

Kornelia Imesch, Sigrid Schade, Samuel Sieber (eds.)

# Constructions of Cultural Identities in Newsreel Cinema and Television after 1945



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KORNELIA IMESCH, SIGRID SCHADE, SAMUEL SIEBER (EDS.)

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# **Constructions of Cultural Identities in Newsreel Cinema and Television after 1945**

## Introduction

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KORNELIA IMESCH, SIGRID SCHADE, SAMUEL SIEBER

### **NEWSREEL AND CULTURAL IDENTITY IN A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

This book addresses questions and issues concerning the construction of cultural identities in newsreel, (documentary) cinema and television as part of national discourses, political processes, and economic strategies in European countries after 1945. It thus extends the analysis beyond the frame of the preceding research project on art and culture reportages in the Swiss Newsreel between 1940 and 1975, initiated by Kornelia Imesch and co-directed by Sigrid Schade, both with a background in transdisciplinary research in art history and visual culture. The project was funded by the Swiss National Foundation. Samuel Sieber, as editor, reinforced the team with an extensive background in media studies.

The original project, titled “Art, cultural activities and the society of knowledge. Constructions of cultural identity in the Swiss Newsreel 1940-1975”<sup>1</sup> focused on the post-World War II Swiss Newsreel. The project re-

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1 “Kunst, Kunstbetrieb und Wissensgesellschaft Schweiz. Konstruktionen kultureller Identität in der Schweizer Filmwochenschau 1940-1975”, a collaboration between the Art History Department at the University of Lausanne (Kornelia Imesch) and the Institute for Cultural Studies in the Arts, Zurich University of



flected on the cultural and political function of the state-controlled mass medium with its very high attendance until the 1960s<sup>2</sup> as a precursor of commercial film cinema, and analyzed the particular discursive strategies of the Swiss Newsreel in constructing images, concepts, and meaning within a framework of a culturally-anchored ‘Swiss identity’. Here the term is not being considered as a fixed concept or reality, but as a construct in perpetual progress through historical, medial, imaginative and imaginary practices of identification, intertwining collectives and individuals, and thereby producing reality (cf. Hall 1992). Cultural identity concepts are usually implicitly and explicitly embedded within political discourses and politics, implying concepts of national identity within imagined communities (cf. Sieber 2014); as such, the project’s approach was to analyze the interrelations between the two concepts. The conditions of producing newsreels in three national languages, their distribution in the Swiss cinemas, and the specific Swiss institutions of the period had to be taken into account.

One of the main aims of the research project was to show that newsreel reports on making art and culture-related events played a politically motivated role within these processes and strategies,<sup>3</sup> and in fact, cultural production and the arts have played that role in a multiethnic Switzerland since the state’s formation in 1848 (cf. *Der Bund fördert* 1988; Imesch 2010). The project also traced and retraced strategies of the Swiss Newsreel in constructing national identity in the particular context of “Spiritual defense” [Geistige Landesverteidigung], an anti-fascist concept developed by Philipp Etter in the 1930s dominant in the pre- and postwar era until the 1970s (cf. Etter 1937; Amrein 2007).

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the Arts (Sigrid Schade), between 2009-2012. We thank Nadja Lutz who contributed to the project in its first phase and Mario Lüscher who was part of the project including the organization of a symposium in Lausanne 2012.

- 2 Until the 1960s the yearly attendance in Swiss cinemas was more than 30 million people (Tedeschi/Fragnière 2004: 12).
- 3 Reportages on art within newsreel had not been subject to analysis before in studies on the audiovisual medium. One of the rare analyses of art related reportages in international newsreel production can be found in the study of the representation of modern art in this medium in Germany after 1945 by Stamm (1983). For German newsreels see especially the doctoral theses of Schwarz (2002), and Bartels (2004).

As in other media too, the construction of an identity—be it cultural, national, ethnical, or religious—in newsreels was generated by the attribution of repeated, memorized, presumed or invented qualities of a ‘self’ and of ‘others’ (i.e. foreigners). Borders of inclusion and exclusion were thus directly and indirectly drawn and negotiated by using or producing ‘documents’ of cultural traditions and representations; by anticipation, adoption and adaptation of ‘foreign’ cultural influences (for example US-Americans) as ‘own ones’; and by distancing oneself by clichéd reportages from events abroad. The ‘own’ and the ‘foreign’ don’t necessarily have to be addressed within the same report, as the definition of a ‘self’ always includes definitions of the ‘other’ as the differing position (cf. Lutter/Reisenleitner 2002: 93-102).

Within its focus on art making in Switzerland, the project allowed to retrace what the Swiss Newsreel stated as major events and artists of the Helvetic art world. It highlighted the dominant art terms and cultural assumptions of the period, and what in contrast was excluded as blind spots, segregated from the particularly Swiss “grand narrative” to which this modern filmic medium decidedly contributed (cf. Imesch 2010).

Newsreel has to be described as a specific historical audiovisual medium with specific combinatorics of reports in their rhetoric mix of sound—a usually male voiceover, spoken comments, music, noise—and moving images. The analysis of the rhetoric in the newsreels’ choices and combinations of reports running usually one to two minutes long shows a wide range of possibilities of connotation and denotation procedures within very short periods (cf. Barthes 1972a, 1972b, 1994). From this perspective, newsreel is an interwoven net of spoken word, music, written text, of moving and still images commenting on each other. The art of newsreel is the way in which it constructs and provides subjective and collective identification with usually mythical subjects (for example a ‘nation’) while at the same time naturalizing its contents.<sup>4</sup>

During and after World War II, the Swiss newsreel showed aspects astonishingly resembling styles of talking in the voice-over, the choice of patriotic motives and the combinatorial strategies of reportages, for exam-

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4 Cf. Barthes 1972a; 1972b. According to Barthes, a myth is an ideology pretending to be nature. For more on how naturalization processes function in visual culture see also Schade/Wenk 2011.

ple of the Nazi German newsreels. Consequently, Swiss newsreel must be addressed as part of a broader history of visual culture and media, as being related to and sometimes in economic exchange with other countries' newsreels and formats at a given period, and as a specific sort of archive.<sup>5</sup>

Newsreels' international success started running its course from the 1910s, at the same time as printed photojournalism (cf. Baechlin/Muller-Strauss 1952:10), and preceded by the "Actuality film", a genre and term coined by the Lumière Brothers in France in 1895, at the birth of the seventh art (cf. Huret 1984). A historical survey of the newsreel cinema and its functions reveals the medium's capacity as a tool of political, ideological and economical propaganda<sup>6</sup> and its commercial relevance in early Western consumer societies as decisive success factors. Since World War I and the introduction of sound film in the 1920s, newsreel became an attractive mass medium within and for nationalist discourses and politics, a means of indoctrination particularly in wartime, and even as a tool of war itself.

When in 1945 and 1946—after World War II—a comprehensive ideological re-orientation of former fascist countries through the allied forces took place the newsreel again played an integral role in the process of ideological and political "re-education" (Hahn 1997) as part of a larger "Marshall Plan".<sup>7</sup> The United States of America and the other countries of the victorious powers were definitely aware of the powerful effects of the audiovisual medium. The production of newsreels after 1945 commanded a large arsenal of stylistic and technological resources, as well as skilled people. Although the period immediately after World War II proved to be the last phase during which the newsreel was produced, the genre kept its importance as a decisive audiovisual mass medium by being an important tool in the development and shaping of politico-cultural public spheres well into the 1960s.<sup>8</sup> Its reportages, produced in the typical documentary style of black and white, generally covered a spectrum of topics ranging from politics, scientific and technical innovations, cultural and art related events,

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5 For newsreel in general, see Baechlin/Muller-Strauss 1951.

6 Criticized by Enzensberger as early as 1962: 88. On Enzensberger, see also King 2007.

7 On the context of Germany's newsreels see Reimers et al. 1983; Hohenberger/Keilbach 2003.

8 On French newsreels in the context of the liberation see Lindeperg 2008.

sports, fashion, and other entertainment or consumer goods—especially relevant in the time of the “economic miracle” [“Wirtschaftswunder”] and the cold war.

## **“TELEVISION KILLED THE NEWSREEL STAR”?**

Television after 1945 inherited newsreels’ role as an audiovisual, filmed newspaper, additionally benefitting from technological enhancements made since the late 1960s in color film. Both filmic audiovisual genres, newsreels and television, are sources for the historical study of cultural and societal changes, of paradigm shifts, in which they participated or of which they were the result. They allow insights into our recent past, a past which is marked by the transition from the modern period—photojournalism, newsreel and early television—towards a post-modern and late capitalistic period affected by new media like video and the advent of the Internet. Television, inheriting the task of news and information formats as well as that of shaping cultural identities after the 1960s, anticipated what video and particularly MTV did with radio in 1981, in marking a media-based paradigm shift, a media cesura: “Video Killed the Radio Star” (The Buggles 1979).

Yet newsreel continues to participate in the processes of archive building and the transformation and deconstruction effects of media in general, remediating the aesthetics of other media such as photojournalism, (documentary) film and radio. And it was and is still being remediating itself in (documentary) film, or in television—the very medium which eventually replaced the newsreel.

Many of the aesthetic forms which today are typically associated with televisual documentaries and news segments were developed in and strongly influenced by newsreels. Much of the archived newsreel footage itself continues to be used in a variety of television programs, both to illustrate and restage past events, passing over or rewriting our understandings of their significance. Within this remediation of newsreel reportages, very often they are stripped off their original context, the specific commentaries, and perhaps even dissociated from the voiceover or soundtracks with which they were originally broadcast.

Newsreels thus not only played a paramount role in forming the audiovisual narratives of diverse “Biopics of the Nation” (cf. Imesch/Lutz/

Lüscher 2011), thereby re-consolidating cultural, political and religious communities, but in many ways continue to either perpetuate or reinterpret such collective identifications in contemporary media. Consequently, the newsreel archives demonstrate both the format's medial qualities and deconstruct a 'natural history' of the media.

## COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES

While working on the project with a focus on Switzerland, it became evident that the project would have to be contextualized in diverse ways.<sup>9</sup> A comparison of the structures, aspects of institutionalization and functions in different European countries promises to offer deeper insight into the differences and similarities of the medial production and use of newsreels from historically and culturally diverse perspectives, while remaining cognizant of differing availability of sources from different countries, gaps in the databases, and that different archival practices might prevent access to the original composition of newsreels reportages.

Drawing from several methodological approaches within the diverse field of cultural and media studies, this book aims to discuss historical, theoretical, medial, aesthetical and political aspects of newsreels in particular and audiovisual formats in general. The choices of the case studies presented allow for a comparative perspective on constructions of cultural identities in the countries addressed.

The chapters discuss both state-controlled and private formats, recent televisual programs from different countries and linguistic areas, as well as documentary and popular film. Special attention is paid to newsreels addressing cultural and artistic topics and their subsequent transition into "Culture Television" (cf. Borer 2013). Finally, emphasis is put on the technical, aesthetical, and political challenges of archiving and restaging news-

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9 An international symposium on "Constructions of Cultural Identities in Newsreel, Cinema and Television after 1945" was held in 2012 at the University of Lausanne in collaboration with the Institute for Cultural Studies in the Arts, Zurich University of the Arts; selected talks are included in this volume. We thank the aforementioned institutions and especially the Swiss National Foundation for its support.

reels and television, not least in today's age of digital (inter-)media and their accelerated distribution, reproduction, and manipulation.

The book is also dedicated to a particular aspect of the newsreel medium, the relevant feature of its cinematic hybrid between documentary and fiction genre and its decisive claim of so-called 'authenticity'. Both aspects supported newsreels' success as a 'news'-medium, shaped the dynamics of its narratives, and contributed to our continuous perception of the medium as an eminent source of visual cultural and social history and memory.

**Samuel Sieber's** essay "The Politics of Archives. Media, Power, and Identity" opens the first chapter, "Constructions of Cultural Identities in Newsreel". Using selected examples from Swiss Newsreel, he discusses the political power and potency of newsreel as a media archive. By introducing two different conceptions of archives coined by Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, he shows how newsreel's ability to construct identities builds and depends on the selective assembly of the articulable and visible. Yet both Swiss Newsreel's evident self-staging and self-thematization as a medium, and the governmental discourses or nationalistic images it features, are subject to constant re-presentations and transformations. In the technological and discursive senses, the newsreel archives therefore mark a substantially political mediality of old and new media.

In his essay "The Creation of Cultural Identity through Weekly Newsreels in Germany in the 1950s" **Knut Hickethier** explores the generation of cultural and national identity through newsreels in post-war Germany, particularly by the NEUE DEUTSCHE WOCHENSCHAU [NEW GERMAN NEWSREEL] in its context of the film business. Many of the NDW's contemporary features revolve thematically around the reconstruction of Germany, forming a grand narrative aimed at fostering a sense of social and national cohesion. Constructing the story of a restored and increasingly prosperous West Germany often implied painting a negative image of the German Democratic Republic, which likewise produced negative narratives of the West; both sides using particularly emotional visuals, metaphoric image material, and cunning dramatic composition techniques.

In her article "West German State Newsreels in the Period of the Economic Miracle 1950-1964. Gender as an open approach", **Uta Schwarz** introduces gender as an important analytical category of social history into the research on the West German government's newsreels in the period of the "patriarchal democracy and economic miracle". Her analysis of the

filmic and narrative structure, the topical content, their combination and the dramaturgic operations which gave the single reports a specific space within a unified whole, shows not only how stereotypical concepts of femininity and masculinity in the West German society were implicitly and explicitly negotiated in the newsreels. Uta Schwarz's analysis also demonstrates how gender stereotyping relates to national production and consumption; referencing gendered film aesthetics as a dispositive, the newsreel continues to mark the gendered concepts of cultural identities as well as the newsreels' gendered aesthetics.

**Hilde Hoffmann's** essay "The Visual Memory of the Cold War. The Long Afterlife of the FOX TÖNENDE WOCHENSCHAU Newsreels on the Building of the Berlin Wall" traces the role of the German newsreel FTW, established as a commercial newsreel by the US-American 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox after World War II, in generating an ongoing collective visual memory of the Cold War and the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961. Hilde Hoffmann's analysis shows how the newsreel produced and constructed images of the good 'self' (addressing a Western 'We' as defenders of freedom) and the evil 'alien' (Russian and GDR associated with National Socialism). Its images of the building of the Berlin Wall had a decontextualized afterlife when they were circulated after the reunification of Germany in the ten years anniversary of German Unity media events in 1999, as historical documents in a new unifying narrative of Germany's history of overcoming suffering.

**Catalina Ravessoud's** and **Gianni Haver's** contribution "Art Exhibitions through Newsreels. An Avatar for Identity Politics (1945-1960)" links the first and second chapter. The essay's focus is the comparative study of newsreel reports on exemplary art exhibitions from France, Germany, Italy and Spain between 1945 and 1960. The authors discuss how art exhibitions were reported in newsreels as "avatars" for identity politics in specific historical and national contexts, especially through restaging and remediating the exhibition as a politically charged event which gains its meaning through the presence of national and international political authorities. During the first years after the war in French and German newsreels reports on the restitution of art works, for example, are used to document a return to 'normality'. The authors show how in later reports national identity politics draw symbolic capital from the international, universal value attributed to

modern art, and how around 1960 a shift in newsreels can be observed towards reports on art exhibitions allowing for more individual interpretation.

The second chapter, entitled “Art and Culture in Newsreel, Cinema, and Television,” opens with **Kornelia Imesch**’s article “Jean Tinguely & Le Corbusier in Swiss Weekly Film Newsreels and Television. Medial Rhetorics—Medial Discourses.” Imesch analyzes the different strategies of reporting on two diversely debated protagonists of Swiss architecture and art: Le Corbusier and Jean Tinguely. In the newsreel and television of the Swiss Postwar period, both artists appear in narrations constructing differing and even conflicting identification patterns within Swiss cultural identity. Her analysis shows how television inherited and reformed the preceding newsreel while at the same time opened its rhetoric by involving its audience via audio-visual presentation. The two media are linked to different discourses and dispositifs and their underlying ideological differences.

In his essay “Fiction and Newsreel Documentary in Godard’s Cinema” **Pietro Giovannoli** shows how the tensions between the techniques and the aesthetics of newsreels and documentary films and those of fiction had been at the center of Godard’s reflections in his (documentary) films as well as in his theoretical writing. Godard’s filmic practices, Giovannoli argues, undermine the separation of documentary and fictional material. Godard’s journalistic cinema addressed actualities (in 1954 the building of a dam, in the 1960s prostitution in France or the war in Algeria, later the Americanization of Europe, the Vietnam war, the students and worker protests in 1968, third world conflicts and colonialism) while experimenting in complex ways with documentary essays and fiction. Coming from a Marxist revolutionary perspective, the struggle for a critique of the “cinematic language” of journalism and mainstream cinema was imbedded in a political analysis of the ideological effects of both, documentary and fiction, as a language of power. For Godard at least in the 1960s, the project of a national (French) cinema able to resist the universalization of the US film industry would not have to be nationalist itself.

While examining the interaction of negotiating religious identity—understood as a cultural practice—, migration and contemporary Swiss documentary film, **Marie-Therese Mäder** shows in her essay “Between Migration and Integration” how documentaries provide a specific form of cultural space in which production, representation and communication are intertwined, and where individuals and groups reflect upon religion, be-



longing and identity. She focuses on two rather differing Swiss documentaries (*BETWEEN TWO WORLDS*, Yusuf Yesilöz, CH 2006, and *OUR GARDEN EDEN* Mano Khalil CH 2010), both made by immigrants, and coproduced and distributed by the Swiss national television channel SRF, which raise questions about the borders and the formation of cultural-religious identities and processes of integration and exclusion under the condition of migration. As her analysis shows, filmmakers, social actors and audiences can become active protagonists in documentary formats, drawing and negotiating their own boundaries within notions of Swiss and other cultures, thus contributing diverse and new perspectives to never fixed concepts of cultural, religious, and national constructions of identities.

**Nadja Borer**'s contribution "Re-marking of Differences: Culture Television and Art Interplaying. Variability of Cultural Magazines and their Heterogeneous Dispositions" discusses the complex interrelations between televisual cultural magazines and art events. Cultural television, close to the the newsreel in so far as it provides an additive structure of framed segments of cultural 'information' and entertainment, continually interprets and translates socio-cultural activities of a society, processing the myths of a society into extensive mythologies. Since the introduction of private broadcasters in the mid-1980s, commercials became even more important. Addressing a broader consumer public in the 1990s, entertainment and advertisement design—such as the magazine *KULTURPLATZ* of Swiss Television—reshaped the studio design even of cultural magazines. Television generally re-visualizes images and other media integrated into different daily practices, thus representing these media practices too. Borer's analysis shows how cultural television as a medium also may develop art representations and re-appropriations, which reflect upon the making of the art and put aesthetical difference on display.

In his contribution "Constructing an Emancipated Culture of Art Spectatorship? The Ambiguity of Ben Lewis's Reportage-Series *ART SAFARI* (2003-2006)," **Marcel Bleuler** discusses the art reportage series that was co-produced by several West European television channels as a format criticizing "educational culture television". Bleuler's analysis shows how the series is operating in the identification and construction as well as in interpretation and transmission of knowledge about art and culture. Audio-visual strategies that do not reveal their own conditionality and are based on ambivalence regarding the intellectual autonomy of their supposed specta-

tors can undermine the authoritarian gestures typical of mainstream art worlds. The implications of such a strategy of educational television may be seen in an empowerment of a new emancipated spectatorship distant from traditional modes of authoritarian instruction.

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# The Politics of Archives

## Media, Power, and Identity

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SAMUEL SIEBER

[B]ecause *every* archive [...] is at once *institutive* and *conservative*. Revolutionary and traditional.<sup>1</sup>

In December 1965, the Swiss weekly film newsreel SWN [SCHWEIZER FILMWOCHENSCHAU SFW] featured a peculiar short piece on young Swiss women and men preparing to deploy to development projects all over Africa (no.1192.2). First panning over idyllic impressions of a rural village in Ticino, the Italian-speaking canton in Southern Switzerland, the camera abruptly switches to close-ups of wooden signboards carrying the names of African countries. The brief feature continues to a group of young people seated in an improvised classroom, who are later depicted working with wood, installing lights and electronic switches, fixing pans and kitchen bowls, repairing car engines, and finally preparing dishes from different vegetables, eggs, coconuts and groundnuts. The commentary joins these images in a compelling narrative featuring an introductory puzzle: “Mogheno, in the Maggia Valley, is a typical Ticino village”, the voiceover states, “so the door plates featuring names of African countries seem all the more unusual”. The riddle is unraveled shortly after: “Here the Swiss Federal Political Department conducts a training for volunteers wanting to join development work in Africa”, and the village of Mogheno and the Canton

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1 Cf. Derrida 1998: 7, emphases in the original.

Ticino, according to the newsreel, provide a fitting setting, for “the young people here find simple [living] conditions similar to those at their future work destinations”.<sup>2</sup>

*Fig. 1: “A typical Ticino village...”*



Source: MEMORIAV, SCHWEIZER FILMWOCHENSCHAU, no. 1192.2

As bold and amusing the equation of living conditions in southern Switzerland and Africa might seem in both a historic and contemporary perspective, the episode exhibits the infamous power of newsreel seemingly capable of establishing cultural, national, and ethnical identities in little over a minute. The voiceover proclaiming the existence of ‘African’ living conditions in southern Switzerland and Swiss’ craftsmanship as an asset for development in Africa, imposes uneven qualities of Swiss, African, and not least Ticino, culture and nationality. The images similarly stage African food next to less exotic Swiss grocery products, and simple cooking tech-

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2 For reading ease, all quotes from newsreels transcribed in this article are translated from German into English by the author.

niques over an open fire lead to a ‘Western’ dinner scenario with diners gathering around a wooden dinner table. By cleverly combining an empathic discourse on the value of ‘Swiss’ talent and entrepreneurship with well-staged images of handicraft and household duties in quasi-‘African’ rural surroundings, the newsreel does more than playfully explore geographical and cultural bounds, but rather determines and extends them.

*Fig. 2: ...with “similar simple conditions as at their future work destinations”.*



Source: MEMORIAV, SCHWEIZER FILMWOCHENSCHAU, no. 1192.2

The newsreel’s signifying regime appears even more powerful in a historic perspective considering contemporary production settings and the medium’s then still young, yet encumbered, history. In their UNESCO-mandated study published in 1951, Peter Baechlin and Maurice Muller-Strauss caution against overlooking the orchestrating capabilities of the young audiovisual medium. While newsreels allegedly “deal with real events” and “display an external likeness of reality which is, in itself, convincing”, they hold a “great potential danger [...] if they should by any means falsify facts” (Baechlin/Mueller-Strauss 1951: 39). This and similar



concerns were especially potent after the experience of government-controlled and propagandistically distorted newsreel features during World War II.<sup>3</sup>

Yet the belief in the depicting and staging power of media in general—and particularly of audiovisual media from early photography to film, newsreel and television, and recently digitally produced or altered videos—certainly is well entrenched. The more recent, euphorically celebrated dawn of so-called ‘social’ or ‘participatory’ and thus seemingly more ‘political’ digital networks only recently demonstrated how global audiovisual networks, as opposed to manipulative and heavily institutionalized ‘mass media’, promise a more versatile, decentralized and thus ‘democratic’ production and distribution of images. Indeed, the hopes and fears attached to today’s digital media remain similar to those that accompanied cinema or television during the golden age of newsreel. “The motion picture”, as Baechlin and Muller-Strauss put it in the early 1950s, “with its tremendous possibilities for dramatizing actual events [...] may become a servant of falsehood as well as of truth” (ibid.: 11).

In the case of newsreel, the judgements on the medium’s opportune and dangerous powers seem to have remained ambivalent. Whereas newsreels’ selective perspectives and narrative style today surely appear too crude, biased, or indeed propagandistic, both original and re-edited newsreel footage is to date regularly used in TV-news and documentaries. The mediating strategy of these more recent broadcastings—for instance in reports on national holidays or documentary features on memorial days—remains at its core almost unchanged, with newsreel footage supposedly providing (audio-)visual evidence of the past. The representing and restaging, however, shapes and accentuates a set of cultural, national, or religious identities in need of a common history or shareable narrative. Indeed, the archived footage has the two-faced image that Kornelia Imesch, Mario Lüscher and Nadja Lutz describe for the public and academic perception of Swiss newsreel. Newsreel footage is either seen as “a product of national propaganda” [...], raggedly produced, stereotypically themed, and controlled by national governments”, or—on the contrary—is praised as a “cultural asset” of great na-

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3 In particular in the Third Reich, as Baechlin and Muller-Strauss stress (cf. 1951: 39).

tional and “historic value” (cf. Imesch/Lutz/Lüscher 2011: 231, translated by the author).

In this *re*-presenting of archived newsreel footage however, through retrospectively constructing and restaging significant events and cultural identities, media demonstrate more than a stipulating power to determine discourses and shape visual regimes. The very act of archiving actuality and the option of repeating and reinterpreting it reveal a political mediality in which the articulable as much as the visual remain volatile constructs subjected to intervening transformations. Media archives therefore never just describe the processes and institutions of storing text and images, nor do they attribute any unalterable informing power or signifying force. Rather, they demonstrate every medium’s stratagem to selectively *depict* and *represent* ‘actuality’.

Briefly introducing two different, yet complementary concepts of the archive in the works of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, I will hereafter explore a political dimension of newsreel beyond the scope of governmental media control and implicitly overpowering old and new audiovisual technology. Media archives indeed figure as places where predominant discourses and visual regimes assemble to unfold the manifold effects of their power. Like the discourses and visibilities they hold, media however remain subject to constant transformations and interference. In both an institutional and discursive perspective, media archives therefore are a political space in which the unsaid and the unseen resonate and reappear.

## DECONSTRUCTING THE POWER OF ARCHIVES

At first glance, newsreel’s power to construct and negotiate identities in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the post-war period appears easily traceable to the medium’s technological progressiveness, screening context, and institutional production environment. At least until the proliferation of television sets in virtually every household from the 1950s onwards, newsreel figured as a widely uncontested audiovisual news medium, shown in cinemas before theatrical motion pictures and distributed by governmentally sanctioned production companies shining politically-driven spotlights on ‘actuality’. Similar contributory factors are—if to different extents—however distinguishable in the history of cinema, television, or digital vid-

eos, and are true for media in general. To construct ‘actuality’ by assembling and storing discourses is, in fact, a particular modality of (news) media and even a general perceptual condition. As Jacques Derrida phrases it in an interview with Bernard Stiegler, ‘actuality’ depends on the two traits of “*artificiality* and *actuvirtuality*“, which is to say it is “produced, sifted, invested, performatively interpreted by numerous apparatuses which are factitious or artificial, hierarchizing and selective, always in the service of forces and interests” (Derrida/Stiegler 2002: 3). Newsreel’s genuine operating area is thus the “fictional fashioning” of actuality; it belongs to the “set of technical and political apparatuses” that choose, “from a nonfinite mass of events, the ‘facts’ that are to constitute actuality.”<sup>4</sup>

As the remediation of newsreel footage in contemporary documentaries and television programs suggests, media’s performative power is not limited to a single act of selective and precluding representation, but rather is subject to repetition and reinterpretation. Newsreel’s and other media’s ability to selectively present implies the power to assemble, compile and store what is articulable and visible at a specific time, that is to *archive* actuvirtuality. In his essay *Archive Fever*, Derrida explores this temporally stretched, recursive power of media archives. Etymologically tracing the archive back to the Greek *arkheion*—a house, residence or domicile—he first emphasizes an archive’s need of domiciliation. Already in the ancient residences of superior magistrates filing official documents, archives, according to Derrida, “needed at once a guardian and a localization”, and thus “could neither do without substrate nor without residence” (Derrida 1998: 2). Archives therefore “take place in a domiciliation”, and their ‘documents’ are “only kept and classified under the title of the archive by virtue of a privileged topology” (ibid.: 3).

Derrida challenges and expands the archives’ topology by unmasking its prescriptive and assembling, quasi-‘legislative’, power. Archives ‘take place’ at “the intersection of the topological and the nomological, of the place and the law, of the substrate and the authority”, operating in a “topo-

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4 Cf. Derrida/Stiegler 2002: 3, 42. Derrida however by no means aims to contrast an allegedly preexisting ‘reality’ with artificial media presentation, for an “interpretive sifting is not confined to the news or the media”, but “indispensable at the threshold of every perception or of every finite experience in general” (cf. ibid.: 42).

nomological” space (cf. *ibid.*: 4). Because archives also gather the “functions of unification, of identification, of classification”, they hold a “power of consignment”, of “gathering together” (cf. *ibid.*). Such consignment or gathering, strictly speaking, implies “to coordinate a single corpus, in a system or a synchrony in which all the elements articulate the unity of an ideal configuration” and no “absolute dissociation, [...] heterogeneity or secret” can persist (cf. *ibid.*).

The powerful topo-nomology of archives aims at the “possibility of memorization, of repetition, of reproduction or of reimpression” (*ibid.*: 11). As “[t]here is no archive without a place of consignment, without a technique of repetition, and without a certain exteriority”, there is “[n]o archive without outside” (*ibid.*). The archives’ power to dwell and consignate, however, by no means only affects or shapes an uncertain future discourse or perception. The very institutions and technologies of archiving already condition the act/virtual and artefactual present. For Derrida, the archontic power therefore directly concerns “our political experience of the so-called news media” (cf. *ibid.*: 17). For “the archive, as printing, writing, prosthesis, or hypomnesic technique in general is not only the place for stocking and for conserving an archivable content of the past which would exist in any case”. Rather, “the technical structure of the archiving archive also determines the structure of the archiveable content even in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future” (*ibid.*: 16 et seq.).

Within every archive’s drive to assemble, store and remember, however, slumbers a destructive force endangering and inevitably transforming it. The archive fever referenced in the title of Derrida’s text refers to a desire to archive in the face of a simultaneous death drive, which is “the radical finitude, [...] the possibility of a forgetfulness which does not limit itself to repression” (*ibid.*: 19). Above all, “beyond or within this simple limit called finiteness or finitude, there is no archive fever without the threat of this death drive, this aggression and destruction drive” (*ibid.*). When Derrida thus stresses that the “archival technology no longer determines, will never have determined, merely the moment of the conservational recording, but rather the very institution of the archivable event” (*ibid.*: 18), he does not attribute to media technology an unlimited power. Indeed, the archive conditions itself as much as its ‘content’, yet it does so in light of forgetfulness, finitude, and facing the inevitable breach of articulable and visible configu-

rations *yet to come*. Media technologies—or rather the dispositifs<sup>5</sup> of archiving—are thus themselves subject to intervention and transformation. What Jacques Derrida projected for the new technology of electronic mails in the late-90’s is certainly true for the rich interplays and many shifts between old and new media in general and up to date: “any destruction of the archive must inevitably be accompanied by juridical and thus political transformation” (cf. Derrida 1998: 17).

With newsreel today largely subsisting in storage, the medium puts itself forward as an illustrative example of the simultaneously forceful and fragile power of archives. In May 1957, the SWN aired a brief piece on the first experimental nuclear reactor in Switzerland (no. 772.3). As the first example discussed, this episode, too, is rich in nationalistic discourse and a number of cultural stereotypes conveyed by both narrative and visual means: “In Würenlingen by the River Aare the furnishing of the American reactor which was displayed at the Geneva nuclear conference has just been completed”, the voiceover states. Viewers are then informed that the reactor “has ten times the power and is most carefully operated and monitored by exactly calibrated instruments from the control room, [...] every man and everything is examined again and again for dangerous nuclear radiation with the Geiger counter”, and “an enormous concrete socket protects the research area in the basement”.

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5 I suggest maintaining the original French term of the “dispositive” over the common English translations of the “apparatus” or “deployment”: both are problematic in that they either imply a dominant technical structure or a rigid or suppressing order. “Dispositifs” in the Foucauldian sense are a changing “system of relations” between “thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures” (cf. Foucault 1980: 194), and thus maintain a more open perspective accentuating both power relations and political transformation (cf. Sieber 2014).

*Fig. 3: The first experimental nuclear reactor in Switzerland is “carefully operated and monitored by exactly calibrated instruments from the control room ...”*



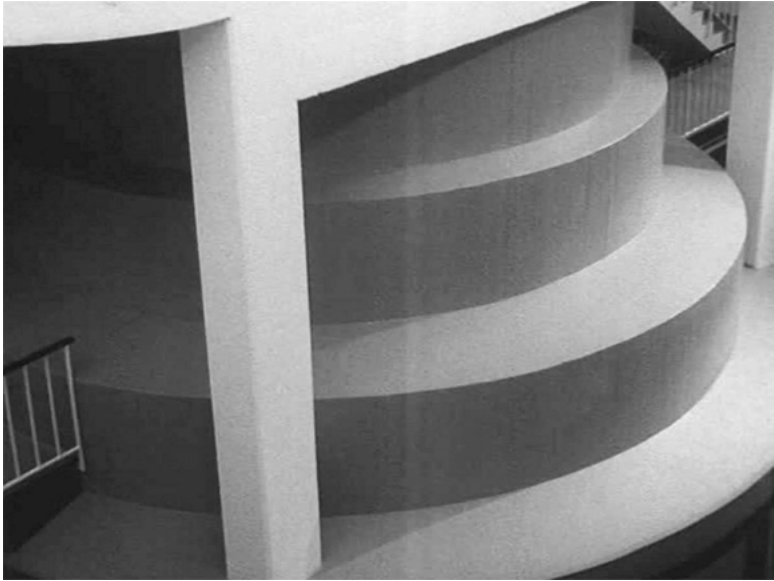
Source: MEMORIAV, SCHWEIZER FILMWOCHENSCHAU, no. 772.3

Meanwhile, camera movement, shot perspectives, and image composition strive to mimic the sterile, strictly organized and security-minded architecture of a nuclear facility. Men<sup>6</sup> in white lab coats appear as mere ornaments of the facilities' omnipresent devices and consoles, instruments and warning lights, steel beams and concrete vaults. The episode is filmed from extreme perspectives, shooting either steeply down- or upwards, and the camera seems to playfully accentuate the facility's architecture and technology

6 The only woman featured in the brief episode scans a group of male colleagues for dangerous radiation with a Geiger counter. Gender roles are thus, and by no means coincidentally, part of the set of cultural identities constructed by media archives. Derrida, in fact, precisely notes the strongly 'gendered' history of archives themselves. As the ancient *archons*, the guardians of documents, "the archontic dimension of domiciliation" is an "archic, in truth patriarchic, function" (cf. Derrida 1998: 10).

by panning over monitors and dials, and almost artistically framing the reactor's conical vault.

*Fig. 4: Celebrating nuclear power, technology, and itself as a media archive: Perspective onto the reactor's vault.*



Source: MEMORIAV, SCHWEIZER FILMWOCHENSCHAU, no. 772.3

The bunker-like structure of the vault is not merely presented as the invisible, but tamed pinnacle of modern technology. Its almost abstract staging seems to celebrate newsreels' potency to narrate and show as the medium sees fit, applying a highly selective discourse in conjunction with various perspectives and framing techniques, making for an artistic and artificial presentation. Yet the doubtlessly powerful assemblage of visual and discursive elements today—in its remediation—feels oddly out of place: the visual tale of lab-coated men operating the precise instruments controlling nuclear energy, the aesthetic dominance of both nuclear and media technology, and the nationalistic narrative celebrating the Swiss adoption and improvement of American innovation, all appear pale and outdated. The sense of presence the newsreel archives and presents proves volatile, even fleeting.

## THE AUDIOVISUAL ARCHIVE OF NEWSREEL

There is another equally renowned notion of archives that offers a slightly shifted focus on media's capacities to assemble and store: In his famous study on the *Archeology of Knowledge*, Michel Foucault lays the groundwork for a discourse analysis leading towards a subtle analytics of power, including a short but important chapter on archives and archeology. Foucault, however, does not address "the sum of all the texts that a culture has kept upon its person as documents attesting to its own past, or as evidence of a continuing identity". Archives here are explicitly not considered "the institutions, which, in a given society, make it possible to record and preserve those discourses that one wishes to remember and keep in circulation" (cf. Foucault 1972: 128 et seq.). Instead, Foucault's discursive take at the archive emphasizes the coming-into-existing and persistent power of the articulable. The archive is "the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events", and "that which determines that all these things said [...] are grouped together in distinct figures, composed together in accordance with multiple relations, maintained or blurred in accordance with specific regularities" (ibid.:129).

Foucault's conceptualization of the archive is thus clearly not limited to storage technologies or media institutions. An archive is the "general system of the formation and transformation of statements", and while it "does not have the weight of tradition", it both includes and exceeds discourse in and on media (cf. ibid.: 130). Focusing on the discursive formation of statements, however, the archive stresses a highly political momentum in the discursive emergence and persistence of media technology. "[H]ow is it that one particular statement appeared rather than another", asks Foucault, highlighting the in- and exclusive forces at play in selecting and storing discourses during the process of archiving (cf. ibid.: 27). From the start, the *Archeology of Knowledge* is a political project, committed to exploring regularities in the formation of discourses, similar to the "interpretive sifting" Jacques Derrida locates "at the threshold of every perception or of every finite experience in general" (cf. Derrida/Stiegler 2002: 42).

As Gilles Deleuze puts in his essays dedicated to Foucault's work, the "strata" or "historical formations" revealed by discourse analysis are "positivities or empiricities" (Deleuze 1999: 41). These positivities, however, are not limited to statements in the narrow sense of speech or written text. In-



deed, the *Archeology of Knowledge* “seems to grant the statement a radical primacy”, but the discursive formations are “made from things and words, from seeing and speaking, from the visible and the sayable, from bands of visibility and fields of readability” (cf. *ibid.*: 41 et seq.). As Deleuze stresses, the Foucauldian archive is “audiovisual”, and it understands knowledge as “a practical assemblage, a ‘mechanisms’ of statements and visibilities” (*ibid.*: 43). A historical formation is thus a combination of “a way of saying and seeing, discursive practices and forms of self-evidence”, with their composition varying and contesting “from one stratum to the next” (cf. *ibid.*: 42).

Foucault’s notion of the archive is radical because it considers the articulable and the visible a “historical a priori” (cf. Foucault 1972: 126 et seq.). There is no conception of culture, nationality or ethnicity, and no technological or institutional form of media that precedes the archive. As Deleuze writes, “[a]n ‘age’ does not pre-exist the statements which express it, nor the visibilities which fill it” (Deleuze 1999: 42). It is therefore newsreel and other audiovisual media are attributed the power to *construct* and *transform* identities through time.<sup>7</sup> As Foucault notes in his famous inaugural lecture on the *Order of Discourse*, “in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality” (Foucault 1981: 52). Media certainly are amongst the procedures channeling and structuring discursive figures and visible forms. Yet there is no technicity, institution, or power of media before the discursive materiality. Rather, different configurations of audiovisual media form discursive orders and regimes of gaze *given* or *in the face of* the articulable and visible. As Christoph Tholen emphasizes, “there is now perception sufficiently determined by a natural condition” and thus no medium that would “extend or falsify an allegedly preset sensation”. Rather, perception is “always one of the medium”, it is always “affected by the artificial”, in the sense of a “de-

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7 Following a similar train of thought in Jean Luc Nancy’s *Being Singular Plural*, there generally is no ‘substantial’ ‘identity’, as “the question of the ‘with’ can never be expressed in terms of identity, but rather always in terms of identifications” (cf. Nancy 2000: 66).

ceit or stratagem making something emerge altogether” (cf. Tholen 2005: 162, translated by the author).

For media technology, the auspicious turn of discourse archeology remains in the slightly modified political questions of how media themselves become, persist, and eventually stop being articulable and visible. The focus, then, shifts to the discursive ‘archiving’ of media archives: Understanding newsreel’s historic and contemporary power to construct identities by consigning discourses and perspectives first requires one to temporarily blank out all their obvious material, technical and institutional layers. Newsreel is then determined neither by film celluloid nor by the seating arrangements in a cinema, neither by the governmental production structure nor by a propagandistic gesture, although these aspects are themselves part of the medium’s audiovisual formation. In order to collude with governmental control, with nationalistic images, or cultural stereotypes, newsreel must first itself become articulable and visible as a medium. Only when newsreel is itself part of a discourse can it sustain, weaken or transform other discourses and their mechanisms of control, selection and redistribution. Likewise, the medium needs to become visible, to present and stage itself as a means, an instrument, or an interpreter. As Kornelia Imesch convincingly pointed out in the case of Switzerland, it might be precisely due to the medium’s attempt to “pass itself off to be authentic, [that] it proved to be a construct” (cf. Imesch/Lutz/Lüscher 2011: 226, translated by the author).

While a certain ‘self-fashioning’ is already apparent in the framing of shots in the story about future development workers in the Swiss canton of Ticino or in the artistic staging of the experimental nuclear reactor, a third example from Swiss newsreel illustrates this discursive ‘archiving’ and staging of newsreel as a medium. In 1946, a US-American Dakota C-53 airplane carrying ranking military personnel en route from Vienna to Pisa crashed on the Gauli Glacier in the Swiss Alps. Due to the initially unclear location of the crash site, it took the rescue workers six days to find the injured passengers. The subsequent rescue operation received international attention due to two Swiss airplanes landing on the glacier and flying the passengers to safety—and because SWN-camera operators thoroughly documented this as the first alpine air rescue operation in history. The SWN was among the original rescue squad climbing the slopes to the crash site; it accompanied the search aircrafts, filmed the American troops idly awaiting

orders upon their arrival in Switzerland, and documented the landing sites on the glacier and in the valley below.

*Fig. 5: “Tiny in the white wasteland” and filmed from a Swiss rescue plane, the SWN shows the rescue force approaching the crash site of the US-American military plane.*



Source: MEMORIAV, SCHWEIZER FILMWOCHENSCHAU, no. 288.2

The resulting newsreel feature consequently presents itself as the highly dramatic story of fearless Swiss men daring the impossible, of helpless American troops surrendering to the hostile conditions of the Swiss Alps, and not least of the challenges and promises of newsreel’s recording technologies themselves (no. 288.2). The camera operator accompanying the rescue squad on foot is at first unable to film due to his battery freezing during the climb. Once a rescue plane delivers a new battery to the glacier, however, the newsreel manages to show take-offs and landings in various perspectives from the glacier and from the plane.

At the landing site in the valley, journalists can be seen operating various photo and video cameras next to the operators handling radio equipment to communicate with colleagues on the glacier and the pilots flying

the planes. For shots of the American rescuing troops filmed arriving at a local train station with caterpillars and heavy machinery, the background music changes from the tension-building theme to a cheerful, almost comic melody. “They must realize that our Alps cannot be conquered with tanks”, the voiceover explains. It therefore seems all the more unjust when “Swiss reporters are dragged off the landing field”, although the newsreel’s camera is still able to document both the landing of the rescue planes and the expulsion of a reporter.

*Fig. 6: Although “Swiss reporters are dragged off the landing field”, the newsreel feature manages to record and show the successful air rescue operation.*



Source: MEMORIA V, SCHWEIZER FILMWOCHENSCHAU, no. 288.2

From the airplanes to mobile and vehicle-based radio equipment, and not least to the film cameras, cables, and batteries, the episode shows and stages quite promising, but nonetheless constantly failing technology. Addressing the very technologies of archiving here also allows celebrating the continuing necessity of human intervention, which in turn shapes a highly patriotic Swiss narrative. The ‘intruding’ American troops are waiting, “slight-

ly embarrassed,” at the train station, while Swiss pilots accomplish the impossible and Swiss journalists struggle with dead batteries and strive for the truth, yet are eventually escorted away from the scene that dominated international headlines. This nationalistic tale of Swiss heroes strongly builds on the self-thematization and self-staging of the SWN—as an archiving technology, a media institution, and not least as an authority to show and tell the ‘Swiss’ story.

## RE-THINKING THE POLITICS OF ARCHIVES

Media archives—including but not limited to newsreels—are powerful since they imply a selective assembly of the articulable and a form of self-evidence, which in turn determine whether discursive and visual figures of cultural or national identities flourish or wither. However, neither the discursive archives of media nor the discourses and evidences they assemble and store are rigid or unalterable formations. Both are subject to constant *trans*-formation, marking the substantially political mediality of media: both in the technological and the discursive sense, the archives’ power to consign and perpetuate is simultaneously a leverage point of intervention and alteration.

Newsreels’ power to set or reiterate identity figures is therefore never overwhelming, continuous, or gapless. As an archive in the Foucauldian sense, the topo-nomological potential of media requires constant re-articulation and re-presentation. The three examples of Swiss newsreel illustrated this with carefully sequenced image editing, both artificial and artistic camera perspectives, and not least by integrating media technology into a patriotic narrative. Newsreel here celebrates its contemporary technical and representational capacities as a medium in the very moment it so confidently sets and transposes national and cultural identities.

The iteration and re-staging of newsreel footage—to ‘celebrate’ national memory, to ‘demonstrate’ cultural heritage, or to ‘investigate’ audiovisual impressions of the past—challenge previously constructed identities rather than just resurrecting them. Jacques Derrida’s notion of the archive grasps this challenge as media’s feverish drive to domesticate and consign in the face of a constant forgetting. With Foucault, this drive propels the

powerful institutions and technologies attempting to control and channel the discourses and evidences.

In many regards Michel Foucault's later works succeed in joining these two complementary emphases of archiving the articulable and the visible. The 'dispositifs' of power, according to Foucault, always require and intertwine with audiovisual formations of knowledge. Further developing discourse analysis towards a subtle analytics of power reveals "power-knowledge relations" and underlines how "power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (cf. Foucault 1977: 27).

Thinking newsreel as a media dispositif therefore allows us to deconstruct the entanglement of discourses, visibilities, institutions and technologies that constitute the manifold, yet never absolute nor centralized power relations of the medium.<sup>8</sup> Far from being just a suppressive structure or subduing apparatus, newsreel—by precluding national or cultural identities—opens the leeway for the return or intrusion of formerly untold narratives and excluded discourses, of banned gazes and invisible perspectives. The same holds true for the 'identity' and power of newsreel as a medium: With its former glory as an allegedly omnipotent national mouthpiece certainly faded, many of newsreel's formal characteristics and staging techniques persist in today's television news or web-based formats. The medium's 'own' history, in short, is 'itself' an *intermedial* one and rich in directional shifts and challenges. Understanding the fundamental politics of archives on that note embraces a plea: to re-consider the irrevocable political dimension in the power of old and new media.

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8 I have argued elsewhere that dispositifs, rather than describing a 'topic' structure or 'rigid' order, conceptualise 'heterotopic' and constantly transforming networks or rhizomes—accentuating omnipresent political flightlines and interventions (cf. Sieber 2014: 103 et seqq.).

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# **The Creation of Cultural Identity through Weekly Newsreels in Germany in the 1950s**

As Illustrated by the NEUE DEUTSCHE WOCHENSCHAU and the UFA-WOCHENSCHAU (With a Side Glance at the DEFA Weekly Newsreel DER AUGENZEUGE)

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KNUT HICKETHIER

## **1. HOW THE NEWSREEL DEVELOPED IN GERMANY AFTER 1945**

With the end of World War II and the complete defeat of Germany by the Allied victors, the existing German media system was dissolved and subsequently reorganized. The Allies had attributed to the media a strong propagandistic effect on the German population during the Nazi period, especially during the war. So, after the war it was considered necessary to reorganize and re-educate the media for the purpose of democratization. Movie theaters were forbidden to use editions of the Nazi DEUTSCHE WOCHENSCHAU [GERMAN NEWSREEL] still existing, which, from Berlin, had continually announced German victories during the war (though often these were in fact defeats). Instead, newsreels made quickly by the American, British, French and Soviet allies were shown in their respective occupation zones.

However, towards the end of 1945 these were already being replaced by newsreels which were produced in Germany and in German on the instructions of the Allies. They may have had German titles like WELT IM FILM [WORLD IN FILM], BLICK IN DIE WELT [GAZE ONTO THE WORLD] and WELT



IM BILD [WORLD IN IMAGE], but they were still regarded by the populace as a propaganda tool of the occupying powers. The German-language American newsreel FOX TÖNENDE WOCHENSCHAU [FOX SOUNDING NEWSREEL] was the only one to overtly display its American origins.

The propagandistic character that had defined the wartime newsreels had a lasting impact on the image of newsreels as an information tool and was initially retained in the Allied newsreels—albeit with a more moderate tone—and filled with new content. Instead of a final victory, the campaigning was now for the construction of a new state and new values. Between 1946 and 1949, newsreels were aiming to re-educate the Germans to embrace democracy. However, the style and air of communication began to change—albeit slowly. With the beginning of the 1950s more far-reaching changes started to come about, manifesting most clearly in West Germany in the NEUE DEUTSCHE WOCHENSCHAU [NEW GERMAN NEWSREEL] (cf. Hickethier 2006). As early as 1946, in the Soviet occupation zone a new form of communicating political content in movie theaters came about with the establishment of AUGENZEUGEN [EYEWITNESSES], produced by DEFA under Kurt Maetzig; but from 1949, with the founding of the two German states, its reach remained largely limited to the GDR/East Berlin area of circulation. As a prominent film director, Maetzig created an information instrument in AUGENZEUGEN, which, after the wartime newsreels of the Nazi era broke new paths in its production in a way more striking than the newsreels of the West, above all trying out a new form of addressing the audience (cf. Mückenberger/Jordan 1994). AUGENZEUGEN's new, ultimately less fervent tone, wider variety of voices and occasionally personal form of reporting (ibid., pp. 209, 211) were cut back, however, with the intensification of the Cold War, which was played out mainly in the media, along with implementation of new principles of design in the 1950s.

In the West, a new German newsreel was based on the British newsreel WELT IM FILM [WORLD IN FILM] which, through its name, was connected to the German tradition on the one hand, while on the other hand it worked to distance itself from just that—the NEUE DEUTSCHE WOCHENSCHAU [NEW GERMAN NEWSREEL]. My statements in what follows relate to this newsreel.

In 1949/1950 a dedicated company, DEUTSCHE WOCHENSCHAU GMBH [GERMAN NEWSREEL LIMITED], was founded for the NEUE DEUTSCHE WOCHENSCHAU (hereafter, NDW). It was based in Hamburg, first in the

Aby Warburg-Haus in Harvestehude, and then shortly afterwards in Hamburg-Rahlstedt, in close proximity to the Geyer film laboratory, which considerably shortened the production routes. DEUTSCHE WOCHENSCHAU GMBH was a public enterprise belonging to the West German Government, answerable to the Press Office of the West German Government and thus to the Speaker of the West German Government. Nevertheless, it produced newsreels independently and without direct instructions from Bonn. After several changes, its head from 1958 to 1965 was the journalist, screenwriter and director Manfred Purzer, who politically was close to the CDU [Christian Democratic Union].<sup>1</sup>

One cannot dispute that the NDW's basic attitude was governmental, the newsreel having emerged with the aspiration of being a German production and offering a German view of the world. The fact that this was then primarily a governmental point of view and also in turn the view of the conservative-liberal camp seemed to many viewers, if they even noticed it, a matter of course and it was not understood to be an objective reproduction of reality.

With great effort, this NEUE DEUTSCHE WOCHENSCHAU succeeded in asserting itself as the leading weekly newsreel in the West German motion picture market of the 1950s, as described by Sigrun Lehnert (2013). It certainly helped that the DEUTSCHE WOCHENSCHAU GMBH was so closely connected to the West German Government, complying with the authoritarian state mentality of West German society in the 1950s. Though the West German Government wanted to dispense with its film holdings, it met with opposition in the market-economy-minded CDU/FDP [Christian Democratic Union/Free Democratic Party].

In 1956 three new film corporations were founded in West Germany with massive amounts of state aid. These would go on to help German film emerge from being a fragmented, small-scale film industry into new international standing: UFA Film AG, which was closely associated with UFA Theater AG, and Bavaria Film AG. UFA Film AG was designated to DEUTSCHE WOCHENSCHAU GMBH, the West German Government only holding a blocking minority as a stockholder.

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1 Cf. Anonymous: Issue 314. In: *Der Spiegel* dated 8 September 1965 (about Purzer and the CDU). Also digitally available from: <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-46274017.html> [15 June 2016].

But the newly established film corporations were not destined to survive the movie theater crisis that was beginning in 1957 caused by mismanagement. In 1963 the West German Government reacquired the newsreel company from the declining UFA corporation, despite having no promising new approach to communicating news through motion pictures. With movie theaters closing their doors all over Germany, the number of newsreel subscribers fell, threatening loss of the economic basis for the newsreel production. For that reason, in the 1960s the newsreel company also produced more commissioned films and German magazines for the West German Government's work abroad. Despite this effort, newsreel production was discontinued altogether in 1977. Newsreels could no longer compete with the more accelerated and extensive, up-to-the-minute news coverage of television (cf. Hickethier 1998). Viewing of motion pictures in general had also shifted from movie theaters to television.

In the second half of the 1950s criticism of the newsreel was increasing. It was called to account, in particular, for its proximity to the government as well as for its entertaining nature and the fragmentation and diversity of its topics. In a widely published essay, the later famous commentator on politics and current affairs and critic Hans Magnus Enzensberger criticized just that kaleidoscope-like quality (which the newsreel-makers had until then seen as something positive about their product), saying it prevented viewers from developing political consciousness (cf. Enzensberger 1957).

There were fierce disputes in the media when in 1962 the West German Government took the newsreel completely into government ownership, not least with the political opposition, the SPD [Social Democratic Party]. By that time, however, the newsreel had already lost most of its importance as an audiovisual information tool in favor of television. Therefore, even though it took place under the social democratic-liberal West German Government headed by Schmidt/Genscher, the demise of the newsreel was ultimately due to structural causes, not to politics: The newsreel was no longer current—next to television's news programs and behind-the-headlines reports, it was already outdated the day it came out (cf. Hickethier 2011).

## 2. THE FUNCTION OF THE NEWSREEL IN THE MOVIE BUSINESS

In the 1950s, a special public-oriented function fell to the newsreel of educating viewers about the world. Produced relatively soon after the event in question, the newsreel offered an audiovisual report in moving pictures to which audiences ascribed a high degree of realistic character. This perceived accuracy is due to the character attributed to the photographic image by cultural traditions and conventions as well as the socially consensual view that photographic motion pictures were a direct replica of reality (nature) in the image. As a result, newsreels gave the impression that one had seen the actual events—portrayed as they had taken place. The great majority of audiences did not see that the perspective and angle of the camera, editing and montage, commentary and music were all significant manipulations shaping the viewer's experience.

The newsreel was part of the program at movies, a program which always followed a certain sequence stipulated in Germany by the Imperial Motion Picture Law of 1934, which remained unchanged into the 1960s. The sequence ran as follows: advertising films/newsreel/cultural film/feature film. While the advertising films set the stage of the movie event, the newsreel provided the reality-based part of the program, which in most cases was characterized by a nationalist point of view. The cultural film then offered a more contemplative view of the world, before the feature film's dramatic and beautiful fictional interpretation of a possible world. Thus the course of the program followed the dramaturgical principle of crescendo. The audiences did not come to the movies for the cultural film; nor did they come for the newsreel. They came for the feature film, to enjoy a few pleasant hours in a motion-picture world depicted as eventful and emotionally exciting.

With the propagandistic function of the newsreel intended for it during the Nazi era, i.e., to convey and illustrate a certain world view and ideology, it was important that the audience in fact took in that sequenced program in full and did not arrive at the movie theater after the newsreel had run. Seeing the newsreel was therefore mandatory in the Nazi period and in many cases the entrance doors to the movie theater were closed at the beginning of the newsreel. As a result, in the perception of the movies, the shared identity of the newsreel, culture film and feature film as a se-

quenced—sometimes unpleasant—presentation of reality became culturally entrenched as the presentation of a possible, other and more beautiful world (in fiction).

The legal stipulation of the movie program sequence also continued even after 1945. It was not eliminated in Germany until the mid-1960s, when, with the decline of the movies, such stringent regulations could no longer be enforced. New types of movie theaters emerged with a sophisticated program offering and with no weekly newsreels (so-called art-house movie theaters), which were successful until well into the 1980s. Mentally, however, with its different understanding of programming, television had already replaced viewers' perception of the sequenced movie program as a hard-and-fast pattern for showing movies.

It is of interest when looking at the weekly newsreel that audiences had developed an expectation of reality while at the same time expecting entertainment. The conclusion for newsreel makers was that newsreels—even with all the seriousness of their posts—always had to provide entertainment as well.

### **3. VALUE JUDGMENT AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF MEANING IN WEEKLY NEWSREELS**

Having overcome its initial teething problems, the *NEUE DEUTSCHE WOCHENSCHAU* focused on re-establishing national self-esteem without explicitly calling into question the regime of the occupying powers. That was realized through the internal program sequence (i.e. the dramatic composition) of each individual report.

If, for example, a report showed the dismantling of some factories in Germany (and thereby the American occupation forces), the next report would present the successful completion of two new cargo vessels at a shipyard in North Germany. The subtext of “We’re back as an industrial nation” counteracted and undermined the previous account of the dismantlement of industry. If the subject had been about refugees and Soviet POW returnees—which would once again recall their defeat in the war—then the next report would show recently completed housing facilities for the refugees.

Newsreels refrained, in most cases, from explicitly uttering such value judgments out loud, thereby appearing to act with maximum objectivity. Value judgments were made by other means. On the one hand, and in addition to the sequenced reports already described, this was done within individual reports through camera angles, the choice of images and in particular by emotionalizing music. In photographic reports, perspectives were chosen that made the successes seem larger: shots of ships were taken at sharp angles from below to make them look bigger, and the commenting on images of the dismantling mentioned above was done by the plant flags set at half-mast; views of the dismantled plant would be shot from a distance and without exaggerations of heights, making them appear rather insignificant. Additional value judgment occurred through the strategy of embedding, through the positioning of reports within the sequence. For instance, when a newsreel reported about conflicts, the conflict report was surrounded with positive messages and thus neutralized. Music was also used to subtly underscore negative or positive emotionalizing effects as needed, ultimately resolving into pleasing harmony to end in a positive fashion. The viewers' sense of well-being had top priority.

#### 4. THE WEEKLY NEWSREEL AS A GRAND NARRATIVE

The tenor of the first weekly newsreels—until into the second half of the 1950s—is shaped by one major topic: the reconstruction of Germany. Through countless reports it was intimated to viewers again and again that everyone is pitching in, that it is possible to pull off the reconstruction together. Newsreels wanted to convey an optimistic attitude and thus also influence their audiences' perspective on the world.

This topic of reconstruction one can see as the *grand narrative* of the newsreels in the 1950s. The notion of a grand narrative is derived from literature and literary studies and is an account of the world that can substantiate and unite a community, cultural group or nation, through creating a sense of shared culture and history. These can be explicit texts, such as *the Nibelungen* in German, or they may also be historical recollection, such as the references to the Teutons established by the Romantic movement, or common experiences, like the unification of the German Empire in 1870/71.

With our media society's oversized supply of stories, grand narratives similarly coined by content and themes have nowadays become rare. Their community-building function has been taken over by big media-savvy product lines, which, through their continuous public presence and permanent reporting of world affairs from a specific, usually national perspective, make themselves out to be grand narratives.

The newsreel of the 1950s combined both aspects: In terms of content, the continuous narrative of the great successes of reconstruction, and for media-savviness, a new narrative of current world affairs every week. In the 1960s the newsreel, however, proved unable to maintain this last aspect in the face of constantly updated television news broadcasts like the TAGESSCHAU [DAILY NEWS SHOW]. The contents of the narrative then became increasingly sophisticated, showing themselves to be more diverse, and at the same time more complex and confusing (cf. Hickethier 1997).

The newsreel in the 1950s was so effective as a grand narrative for the very reason that it did not carry with it any pretense of a grand narrative, instead allowing one to emerge from many small episodes and reports in the form of simple stories of many varieties, especially in pictures. It thereby primed the way for the audiovisual narrative flow of television news.

The newsreel was an ongoing account of a world evolving from week to week, a chronology of day-to-day events, whose value to the audience was *not* the information provided, most of which they had already gleaned from faster media like the radio or the newspaper. Before television, the value of the newsreel to its audience was that it gave a chronicle of current events in the *form of moving images*. The audience was presented with images which claimed to be evidence of what was shown, allowing them to partake in world events as spectators. And they generally considered what they saw to be true and—in contrast to written and spoken texts—not ideologically colored.

Viewers' attention was maintained by the fact that this image of the world was repeatedly re-composed from week to week out of individual reports, delivering accounts of new events. The concept of topicality shifted in the process. While as late as the 1940s the German term *aktuell* [topical] still referred to a rather local account related to the world of the addressees, of the audience, in the 1950s a concept of topicality based on fast mediation times gained acceptance. The establishment of the *temporal concept of topicality* resulted in coverage by the much faster medium of television (cf.

Hickethier 2008), at the expense of newsreel and its audience-related concept.

Newsreels almost always related their coverage to the world of their addressees, sometimes even when it was inappropriate. Great political events outside Germany, atomic-bomb tests in the Pacific, the Korean War, European conferences, etc.—all were very frequently seen by the newsreel with a view to the consequences they had or might have for Germany. Editors would even frame marginal issues by producing a German aspect, tying them in that way. In 1950 a report about wood raftsmen in Japan was introduced with a comment referring to Bavarian wood raftsmen, only afterwards informing the audience about the fact that the images were from Japan. The foreign was assimilated for the German audience, and thus made easier to integrate into a narrative in which foreign things appeared to be an imitation of German culture.

## **5. THE NEWSREEL—BIOPIC OF A NATION AND NATION-BUILDING?**

For all the ambivalence of the notion, the concept of topicality was of great importance for the newsreel. Because there was always the aim of *putting across current events of the day*, providing pictures of the here and now, rather than pictures that might have justified the nation or the historical context of the German state through an old ‘grand narrative’. For contemporaneous viewers, the newsreel however was not really a biographical narrative of the nation. The weekly newsreel can only become a biopic in retrospect—for instance by one looking back from the present day to the newsreels of the 1950s—when we see their various issues as an apparently chronological account visualizing the past for us today. But even then it seems to be more than an audiovisual diary, a journal that requires historical explanation and interpretation, which only by calling on cultural contexts can become an account of the cultural biography of a country.

To what extent, however, did the newsreel, through its grand narrative, bring about social cohesion in the sense of nation-building? Germany’s national cohesion, the awareness of belonging to a common German nation—despite the division of Germany by the Allied forces—was, of course, already in place; it did not have to be created from nothing. It did, however,



need to be upheld and reinforced, there being the possibility of losing it in a decades-long drifting apart of the two German states. The newsreel was of great importance in that it emphasized German unity time and again, reminding its audience of a big overarching communality.

The newsreel conveyed such messages unobtrusively, hidden in news items about current events. Political goings-on—as the newsreel alleged—continuously supplied pictures and commentaries about the basic theme of reconstruction and of the necessity for Western, and later German, unity. In the political image it had of itself, the newsreel was ultimately conservative, matching the political image the West German Government had of itself, without any instruction having been necessary. For the CDU-led government, there was no question but that German unity was not to be given up, that nor must the German territories east of the Oder and Neisse rivers be relinquished, nor any decision about them should be taken immediately rather than in a future peace treaty.

That is why time and again the *NEUE DEUTSCHE WOCHENSCHAU* included reports about the GDR and the “Soviet Occupation Zone”, as it was officially called until the early 1970s. A regular part of newsreels were reports about collectivization processes in the GDR, refugees, persecution and oppression, and growing stringencies on the inner German border, usually put to gloomy, grave music to produce the appropriate emotional frame of mind. Memory was also upheld of the German territories east of the Oder and Neisse, which then belonged to Poland, by reporting continuously on conferences of expellee associations, ultimately with the revanchist undertone that they were to be retrieved.

These reports provided an antithesis to the great number of anecdotal reports about reconstruction in West Germany: While people in the West were doing better and better, as the message went, their lives marked by increasing, if modest, prosperity and growing consumption, Germans in the other part of the country, according to the newsreel, were doing ever worse, often in ways that unsettled West-German audiences.

The newsreel was, however, not alone with such reporting and accounts concerning the political situation of one’s own nation, but rather was in keeping with mainstream reporting and the cultural worldview in West Germany. Newsreels confirmed an existing worldview and were for that very reason particularly effective, committing these ideas as certainties in the minds of their audiences.

Of particular historical importance is this tying of newsreels into the main ideological current of social self-understanding, especially in the 1950s and early 1960s, what with East and West German newsreels up against one another. Some reports from the period make clear how recontextualizing particular materials could produce completely contradictory statements. In one instance, the *NEUE DEUTSCHE WOCHENSCHAU* produced a report about the emerging luxury of West German winter sports including a fashion show with parading models, the gist being, “Things are on the up again”, “We are somebody again”. In contrast, the East-German *AUGENZEUGE* promptly showed the same fashion pictures, which were obviously obtainable via one of the international picture agencies, and contrasted them with images of poverty-stricken West German citizens. Here, the East German newsreel aimed to portray the social conditions in West Germany as getting worse; only the capitalists are benefitting. Such examples of the use of images in newsreels show that the accounts were never objective; they were always editorial opinions in the interest of prevailing worldviews.

## 6. THE IMAGES OF THE NEWSREEL

The images in individual newsreel contributions, which as a rule lasted no longer than 1:30 minutes, are highly conventionalized, a fact which is easy to see watching several newsreel editions one after the other. This of course had to do, on the one hand, with the brevity of the reports, it having been necessary for the audience to identify them immediately in terms of their content and pertinent audio explanations. The fact that standardizations and stereotyping came about was also because the situations depicted were themselves standardized: political greeting rituals, contract signings, meetings, openings of events, etc. Recurring picture paradigms arose, for that reason, with less variation. Since they accelerate comprehension, such stereotypes are not usually negative, but they did become problematic if—as often happened in newsreels—they were ideologically charged, turning them into icons of influence.

This produced a strange paradox of image usage: Newsreels (whose advantage over print media was precisely their use of motion pictures and their impression of unfiltered reality) reduced that motion by repeatedly making and reinforcing images that were reminiscent of still images. So,

stereotyping ultimately made the newsreel image return to the conventions of the still image from which it had derived its journalistic form.

In their very use of stereotypes, however, newsreel images can also be understood differently. In the late 1940s the first accommodation of the editorial staff at the NEUE DEUTSCHE WOCHENSCHAU in Hamburg-Harvestehude happened to be the Aby Warburg-Haus, the building in which art historian Aby Warburg had his famous Library for Cultural Studies in the 1910s and 1920s. This points tellingly to two theoretical constructs by Aby Warburg that can also be applied to newsreel images: pathos formulas and image migration.

The concept of pathos formulas (cf. Hurrting/Kettelsen 2012) involves embedded representations of emotion which can often be found especially in the stereotyped images. Their presence points to the canon of similar images handed down through a community's history. Generally, however, they were rarely staged with much thought for their history or influence. Instead they were generally selected from the wealth of image material available with little reflection, following the editors' embedded pictorial knowledge and thus in most cases can claim to be a reflection of the cultural consensus. Prominence was given to pictures of suffering and pictures of triumph. Combined with them in most cases is an emotional charge which is underscored by the way the people pictured and the commentator speak as well as through music.

Secondly, newsreel images involve Warburg's concept of image migrations in which the use of certain picture paradigms in different cultures creates a process of 'migration' of individual image motifs in different cultures and in contemporary history through various media. In composition and arrangement, motif usage and subject, the memory of another picture (which often only turned out to be a current picture in terms of the decor or the physiognomy of the characters) was often embedded in an individual image sequence. This can be determined by a simple examination of newsreel editions. Here, however, a systematic comparative analysis of a large corpus of images would be necessary. Such image use is dependent on the particular cultural group in which and for which the newsreel is made.

Thus newsreels supplied a continuously condensed and exaggerated image of the world whose pathos increased by switching between visual acceleration and emotional stagnation. One of the examples from the NEUE DEUTSCHE WOCHENSCHAU appeared in a sequence about the East Berlin

uprising on 17 June 1953 with the metonymical wording “The tears of the relatives are the tears of the nation”.

Metaphorical images are frequently used in newsreels to show apparently very concrete current events while pointing simultaneously to a larger unifying symbol. They are visual metaphors that refer to something general, frequently a piece with the effect of unifying society: the success of reconstruction, the Western world’s claim of being the better model and thus also a binding of the Federal Republic of Germany to the West (which to audiences in the 1950s was by no means yet a matter of course) as well as to performance consciousness, prosperity and other Western stereotypes of success. Visual metaphors have a community-forming and culture-creating effect precisely because they are based on images that are part of the basic components of a cultural group or nation (cf. the modern metaphor theory of Lakoff/Johnson 1980). Perhaps that is the very source of its community-creating function through its confirmation of national unity.

## **7. THE DRAMATIC COMPOSITION AND STRUCTURE OF THE NEWSREEL**

Returning to the structure of the newsreel, so far the discussion has been about an overall view by this organ of information, about the overarching grand narrative and its implicit ideological messages. When one looks at the dramatic composition of individual newsreel editions, at first glance they follow a different principle—that of entertainment value.

In the 1950s, both in the internal documents of the newsreel company as well as in correspondences between newsreel producers and theater owners, it was repeatedly emphasized that, with regard to the context of the movie program, the newsreel was to be entertaining. “We got a laugh” was considered a positive review for a well-made newsreel issue.

Thus, newsreels were designed such that each ten to twelve minute edition would open with major political issues of a national or international nature and proceed to cultural topics, frequently art and music. The newsreel would then switch to sports and finally present fashion shows, topics from the glamorous world of the movies or odd happenings. Already expected to be seen as ‘previews’ to the entertainment value of the main movie, such

entertainment topics were particularly important for the acceptance of the newsreel.

That formula, which was employed similarly in other media, was not particularly rigid; occasionally entertainment topics would also be placed between political reports to avoid too much predictability. What was important for the dramatic composition was that the audience not be released from the newsreels with a grave issue that might have put them in a ruminative mood unsuited to the main attraction. With few exceptions—mostly when major political conflicts were addressed—it was all about instilling a positive mood: “We’re doing well after all” and “We live in the best of all worlds”.

It is clear that these entertainment topics were not mere encores—especially the repeated presentation of fashion shows and new consumer products—but rather also served the grand narrative of reconstruction and the ‘good life’ in the West. They were meant to show the audience they *did* live in an up-and-coming, affluent society and that doing well privately was a sign of their living in the best of all forms of society. It could be funny or odd, what mattered was that it did not appear threatening to the audience and that, in their here and now, it affirmed in them a sense of their affluent society.

## 8. THE OUTLOOK

So, was the newsreel successful as a social information tool? As a nation, West-German society in the 1950s saw itself as a matter of course as independent of such media imagery; it even claimed sole representation over the East German part of the divided state. The task of the newsreel was to supply increasingly comprehensive audiovisual images *for social self-understanding*, which as a whole created a positive attitude towards the state and gave the impression that, thanks to reconstruction, democracy and the effort of many, audiences in West Germany were doing especially well after all. It also gave the impression that everybody had something to do, sometimes even over and beyond what was usual. The community did not have to be created from scratch, but rather just reaffirmed again and again—also through dissociation from the other German system. The newsreel did this well.

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# West German State Newsreels in the Period of the Economic Miracle 1950-1964

## Gender as an Open Approach

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UTA SCHWARZ

“Bears and fashion shows were enjoyed the best. Korean theatre of war was too short.”<sup>1</sup>

Because societies are founded on communication, social historians of the 20th century are studying mass media, its role, function and impact in the social process, its contents, discourses and images, and how production and reception can be understood. Gender is one major analytical category of social history. It aims to study the social constructions of the sexes in their interdependency and related to economic, cultural and other contextualizing factors. Gender relations are considered socially constructed through cultural means and practices, for example by mass media; and like mass media, gender relations develop in the process of social change.

Studying Germany’s social history in the two decades after Second World War, the gender studies approach proves particularly appropriate. In Germany, war and post-war experiences profoundly marked men and women and put into question pre-war concepts of masculinity and femininity. In

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1 Cinema owner from Osnabrück, reporting audience’s reaction to NEUE DEUTSCHE WOCHENSCHAU Nr. 22, August 1950 (quoted in: Schwarz 2002: 437, translated by the author).



the first years after the war, contemporaries observed a disastrous “crisis of shame” in heterosexual sexual life, referring to experiences of rape and prostitution, illegitimate sex and abortion, sexual problems within families and divorce, relations of young women with allied soldiers, and venereal diseases (Eder 2008: 11 et seqq., translated by the author).

Like newsreel studies, gender analysis is adapted to the heterogeneity of its object, providing methodological openness. It incorporates aspects of film history, media history, social history, British cultural studies, the French Annales School and other epistemological orientations in order to grasp newsreels as an integral part of the cinematographic culture of entertainment and consumption, which in its heterogeneous character and overall composition can be understood as an effective strategy of social engineering. The concept that gender difference is a construction urges the researcher to proceed from the analysis of the film itself and to include in the analysis not only the cognitive content of images and discourses, but also the sensual communication qualities of the media product, its spoken and written text, moving image and sound and how these facets are related to, rather than proceed from, a knowledge constructed otherwise.

The first gender studies analysis of the Federal Republic of Germany’s (FRG) state newsreel 1950-1964 (cf. Schwarz 2002) combines an analysis of the newsreel as program including sensual aspects and symbolic representations, taking into account the content of images and associated meanings in relation to actors and discourses (cf. Chartier 1989). The study also incorporates a reconstruction of the political and economic backgrounds from paper archives, and a survey of contemporary facts and fictions about the newsreel’s reception.

This article will adopt a more distant attitude. Inspired by recent publications in feminist theory and political communication studies, both referring to Michel Foucault’s central notion of the *dispositif* and subsequent interpretations, I will look to the same object—the FRG’s state newsreel in the long decade of 1950s—with a different focus. My intention is to observe where power and resistance appeared in the realm of newsreel and how it can be described.

Foucault stressed the productivity of power since the era of enlightenment, in contrast to its more repressive nature in pre-modern times. A *dispositif* (in the following quote translated as apparatus) is defined as a strategically oriented entity combining elements of heterogeneous nature, “dis-

courses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions ... The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements.” (Foucault 1980: 194). In this sense, the newsreel as well as the gender system are *dispositifs*, although the French philosopher himself never considered gender as such (cf. King 2004: 29 et seq.). However, feminist reception of Foucault has appropriated the term as useful for analyzing gender difference, subjection and resistance (cf. Leache 2011: 16-18). For the period studied, newsreel and the gender system, in close and strategic interconnectivity, were operating on differences and hierarchies, producing effects and distinctions of normality and a-normality.

The feminist claim of the 1970s that “the private is political” challenged institutionalized politics’ exclusive representation of the political; ecology and new social movements followed. In a society constructed by and through communication, media are the genuinely political, structured by strategic regimes of “what can be said and seen”. Jacques Rancière’s formula of the media as a “police” regime, acting via a “distribution of the sensual”, points to the disposing and gate-keeping function of media, as they admit to or bar from the realm of sensual perception, in which is defined what is common and what remains excluded, a realm whose strategic rationale or purpose is “the right apportionment of bodies in the community” (Rancière 2006: 25 et seqq., translated by the author; cf. Sieber 2012: 44 et seqq.). Insofar as this realm of sensual perception also contributes to form subjectivities, it stresses spatial, sensual, and relational aspects in the process of subjectivity-formation which have been described by Foucault as a product of discourses. The sensual also links to the concept of representation, where the image is seen as a sensual, ambiguous, associative and emotionally appealing element (cf. Diehl 2012: 163).

In the section that follows, the newsreel’s formal aspects are highlighted in relation to gender and national identity; following this, examples are given of typical codes and imaginary operations.

## GOVERNMENT'S NEWSREELS OF "PATRIARCHAL DEMOCRACY" AND "ECONOMIC MIRACLE"

When the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) was established in 1949, in West Germany and West Berlin a newsreel "market" re-emerged. Two American newsreels, *WELT IM FILM* (*THE WORLD IN MOTION PICTURE*, produced by the US Armed Forces) and *FOX TÖNENDE WOCHENSCHAU* (*FOX SOUND NEWSREEL*, produced by 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox), and the former French occupation newsreel transformed into a German company *BLICK IN DIE WELT* [*VIEW INTO THE WORLD*] competed on this territory. The German side, in a situation of restricted sovereignty, did not want to be at the mercy of the allied powers in matters of newsreels; also it seemed important in West German eyes, not to leave "Germany's" audio-visual representation abroad to the German Democratic Republic's (GDR) newsreel *DER AUGENZEUGE* (*THE EYE WITNESS*).

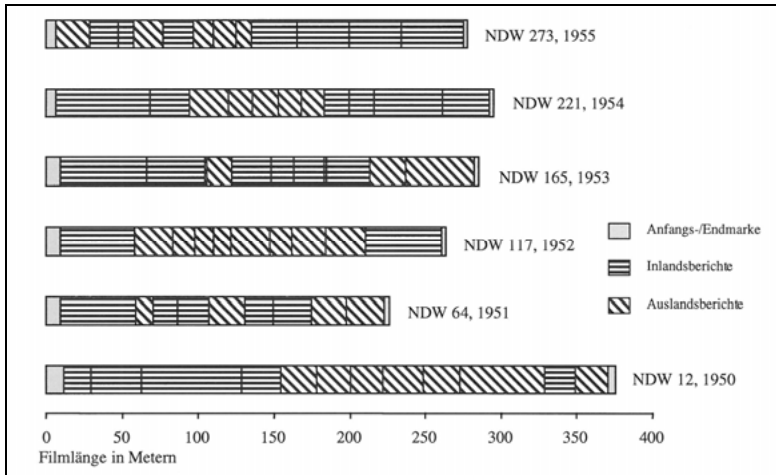
The initiative to establish a *NEUE DEUTSCHE WOCHENSCHAU* [*NEW GERMAN NEWSREEL*] came from the film and newsreel milieu in Hamburg, linked to local social democrat elites. When the British Armed Forces withdrew in 1949 from the joint Anglo-American military occupation newsreel, they supported the German project in order not to leave their newsreel distribution potential to the Americans. Konrad Adenauer's liberal-conservative government in Bonn joined the project and benefitted from its initial financial difficulties. Within barely two years, the Federal State owned the newsreel production company, and the chancellor, as the state's executive head, could "fully exploit" it (von Hase 1988: 99 et seq.). The newsreel became part of what has been called the "chancellor's democracy" (Wolfrum 2004: 177, translated by the author). In 1956, with box offices earning their highest rates ever (817,5 Mio), every week about 9,5 million cinema-goers saw one of the two state-owned newsreels: *NEUE DEUTSCHE WOCHENSCHAU* (NDW) and *WELT IM BILD* (WiB). Between 1952 and 1962 and during the "economic miracle", two thirds of West Germany's and West Berlin's cinema theatres screened one of the reels weekly as part of their pre-program. Cinema audiences in this long decade were composed principally of young people, children, and young unmarried adults, among them clearly more men than women (cf. Prommer 2010: 235-237). Particular enthusiasm for the newsreel came from young people 12 to 16 years old and woman over 50 (cf. Hagemann 1958: 12).

This political frame may suggest that the state-owned newsreels were mouthpieces of the government: “some people joked that it was just installed to avoid the necessity of creating a new Ministry of Propaganda” (Griep 1996: 159f). The following paragraphs will explore along which criteria the sensual was divided up in/by the newsreel.

A standard newsreel filmstrip of 300 meters (35mm) ran for eleven minutes on the screen, encompassing ten to thirteen elements (later six to eight longer *sujets*). On the content level, the newsreels integrated film-news from heterogeneous spheres: from the national and the international; from politics and cinema; from economy and sports; from industry and leisure time. Fig. 1 shows how in the arrangement of stories from home and stories from abroad difference is constructed in weekly editions of the NDW composed by single film-news. The graphical scheme depicts the apportionment of the sensual at work: program placement, the length of single films and their succession were arranged along the national-international-difference. According to this routine in arrangement, the letterhead slogan on NDW archive documents—“Der Filmbericht, der unsere Sprache spricht.” [The film report speaking our language.]—conveyed an audiovisual *Gestalt* to the imagined relations between a national ‘we’ and the international ‘other’. The initially casual practice of starting with national politics and ending with national sports became a rule at least from summer 1952, when the NDW was urged by the government to provide support for its politics. Both topics were given relatively significant amounts of time, and especially national politics were given more narrative depth and cinematographic space than film-news from abroad.

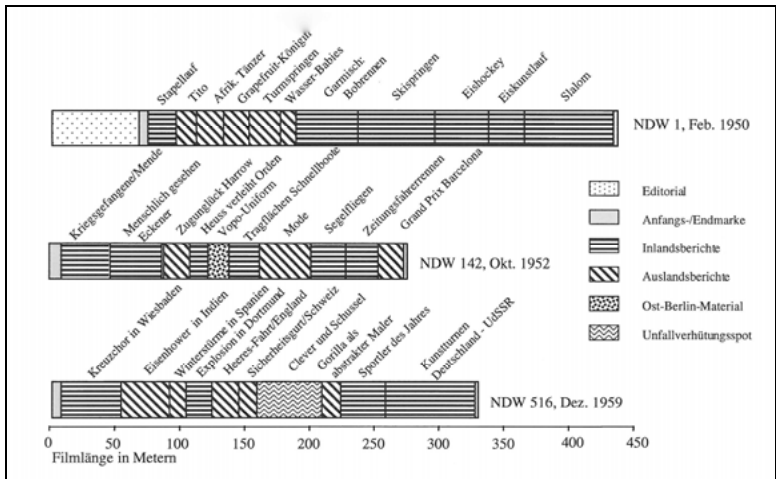
An allocative logic of “we” and “others” also proves to be valid if we look at the NDW and WiB content with gender-sensitive eyes (see Fig. 2). Subjects *in which the main actors are not men* (fashion, celebrities, beauty contests; gorilla as a painter) were located in the intermediate space of an edition, very often at its end, before sport stories (mostly German) started. Going through editions over the years, this pattern proves valid, though with manifold variations, at least in the first half of the 1950s: film-news with women appearing in active parts are to be found more often in—or more exactly, at the end of—the middle part of the “Auslandsberichte” [reports from abroad]. On the other hand, in film-news shot at home, women were hardly to be found as actors.

Fig. 1: Program composition by nationally produced and imported sujets. NEUE DEUTSCHE WOCHENSCHAU 1950-1955.



Source: Author's illustration

Fig. 2: Program places of topics. NEUE DEUTSCHE WOCHENSCHAU 1950-1959.



Source: Author's illustration

If we read the newsreel arrangement as the *narrative* of an imaginative trip around the world offered to the cinema audience, then this trip starts in a more or less well established or optimistic home, goes through social problems, catastrophes, crisis or misery abroad as well as through erotic/exotic spheres, after which women (or something “other than male”) appears just before re-entering the home area through sports. One can’t help but recognize in this storyline what feminist film theory described in the classic fictional cinema: The female figure is waiting in the area of action, indicating the place of the hero’s destination, warranting the narrative enclosure and subordinating herself to the male view. “She confirms the mythic subject” (Gottgetreu 1992: 44 et seqq., translated by the author). Classical cinema’s “information format” shared this gendered narrative, while production companies’ and political stakeholders’ discourse stressed the newsreel’s informative character.

“Auslandsberichte” [reports from abroad] were shorter, located in between and compiled in higher quantity and bandwidth of heterogeneity. Therefore they could attract less attention, and a contextualizing reception of the single event information was barely possible. The high degree of variety—of world regions, social and cultural levels and spheres—was knit together in a fugacious flow and coupled with a strong stereotyping in the choice of reported events and how they had been recorded. In some sense, the newsreel repeated already “known”, *iconified* images from abroad: Blizzards, rodeos, celebrities or military issues from the USA; strikes or fashion from France; the royal families from England and the Netherlands; earthquakes from Asia; from Africa conflicts of de-colonization or black men dancing for a European king at a diplomatic event. The “other” appeared familiar and not in the least unsettling.

This “deoxidizing” aspect (on the level) of content is counterbalanced by a strategy of affect and emotional manipulation on the level of arrangement. As former members of NDW’s production team assert, a weekly edition was considered perfect when it offered the audience an alternating bath of feelings (cf. Schwarz 2002: 151). In Aristotle’s rhetoric, delight and pain are the main vectors of exciting the public into the state of affect: beside cognition, imagination and physical experience are addressed, and the transfer of feelings is made by voice, rhythm, diction and bodily commitment of the orator (cf. Diehl 2012: 160 et seqq.). Newsreel producers shared a knowledge of cinematographic rhetoric in their common produc-

tive practice, an intuition regarding how the program had to be composed in order to take the audience on an emotional rollercoaster ride and generate knee-jerk reactions of consternation, amusement or loud laughing. In film-news on sports, such as soccer matches, the newsreel camera demonstratively took close-ups from on-location-spectators, frantic or giddy with pleasure—a giddy and self-reflexive spectacle of being ‘beside oneself’. This mood management ‘formula’ coincided with the aims and interests of different stakeholders: of cinema goers eager for information of the rest of the world or just awaiting the fictional main attraction; of cinema owners demanding the audience’s mood management from pre-program to the complete darkness of the fiction film; and of the political class investing in a widely accepted product for shaping opinions to gain acclamation and votes.

This *mood management* technique relied on a thoroughly *gendered practice*. A study published by UNESCO in 1951 entitled *Newsreels across the world* described the format’s structure along degrees of emotionality as actuality: from eruptive “sudden events of immediate interest” with a disphoric emotional appeal (catastrophes, strikes etc.), to “scheduled events” prepared by the public relation units in politics, industry, sports and fashion with a moderate emotionality, and to “items of general interest” (traditions and habits, pin-up-Girls, children, animals) which could be used as fillers because of their ritualized, time-detached character (Baechlin/Muller-Strauss 1951: 19). The “items of general interest”—with actors other than men, in both senses of the word—must have been considered especially euphoric and indispensable to assure the mood shift. Their pragmatic location towards the end of the international middle section of the newsreel was essential to ensure the audience’s emotional transfer towards the re-creative realms of fictional cinema.

The *discourse around the newsreel* was situated around the idea of audio-visual frontier crossing as a negotiation of power related to identity. Manifold conflicting intentions and contradictory projections were captured as in a hall of mirrors. With the advent of sound, the United States had become the leading nation in this market, beside British and French companies, and their newsreels attained a global hegemony in news-film business and coverage, criticized by UNESCO in 1951 as “a virtual world monopoly” (Baechlin/Muller-Strauss 1951: 17). Against the preponderance of newsreel companies controlled from abroad on FRG’s territory, the German

side wanted a national newsreel to demonstrate sovereignty<sup>2</sup>, autonomy from foreign influence, and of being part of the news-film exporting nations. In early FRG the film production branch and the political class, driven both by economic motives and the idea of the film's persuasive power, agreed to re-appropriate cinematographic means. In the first session of NDW's supervisory board two targets were identified: the newsreel should be the nation's promotion tool for the exportation of industrial goods, and the newsreel should realize and express the idea of national sovereignty, as the power to design the nation's image abroad. It should make sure that "foreign countries, via the exchange of images, will get to see events from all realms of public life in Germany through German eyes" (quoted in: Schwarz 2002<sup>3</sup>: 80 et seq.). Beside the more pragmatic exportation argument, the cinematographic argument referred to an international process of (self-)display and "being-looked-at", needing control over the nation's image abroad. Interestingly, the newsreel's persuasive power at home remained unexplored, invisible to the daylight discourse.

Cinema-goers' demand for film-news from all over the world, historically linked to the advent of photography, radio and cinema, had been systematically developed. In the 1920s an exchange between German and American newsreel-producing companies had started, interrupted during the war.<sup>4</sup> When in the spring of 1950 a young NDW was struggling in the German newsreel market, cinema-goers criticized "that most actual events from abroad are missing and too much unimportant events from Germany are shown" (quoted in: Schwarz 2002: 433). Indeed, the first production from NDW, released in February 1950, had been composed of 74 percent homemade material, as exchange with foreign agencies was still a work in progress. But it was more: Cinema-goers and cinema-owners in the FRG did not expect the format of the newsreel to be a national one.

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2 The Besatzungsstatut [Occupation Statute, Mai 1949] transformed allied military occupation of West Germany into a limited sovereignty for the future West German state, notably in terms of demilitarizing, foreign politics and trade.

3 To increase readability, all direct quotes taken from my German texts (cf. Schwarz 2000; 2001; 2002; 2003; 2006) have been translated to English.

4 During the war, foreign and entertaining news-films were banned from the DEUTSCHE WOCHENSCHAU. In 1945 allied occupation forces started to screen foreign film-news especially from the States.



Fig. 3: “The first independent newsreel in 17 years”. *NEUE DEUTSCHE WOCHENSCHAU* Nr. 1, 1950.



Source: Bundesarchiv

The production team intended to realize a newsreel recognizable as “new” and as “German” from its content, point of view and aesthetic features. However, NDW’s editorial line of constructing national identity, seemingly appropriate at the moment of nation-building to attract a national audience, did not meet with unanimous approval. Cinema owners and audiences felt that NDW’s opening (and closing) credits were too old-fashioned and weak in graphics and musical theme, compared to the broad, globe-covering graphics and extroverted acoustic air of the British-American *WELT IM FILM*. Disappointed, a cinema-owner complained: “The opening credits, the crossover between single *sujets* and the overall arrangement do not compete with *WELT IM FILM*” (Schwarz 2002: 433). NDW’s initial aesthetical

“German-ness”<sup>5</sup> did not correspond to the modern aesthetic sensibility and communicative performance the audience had learned over the course of decades and refreshed over the five years of the allies’ WELT IM FILM from 1945-49. Competing at the level set by international standards demanded a speaker’s self-conscious vocal acting in an attitude of modernity, accessing the world with sincerity and optimism. Finally, through subtle improvements and adaptations—and along with a new special topic starting in summer 1950, USA’s war in Korea—NDW succeeded in being accepted and even acclaimed by the local audiences. Notably, this success was the result of NDW’s pacifist commentaries on the war images.<sup>6</sup>

Newsreel audiences and cinema owners, asked what they liked most about NDW and WiB, expressed a strong preference for commentaries. The most important purpose of newsreel’s spoken commentary was to build discursive bridges from one *sujet* to the other. Especially in the middle section of a newsreel, the commentary had to provide transitions, organizing the heterogeneous spheres into a unified perspective. This linking function was one of the speaker’s essential and identification-triggering functions. In 1959, a distribution agent described the ideal commentary in terms of performativity as having a “smoothness and a causerie’s elegance” (quoted in: Lehnert 2013: 287, translated by the author).

It was an ideal reception, the view of a *flâneur*: the capacity to perceive fast-moving, highly divergent images from all over the world, and to draw from the visual maelstrom, the back and forth of fascination and distance, a subjective and commensurable sense, articulated in ordered phrases in the *national* language. This answer to the “feaze of image collections” (Kracauer 1927a: 198, translated by the author) seems to have been one of the most important factors in terms of encouraging collective identification. The speaker had to utilize appropriate words and diction for a personal but collectively acceptable negotiation of allurements, threats, and thoughts possibly emanating from the images. His experienced but somehow locally

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5 Most NDW cameramen, the cutter-in-chief and the editor-in-chief had been members of the NS war newsreel or propaganda companies.

6 Two years later, responsible editor-in-chief Heinz Kuntze-Just was dismissed on demand of the American High Commission. His pacifist commentaries on USA’s war in Korea were considered an obstacle for West Germany’s rearmament.

specific speech provided a linguistic translation of the voyeuristic attitude towards the “others”, and this was the spectacle the audience was seeing and listening to. The tone may seem to us today “announcing”—but for contemporaries this preaching way of speaking was necessary and adapted to cinema halls with more than 1000 seats: the architecture’s contribution to the newsreel *dispositif*, one of information, not of communication (cf. Sieber 2012: 45). The most famous NDW speaker was Hermann Rockmann from the NORDWESTDEUTSCHER RUNDFUNK public radio station in Hamburg. Every week when recording the commentary in the NDW studio, he immersed into the ocean waves of the already adjusted film-news stories emotionally enhanced by music added from the archive. Reading commentary well prepared by the editor-in-chief, Rockmann emerged from that ocean without being absorbed, and the following Friday it was the audience’s pleasure to witness his struggle from a comfortable seat in the dark.

The *sensual* quality of the voice carried *social and political qualities*. After NS newsreels and their acoustical martial heroism, the FRG’s newsreel’s voice intended to articulate the new national identity via a new civilized masculinity, purged of war’s violence but self-assured and able to lead the audience. This gendered performance is ignored in the newsreel archives’ written documentation; most commentary documents do not account for the sex of the speakers engaged. During my research in the NDW archive in Hamburg—in 1998/9, before digitalization—I could detect only few isolated segments narrated by female voices, all related to specific topics, for example Christmas, and men’s fashion (cf. UFA WOCHENSCHAU<sup>7</sup> Nr. 64, Nr. 69, 1957). When female talking heads started to appear regularly on television, the newsreel also tried to adapt to the desires of cinema owners and to engage “a really good female voice” (quoted in: Schwarz 2002: 181, translated by the author). As far as I know, a newsreel edition spoken by a female voice as the *principal* speaker was not produced in Hamburg until 1964.

The exclusion of the female *voice*, though not the female body, in the Western newsreels corresponded to the traditional bourgeois gender system. In the polarity of gendered characters (cf. Hausen 1976), women were

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7 In 1956, distribution of WELT IM BILD was gradually transferred to the new UFA company, changing the name into UFA WOCHENSCHAU and restarting numbering.

believed to lack by their nature properties necessary to fulfill the commentary's function such as authority, credibility and self-distance. Analysis and interpretation of the world had been defined anew and confirmed as a male task and privilege since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century in Western Europe; *corporeal* embodiment of feelings was held to be the realm of female expression (cf. Prokop 1998: 176). The newsreel emerged before First World War, imbued with this gender ideology in its audiovisual vocabulary and production routines, carrying it all over the world. As women's mode of spectatorship was held to be "distracted" (cf. Kracauer 1927b), a female voice therefore could not lead the national audience safely through the newsreel's world trip, as it was believed that women were not able to deal with the attractions of foreign images appropriately. In 1964, a report entitled "Fräuleinwunder" characterized German women on the one hand as "self-conscious, cosmopolitan and beauty-conscious"—and on the other hand criticized them for being "open for national fashion news and for those of foreign nations" (UFA WOCHENSCHAU 411, translated by the author). The allegation of women's lack of patriotism, commonly heard in post-war years, reappeared in 1964, when it came to exercising purchasing power, like a temporarily repressed mantra. But with growing international interdependencies in the 1950s, addressing female audiences with national consumerism could be only a subliminal practice of soft protection for national textile industries.

In East Germany's newsreel DER AUGENZEUGE, women were part of the editorial team and female voices were engaged in a more general way (cf. Schwarz 2006: 210). Here the "world" was smaller, its socialist allure less seductive, and the bourgeois social division of labor had been officially abandoned. In the newsreel production team in Hamburg, women were engaged as cutters, archive specialists, and secretaries—as experts with specific and prestigious qualifications necessary for newsreel production and highly estimated in the team but with very limited or no editorial competence. They belonged to the new generation of young "beautiful women" in the late 1950s and 1960s. In the film laboratory, so-called "Kopiermädchen" [copy girls] were engaged in boring manual labor at night to produce the film copies to be sent to cinema theatres.

## NATIONAL PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

Some examples are presented here of how relations between nation and gender have been operating at cross-sections of discourse and imagination. As topics like industrial production, advertisement and consumption (especially fashion and beauty) across borders are particularly susceptible to being gendered, most examples have been drawn from this realm.

Fig. 4: “Grapefruit-Queen”. *NEUE DEUTSCHE WOCHENSCHAU* Nr. 1, 1950.



Source: Bundesarchiv

The first example concerns NDW’s first reel from February 1950. It included a seemingly lighthearted beauty contest, with girls in swimming suits posing for a cinematographic American grapefruit advertisement (see Fig. 4). Yet the German commentary in this case did not “obey” conventions to read this advertisement in a way that was politically correct. Instead, in a harsh diction of voyeuristic misogyny (“nice rascals”) it took symbolic revenge for what German women and the United States had inflicted on “us”, thus constructing an image of the nation as male. The contemporary audience doubtlessly recognized the link to the girls and women among them who were believed to have exchanged “love for nylons” with allied occupa-

tion soldiers. The newsreel commentary, playing with the visual content and potential of imported images, could manipulate these images into portraying different or contrary meanings before they were screened. Performing a “sadistic” masculine voyeurism, the NDW in its first edition constructed itself as a watchful weapon against the American persuasions of hedonistic pleasure. In cinema halls, this *sujet* was well received—although not in the advisory board, where the only female member withdrew in protest.

The second example relates to representation of the country’s industrial production and economic success. A basic discursive feature of 1950s newsreels in West Germany is the denial of women’s contribution,<sup>8</sup> which encouraged the perception of the economic miracle as a uniformly masculine performance. This has to be situated in the context: The postwar “rubble women”, depicted in allied and licensed mass media, highlighted women’s engagement in reconstruction, carrying also the message of masculine defeat, and this icon remained for some years an obsessive yet displaced part of collective memory (NDW 192, 1953). West Germany was also seeking to distance itself from “communist” GDR, accusing the “Zone” of destroying the family by forcing women to leave their home and venture into industrial workplaces. In the West, the family model of the male breadwinner for some children and wife/mother/*Hausfrau*, upset during the war and for some years after it, was reestablished. These ideological conditions made it impossible for women working in production and other industries to find themselves represented as discursively legitimate contributors to the nation’s increasing prosperity.

This does not mean that women were not identifiable in the newsreel images, in shots taken at industrial workplaces, on factory work floors and in offices, laboratories, on the assembly line, as seamstresses, secretaries or nurses.<sup>9</sup> But when they were represented in these real-life ‘roles’ they were portrayed not as ‘actors’, but as an accidentally existent, voiceless human part of the industrial inventory in which other actors prevailed. Women

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8 Women’s part of the labor workforce has been stable from late 19th century until to the 1970s in Germany/the old FRG at 36-37 percent; 48-50 percent of all women between 15 and 60 years old worked outside (with exceptions in war and post-war times; cf. Hausen 1997:31).

9 Insofar, images can be read as a “counter-analysis” (cf. Ferro 1977).

were visible there but they were not made meaningful in their own right, neither in appearance nor in outspoken discourse. Yet they were meaningful for other discourses, for example that of unilaterally gendered social hierarchies at the workplace. This perception reflects one part of the truth, since for the majority of women in a segregated labor market only a few socially-acceptable professions were accessible (cf. Hausen 1997: 26).

A telling example of this practice is a news-film of 1955, screened for Müttergenesungswerk's [mother's recovery initiative] fundraising around Mother's Day. We see federal president Heuss visiting female workers seated at sewing machines on the factory floor of a company producing clothes for children, while the commentary insists on the entrepreneur's charity (WiB 148, 1955). The images may have been a consciously negotiated deviation from the ruling "system of sensual evidences": They showed women as acting industrial workers, however in laborious and poorly remunerated industrial jobs. This image sequence should provide evidence of the need to collect money to allow some weeks of rest cure for women overburdened by the tasks of both earning money and being mothers. The discourse constructed women as helpless objects of charity, although the company's charity politics being mentioned may have been the employer's condition for allowing the company's location to be made public. The other part of the truth in FRG's 1950 newsreel was skipped over: the palpable and far-reaching improvement in women's legal status, as adjustments of the Civil Code in 1953/1957 reduced privileges of husbands, e.g. a husband's right to block his wife's employment contract.<sup>10</sup>

## FASHION

The third example concerns the strategic field of fashion. Showcase, exhibition, looking and being-looked-at: the newsreel exchange system followed imaginary logics similar to those of bourgeois prestige consumption and

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10 The Fundamental Law from 1949 stipulates in Art 3, Abs 2 an encompassing equality in legal and social matters, as a result of a campaign led by female members of the Parlamentarischer Rat [Parliamentary Council] in 1948. By constitutional commitment, the conservative government was obliged to amendments of the Civil Code of 1901.

haute couture. Newsreel's fashion-films displayed—at least theoretically—the economic success and cultivated taste not of husbands and fathers but of nations, showing prosperity and development not of a social class but of the nations imagined collectively as the bourgeoisie. Only in NDW's first year could fashion appear as a field of female expertise, with designer Helle Brüns, mannequin Hildegard Knef or actress Hilde Weissner. By 1951, fashion news-films were narrated by a male voice, and on the screen male designers such as Heinz Oestergaard (Berlin) and Heinz Schulze-Varell (Munich) alone—maybe with allied help—were permitted to represent West German fashion excellence. In NDW's portrayal of foreign fashion, prominent male designers appeared as the only legitimate fashion experts, as kings and dictators represented or accompanied by ambassadors: breathtakingly opulent evening gowns with names, displayed by nameless slim women.

*Fig. 5: Heinz Schulze-Varell's "architectural" fashion. NEUE DEUTSCHE WOCHENSCHAU Nr. 88, 1951.*



Source: Bundesarchiv

A French fashion show held in Hamburg was ennobled to the point of being portrayed as a diplomatic event entitled "Entente Modéale" (cf. Schwarz



2002: 318-321), as West German stocking companies (OPAL, ARWA) cooperated with French and Italian fashion houses (Christian Dior, Jacques Fath and Emilio Schubert) for license-partnership. From 1951, and especially after Jacques Fath's sudden death in 1954, an increasing number of carefully elaborated news-films on German fashion transformed the "French" topic into a national one and the perception of German fashion into an export commodity competing with Haute Couture from Paris, Vienna and Milan. Fashion shoots of new collections—outstanding in length and cinematographic quality—occupied the first "national" program position (cf. NDW 88, 1951; NDW 113, 1952; WiB 133 and NDW 291, 1955; WiB 194, UFA 7, NDW 349, 1956; UFA 431, 1964). These carefully elaborated fashion shoots are still fascinating today.

In terms of audience, the newsreel always has been taken as a format offering something for everyone, and fashion as an instrument for addressing women. Indeed, fashion was named first preference by female cinema-goers in 1957 (cf. Schwarz 2002: 424); in the United States, fashion was everyone's second preference, after sports (Baechlin/Muller-Strauss 1951: 61). This high resonance among women as well as men of a topic which with "beauty" was less than 5 percent of a newsreel's film length (sports accounted for approx. 25 percent) indicates that one of the newsreel's most attractive features was the display of idealized bodies of both sexes. But fashion stories also symbolically constructed the fashionable woman as an icon representing plenitude and prosperity, erotic liberation and aesthetic self-fulfillment, as the phantasmagoric incarnation of Western democracies. The mannequin's body was, in the newsreel, a surface and stage of display, and to exhibit it was a symbol of market economy and its freedoms (Schwarz 2000:133). The advent of artificial fabrics partly changed the message in 1952, now informing the audience that women could themselves appropriate clothes made of artificial textile fibers produced by former IG Farben companies. Fashion designer Heinz Oestergaard was ready to process artificial fibres, awarding to these cheap fabrics the nimbus of Haute Couture. Instead of admiration and desire, appropriation and practice were the new messages, highlighting (national) consumption as "women's route to citizenship" (Carter 1997: 71).

The mannequins in the fashion shoots acted in front of the camera as translators of the messages the fashion houses wanted to convey to the public. Whereas the melodramatic femininities designed by Schulze-Varell did

not break the rules of prestigious consumption, Oestergaard's dresses made the mannequins step out, in order to demonstrate the skirts' "swinging-up" movement: his dresses presupposed freedom—to walk and to work, to earn money for oneself and one's family. The new fabrics' imaginary tended to dissolve gender and class conflicts into a harmonized middle class society, countless happily (re)uniting heterosexual couples. Few label-free fashion stories left room for NDW's critical editorial comments, and textile mass marketing managers organized minor fashion shows which deliberately referenced this conflict. One fashion show on a scaffold at the courtyard of Maschinenbau Salzgitter GmbH confronted mannered bourgeois fashion with (male and female) blue collar workers "in silent dialogue with the pay packet", but showing the on-location audience finally applauding the mannequins (NDW 132, 1952, translated by the author). Another show was situated in a mine, "in order to demonstrate that the original material stems from the profundity of earth", depicting large-eyed blue-collar miners admiring mannequins in evening gowns (NDW 276, 1955; Schwarz 2002: 326 et seqq.). Both narratives insisted that fashion's hedonistic pleasures were in sharp opposition to the hard industrial work on which they rely; but the discourse about fashion as a socially reconciling power was supported by visual evidence.

## **BEAUTIFUL WOMEN AND MOTORIZED SERVANTS**

The fourth example can be found in the work of the more progressive UFA WOCHENSCHAU, which, in 1964, held an outspoken discourse about the "beautiful women". Female beauty, in 19th century a "natural" quality of charming appearance which ennobled bourgeois husbands, now appeared to be attainable by every woman through fashion, cosmetics and a body language which could be learned via models from cinema and magazines (cf. UFA WOCHENSCHAU 411). In the postwar period, beauty was the newsreel's discursive code for the modern women who, legitimized by beauty, gained access to the public sphere, entering the workforce and engaging in other activities out of home and family—activities which put more emphasis on personal presentation than activities in the private sphere of the home. This discursive code claimed to implicitly disclose something about the nature of the social change of the period while describing appearances.

In earlier decades, “beauty” as a topic in the newsreel had echoed scandal and provocation, when “beauty contests” with girls in swimsuits and evening gowns dramatized the provocation the modern woman constituted for conservative settings feeling endangered by upwardly mobile young women. The UFA WOCHENSCHAU in 1964 redeemed the notion of beauty, designing the *new* modern woman as a combination of non-glamourized professional activity and “beauty”, a feminine, fashionable and appealing appearance, obtained by and necessary for professional careers. The provocative and irritating features of the 1920s modern woman transgressing gender limits appeared to be overcome by a generalized and moderate, non-transgressing, practice.

The fifth example of how relations between nation and gender have been operating at cross-sections of discourse and imagination concerns aspects of the modern woman more difficult to integrate into the logic of conspicuous consumption. From the 1950s, the proliferation of domestic appliances in the home was a problem for the newsreel’s representational logic. Washing machines and refrigerators were made for female use, but at home. The private sphere of the household, defined as the natural workplace of housewives, became the location of technical progress and its modern rationality. News-film segments on consumer fairs showed new kitchen aids, and the ‘hostess as housewife’ mannequin displayed not only her fashionable outfit but also manipulated “motorized servants” (NDW 378, 1957, translated by the author). This discourse imbued the housewife with the ideas of power and leisure time. Some newsreel commentaries skeptically observed this transformation, worrying about “housewives’ phlegm” (NDW 4, 1950, translated by the author) or devaluing modern housework as “foolproof” (NDW 375, 1957, translated by the author). We may recognize in this metaphor, which bemoans the de-valuation of women’s “housework by love” a coded discursive bridge to the idea of men taking over household chores themselves. Technical household progress affected the power balance between men and women at home and carried the idea of women’s entrance into the workforce, as a second income in most cases was needed to realize the household’s modernization.

*Fig. 6: Studio shooting of men's fashion. UFA WOCHENSCHAU Nr. 323, 1962.*



Source: Bundesarchiv

Whereas the FRG's state-newsreel did not encompass a particular and distinct representation of male workers or employees, the GDR's AUGENZEUGE offered a stage to industrial workers, promoting the working class as the central political class of socialist society, with the camera entering workplaces depicting individual workers and their performances (cf. Schwarz 2006: 213 et seq.). The West German government did not intend to strengthen representation of the working class. Especially in the ongoing conflict over industrial power sharing between the government, employers and unions, the government's newsreel preferred to represent the nation's productivity by focusing on economic leaders, minister Ludwig Erhard, and directors of big industrial plants—or by displaying production results, goods and commodities, in news-film about the Hannover fair and automobile fairs in Frankfurt, Paris or Geneva. While blue-collar work clearly lost value in economic and representational terms, as could be observed in a news-film on the European coal-mine crisis (UFA WOCHENSCHAU 136, 1958), nonproductive industries gained weight and prestige as carriers of presentation and representation—in which “beautiful” women could be

successful. Masculine identities felt endangered by the loss of privilege, and the newsreel reluctantly recorded this shifting power balance as a cinematographic yellow press impregnated by social melancholy. As men exclusively held and exerted authority over the images (cameramen), discourses (editor-in-chief) and voices (speaker) presented, the newsreel could articulate this discomfort in dark cinema halls, protected from daylight. This has to be taken into account when looking to the newsreel of the 1950s as “a visibility machine” (Sieber 2011: 303, translated by the author). Men’s fashion and male hedonism started to be legitimized as a national product in 1962.

## A NEW DOCUMENTARY STYLE

The genre’s ‘misogyny’ was also driven by the advent of television in the 1950s, already endangering the newsreel’s *raison d’être*. In 1953, journalist Ella Reetz commented ironically on the newsreel reporter: within a hilarious bestiary she would class him as a blind beastie only geared to noise: “For them, only screaming sounds are topical ... Let us dim out and wait for the de-masculinized newsreel. Yes, how about the profession of a female newsreel reporter?” (quoted in: Schwarz 2002: 441, translated by the author)

This hope, inspired by television, remained unfulfilled. However, intensified competition with *TAGESSCHAU* [DAILY NEWS] broadcast daily since the end of 1956, progress in recording techniques, and a new generation of editors triggered modernization, giving more weight to local  *Sujets* and to the spoken discourse. The pre-editorial position of the cameraman shooting public events was relativized. Editors developed exposés and started to appear interviewing ‘people like you and me’, on streets, in supermarkets, and in citizens’ homes. Now, sensual evidence was produced to support a commentary’s argument, hammering together fresh shots and images from the newsreel’s archive: montage became more important.<sup>11</sup> Fewer and longer single news-film, sometimes extended to an essayistic style, filled up the eleven minutes (often less). The government’s representation decreased

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11 In the 1960s, cutter could perform more complex tasks and take over more editorial responsibility.

in proportion and quality, and news-films on sports now took notice of disciplines still untouched by the commercialization of leisure time.

This event-detached documentary style changed the newsreel's "sensual police" character, its "apportionment/distribution of the sensual" and the "system of evidences" (cf. Rancière 2006: 25 et seqq.; Sieber 2012: 44 et seqq., translations by the author). On the one hand, federal ministries and institutions represented in the advisory board gained still more influence over editorial choices, as well the interests of companies in covert advertising (cf. Lehnert 2013: 370-379). On the other hand, with the newsreel's decline the pressure to reproduce reality decreased, offering new choices in both topic and approach. Some editions of this period, from 1959 to 1964, are comprised of essayistic features, and through their image-discourse-relation we can retrace how the representation of the shifting cultural identity was accompanied by imaginary operations. For example, in a story on young peoples' musical tastes (NDW 590, 1961), black jazz was discursively appropriated as a style preferred by educated young male Germans; on the level of montage, black men—identified with wild jazz in early 1950s—now appeared connected with traditional European music styles on the screen. Silent, imaginary spatial re-organizations were at work and maybe even consciously applied. Access to this part of history is not in paper archives; but can be found only in the audiovisual material itself.

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# The Visual Memory of the Cold War

## The Long Afterlife of the FOX TÖNENDE WOCHENSCHAU Newsreels on the Building of the Berlin Wall

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HILDE HOFFMANN

It is striking how familiar images and stories from the newsreel reports of the early 1960s still are. Even after fifty years they live on in our pictorial memory and form our view of the world. The persistence of these newsreel images and constructions is related to the aesthetic form and the interlocking of newsreel with other media. Their continuing potency is also due to the particular relationship of the newsreel to the state.

The specific character of the newsreel is based on swiftly bringing spatially and temporally distant events into the here and now through the moving photographic image. Images contained in the newsreel were perceived as windows on the world; there was the “notion that if wielded with sufficient skill, the camera could provide an accurate and irrefutable account of an event in time” (Atkinson 2011, 78). This belief in the proof of photographic images developed along with the technical innovations for depicting natural phenomena and the concomitant assumption that “objective witness” and the production of scientific data guaranteed the “truth” (cf. Feenberg/Hannay 1995, 161). From 1927 onward, with the introduction of film sound, an additional acoustic accompaniment and interpretation of the visual sequences could be centrally controlled.<sup>1</sup> According to Nicolas

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1 In 1927 the Fox Film Corporation released the first sound newsreel, FOX MOVIE TONE NEWS.

Pronay, this changed the status of the newsreel overnight (cf. 1976, 95-120). The new level of commentary, music, and sounds strengthened the newsreel's effect of authenticity<sup>2</sup> and the illusion of participation and shared experience.

## THE INTERLOCKING OF THE NEWSREEL WITH OTHER MEDIA

The newsreel has been closely tied in with the illustrated press. Aside from their parallel technical development—"in continental Europe the newsreel appeared at the same time as printed photojournalism" (Baechlin/Muller-Strauss 1952, 10, translated by the author)—their contiguity was explicitly expressed in the names of the early newsreels, such as *ÉCLAIR JOURNAL* (1907), *PATHÉ'S ANIMATED GAZETTE* (1910) or *GAUMONT GRAPHIC* (1910). Since the turn of the century, the interconnection between the "mixed news" of the new mass press and true-to-life visualizations in panoramas and wax museums had led, particularly in the cities, to increasingly unbri-dled visual curiosity (cf. Schwarz 1998, 283-317). The new public sphere associated with this and the emerging "prominence of the media" influenced both press and newsreel. The visual semantics of the newsreel drew on the well-established narrative conventions of the feature film. But in contrast to the feature film, "the meaning projected onto the newsreel image was oriented to narratives that were created and distributed in other published and transmitted versions of reality: in newspapers and magazines, on the radio, in speeches and appeals" (Öhner 2002, 370, translated by the author). Decisive to the form of the "images of the world" produced by the newsreel was their structural embedding in the commercially oriented cinema.

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2 I understand authenticity as aesthetic strategy, not as a description of an actual relation to pre-filmic reality. Concerning the relation of documentary footage and authenticity cf. Hattendorf 1994.

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NEWSREEL AND THE STATE

In political terms, the early newsreels operated with the imagination of a neutral, unbiased state. This attestation by the state or the ruling class was of great importance to the credibility status of the newsreels. In this sense, Ute Daniel described them as “governmental propaganda,” an “ensemble of strategies for the creation of political meaning and the control of opinion and perception” that aimed to intensify “moods in the population for which the originator can then be presented as executor” (1994, 72ff., translated by the author). Even if the extent of their effect remains questionable, it is beyond doubt that the newsreels as a whole were placed in the service of state propaganda (Reeves 1999, 157). They influenced both emerging public discourse and the collective pictorial memory, and generated attentiveness to the functional elites. The genre was particularly attractive to politics, as it can be oriented to current interests more easily and at shorter notice than the feature film.

Due to continual economic dependence, politics and business were able to exert influence on newsreel production through subventions, and thus to gain access to a permanent structure for the conveyance of images and narratives, and to a large audience (cf. Schwarz 2002, 16-18). At the start of the cold war, the newsreels enjoyed a prominent place in the media landscape, and were shown before feature films worldwide. A report commissioned by UNESCO during the 1950s suggests that the sameness of coverage, unified perspective, and lack of dissenting voices heightened the impression that newsreels offered a definitive account of events. The report warns that the “quality of conviction” given by the newsreel’s combination of words and images creates an impression of objectivity that can mask their status as instruments of politics (cf. Baechlin/Muller-Strauss 1952, 31-45).

## THE FOX TÖNENDE WOCHENSCHAU

With the outbreak of the First World War, the continual production of newsreels was given government support in Germany, thus confirming and sustaining the newsreels’ relationship to the state described above. Follow-

ing the war, American film corporations such as 20th Century Fox, Universal, Paramount, and a little later MGM began to dominate the European film markets because of the strength of their financial resources and the weakened state of the post-war cinematic infrastructure of many European countries. Primarily due to the expensive introduction of sound, German newsreel production came to be concentrated in the hands of a few dominant film corporations from the 1930s onward.<sup>3</sup> From 1940, only the National Socialist DIE DEUTSCHE WOCHENSCHAU was shown in Germany and Austria. After the Second World War, the Allies took over film reporting and the production of newsreels became an instrument of “re-education.”<sup>4</sup> State newsreel production was supported by the British from 1950 and by the Americans from 1952.<sup>5</sup> In 1950, the newsreels from the American production company Fox returned to Germany. FOX TÖNENDE WOCHENSCHAU was the only German-language commercial newsreel in the German-language market after the war. Against the background of the European Recovery Program,<sup>6</sup> FOX TÖNENDE WOCHENSCHAU stood for a new, comprehensive form of political communication. Fox had branches in West Berlin and Vienna, and operated under American management and editorship. While the foreign news from globally operating 20th Century Fox was compiled from around the world, the production of national media culture was reserved for local journalists. The FOX TÖNENDE WOCHENSCHAU there-

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- 3 In the 1930s, the most commonly screened newsreels were the UFA-, DEULIG-, and EMELKA-TONWOCHE, as well as the FOX TÖNENDE WOCHENSCHAU.
  - 4 The Allies set out to re-educate the German population after 1945. The changed aims of this program, due to the cold war, were later expressed in the term “re-orientation” (cf. Brigitte Hahn 1997, p. 235).
  - 5 The federally owned NEUE DEUTSCHE WOCHENSCHAU (NDW) and the WELT IM BILD were shown in 1953-62 in around two thirds of the cinemas in the Federal Republic and West Berlin. The rest shared the FOX TÖNENDE WOCHENSCHAU and the French-supported WELT IM BILD (cf. Uta Schwarz 2003, 189).
  - 6 The Marshall Plan, officially called the European Recovery Program, was the most important American program for the economic recovery of war-destroyed Western Europe. Three reasons can generally be considered objectives of the program: help for the destitute and even starving population, containment of the Soviet Union and communism, and the creation of a market for American overproduction.

fore acted as an interface between the global and the national visual memory, and shaped the recollective images of the global news market. Today, its edited newsreels are distributed under individual years as “a piece of history in moving images!”<sup>7</sup>

The lasting effect of newsreel images as a determining element of post-war visual culture can be seen in the representation of one of the key events of the cold war<sup>8</sup>: the building of the Berlin Wall. Here it becomes clear that the newsreel material is both an indication of a transnational pictorial memory—which can be understood as a reservoir of widely circulated pictures made understandable and connectable across nations, languages and generations—and an archive of identity concepts. The popular media in particular were part of the culture of a “divided world” (1961, report 41; 1962, report 18). The cold war manifested not only in economic, political, and military endeavor; the division of the world into two blocs was a central element of the propagandistically instrumentalized area of entertainment and the media. Images and readings of the confrontation “in struggle for freedom” (1961, report 41) that are still circulating today can be traced back to newsreel reports of the time.

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7 20th Century Fox builds on shared recollection with the distribution of annual compilations of the FOX TÖNENDE WOCHENSCHAU. Its advertising—“For decades the famous FOX TÖNENDE WOCHENSCHAU reported as the voice of the world on sporting events, fashion trends, world catastrophes, attitudes to life, and memorable occurrences ... Moving, unforgettable moments and endearing insights into everyday life”—corresponds to the general contemporary view of the newsreel as an “unbiased chronicle.”

8 In the postwar period, the different aims and interests in reordering the world gave rise to a conflict between the “Western powers,” led by the United States, and the “Eastern bloc,” led by the Soviet Union; a conflict that was waged from 1945 to 1990 with all available means, but not as an all-out war. The American journalist Walter Lippmann first described this situation in 1947 as a “cold war,” a phrase he had heard from Bernard Baruch.

## THE “SELF” AND THE “ALIEN” OF THE COLD WAR

All contributions to the Fox Tönende Wochenschau of 1961,<sup>9</sup> the year in which the Berlin Wall was built, address a “we” that takes form in a differentiation from what it doesn’t include. Even their title images distinguish between and define the “self” and the “alien.”

*Fig. 1: The own: “The struggle for peace”*



Source: DAS WAR 1961, Beitrag 14 ‘Kampf um den Frieden’

The American president John F. Kennedy is introduced as the most important representative of this collective “self” (1961, report 3, 14, 16 & 35), with the legend “The Struggle for Peace” (1961, report 14, see Fig. 1), and his intentions are interpreted and evaluated from the very beginning. Ken-

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9 The VHS FOX TÖNENDE WOCHENSCHAU. DAS WAR 1961, distributed by 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, contains a selection of reportage from the year 1961. Five reports deal with the situation in Berlin. The corresponding footage archived in the Filmarchiv Austria is sometimes more comprehensive and was shortened for the commercial video tape.

nedy is usually shown frontally; the visual perspective and framing used lend his words great authority. Kennedy's speeches are appraised as "impressive" by the commentary of every newsreel, and the audience is reminded in the voice over that the United States "safeguards the freedom of West Berlin." America and the non-socialist countries are striving for "peace"; it is assured that there is "full agreement" between Western politicians such as Konrad Adenauer and J. F. Kennedy (1961, report 16). There is also a consensus in the newsreel between Western government bodies and citizens: the police have the "unpleasant task of reprimanding West Berliners, with whom they see eye to eye" (1962, report 40).

The newsreel's affinity with military campaigns remained unchanged in the aftermath of the Second World War. American troop movements were accompanied by music full of suspense and narrated as an adventure with an open end. A NATO winter maneuver was celebrated with superlatives and festive music as the "biggest winter maneuver of the Western world" (1961, report 7).

*Fig. 2: The alien: "This is what the workers' paradise looks like"*



Source: DAS WAR 1961, Beitrag 47 'Wohnungen an der Sektorengrenze'



As the opposing power, the Soviet Allies are described as aggressive and “responsible for all consequences” (1961, report 35). The Berlin Wall is described as the “most shameful building of the Ulbricht regime,” a barrier which “inhumanly blocks its disenfranchised citizens the way to the better Germany” (1961, report 50). The commentary suggests that “freedom and human dignity end in the streets of East Berlin.” (1961, report 47). “Innocent people [are] forced to leave their homes in Ulbricht’s workers’ and peasants’ state. Raiding parties of the Soviet-friendly Ulbricht regime deport their fellow countrymen.” The GDR is described as a “huge prison camp of the Soviet zone.” Water cannons are depicted menacingly. “Brutal arbitrary measures” are in force here, the montage implies, before the eyes of uncomprehending children (1961, report 47). The combination of sound and image often diverges. Footage of advancing tanks, for example, is accompanied by an ironic comment from the voiceover: “This is what the workers’ paradise looks like” (1961, report 47, see Fig. 2).

The political newsreel reportage covering the United States, also referred to as the “free West,” the “free part of Germany,” (1962, report 18, 38, and 40) and the military maneuvers of the American Allies is related “authentically,” through a closed narrative illusion of reality. The manner of presentation is an invitation to identify as seamlessly as possible with “Western” politics and its content and personalities. There is little leeway for interpretation: the classical cinematographic portrayal gives the impression of direct participation. Methodically produced visual evidence suggests the truth and transparency of what is being shown.

When the Soviet Allies, referred to as “dictators” and “the ruler of the zone” (1961, report 38) or “Ulbricht’s Prison” (1962, report 18) become the subject of coverage, the reportage is characterized by a tension between image and commentary. Distancing, irony, or open defamation dominates. Miriam Hansen has pointed out that the aesthetic mode of authenticity in the newsreels is a marker for one’s own in order to distance oneself from what is alien through an emphatically theatrical, “unnatural” stylization (1991, 55). The differentiation between the self and the alien, good and bad, peaceful and aggressive, freedom and prison camp, is likewise produced aesthetically.

## BUILDING THE BERLIN WALL IN NEWSREELS

The reportage directly referring to the building of the Berlin Wall describes the day before it went up as a paradisiacal situation. Footage of an exuberant children's party, carousel rides, and a game of Ring around the Rosie with West Berlin's mayor, Willi Kressmann, is narrated as follows: "It is August 12, 1961. As in every year, the West Berlin district of Kreuzberg organizes a children's party at the sector border [...] everyone is happy and gay" (Film Archive Austria 1961, see Fig. 3). On August 13, 1961, the day after the construction of the Berlin Wall, everything has changed: "The eastern sector of Berlin became a military camp. Tranquil parks become the deployment zone of the Soviet tanks. Soldiers of an enforced other Germany stand on guard against Germany" (Film Archive Austria 1961, see Fig. 4).

*Fig. 3 & 4: In the west: "Everyone is happy and gay" (left) and "Tranquil parks become the deployment zone of Soviet tanks" (right).*



Sources: DAS WAR 1962, Beitrag 38 'Ein Jahr danach – Die Mauer' (left), DAS WAR 1961, Beitrag 38 'Aufmarsch in Ostberlin' (right).

The report divides time into "before" and "after" the Wall's construction, and the commentary makes both the East German population and the "West" into victims of the "inhuman" East German politicians.

The images from the East are apparently shown for what they really are through the friction between visuals and commentary. The "unjust regime" of Eastern Germany is portrayed by the FOX TÖNENDE WOCHENSCHAU with footage of barbed wire and military parades, and is charged and convicted of deception, false promises, and the instrumentalization of "innocent chil-

dren.” “But”, the voiceover claims “the reality looks different”<sup>10</sup> (Film Archive Austria 1961, see Fig. 5).

*Fig. 5: The gulf between image and voice over: “But the reality looks different.”*



Source: DAS WAR 1961, Beitrag 38 ‘Militäraufmarsch in Ostberlin’

Aside from these aesthetic distancing strategies, documentary images consistently remain a part of the production of evidence. The photograph of the border guard, Conrad Schumann, jumping over the barrier in Bernauer Straße becomes a symbol that unites all elements of the narrative (Fig. 6): “With courage and despair he broke through the barbed wire. With courage and despair a young border guard crosses the arbitrary boundary he is supposed to guard as a German against Germans” (Film Archive Austria 1961). The picture of Conrad Schumann, who chooses to live in “the free

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10 The reports of the German newsreel agencies likewise focus on human suffering, and symbolize the GDR as a dictatorship through use of images of barbed wire and the military (for these productions, cf. Steinle 2003, 186-189).

part of Germany” apparently confirms all previous narratives of the news-reel and becomes a concise symbol of Cold War rhetoric. Through contextualization and extensive circulation in media, the image can only be understood in combination with the previous contents. The “arrival of 1,500 American soldiers” finally celebrates the “unfailing help” of the United States, and invokes the community of the West: “Now the West Berliners know once again that they do not stand alone in the struggle for freedom. The West has not forgotten us” (1962, report 41).

*Fig. 6: “With courage and despair he broke through the barbed wire“*



Source: DAS WAR 1961, Beitrag 38 ‘Militäraufmarsch in Ostberlin’

This perspective introduced in 1961 had become well-known visual and narrative elements and a solid body of knowledge a year later.<sup>11</sup> In 1962, the reportage drew on material from the previous year as a matter of course. The West is represented by economic prosperity; the “economic miracle” is

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11 Here I refer to the six contributions to the commercial DVD FOX TÖNENDE WOCHENSCHAU, DAS WAR 1962 that relate to the division of Berlin.

depicted affirmatively: “The result of wise and consistent economic policy. Minister Ludwig Erhard has been proved right in his plans. So let’s drink to that” (1962, report, see Fig. 7).

*Fig. 7: “The result of wise and consistent economic policy [...], let’s drink to that”.*



Source: DAS WAR 1962, Beitrag 5 ‘Die Währungsreform’

East Germany is still portrayed through images of border guards and barbed wire. The suffering of those affected is primarily illustrated with images of people waving over the border or women weeping at the border and spectacular escape attempts (Figs. 8 and 9). As Schindelbeck explains, “In order to make the message of the ‘inhuman structure’ [...] obvious, visual documents showing people in direct, fateful contact with it, tragically coming to grief on it, or heroically overcoming it were indispensable” (translated from Schindelbeck 2011, 42).<sup>12</sup>

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12 The extensive visual documentation of the Berlin Wall from West Germany narrowed at times to two photographs. Images of the “wall jumper” Conrad Schu-

*Fig. 8 & 9: The suffering: women weeping at the border (left) and spectacular escape attempts (right).*



Sources: DAS WAR 1961, Beitrag 50 'Die Mauer in Berlin' (left), DAS WAR 1961, Beitrag 47 'Wohnungen an der Sektorengrenze' (right).

On its first anniversary (1962, report 38), the coverage aggressively called for remembrance of the building of the Berlin Wall: "Have we already forgotten how things used to be?" Images from the reportage of 1961 are now given a pointed commentary, and have become a closed narrative:<sup>13</sup> "There are no children playing any more. Right through Berlin, the streets are being dug up. Tanks have been brought in; heavily armed soldiers have been mustered. Barbed-wire barriers are being laid. Walter Ulbricht, prime minister of a so-called republic that even describes itself as democratic, has deployed German people to separate German people from one another with violence." The report is a call to live through and confirm the newsreel version of the events in all its emotional complexities. Other perspectives are excluded; the context and background of the confrontation is dropped in order to bring one specific interpretation into focus.

These potent newsreel images took on a special role: the material was dubbed and broadcast around the world. However, most of the information about the events is conveyed exclusively through the commentary; the images rely on previous knowledge shaped by media. "News images basically

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mann and the "wall victim" Peter Fechter determined the image of the Wall in the "West" for decades.

13 Many of the subsequent Wall films make use of material and motifs produced during and after the first weeks of the construction. For the numerous Wall films, cf. Steinle 2003, 175-186 and 207 et seqq.

prove nothing,” observe Hans Petschar and Georg Schmid in their analysis of Austrian newsreels between 1949-1960, “and they are only capable of developing their theoretically inherent semantic value when they are related to older, already collected images” (translated from 1990, 108). The newsreel images of the building of the Wall also appeal to the emotions and ideas of earlier portrayals. Stereotypical portrayals of the Allies and the ideologies associated with them, which had been circulating in the newsreels and other media since the late 1940s, are re-edited and recycled. The images are produced and selected in such a way as to link in to previous cultural knowledge and take up the content in other media. “By situating contemporarily valid image worlds within a particular horizon, the images, sounds, and commentaries of the newsreels function in the mode of invocation” (translated from Öhner 2002, 371).

The effectiveness obtained by the narratives through these images is clear to the newsreels’ editors, and is set out by the voiceover: “These are images of harrowing drama,” and “speak more powerfully than words”; “these images speak a language that knows no words” (1961, reports 47 and 50).

## THE PERSISTENCE OF NEWSREEL IMAGES

These images are circulating once again, decades after their original production. In the early 1990s, the collapse of the GDR and unification of the two German states became a cause for sounding out sustainable interpretations of the past, explaining the present with a view to the past. The officially celebrated anniversaries of German unification (October 3, Day of German Unity) and the television programs produced for it provide a short introduction to the official readings of national history.

The media event 10 YEARS OF GERMAN UNITY, in 1999, was shown on numerous television channels primarily as a celebration of overcoming the past and of embarking on a new beginning as a “united nation” within Europe.<sup>14</sup> Formally, the festivities appeared on the one hand to be the staged

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14 After a decade of negotiation, the “tenth anniversary of German unity” was celebrated particularly elaborately in the media. German “reunification” was equally celebrated on the anniversary of the “Wende“ (turnaround) in 1999.

conclusion of a decade of political negotiation about how the GDR and the shared history of the two Germanys should be commemorated. On the other, the program seemed to be the beginning of a whole series of anniversaries that would consolidate these official views of the German past.<sup>15</sup> Particularly important in the broadcasting of the 1999 ceremony were three compilations of images that underpinned the event's central content and reinforced a specific remembrance of, and perspective on, national history. Their combination of heterogeneous elements reveals a narrative contour that becomes a closed historical account. The archive images compiled for television programs and on the anniversaries of the "Wende" (turnaround) and "Wiedervereinigung" (reunification)<sup>16</sup> adhere firmly to the visual semantics of the Cold War, even though having been actualized for the compilations of the festivities by a new montage and voiceover.

The images used from the 1960s are emotionally charged: "Each in its own way has the status of a 'witness for the prosecution'" (translated from Schindelbeck 2011, 40). Like the newsreels from 1961 and 1962, the audiovisual remembrances produced for television broadcast on the anniversaries of "German unity" are conceived as a binary opposition of the failed GDR and the united Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). The GDR is still the negative foil to which the (now new) FRG is contrasted. The sequences represent a selective construction of the history of the division of Germany and its overcoming, while at the same time functioning as a meta-narration of the "victory of good over evil," or the overcoming of human suffering.

Despite their concreteness, the individual images are imprecise. We see a woman weeping because—the image suggests—the wall has separated her from those close to her (Fig. 10). People are waving because—the image suggests—this is the only possible form of contact between relatives over the now closed border. The images of "waves of refugees" from the "Soviet zone" are utilized, like the images of the Cold War, as an argument

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15 A central motif of the commemoration was the Wall. In individual productions, but above all throughout the entire program, remembrance of the Wall was constructed as a unifying symbol of the suffering of "the Germans" from the GDR and the FRG.

16 FESTAKT ZUR EINHEIT 1999. The media ceremony, anchored by Anne Will, was a summary and rearrangement of the official commemorative event by the television channels SFB and WDR.



in support of the “West” as “the better Germany” (DAS WAR 1961, Beitrag 47, ‘Wohnungen an der Sektorengrenze’). The “way to a longed-for new life” (ibid.) continues to be depicted as the departure from a militarized zone, illustrated by the same images of dramatic escape attempts through barbed-wire barriers or spectacular jumps out of windows (Fig. 11).

*Fig. 10 & 11: Persistent interpretation nearly 40 years later: women weeping at the border (left) and spectacular escape attempts (right) restaged in 1999.*



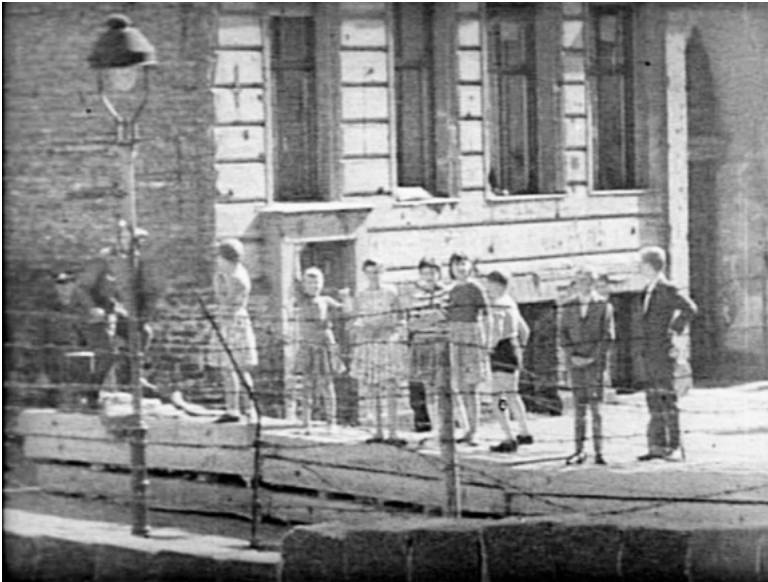
Source: (FEST ZUR EINHEIT 1999, Coproduction by SFB & WDR) (left & right).

With ideological zeal, the newsreels of the 1960s compare the GDR to the National Socialist state. “These images could come from the years of Hitler’s tyranny, but they were filmed in September 1961” (1961, report 47). The voiceover narration explicitly equates Walter Ulbricht with Adolf Hitler, noting that “dictators always loved to present themselves as friends of children” (1961, report 38). This parallelization of the GDR with National Socialism at the height of the Cold War became unusual for several decades. Almost forty years later, after 1989, in order to render the historically preserved narrative of the “reunification” plausible, the GDR is narrated as the extension of National Socialism again—with recourse to the newsreel material (Fig. 12).

“There was no overthrow of images after the war. Today we look at them as documents,” comments Hartmut Bitomsky in a montage of excerpts from National Socialist KULTURFILM documentaries in his film DEUTSCHLANDBILDER (FRG, 1983). This observation applies not only to National Socialist image production; there was no overthrow of images, no iconoclasm after the Cold War either. The newsreel images from this time

are frequently shown today as self-explanatory historical documents, thus perpetuating a media understanding that “sees [these] documentary images as depictions of reality and not as constructs bound to intention and context” (translated from Schwarz 2002, 187). In contemporary media theory approaches, no material is allowed a privileged approach to reality (cf. Hohenberger 2012).

*Fig. 12: Parallelization of the GDR with National Socialism, 1961.*



Source: DAS WAR 1961, Beitrag 47 ‘Wohnungen an der Sektorengrenze’

Such a simplified notion of media goes hand in hand with a reductionist view of history, in which complexity and context are neglected in favor of usability. The use of the newsreel material in accord with the logic and needs of television in remembering the Berlin Wall extends the logic of the Cold War with the juxtaposition of two systems presented as representing “good” and “evil”. It encourages a reading in which “the Germans” become “victims of history” through their suffering. In the 1960s, newsreel images showed Germans who were suffering because of the “inhumanity” of the GDR. Nearly forty years later, taken out of context of the historical reports,

those widely circulated pictures became even more vague: now they function to show that “the Germans had suffered”.

According to Uta Schwarz, one quality of historical documentary footage lies in the fact that “it enables the atmosphere of a time to be felt in extract, thus creating both distance and closeness between today’s viewer and the depicted past.” On the one hand, the newsreels show us things that no longer exist today; on the other, they show us how things were portrayed at a specific time for a cinema audience, allowing us to experience something of what life was like for those who came before us. This friction between “near and far” no longer occurs when archive material is used in the festivities around “ten years of German unity,” without the original soundtrack and re-edited, thus merely functioning as marker of “authenticity” and to illustrate a present-day historical discourse. “Undressed” in this way, the abstraction of most newsreel images causes them to become loaded with a historical and cultural meaning that stems primarily from equally media-produced knowledge. According to Vivian Sobchack, such image fragments, “because of their abstraction and vagueness,” invite us to “name” and “locate” time and space, and to activate them for narratives. The images “appeal to our knowledge, and invoke our presuppositions about the contexts they lack—and thus become loaded with a historical accuracy that, because of their abstraction, is absent from the images themselves” (translated from Sobchack [1999] 2003, 142).

In negotiating the meaning and memory of a political event, visual elements of its coverage and later portrayal are of great importance. They underpin the central content of the narrative, and reinforce a specific memory of it. Already existing bodies of knowledge are confirmed and reified by the deeply interconnected images and narratives of the newsreels. Recourse to newsreel material is thus also a practice of stabilizing interpretations and value systems. Once introduced, the newsreel images appear “natural” and “accessible”; they become quasi-objective representation. The interpretations and bodies of knowledge naturalized as a consensus are safeguarded by the “accessibility” of existing stereotypes and dichotomies. Archive images can also be drawn upon to validate and authenticate new historical narratives, as shown by the example of the historicization of “German unity”.

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# Art Exhibitions through Newsreels

An Avatar for Identity Politics (1945-1960)

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CATALINA RAVESSOUD AND GIANNI HAVER

The purpose of this article is to address the subject of art exhibitions as presented in cinema newsreels in different European countries. The subject is therefore not art in its broadest sense, but representations of art exhibitions in cinema newsreels. Despite the many sources referenced, the aim is however not to retrace the history of exhibitions in the post-war period but to reflect on the relationship between the art exhibitions and the construction and maintenance of a national identity.

The reference period for this study runs from the first newsreels produced in the aftermath of the conflict in Europe until the beginning of the 1960s. Although the newsreel format was still active at this point in time, it was already in competition with television, which fast became more popular than the films that preceded it. During these fifteen years, newsreels produced a large number of images on art exhibitions, not all of which can be addressed within the scope of this article. For this reason, we will make use of examples which seem significant through comparison between different national productions. This qualitative strategy—prioritized over a systematic and quantitative analysis—is also made necessary by the relatively uneven availability of sources depending on the countries involved. Even though some online databases of newsreels have recently been established, there remain gaps in their content, as is the case with all archives.

Certain NO-DO newsreels from Spain<sup>1</sup> have no sound; while some issues or titles from different European countries are not available. In addition, archiving by subject—particularly in France—obscures the original composition of the newsreel, while converting to digital formats suitable for publishing online also alters the viewing experience.

## **CULTURAL IDENTITY, NATIONAL IDENTITY**

When analyzing newsreels and artistic events represented through them, two forms of mediated communication come into focus: the act of showing and displaying art generally inherent to exhibiting gestures, and, in a broader sense, the news coverage reporting on an exhibition and thus appropriating and restaging the aforementioned act of showing art. These two forms of mediated communication, though proceeding from a resembling gesture, might use different approaches and references, while sometimes finding themselves within a process of establishing a cultural or national identity.

Beyond the act of showing of an exhibit as opposed to its media coverage, the metonymy of relations between art and human beings contained in the exhibit itself remains. In our case, this metonymy is constructed in the context of relations between the State—embodied in its institutions or its official representatives—and artistic production. However, the art exhibition, like any public event, only gains meaning through a certain set of circumstances which constitute the cultural context in which the latter takes place. Accordingly, society is expressed symbolically through an event experienced by the individual.

While the relations between the public and art might take different forms, newsreels retain their role as a carrier of official discourse, and even of propaganda—the latter being a legacy of wartime politics and the decade preceding the conflict. Despite a desire to depart from this role during the post-war period, the newsreels' function as an official government channel remains almost constant even in spite of the variety of configurations in the relationship between political power and the media.

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1 NO-DO is the colloquial name for NOTICIARIOS Y DOCUMENTALES, [NEWS AND DOCUMENTARIES], the only cinema newsreel produced in Spain from 1943 to 1981.

In Europe, different forms of newsreel coexist: those produced independently; those co-funded by the government, or else entirely dependent on the state apparatus; and, in the case of the defeated countries, newsreels produced by the occupying forces. David Gargani and Antonella Pagliarulo showed a continuity in the editorial policy aimed at conveying and promoting an official image of the country in their cross-analysis of *GIORNALE LUCE*, an Italian newsreel produced during the fascist period, and of the main post-war publication, *la SETTIMANA INCOM* (a private production which benefitted from state funding)<sup>2</sup>.

Similarly, during the Cold War, the Swiss newsreel perpetuated a policy of promoting national values, as was the case during the creation of this tool in the context of a larger-scale project called *Défense Spirituelle* [Spiritual Defense].

When it comes to exhibitions, the media coverage practiced derives from a different approach. While the subject of an exhibition is art, the subject of the newsreel is the exhibition. Whether or not the newsreel takes the event into account, the exhibit is created by a process of selection, assembling and staging of an artistic production. From this perspective, it appears that the exhibition works as part of—or even claims a role in—the effort of defining the artistic practice, while the newsreel presents itself as a seemingly neutral observer. An enunciation of discourses on national identity can be seen at all three levels of the relationship between the artistic practice, the exhibition, and the newsreel. Nevertheless, it is within the newsreel that this discourse appears most explicitly. The anchoring of the newsreel in national practices is readily observable, if only by the fact that it is produced within a country, destined for its cinemas and sometimes under the supervision of a state body. However, art, through a discourse that is part of a form of internationality, appears to be free from a national affiliation if one considers the abandonment of such terminologies that suggest the existence of a truly national art. More recently, in a debate organized in 2004 around the *Shake* exhibition at the Villa Arson in Nice, Henri Giordan, said: “We often support the following position: Contemporary art is first of all international. The universal dimension of art is paramount. Its logic is opposed to any location” (Giordan 2004). However, it is precisely this per-

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2 For further details on the Italian newsreels cf. Sainati 2001; Mazzarelli 2010; and Frabotta 2001.



ceived ‘universal’ character of the art which allows the production of a national identity discourse, because it is built on a relationship to ‘otherness’ established between the component entities of this so-called ‘universal’ character. On the one hand, in the major manifestations of art, the national origin of works is rarely forgotten, as in the pavilions of the *Venice Biennale*. On the other hand, this idea of the ‘universality’ of art is tinged by the fact that the event is hosted in a given national territory. Consequently, it is the host country which collects the symbolic benefits of this ‘universal’ character. This recourse to the ‘universal’ is all the more powerful in that it allows the cultural policy of a State to be enhanced without presenting it as inherently part of a national, or even nationalist identity discourse, which was obviously problematic at the end of the Second World War.

This ambivalence recalls the links that the philosopher Etienne Balibar established between cultural identity and national identity and the slippage that occurs equally between these two concepts. According to Balibar, cultural identity is the very expression of the singularity of the individual which allows him not to be confused in uniformity and not to erase the borders that separate one person from another. However, Balibar (cf. 1994) adds that we do not cease to protect ourselves against the reduction of cultural identity in the “national character” or against the normative traits conferred by the institutions of the nation state. According to the philosopher, culture is the name given to the “essential nation”, an entity that can be distinguished from any state but that works as the ultimate goal of its constitution. Continuing this analysis, Balibar (cf. *ibid.*, translated by the authors) invites us to reflect on the question “what if the notion of cultural identity was today nothing other than the metaphor of national identity?”

## THE NEWSREEL AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH ART

Art exhibitions are present already in the news filmed before World War I. The Gaumont archives keep reels of this type dating from 1910.<sup>3</sup> The pres-

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3 Particular examples include: *The exhibition of French artists at the Petit-Palais: statues* (1911), *Paris: cubist exhibition at the autumn fair* (1912), *Vienna: exhibition of Fine Arts* (1912), *Berlin: opening of the art exhibition by the Emperor Guillaume II* (1913).

ence of art exhibition reports from abroad tells us that the newsreel production companies from other countries with which Gaumont maintained an arrangement of purchase or exchange also paid attention to this type of event.

In accordance with the technical capabilities of the time, and notably due to the low sensitivity of film, indoor shots which would allow the exhibition itself to be viewed are rare. In contrast, the newsreels mainly show political and cultural authorities or the local sovereigns entering or exiting the building, thereby underlining the importance of the event but not reporting on the actual content of the exhibition. In the interwar period, art exhibitions begin to be regularly covered by the news, and by this time technological advances allow to walk among the exhibition rooms and record the interior as well. The novelty of and interest in this new perspective is supported by the significant number of shots present in the archives of various newsreels' titles.

In the ideologically-charged environment of the 1930s and World War II, the newsreels become an important tool in the propaganda policies of countries. At the end of the conflict, a logic of radical reorganization primarily in the defeated countries took over, particularly in Italy and Germany. These two countries were moving from a state monopoly of filmed information to a more competitive environment with different commercial titles. After the occupation, during which Germany, and to a lesser extent the Vichy regime, had a stronghold on this media, France found from 1946 onward a situation similar to that of pre-war times with the presence of five competitive titles (cf. Huret 1984). In Switzerland or in Spain, the situation changed relatively little; the Franco regime continued to produce the *NO-DO* that it had started to publish in 1943 and the Confederation continued to co-finance the *SCHWEIZER FILMWOCHENSCHAU* the diffusion of which was no longer obligatory from 1946 (cf. Gasser 1978/1979). There was also little change among the victors of the conflict, with the exception of the production of newsreels for the occupied regions.

The newsreels during the first years of peace addressed art exhibitions from an angle which still appeared to be extremely influenced by the conflict. Thus, one of the first subjects dealing with art in the French News shows the restitution of paintings to the various national museums from the Château de Chambord where they had been stored. In presenting the works being returned to their places, the narrator emphasizes the return to "normal", ending his commentary by saying that "despite these six years that

have marked us all, no one has aged [meaning the works]” (ACTUALITÉS FRANÇAISES, August 31 1945). Likewise, the GAUMONT-JOURNAL<sup>4</sup> devoted an issue to the painting exhibition *Art et Résistance* which took place in the Palace of Tokyo between February and March 1946 and was inaugurated by a minister formerly belonging to the Resistance.<sup>5</sup> Testifying to this focus on political issues, this 33 second-long segment granted only three seconds to the exhibition itself, devoting the remaining sequences to the officials visiting it. A few months later, marking France’s pre-eminence in the former capitals of the axis, the PATHÉ-JOURNAL reported on two exhibitions of French art. The first took place in Rome (PATHÉ-JOURNAL 31, July 7 1946) and the second in a Berlin Palace<sup>6</sup> still showing damage from bombs.

There was a comparable situation in Germany, where during the first few years after the war, the news was controlled by the occupants under the title of WELT IM FILM [THE WORLD IN FILM]. Very quickly after the conflict, news was devoted to the recovery of works of art stolen by the Nazis from various German and European collections. One particular news report (WELT IM FILM 7, June 29 1946) includes a scene which mimics a rudimentary exhibition set-up put in place for the needs of the camera. A few months later, still on the theme of the restitution of the artwork, the news broadcasts in Germany takes up the aforementioned French topic (cf. Huret 1984). In 1947, another similar topic is proposed by the German news, but this time concerning a painting of the Hamburger Kunsthalle, sheltered during the war (WELT IM FILM 94, March 14 1947). The art and the exhibitions seem to serve as a marker of normalization accompanying the reconstruction of the country.

Spain, despite not having taken part in the conflict, was nevertheless isolated in the immediate post-war period because of the proximity of the Franco regime to Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. In particular the country found itself hit by a diplomatic boycott of the United Nations from 1946

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4 The issue and the date of the newsreel are not listed by the Gaumont archives.

5 Charles Tillon who was the founder of the Parisian Francs-Tireurs and Minister for Armaments chaired the opening of this exhibition which would later be moved to London and New York.

6 PATHÉ-JOURNAL 49, 11 December 1946. It should be noted that the same subject had already been included in the news WELT IM FILM (Anglo-American news destined for Germany) 77, 15 November of the same year.

and sought external rehabilitation by any means, also by its cultural policy. Financial investments outside of the country<sup>7</sup> in the development of art-related events in the NO-DO—especially when Spain and the victor countries are considered in relation to one another—was a strategy used to give a positive image of Spain. Thus, although most of the artistic subjects of the NO-DO between the end of the war and the entire year of 1946 were devoted to national artistic events<sup>8</sup> both in terms of their content and their location; the few exhibitions not covered by this rule stand out. In this way, a modest event, such as the exhibition of English and Spanish artists in the British Institute of Madrid, is integrated in the national newsreel (NO-DO 160a, January 28 1946). In Spain the use of art as a means of breaking down international barriers culminates with the Hispano-American art exhibition of 1951.

## MAKING AN EVENT AROUND ART

An exhibition, linked to a state event such as a national day or an anniversary, allows to create a community around certain values. For example, this was the case in Spain where the anniversary of the tercentenary of the death of Velasquez gave rise to a series of events that were inaugurated and widely relayed by the NO-DO.<sup>9</sup> More generally, when an exhibition is presented as national and more so as international, and when it clocks the calendar of events by virtue of its periodicity, it imposes itself on the media as an event which cannot be ignored and becomes a theater for the representation of identity issues. Thus the major artistic events as well as their media coverage can be analyzed in this perspective. Furthermore, the filtering process executed both through exposing and rebroadcasting such events in the newsreel allows this cross-analysis. In this way, the presentation by Renato

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7 Notably in Latin America (cf. Bonardi 2004).

8 National artists as well as national events were highlighted.

9 NO-DO 637a, December 19 1960; NO-DO 939b, January 2 1961; NO-DO 949a, March 13 1961; NO-DO 962a, June 12 1961. Besides the exhibitions, the commemoration covers multiple aspects such as, for example, sets of stamps with paintings.

Guttuso<sup>10</sup> of paintings by Picasso at the first *Venice Biennale* of the post-war period can be read as a concession of the Christian democracy in power to the communist party.<sup>11</sup> This major event in the history of the Venetian exhibition (this was the first time that Picasso was exhibited there), widely relayed by the written press (cf. Budillon 1978), is yet completely ignored by the Italian newsreel, *la SETTIMANA INCOM*<sup>12</sup>, which was close to the government and therefore reflected the policy of the Christian Democracy. Here the filtering done by the newsreel redefined the event in the way desired by the official government policy.

The exhibition itself establishes its official nature by the presence of representatives of the political authorities and its cultural value through the participation of recognized players in the art world. The newsreels on their side insist on the presence of political authorities to validate the exhibition as an event worthy of being reported to the public. As for the political authorities, they reclaim the symbolic benefits of the event through their presence. Thus a triangulation is built between media, politics and art where everyone gains legitimacy from a transfer of symbolic capital.

A notable example of this tripartite relationship is given by the first edition of the *Bienal Hispano-Americana de Arte*, inaugurated in Madrid in 1951, which is one of the fruits of what is termed the “*política de la Hispanidad*”, during which Franco's Spain tried to break out of its international isolation by relying on the countries of Latin America. The NO-DO gives an importance to this event and thus extends the artistic policy promoted by the government to the national level. Two subjects are produced the same week, inserted in editions “A” and “B” and distributed simultaneously. These two films are very similar but with no joint plans, everything is fo-

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10 Guttuso joined the Italian Communist Party in 1940 and then took part in the Italian Resistance from 1943.

11 The tensions between the Communist Party and the Christian Democracy are expressed in the organization of the Biennale. It is rapidly converted to “a site of Christian Democracy’s struggle against Communism”, itself encouraged by the decisive victory of the Christian Democracy (CD) in the elections of 18 April 1948 (cf. Jachec 2005: 202).

12 Gargani and Pagliarulo consider the strategy and the editorial policy of *SETTIMANA INCOM* very similar to that of the newsreel *LUCE* produced by the government during the Fascism (cf. Gargani/Pagliarulo 2011).

cused on the presence of Franco in uniform inaugurating the event.<sup>13</sup> Note that this exhibition, intended primarily to have an impact abroad, implies a radical change in the artistic policy of the regime that until then had prized religious and traditional art.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, modern art that was until this time “simply regarded as a heresy” (Bonet 2002: 131) saw its destiny become more favorable because it allowed the promotion of the image of a modern Spain inserted into international artistic trends. The *Bienal Hispano-Americana de Arte* therefore integrated artists including Tapies and Millares from a vanguard which was then—in Spain—reborn from its own ashes (cf. *ibid.*).

Returning to the ties that bound political authorities to exhibitions, in post-war Italy the *Venice Biennale* brings forth important identity issues. Created at the end of the nineteenth century and then incorporated in the artistic and cultural policy of the fascist regime, the Biennale enabled the young republic to revive the pre-fascist tradition while marking a clean break with the Mussolini regime,<sup>15</sup> making the presence of the highest authority of the new State essential. Thus, after a break of six years the *Venice Biennale* is held in 1948, the same year as the proclamation of the Republic, therefore becoming not just a “super-exhibit for the Italian State internally but also an instrument of its propaganda toward other nations” (Monnier 1994: 12) Indicative of the importance of the event, the main national news, *SETTIMANA INCOM*, produces four reports on the event. Its first story focuses on the inauguration and on the presence of the president of the Einaudi Republic and then shifts attention to Venice and its architectural beauties, concluding with the proclamation that “[t]oday Italy rejoices that its president is re-establishing the indomitable tradition of art, as witnessed by these palaces” (*SETTIMANA INCOM* 162, June 10 1948).

The second story (*SETTIMANA INCOM* 165, June 23 1948), entirely devoted to the Italian pavilion, reviews the artists through their works com-

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13 The sound from these two subjects of 1951 is lost, therefore we do not know the commentary that accompanied these images.

14 The main artistic subjects of the NO-DO during the 1950s and 60s also cover this type of art.

15 This is however difficult because in the immediate post-war period the very idea of ‘Italian culture’ was linked to fascism and therefore treated with suspicion (cf. Corgnati 2011).

mentated rapidly. The third (SETTIMANA INCOM 166, June 24 1948) is devoted entirely to the retrospective of expressionist painters. Finally, the fourth newsreel (SETTIMANA INCOM 167, June 30 1948) focuses on the exhibited works of Braque and Kokoschka and offers a didactic and explanatory commentary. The duration of these four newsreels is relatively long, sometimes with reports of more than two minutes, which emphasizes the importance which is given to the event even stronger.

It goes without saying that in this mechanism to recover symbolic capital by the state, the anchoring on national territory of an international event fills an important role. In this sense, the coverage by the NO-DO of the *Biennial Hispano-Americana de arte* presented a paradigmatic situation. While the event always is held in Spain and in a Latin American country, the NO-DO reports only what took place in Madrid in 1951 and Barcelona in 1955 and ignores events in Havana in 1954 (cf. Bravo 1996). Generally, it seems that the organization favors the artistic and cultural news unfolding in its national territory. According to a statement made in 1955 by Rafael R. Tranche, it follows that the theme of ‘industry’ is represented by 17 Spanish and 17 foreign reports; the theme of ‘cinema’ by six Spanish and three foreign subjects; and the theme of ‘attractions’ by eight Spanish and 30 foreign reports. In contrast, the theme of ‘Art and Crafts’ scores largely in favor of national events—twelve Spanish to only two foreign reports— while the theme of ‘Culture’ totals thirteen national and two foreign reports (cf. Sánchez-Biosca/Tranche 2000: 109).

Within the logic of presenting Spain then as modern and open to the world—and assisted in this endeavor by an improving international situation<sup>16</sup>—the NO-DO relays the third *Biennale* in Barcelona 1955 by lingering on the American presence at the event and concludes with the comprehensive representation of all the artistic trends, from the realist school to “more modern manifestations of painting”.<sup>17</sup> Following the same logic of openness to the modern world, the newsreel deals simultaneously with the

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16 In 1953 an agreement was signed with the USA for the stationing of American troops in Spain and in 1955 Spain joined the UN.

17 NO-DO 667, October 17 1955. The construction of the subject is similar to that of 1951 but it only exists in edition “A”. Also noteworthy is the fact that Franco is in civilian clothes this time.

inauguration by Franco of the SEAT factory, and publishes these two stories under the single title “*Industria y Arte*” [Industry and Art].

## FROM PEDAGOGICAL ACTION TO SHARED EXPERIENCE

Through the media, events covered become popular symbols because they enter the framework of common referents. This process also allows the creation of a specific form of sociability around the event in question, while being outside of the latter. The newsreels, by virtue of the national value given to them and their way of presenting themselves as being politically neutral, grant an additional form of legitimacy to the events that they portray. In the immediate post-war period in Europe, this power was shared only with the radio, and would be shared with television some years later.

Beyond the media coverage on art news that they offered, the newsreels also took part in the very inclusive activity of cultural mediation in enabling the public to better ‘meet’ the art. Indeed, by the choices that they make and especially by the comments that they include, the newsreels assume a role of ombudsman as well as the aura of neutrality which usually accompanies such activity (cf. Caune 1995: 18). This aspect of ‘mediation’ is also perceptible in the newsreels of different European countries during the 1940s and 1950s. Although the newsreels devoted a significant share to the official and social sides of the demonstration, they include almost systematically a section devoted to the exhibited works. This section takes the form of a quick review which is always accompanied by an explanatory commentary.

The principle of the exhibition itself offered a defined arrangement, perhaps designed for a certain purpose, but the effects of which cannot be totally predictable. Unlike the newsreel which offers a ‘closed’ reading away from any contingency,<sup>18</sup> the exhibition remained a space where meanings were subject to a wide spectrum of interpretations.

Beyond this focus and the invariable approach proposed by the media, the exhibits themselves experienced a redefinition of their function with an emphasis on the interpretation of works. In this perspective, there are at-

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18 The concept of contingency in an exhibition context refers to the infinite possible interpretations of the subjects presented (cf. Lévi-Strauss 1962: 39-47).



tempts to represent the exhibition space as a place where the meanings are not pre-established and where the contingency can operate. This position corresponds with the willingness to rethink the cultural policies in 1960s Europe, particularly in France. In fact, André Malraux, then France's Minister of Culture, proposed a new policy based more on the artistic experience than on an educational position,<sup>19</sup> by focusing on the personal and subjective perception and by the renunciation of a unilateral reading given by the institutional context. Among the foundations of this policy reside positions such as "we do not educate a man eager to grow" (Pierre Moinot quoted in Urfalino 2004: 88). This focus on experience is based on the idea that art is able to transcend itself to transmit its meaning to the public.

A sign of this change in relation to art may also be perceived in the newsreels. For example, the German newsreels treat the *documenta II* in 1959<sup>20</sup> in a manner which seems to appear to break with the strict pedagogical directions towards a homogenous interpretation given before. In the UFA WOCHENSCHAU<sup>21</sup> the pedagogic discourse and the presence of officials disappeared in favor of a report showing the public 'experimenting' with the exhibition: a young man scrutinizes a statue while a woman plays with an abstract structure. In Italy, this change is also visible in the coverage of the *Venice Biennale* in SETTIMANA INCOM. While it dealt with this topic in a very educational manner in 1958 (SETTIMANA INCOM 1666, June 19 1958), during coverage of the next *Biennale* in 1960 (SETTIMANA INCOM 1936, June 22 1960), this changed radically. Far from the official tone used previously, the newsreel becomes more ironic and leaves room to experiment by moving away from the educational principles used previously.

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19 Cf. Services of studies and research of the Department of Cultural Affairs (1970): Aspects of French Political Culture, UNESCO, Cultural policy: studies and documents, Paris, p. 12.

20 The *documenta I* has not been addressed at all by the German newsreels.

21 UFA-WOCHENSCHAU 155, July 14, 1959. This title succeeds WELT IM BILD in August 1956.

## INTERNATIONALITY AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

As specified at the outset, the newsreels showing art exhibitions do not reproduce the exhibition itself but propose a kind of derivative of it. With their specific format, their own editing and their national broadcasting, the newsreels offer avatars of exhibitions at the same time as they report on them. Without acknowledging that the press behind the newsreel entirely reorders the event, the news items it produces cannot be understood and analyzed only as sources simply restituting the event. Coming back to this practice, the newsreels appear sometimes to have very close links with the State, and for this reason were unlikely to deviate from the official discourse. For this reason, the newsreels must be considered to be independent research subjects rather than adequate sources to write the history of art exhibitions.

For the period taken into consideration, this principle appears to provide an appropriate tool for analysis. On the one hand, considering the tendency to refer to national values—exhibitions are protected with their artistic content by the banner of internationality—the newsreels can release a discourse favorable to the state protected from accusations of nationalism. On the other hand, the avatar resulting from the convergence of newsreels and exhibitions allows both, to report and interpret the exhibition, all the while integrating a broader discourse of identity politics.

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# Jean Tinguely & Le Corbusier in Swiss Weekly Film Newsreels and Television

Medial Rhetorics—Medial Discourses

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KORNELIA IMESCH

Ever since the first screening on 1 August, 1940, the nation's birthday, of SWISS WEEKLY FILM NEWSREELS SWN [SCHWEIZER FILMWOCHENSCHAU SFW], a newsreel meant as a "camera against Hitler and fascism" (cf. Ladame 1997), art and culture have played a decisive, and often commercially relevant, role in the constitution of national identity in the framework of "Spiritual Defense" geared towards "conservation as well as promotion of culture" [Kulturwahrung und Kulturwerbung] (cf. Etter 1937).<sup>1</sup> As a rule, the significance of economized esthetics and cultural production has been closely accompanied by technological and scientific progress and innovation. In the broadcasts analyzed for this research, this has resulted in a functional understanding of art. For example, in a report from 13 December 1968 (no. 1339.1/2), the "good form" of the artist Max Bill (Erni 1983) was

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1 On this question in the context of the Swiss weekly film newsreels cf. the NSF-project of Sigrid Schade, ICS/ZHdK, and Kornelia Imesch, UNIL, mentioned in the Introduction of this book. For the Swiss newsreels in general cf. the Introduction and cp.: Gasser 1978/79: 3-67; Fränkel 2003; Sutter 2000; Imesch/Lutz/Lüscher 2011. For the concept of the Spiritual Defense conceived by Philipp Etter (1937) cf. Bretscher-Spindler 1997: 10-12; Amrein 2007: 105-123; Ladame 1997.

presented as an analogy to the “good form” of highway construction (see Figs. 1 and 2).

*Fig. 1 & 2: Kunsthaus Zurich, Exhibition Max Bill, SCHWEIZER FILMWOCHENSCHAU, no. 1339.2, 13 December 1968 (left); Highway N1, Zurich-Winterthur, SCHWEIZER FILMWOCHENSCHAU, no. 1339.1, 13 December 1968. (right).*



Sources: MEMORIAV

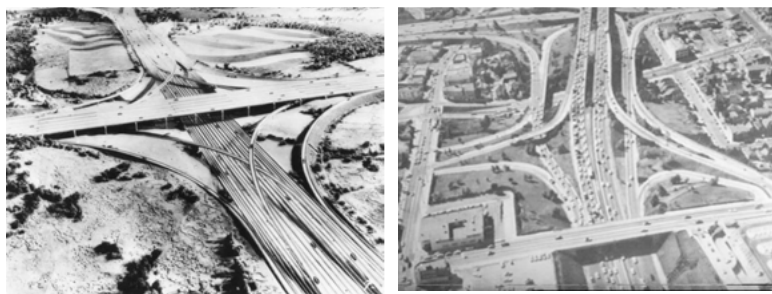
This is not the sole instance of analogization through the use of a symbolical montage that has become an integral part of the Swiss “grand récit” of the functionality of beauty and the beauty of functionality (cf. Imesch 2010: 141-156). A further twist of this analogization is inherent to the construction of highways, which was inspired by the visions of legendary designer Norman Bel Geddes in his spectacular *Futurama* presented at the General Motors pavilion of the World Exhibition in New York in 1939.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the large-scale American vision can be seen as having been translated into a small Swiss reality (see Figs. 3 and 4) in a newsreel report from 4 October 1963 (no 1083.3) whose audiovisual reflection, up to the early 1950s, was monopolized to a large degree by SWISS WEEKLY FILM NEWSREELS.

Starting in 1953, however, this monopoly of the audiovisual sector in Switzerland was undermined by the introduction of public television (cf. Mäusli 2012), whose filmic style and news-broadcasting soon rivaled that of the newsreels. This rivalry culminated in a cessation of the older medium in 1975—despite repeated attempts to reform the newsreel from 1970 on-

2 For the *Futurama* and the highways in general cf. Albrecht/Bel Geddes 2012; Smith Wergeland 2013; for the highways in Switzerland cf. Heller/Volk 1999.

wards under the new chief editor Hermann Wetter (1970-1973) and Peter R. Gerdes (1973-1975). These reforms even included experiments with the “magazine-like” style of television, often realized during this time by young Swiss film directors (cf. Schärer/Sutter 2000: 10-11). This essay will explore the full extent of the aforesaid medial rupture, which was much more than a mere technical change based on scientific innovation.

*Fig. 3 & 4: Norman Bel Geddes, Futurama, General Motors pavilion, World Exhibition, New York 1939, detail (left); Mensch und Planung, SCHWEIZER FILMWOCHENSCHAU, no. 1083.3, 4 October 1963 (right).*



Sources: Archive of the Author (left), MEMORIAV (right).

## **SPIRITUAL DEFENSE, NATION OF WILL AND THE MEDIUM’S RHETORICS**

SWISS WEEKLY FILM NEWSREELS, which were conceived as a “Biopic” of Switzerland (cf. Imesch 2011: 227-230), conjured the already mentioned functionality as an almost Aristotelian esthetic ethics, or an ethical esthetics. According to Charles Cantieni, the chief editor in 1963, this sensibly lay midway between what he called the (still) flashy German weekly newsreels, the DEUTSCHE WOCHENSCHAU, and the (far too) veristic Italian weekly newsreels INCOM (cf. Cantieni 1963: 135-136).<sup>3</sup> Therefore, regarding

3 Before Charles Cantieni who was chief-editor of the Swiss Weekly Newsreels between 1 September 1961 and 31 December 1966, his predecessors were Paul



rhetoric, they opted in line with the Swiss conceptually non-hierarchical, median, conception as “Nation of Will” (Ernest Renan)]—for a “median style” and presented themselves—so Cantieni again—as a “filmed newspaper” that understood itself to be a “mirror” of the country (cf. Cantieni 1963: 137, 138).<sup>4</sup> In the words of the then operator Franz Vlasak, this “mirror of the country” in service of the “Invention of Switzerland” (cf. *Die Erfindung der Schweiz* 1998) functioned along the lines of the concept of filmic hybridization built on the so-called reconstructed authenticity (cf. Vlasak 1956) and a combination of the genres of documentary and feature film which make the newsreel medium so genuinely distinctive.<sup>5</sup> This was accompanied by commentaries—preserved by MEMORIAV, Berne, in the three national languages of Switzerland—that, as a rule, are characterized by an impetus towards morality and educating the masses which was—in the Swiss context—completely in line with the medium’s function and message as a medial product of the aforementioned “Spiritual Defense”. However, quite often this impetus was somewhat weaker in French and Italian versions and commentaries than in German ones. In the 1950s and 1960s, the educational impetus inherent to German versions was, as in the first years after 1945 in German Newsreels, emphasized through the voice-over—which, in terms of tonality and austerity, did not differ much from the voice-over in war times. The patronizing, moralistic tone and impetus were further accentuated by the signet of the SCHWEIZER FILMWOCHENSCHAU.

Regarding topics in art and culture which could be presented in the desired style—and here I am speaking about the period between the 1940s and the early 1960s—SWISS WEEKLY FILM NEWSREELS constitute an impressive audiovisual medium. The Swiss appropriation of the newsreel medium is based on an intriguing mix of characteristics of newsreels aimed at up-to-dateness, sensationalism and commercialization, and Swiss pragma-

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Alexis Ladame (1.8.1940-15.10.1944) and Hans Laemmel (15.8.1944-31.8.1961). Cf. Schärer/Sutter 2000: 1-10.

4 For the rhetorical styles cf. Göttert 1991.

5 Franz Vlasak in the *Seeländer Volkszeitung*, Biel, 6 Januar 1956: “Die Wirklichkeit braucht Regie. Es passiert viel in unserem Lande, aber selbstverständlich nicht immer, wenn wir dabei sind, oder in einer Form, die sich für Aufnahmen eignet. Das ist der Grund, dass 60 bis 70% unserer Aufnahmen rekonstruiert gefilmt werden müssen.” Vlasak quoted after Schärer/Sutter 2000: 8.

tism—resulting, in all aspects, in a typically Swiss de-emphasis of anything too spectacular.

But who were the artists that most caught the attention of the newsreel producers? What was the applied style of presenting art-related topics in newsreel productions for which, over many years, an unchanging editorial staff and film crew was responsible? And how did television present the same or similar topics in daily news shows or local news reports? What was the line of argument of each medium expressed in visuals or “film language”, content, or commentaries?

These questions, which were one of the principal topics of the aforementioned research project,<sup>6</sup> are here tackled by looking at reports about the artist Jean Tinguely, born in 1925, and the architect Le Corbusier, born in 1887.

## **LE CORBUSIER AND JEAN TINGUELY IN SWISS WEEKLY FILM NEWSREELS AND IN TELEVISION**

What united the much younger Tinguely and the older Le Corbusier was that although being born in Switzerland, they both had great careers abroad. Furthermore, from an early age, they each made conscious use of media images—both in the form of photography and film (cf. Hahnloser 1999; Herschdorfer/Umstätter 2012; Hultén 1988)—for promoting their careers, building up their images, and their personal brands (see Figs. 5 and 6). They were also both their own theorists, especially Le Corbusier (cf. Benton 2007). The latter, an especially active promoter of the self, the “I”, even strived, by choosing his own photographers, for near total control of his

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6 Cf. Note 1. These questions cannot be in the foreground of this essay. Summarily answered, the research results proved that several of the most visible artists in Swiss art history like Max Bill, Hans Erni or Jean Tinguely are also treated in different reports of the Swiss Weekly Newsreels and gained in this audiovisual medium a great importance. Beside this we have a great number of male artists again which are treated in reports that are not or only little known today which shows us a second or different “History” of Swiss Art History. Not much importance was granted to architects and even less to curators who are known today, like Arnold Rüdinger or Harald Szeemann.

private and public image. Both artists thus demonstrated awareness of the power of contemporary mass media in deciding what entered social discourses and what entered the collective cultural memory.

*Figs. 5 & 6: Le Corbusier in front of a plan of the Cité radieuse, 1930s (left); Jean Tinguely with his Méta-matic no. 12 in Paris, 1959 (right).*



Sources: Archive of the Author (left), Robert Doisneau, photographer (right).

With the benefit of hindsight, however, their conscious use of these media did not always turned out in their favor, such as Le Corbusier's failed interview with the TAGESSCHAU of SWISS TELEVISION on 5 November 1961.

In addition to their worldwide fame, these artists' work shares an 'up-to-dateness' recognized by both the newsreel medium and television, which served to promote the image of Switzerland abroad. However, both media started to report on these artists at a rather late point in their careers. This is partly due to the fact that at that time, Tinguely and Le Corbusier mostly worked abroad—Le Corbusier even taking French citizenship. I will first concentrate on reports about Le Corbusier.

Le Corbusier's functional, rational, and eventually expressive understanding of architecture (cf. Cohen 2013) was well suited to the so-called

“grand récit” of Switzerland as an esthetic-ethical construct informed by a functional esthetics. This “grand récit” combined innovation in engineering and construction with great novelty in architectural and artistic conceptualizations. Therefore, it is not surprising that the last house designed by Le Corbusier, the *Centre Le Corbusier* in Zurich, got full coverage by both newsreel and television (see Fig. 7).

*Fig. 7: Le Corbusier, Centre Le Corbusier, Zurich, 1967.*



Source: Archive of the author

In a number of broadcasts between 1957 and 1971, both media reported on Le Corbusier, who died in 1965, regarding his work in the fields of architecture, painting, and urban design in rather general terms. In addition, there are many reports exclusively focusing on the posthumously (1967) inaugurated *Centre* in Zurich. The German-speaking television station reported on it in five separate broadcasts in the *TAGESSCHAU* and in three contributions of a local news magazine. The four reports by the newsreel medium resemble their television counterparts regarding some aspects of their style or contents. In this article, I take a closer look at newsreel number 1280 from 22 October 1967 that reports on the construction of the Zurich Corbusier Center, newsreel number 1177 from 3 September 1965 about the archi-

tect's passing away, as well as the TAGESSCHAU report from 28 August 1965 and the local news report from 25 May 1966 about, again, the *Centre Le Corbusier* in Zurich.

All of these broadcasts honor the international reputation of the architect and even characterize him as “a prophet not heard in his own country”. They also single out the novelty of his last building, which was based on the principle of pre-fabricated, modular construction that featured a self-supporting roof which was, in terms of statics, completely separate from the rest of the building. As these constructional innovations are a continuation of techniques found in Switzerland in the construction of multi-level buildings before the 1960s, they receive similar treatment in newsreel and television reports. Interestingly, this pre-fabricated, modular style of construction was, in the same period, often explained to the public in analogy to innovations in highway construction, another domain of special importance for the Swiss *grand narrative* of this period (cf. Imesch 2010). Notably, the TAGESSCHAU was able to react to the architect's death a week earlier than the newsreel medium. This demonstrates one of the newer medium's greatest advantages: its up-to-dateness. In addition, television was able to adopt filmed material from newsreels, filmed in 35mm—whereas reversed borrowing was impossible due to television's formatting in 16mm.

By comparing newsreel clips from 1966 to further broadcasts of the TAGESSCHAU or the local news magazine by the German-speaking television station at the occasion of the inauguration of the *Centre Le Corbusier* in Zurich in 1967, remarkable differences regarding filmic and journalistic strategies become apparent. Let us look at the media's differing treatment of polemics circulating in Zurich around the building's construction. One of the most prominent polemical instances is a gender issue revolving around the female owner of the building: Heidi Weber, owner of a gallery and vendor of design furniture “dared” to set the final stepping stone into the architectural legacy of Le Corbusier, an architect treated as a god in the international architecture scene. While the newsreel report lightly maneuvers around the polemics related to this case, the television report directly tackles the polemics and tries to address possible reasons for it—an endeavor supported by filmed material from various angles. Whereas the newsreel uses commentaries from the off, television combines off-commentary with interviews in which Heidi Weber explains her motives at great lengths. This is in keeping with television's desire to deliver background information and

to ascribe authenticity to the report by incorporating comments from the people directly involved. Finally, the television reporting style differs from that of newsreels in a greater use of different camera perspectives, representing symbolically different points of view, and in length. For example, the broadcast of the local news magazine about the *Centre Le Corbusier* from 1971 is three times as long as the equivalent newsreels clip, which was three minutes long.

The different approaches to filmic and journalistic presentation found in newsreels and television become even more apparent in clips about Jean Tinguely and his anti-constructive, anti-functional oeuvre. Importantly, Tinguely's kinetic and interactive machines introduced fun into the hallowed halls of museums (cf. Fuchs 2012: 210-243; Imesch 2015: 227-243). His noisy, rusty, and function-less machines and objects put an end to the esthetic ethics and the ethical esthetics of the Swiss "grand récit". His objects, with which the viewing public was invited to interact, undermined the cultivated etiquette to which visitors to art museums ever since the 19<sup>th</sup> century had been trained: keep quiet, do not touch, just contemplate (cf. Bennett 1995). The "Jack-of-all-trades", who in Paris of the late 1950s became famous overnight, already around 1960 and shortly thereafter achieved international fame due to his happenings and art objects: in the patio of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, in the Nevada desert, in the boulevards of Paris, in the piazza in front of the Dome in Milan or in the sky over Düsseldorf, in Japan as well as in Switzerland, in museums just as in art galleries, and finally at the national exhibition in Lausanne—the Expo 64—with his machine sculpture *Heureka* (cf. Imesch 2014: 257-269).

1960 marks the beginning of an eight-report broadcasting spree about Tinguely in the SCHWEIZER FILMWOCHENSCHAU. The last of these reports was produced in 1972, under Hermann Wetter who, as already mentioned, took over Charles Cantieni's position in the beginning of 1970. From roughly the same time until 1981, the German-speaking Swiss television station produced a total of eleven reports focusing on Tinguely—in the programs TAGESSCHAU, BLICKPUNKT, and the local news magazine, the REGIONALMAGAZIN, all of them more or less beneficiaries and new medial versions of the SCHWEIZER FILMWOCHENSCHAU reports.

As mentioned before, coverage of Tinguely further highlights the differences in filmic and journalistic strategies of the two mass media: the reports in the BLICKPUNKT or REGIONALMAGAZIN of the Swiss-German tele-

vision station again differ from the WOCHENSCHAU reports in terms of their longer running time, which allowed for a more thorough presentation. Tinguely is introduced in the television reports as an exponent of an alternative Swiss art scene that sets new challenges for audiences. By means of a varied cinematography, spectators are introduced to his works, accompanied by off-voice commentaries as well as explanatory clips from interviews—which, however, never attempt to provide critical guidance for judging the visuals. Mostly, the tone is kept neutral. The filmic, journalistic style tries to be documentary or attempts to almost philosophically interrogate this weird machine art.

The journalistic approach of the SCHWEIZER FILMWOCHENSCHAU report about Tinguely differs from the television reports in another sense—which, of course, can be explained in part by the characteristics of the genre and its specific conditions for production and distribution. The coverage oscillates between, on the one hand, an understanding of art as a socially relevant instrument for education—in the sense of a traditional documentary format which Hans Cürli in the 1920s coined the term “Hands that create” (Kreimeier et al. 2005). On the other hand, the coverage is informed by an interpretational move inherent to the newsreel genre that equates non-understanding with non-sense. In keeping with this understanding, an early report from 1960 first opts for an ironically bent interpretation and social localization of these novel objects. Commentaries from the off state that this Swiss artist “mocks the deadly seriousness of the machine age”. Even though the works, in the mentioned reports from 1960, no. 937, and 1972, no. 1497, are presented in great detail with the help of varied panorama shots and close ups, as well as labels such as “senseless, ugly machines” in combination with cinematographic staging which places them in a context of carnival, turbulence, and noise. Perhaps not surprisingly, the audience in the aforementioned report of 25 February 1972 mainly consists of children and women unconcerned with male modes of devotion (see Fig. 8).

The same report accentuates the depreciation and negative interpretation of both this art and its audience by staging the report in slapstick manner. This reading is likewise supported by the title of the report “Leerlauf plus Schrott = Erfolg”—which translates into “Tickover plus junk equals success”. This mode of critiquing and staging of then contemporary art is replicated in a report of 1971 regarding the newly founded art fair “Art Basel”.

*Fig. 8: Exhibition Jean Tinguely, Kunsthalle Basel, SCHWEIZER FILMWOCHENSCHAU, no. 1497, 25 February 1972.*



Source: MEMORIAV

## **MEDIAL DISCOURSES—MEDIAL IDEOLOGIES**

The audiovisual mediums and especially the new medium television, grown out of a post-war-society, had, as the up-to-date media, complex consequences for discursive argumentation and form. They thus constituted the socio-political discourses (cf. Sieber 2014), its changed dialectics and underlying ideologies; and this also and in manifold ways remains the case in the field of art reports today (cf. Borer 2013).

While the SCHWEIZER FILMWOCHENSCHAU, produced normally in black and white, can partly be seen as the product and the medial defender of a teleological, sacralized mono causal state dialogue, the new and younger medium of television, first produced in black and white, was after 1968 produced in the visually attractive and vivid format of color, marked a changed discursive manner of audiovisual transmission of information and their inherent ideologies. This medial change was intimately linked to different dispositional knowledge presentation due to or as a consequence of deep social changes in the Swiss and Western societies of the 1950s, 1960s



and 1970s,<sup>7</sup> thereby anticipating and preparing for changes in the political system which were—in Switzerland—recognizable only after the crisis of the Swiss state at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the context of the so-called “Token Affairs”, the Swiss state crisis of the end of the 1990s. Media changes are therefore understandable and prolific in their potential as “media caesura” (“Zäsur der Medien”, [cf. Tholen 2002]), and as part of a complex negotiating and emerging of newly becoming communities.

Other aspects point in the same direction in the context of the SWISS WEEKLY FILM NEWSREELS which—as newsreels worldwide—in the postwar period began to lose their importance as a medium of information and entertainment. This becomes understandable through another truism, that media only continue to exist if their discursive and audiovisual characteristics keep adapting to social and ideological changes. The conceptualization of the SWISS WEEKLY FILM NEWSREELS as a medium that “mirrors” a Switzerland shaped by myths (Marchal 2007) and modernist stereotypes of functionality and rationality, in absence of problems and ruptures, finally proves to be a medial “dinosaur” that capitulates when faced with more recent artistic and social developments which occurred in the Helvetic art and architectural field since the 1960s.

This can also be seen in a report on the last day of the 1964 Expo. In this report, Tinguely’s machine sculpture *Heureka* (see Fig. 9) one of the main attractions of the national exhibition in Lausanne, is interpreted as either “a nuisance or a joke”. Despite calling *Heureka* an “unmasking machine”, thereby acknowledging its successful challenge of the exhibition’s main ideology of “good form”, the report’s positive commentary gets immediately neutralized. The camera hectically moves away from *Heureka* and focuses on the monorail, then on the military pavilion of the architect Jan Both, standing for a well-fortified country, and finally on the “Path of Switzerland”, all of them exemplifying the “good form” at the basis of this Expo and of the construct of a Switzerland ruled by order and rationality. The report’s commentary remains therefore seemingly oblivious that this national exhibition in Lausanne is at the same time a swan song of exactly such a myth. Instead, the filmic montage places Tinguely’s machine sculp-

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7 For this changes in the Swiss society cf. also Imhof/Kleger/Romano 1996; Linke/Tanner 2006.

ture near the rollercoaster and hence reinforces an association between the two.

*Fig. 9: Jean Tinguely, Heureka, National Exhibition Expo 64, Lausanne.*



Source: MEMORIAV

Thus, despite the report's initial praise of the unusual work, the gigantic rusty monolith is ultimately interpreted as being pure tickover. However, what literally *did* tick over was the Swiss weekly film newsreel, whose production ceased in 1975. Government-funded reporting on art and culture was now exclusively handed over to television.

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# Fiction and Newsreel Documentary in Godard's Cinema

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PIETRO GIOVANNOLI

## DOCUMENTARY AND FICTION. AN EMBLEMATIC LEGEND

There is a legend that Godard would have been one of the special guests in the live broadcast of the Moon landing on the First National French channel (ORTF1) and that he would have pretended that the world-wide televised images were just a really convincing fake (“ce direct est un faux”; “ce qu’on voit c’est un film monsieur”).<sup>1</sup> These phrases, which presumably were never uttered by Godard—who, in his most violent Marxist-Maoist period, would have been a very unlikely guest for such an event—are nevertheless emblematic of the close relationship that Godard’s cinema maintains with both *fiction* and *documentary* or—more specifically to the subject of our volume—to *newsreel cinema*. A dozen years later the successful mission of the Apollo 11, Godard, guest of Jean-Luis Burgat at the live tap-

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1 Guillas 2009, Hansen-Løve 2010. Following Karel 2003: 5, Godard would have expressed his doubts in the “journal de TF1”. – In an interview with A. Fleischer (director of *MORCEAUX DE CONVERSATIONS AVEC JEAN-LUC GODARD*), when asked if “Le commentaire de Jean-Luc Godard sur la non-vérité de l’homme sur la Lune est-il confirmé?” Fleischer answered “Godard est capable de toutes sortes de provocations, y compris sur des thèmes plus graves. On a parlé même d’une certaine forme de négationnisme chez lui. Dans ce cas, il pourrait en effet nier l’homme sur la Lune, puisque cet homme est américain” (Fleischer 2009).

ing of the 7 SUR 7 (a daily TV show on air between 7 and 8 PM), commenting on some footage of the third part of the weekly news that presented images from European space missions, provocatively asked: “Pourquoi c’est complètement flou toutes ces images, ...toujours?” When Burgat candidly answered “Parce que elles viennent de très loin”, Godard sceptically objected: “Ouais mais avec la technique [...] Moi je pense que c’est truqué, c’est des maquettes faites par Lucas... ça c’est pas vrai”.<sup>2</sup>

More than fifteen years earlier, in a 1967 interview shot by Jean-Paul Savignac for the first national channel, Godard affirmed that his job, if he had lived in the future, would have been “Cameraman sur la lune, faire le journal de bord d’une fusée, la télévision d’une province, que cette province soit Perpignan ou Vénus” (CHRONIQUES DE FRANCE). In the same year, also evoking journalism and the Moon, Godard had already reflected about fiction and cinematic mimesis, making Jean-Pierre Léaud say in *LA CHINOISE* [1967]<sup>3</sup>—reversing the famous equation by Truffaut—that Lumière was a painter, the last impressionist, while Méliès was the real documentary-maker:

Guillaume: Camarades et amis, aujourd’hui je vais vous parler des actualités.

Audience: On sait ce que c’est. On en voit au cinéma.

G: Oui mais justement, il y a une idée fausse qui circule à propos des actualités au cinéma. On dit que c’est Lumière qui a inventé les actualités, ou que lui faisait des documentaires, alors qu’à la même époque il y avait un autre type, s’appelait Méliès, dont tout le monde dit que lui faisait de la fiction, donc qui était un rêveur qui filmait des fantasmagories. Et moi je pense justement que c’est le contraire [...] et il y a un film de M. Henri Langlois, directeur de la Cinémathèque, sur Lumière, et ce film prouve que Lumière était un peintre. C’est à dire qu’il filmait exactement les mêmes choses que peignaient les peintres contemporains de son époque... des gens come Pissarro, Manet ou Renoir, [...] il filmait des gares, il filmait des jardins publics, il

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2 Some footage from this broadcast is present in Michel Royer’s 1999 documentary *GODARD À LA TÉLÉ*. “Lucas” is probably George Lucas, creator of the space opera franchise *STAR WARS*. In this case Godard offers an alternative director to the moon hoax conspiracy theories according to which the fake moon landing was shot by Stanley Kubrick (see for example *OPÉRATION LUNE*).

3 Léaud’s speech, as we can read on the blackboard that stands behind him, is called “Problèmes d’information: Pour une TV républicaine”.

filmaït des sorties d'usines, il filmaït des gens qui jouent aux cartes, il filmaït des tramways.

A: Il était un des derniers grands peintres impressionnistes de l'époque ?

G: Oui, oui, exactement c'était un contemporain de Proust, quoi. [...] ... Méliès, Méliès qu'est-ce qu'il faisait par là? Méliès, lui, il filmaït le voyage sur la Lune, Méliès avait filmé, il filmaït, il filmaït... la visite du roi de Yougoslavie au président Fallières... et maintenant avec le recul du temps on s'aperçoit que c'était vraiment ça les actualités de l'époque, [...] c'étaient peut-être des actualités reconstituées, dans la manière dont il les faisait, mais c'étaient des véritables actualités. Et je vais même plus loin, je dirais que Méliès, lui, était brechtien [...].<sup>4</sup>

Léaud's affirmation, which underlines the tension between *fiction* and *documentary*, is symptomatic of Godard's cinematic devices. The misunder-

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4 I offer a raw translation: Guillaume: "Comrades and friends. Today's topic is newsreels." Audience: "We know them: we see them daily at the movies." G: "Yes, but there's a false idea about current events at the movies. They say Lumière was the first to film current events, that he made documentaries. But meanwhile there was also Méliès, who is said to have made fiction, that he was thus a dreamer filming fantasies. I think just the opposite. [...] and I saw a film by Mr Langlois, the director of the Cinémathèque, about Lumière which proves that Lumière was a painter. He filmed the same things painters were painting at that time, men like Pissaro, Manet or Renoir. [...] He filmed train stations. He filmed public gardens, workers going home, men playing cards, [...] he filmed trams." A: "Had he been one of the last great Impressionists?" G: "Exactly, a contemporary of Proust. [...] Now, what was Méliès doing at that time? He filmed a trip to the moon [...] Méliès filmed the King of Yugoslavia's visit to President Fallières. And now, in perspective, we realise those were the current events. [...] They were re-enacted, alright [...] Yet they were the real events. And I'd even affirm that Méliès was like Brechtian." A partial transcription of the English translation is available in Witt 2013: 23: "Lumière, they say, is documentary, and Méliès is fantasy. But today, what do we see when we watch their films? We see Méliès filming the reception of the King of Yugoslavia by the president of the Republic. A newsreel, in other words. And at the same time we find Lumière filming a family card game in the manner of *Bouvard and Pécuchet*. In other words, fiction". The same idea had already been expressed in Godard 1966 and in many other interviews.



standing is not in fact eliminated but only repeated in its inverted form: the diverted formula conserves the theoretical main sense, namely the fleeting separation between *documentary* and *fictional* material. Godard's cinematographic praxis is indeed not attributable to such a dichotomist system, being very often a representation of the world that confounds the simple recording and the elaborated *mise en scène*. In the mid 1980s, in beginning to work on HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA, Godard affirmed: "Tous les grands films de fiction tendent au documentaire, comme tous les grands documentaires tendent à la fiction. [...] Et qui opte à fond pour l'un trouve nécessairement l'autre au bout du chemin" (Godard 1998: 144). Already in the 1960s Godard had observed that he wanted "to do research in the form of a spectacle". "The documentary side", he wrote, "is: a man in a particular situation. The spectacle comes when one makes this man a gangster or a secret agent" and that "reportage is interesting only when placed in a fictional context, but fiction is interesting only if it is validated by a documentary context" (Milne 1972: 192).

## **GODARD'S JOURNALISTIC CINEMA UNTIL 1967 AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FRENCH CULTURAL IDENTITY**

The first movie directed by Godard was a 16-minute black and white documentary about the construction of the Grande-Dixence dam, at that time the highest in the world. Entitled OPÉRATION "BÉTON" [1954] and produced by Actua-Films Genève, the movie was sold to the Compagnie de la Grande-Dixence (the company which was holding the dam), allowing Godard to earn a living for almost two years. Exalting French technology and innovation, OPÉRATION "BÉTON" is a documentary which inscribes itself in the field of the national newsreel cinema, and, in July 1958, the short subject was released in France along with Vincente Minnelli's THÉ ET SYMPATHIE. Four years before directing OPÉRATION "BÉTON", Godard, in an article about the Russian cinema of propaganda published in the *Gazette du Cinéma*, remembered the fascination he had for the newsreel medium: "Un après-midi, à la fin des Actualités Gaumont, nous ouvrons les yeux de plaisir: la jeunesse communiste allemande défilait à l'occasion de la fête du

1<sup>er</sup> mai. [...] Par la seule force de propagande qui les animait, ces jeunes gens étaient beaux” (Godard 1950).<sup>5</sup>

After making *OPÉRATION “BÉTON”*, Godard did not direct another traditional documentary,<sup>6</sup> but we can affirm that apart from this first attempt, his whole cinematic work places itself in the space of ambiguity between fiction and documentary. From his first short movies, and even more starting from his revolutionary first long feature *À BOUT DE SOUFFLE* [1960], the cinematic work of Godard presents a strong journalistic component both technically and thematically. Speaking about Angéla, the main character of *UNE FEMME EST UNE FEMME* [1961], a movie shot in part with the actors being prompted through earphones in interviews (cf. Sterrit 1998: 13; 37), Godard admitted that “she does not distinguish between documentary and fiction, just like me” (Beverly Ray 2001: 114); a few years later, asked if he was more concerned with making movies or social commentaries, he answered “I see no difference between the two” (Youngblood 1968: 32).

*LES CARABINIERS* [1963], a screen adaptation of the theatre piece by Beniamino Joppolo, was shot on Kodak double X negative stocks in order to create a newsreel effect, in order to mix and confuse the staged scenes with real war fragments.<sup>7</sup> Similarly to make it appear more “hyper-realistic”, *LE PETIT SOLDAT* [1960] was shot on Agfa Records, a very sensible film mainly used in photographic journalism, and already experimented by Godard’s photograph, Raoul Coutard, in the reportages he had produced for *Life* and *Paris Match* in the 1950s (Leutrat 2005: 45). In the movie, the main actor, Bruno Forestier, ironically states: “La photographie c’est la vér-

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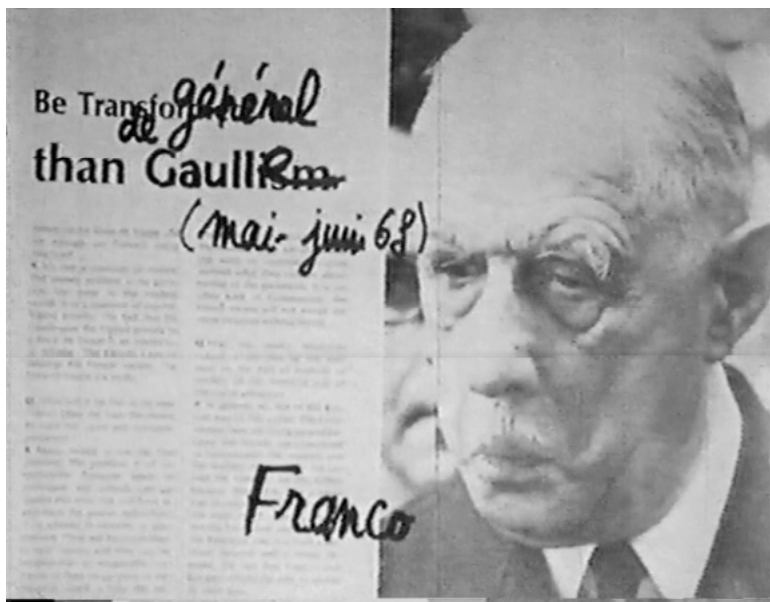
5 Translation by Milne 1972, 16: “One afternoon towards the end of a Gaumont newsreel, my eyes widened in pleasure: the young German Communists were parading on the occasion of the May Day Rally. [...] Purely through the force of propaganda which animated them, these young people were beautiful”.

6 Among the partial exceptions, *UNE HISTOIRE D’EAU* [1958] and the TV series *FRANCE / TOUR / DÉTOUR / DEUX / ENFANTS* [1979].

7 “The ‘staged’ sections of *LES CARABINIERS* were duped several times over in the laboratory until all the greys and shadings were destroyed, and the ‘fictional’ footage achieved the same verisimilitude [sic] as the old newsreels” (Dixon 1997: 35). The same “realistic” reconstruction attitude is destined to the sounds superposed to the silent newsreels: all the weapons and battle noises are real and come from the objects represented in the frames (Godard 1965).

ité. Et le cinéma c'est vingt-quatre fois la vérité par seconde"—and maybe Godard has been influenced by the young Kubrick's "photographie style 'actualité' [the newsreel-style camerawork]" (Godard 1958). Censored for three years and released only in 1963, *LE PETIT SOLDAT* is one of the few films from the 1960s that deals with the "unacknowledged" war of Algeria. Playing with the ambiguity between politics and terrorism, the movie was rejected by both left-wing and right-wing intellectuals, and Godard, answering in the *Cahiers du Cinéma* some negative critiques, observed that "le film doit témoigner de l'époque. On parle de politique, mais il n'est pas orienté dans le sens d'une politique" (Godard 1962).<sup>8</sup> Some years before, speaking about *LE PETIT SOLDAT*, Godard said: "Le sujet n'est pas un sujet actuel mais un sujet d'actualité" (Godard 1960), probably referring to the journalistic "actualités".

Fig. 1: JLG, Still from *Ciné-Tract* n. 7



8 See also Gilliat 1976: "There are films on politics and there are political films. [...] The films on politics records activity, but they are not part of that activity".

VIVRE SA VIE [1962], Jean-Luc Godard's fourth film, was based on a journalistic account of prostitution in France (cf. Sacotte 1959), probably echoing Samuel Fuller's UNDERWORLD U.S.A. [1961], a movie inspired by a series of articles published in *The Saturday Evening Post*. Some years later, 2 OU 3 CHOSES QUE JE SAIS D'ELLE [1967] ("elle" being, together with other entities, the Parisian Region), concentrates itself again on the description of prostitution and living in the conglomerations of the suburbs of Nanterres and La Corneuve (already portrayed in LA CHINOISE), again inspired by a report (cf. Vimenet 1966). These movies are often constructed in a paratactic structure, each fragment bearing a number or an intertitle, and already for À BOUT DE SOUFFLE, shot in newsreel-style with a handheld camera in real location scenes [1960], Godard's style of cinema incorporated the idea of the movie as a chaotic litmus paper of society. In fact, scenario and plot are, in À BOUT DE SOUFFLE, only the frame for depicting a couple of young rebels in the early 1960s. Even more, À BOUT DE SOUFFLE—with its minimalistic juxtaposed semi-narratives scenes—is both, as Godard himself affirmed, a documentary about Jean-Paul Belmondo and Jean Seberg in a Godard movie, and, as observed by Sadoul, a "vision de Paris" (1975). Similarly, MASCULIN FÉMININ [1966], shot by the talented documentary/newsreel cinematographer Willy Kurant, is a generational portrait of French youth of the mid-1960s,<sup>9</sup> while WEEK-END [1967] is defined by a ti-

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9 The advertisements for MASCULIN FÉMININ, a feature mainly composed by semi-real interviews with young non-professional actors, list some of the *actualités* presented in the film: "le sexe et la jeunesse de la France d'aujourd'hui" (Poster, Bergala 2006: 307); "les disques | le Vietnam | le cinéma | les élections | les appareils à sous | les syndicalisme | la pilule | le coca-cola | les noirs". (Small notice, Brenez 2006: 17). When asked by Caleb Deschanel: "At the end of *Masculin/Féminin* Paul realizes that all the questions he's been asking as a poll-taker have been false. What does this mean to his ideology? Is he questioning his Marxist ideology as a result? What is it in the interviews that makes him realize this?" JLG answered: "It was simply a critique of poll-taking which is currently very popular in France. All the French magazines have begun to imitate the United States by running statistical polls. What I'm trying to say is that a public opinion poll doesn't have meaning unless there's also a criticism of the values on which it rests. If you're trying to examine public opinion about Ford automobiles and if you're paid by Ford, you'll obviously go about it in a very

tle card as a film spanning from “la révolution française” to “les weekends UNR”.

Godard, who made the pop-art collage a cinematic technique, wishes that cinema could embrace the largest possible range of things, and, above all, depict society in all its aspects, especially the problematic ones. In an article published in 1967 he declared:

“D’ailleurs, si j’ai un rêve, c’est de devenir un jour directeur des actualités françaises. Tous mes films ont constitué des rapports sur la situation du pays, des documents d’actualité, traits d’une façon particulière peut-être, mais en fonction de l’actualité moderne. [...] On peut tout mettre dans un film. On doit tout mettre dans un film. Quand on me demande pourquoi je parle ou je fais parler du Vietnam, de Jacques Anquetil, d’une dame qui trompe son mari, je renvoi la personne qui me pose cette question à son quotidien habituel. Tout y est. Et tout y est juxtaposé. C’est pourquoi je suis tellement attiré par la télévision. Un journal télévisé qui serait fait de documents soignés, ce serait extraordinaire.” (Godard 1967)

MASCULIN FÉMININ: 15 FAITS PRÉCIS, which a title card names “Les enfants de Marx et de Coca-Cola, comprenez qui voudra”, mixes interviews with actors and real people. Deleuze, assuming some of Godard’s statements, observed that “dans MASCULIN FÉMININ, l’interview fictive des personnages et l’interview réelle des acteurs se mêlent si bien qu’ils semblent se parler les uns aux autres, et se parler pour eux-mêmes, en parlant au cinéaste” (Deleuze 1985: 201). Some years before, Godard himself had already affirmed:

“J’ai toujours navigué entre le documentaire et la fiction dans lesquels je ne fais aucune différence ou dont je me sers pour décrire... décrire ça ; toujours osciller entre deux choses ; le cinéma étant quelque chose qui oscille d’un pôle à l’autre et dans le film lui même, mettre des pôles, indiquer des pôles et osciller à des tas d’endroits. [...] J’ai toujours essayé que ce qu’on appelle le documentaire et ce qu’on appelle la fiction soient pour moi les deux aspects d’un même mouvement, et c’est leur liaison qui fait le vrai mouvement.” (Godard 1980: 168)

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different way than if you were paid by someone else. In a sociological poll you have to be very careful what questions you ask, because they are often influenced by the situation and society you’re living in.” (Youngblood 1968: 39).

Even if *MASCULIN FÉMININ* is a fictional movie inspired by documentary, it is probably the first “cinematographic essay” by Godard. The director does not aspire to make *cinéma-vérité* and does not aim to produce “direct” documentary, but rather approaches this form with the objective of deconstructing its language and revealing its apparatus. Godard’s “*cinéma-vérité*”, with its high degree of construction—fictional, but filmed as reality with an *esprit du direct*—is thus opposed to the “fake reality” of the newsreel and the documentary. Godard is not a naturalistic artist and the strength of his movies comes from transforming the everyday into an artistic creation through abstraction. Edgar Morin observed that:

“Jusque-là, on pensait que l’au-delà de la fiction était le documentaire, et que l’au-delà du documentaire était le film de fiction. Ici, avec *MASCULIN FÉMININ*, nous sommes en même temps au-delà du réalisme de fiction et du *cinéma-vérité* documentaire, c’est pour moi la première réussite de ce cinéma-essai qui depuis des années se cherche.” (Dauman 1989: 194)

Godard’s films are in fact metalinguistic movies more linked with the journalistic language than to an objective reality. To describe the “amphibious realism” of the first long features directed by Godard, scholars and journalists have spoken of “poetic documentary”, of “cinematic essay”, of “documentary *ciné-vérité*”, and so on. The point is actually the metalinguistic construction of Godard’s cinema, which in the early and mid-1960s was intended as a critical description of society: France and its media, seen clearly as a product of the Americanization of Europe. If the cinematic language used by Godard is often linked with journalism, it is also true that this language is deconstructed and that the viewer is almost always reminded of its apparatus via the presence of technical voices in the backgrounds, clapperboards, etc. In other words, with his “newsreels” Godard constitutes a national identity in the sense that this philosophical-linguistic deconstruction is conducted in order to reveal the “spectacle” and give France a cinematic language which could escape the American boundaries, above all politically but also aesthetically.

In 1966 Godard also shot *MADE IN USA* and the following year he directed *2 OU 3 CHOSES QUE JE SAIS D’ELLE*, movies described during the shooting as *actualités*. Godard observed, stimulated by those two “news reports” movies that:

“All my films derive from intimate connections with the country’s situation, from news documents, perhaps treated in a particular way, but functioning in relation to contemporary reality.” (Regard 1966, translated in Lesage 1983: 54)

LOIN DU VIETNAM [1967], shot after 2 OU 3 CHOSES, was a collective effort directed by Joris Ivens, William Klein, Claude Lelouch, Agnès Varda, Chris Marker, Michèle Ray, Alain Resnais, and Godard. It was shot in Vietnam, Cuba, the U.S. and Paris during the spring of 1967. The project, initiated and edited by Marker and composed of personal segments attributed to each filmmaker, represents a violent anti-American indictment of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Answering a question about his efforts in making FAR FROM VIETNAM, Godard remembered that “It was like making a newsreel and Chris Marker was the editor-in-chief [...]” (Youngblood 1968: 20). Godard’s sequence, entitled CAMÉRA-OEIL (aka VIETNAM/GODARD), also directly evokes the newsreel via the voice of the actor/director himself, who, framed manipulating a Mitchell camera, observes that as a French independent filmmaker he was not even allowed to enter Vietnam, while on the other hand if he had been “un cameraman de la télévision du réseau ABC de New York ou de San Francisco, [...] un cameraman des actualités soviétiques”, he would have been given permission to shoot scenes of Vietcong bombed by U.S. airplanes.

Even if Godard had already addressed the Algerian conflict in LE PETIT SOLDAT and the Vietnam War in PIERROT LE FOU, and had already filled its screenplays with famous literary and political quotations, it is from the shooting of LA CHINOISE and LOIN DU VIETNAM that Godard begins to show serious interest in the political movements around the world, such as the Vietcong Party and the Chinese cultural revolution. Between 1968 and 1970—years marked by a militant third-worldism and by the research of “situations concrètes”—Godard visits London, Cuba, the U.S., Québec, Czechoslovakia, Italy and Palestine. Godard’s flirt with Marxism and Maoism really began during the summer of 1968, but LA CHINOISE [1967] and LE GAI SAVOIR [1968],<sup>10</sup> already fully political, introduced his radical turn

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10 LE GAI SAVOIR was co-produced by ORTF, but after the movie has been completed the TV channel refused Godard’s feature, and it was also censored in French cinemas. LOTTE IN ITALIA [RAI, Dec 1969] and BRITISH SOUNDS

prophesising the events of May 1968 and expressing an explicit and vehement critique to the Western contemporary society. At the *Los Angeles Free Press* conference of March 8 1968, answering Toby Mussman's question about what he thought "of the New American Cinema, or the so-called underground" and if there was an equivalent in Europe, Godard observed:

"To me, [...], the term 'underground' is silly, because the only true underground in the world today is North Vietnam. Instead of underground, I would prefer a term such as 'Third World Cinema'. Why? Well, because to me the underground is to the cinema of Hollywood what the new revolutionary politics is to established order." (Youngblood 1968, now in Sterritt 1998: 11)

Two years later, after having visited the U.S. to shoot a political movie, his judgement about the American underground cinema became more critical: in April 1970, after having decide not to edit his American movie, he declared to Andrew Sarris that the Newsreel Group's cinematic methods were incorrect, because

"They shot nothing but the standard CBS stuff – cops beating up students, the students retaliating. Just like a network series. Not even with Jerry Rubin's sense of humor. But a revolutionary filmmaker doesn't merely show a strike. He explains what is behind it." (Sarris 1970: now in Sterritt 1998: 55-56)

## **GODARD'S MILITANT CINEMA AROUND 1968 AND THE CRITIQUE OF THE CINEMATIC LANGUAGE OF JOURNALISM**

The 17th of May 1968, Claude Berri, Milos Forman, Macha Méril, François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard, embracing the cause of the May '68 revolution, removed their movies from the 21st annual Festival International du Film of Cannes, causing its sudden end on the 19th of May at 12 AM, five days before the official closing ceremony. Godard, from the stage

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[LWT, Feb 169] are others projects refused at the end by the respective commissioner TV stations.



of the Grand Salon, explained that the strike was more than symbolic, denouncing the fact that:

“Il n’y a pas un seul film qui montre des problèmes ouvriers ou étudiants tels qu’ils se passent aujourd’hui, il n’y en a pas un seul, qu’il soit fait par Forman, par moi, par Polanski, par François, il n’y en a pas. Nous sommes en retard. Nos camarades étudiants nous ont donné l’exemple en se faisant casser la figure il y a une semaine.” (Godard 1998: 50)<sup>11</sup>

While Godard was making this speech at Cannes, students from Paris asked Chris Marker to join the increasingly revolutionary action by shooting agit-prop movies that spoke to the current social upheaval, which were ignored if not criticised by the official national information. In answer, on the 19th of May 1968, *Les États généraux du cinéma* was formed, uniting approximately 1,500 people, professionals or those not in cinema, with the aim of “faire politiquement des films politiques” [“making political the political films”]. Resnais, Truffaut, Marker and Godard, among others, took part in the May 1968 action by filming political short movies called CINÉ-TRACTS or FILM TRACTS.

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11 A video of the speech is available at <http://fresques.ina.fr/festival-de-cannes-fr/fiche-media/Cannes00254/festival-de-cannes-mai-1968.html> [June 15 2016].

Fig. 2: *JLG, Still from Ciné-Tract n. 12*



Black and white three-minute movies, almost always silent, CINÉ-TRACTS were often composed of photos or stills with taglines and subtitles.<sup>12</sup> Produced by SLON<sup>13</sup> with the aim of immediate diffusion, the tracts, for a total of more than hundred works, were compiled in 16mm reels to be sold at the production cost (which at the time was fifty French francs) and widely dis-

12 Each of the CINÉ-TRACTS should have consisted of 100 feet of 16mm black and white silent film shot at 24 FPS, equalling a projection-time of 2 minutes and 50 seconds. As the cutting was normally being done at the time of shooting (this technique was imposed by a collective choice), CINÉ-TRACTS were not post-produced in the editing room. The director was expected to self-produce, self-edit and be the cinematographer, ensuring furthermore that each film was shot in one day. As in Marker's *LA JETÉE* [1962], these films rely almost exclusively on stills rather than documentary video footage, approaching the form of a didactical photo-story composed of images and texts.

13 Société pour le Lancement des Œuvres Nouvelles, named ISKRA [Image Son Kinéscope et Réalisations Audiovisuelles] from 1974.

seminated. Shot in the spring of 1968, the tracts were screened in student assemblies, factories and political action committees. Due to the filmmakers' anonymous approach to the ciné-tracts project, as well as the collaboration between directors, technicians and amateurs, the CINÉ-TRACTS do not include any information to identify who made them. Despite the anonymity, though, we can often detect the hand of a particular director: in the case of Godard, identification is made easier by the presence of his distinctive cursive handwriting: at least eleven CINÉ-TRACTS exhibit Godard's calligraphy on the title cards or directly upon the images themselves.<sup>14</sup>

*Fig. 3: JLG, Still from Ciné-Tract n. 40*



14 The titles of the FILM TRACTS n. 7-10, 12-16, 23 and 40 are written by Godard's hand and present the same lettering, except n. 16, which has been presumably written faster, and with a different marker. Those titles are written on boxes of Eastman Double-X 7222 films, the one used by Godard to shoot his tracts, except n. 23 and 40, written on two boxes of Eastman 4-X negative 7224 reels.

Together with the special issue *FILM TRACT N. 1968*, the tracts we know to have been shot by Godard are numbers 7-10, 12-16, 23 and 40. The graphic political art produced throughout the May '68 revolts frequently used text as a means of *détournement*, the repossessing of an image for different ideological, political or artistic purposes than that for which it was created, a term originally devised by Isidore Isou and the Lettrists and then by Guy Debord and the Situationist International. This technique is attained by textually inscribing an image to reflect revolutionary ideology or subvert its originally imposed meaning, and other times contrasting binary images to produce an imaginary third one: "Take a photo and statement by Lenin or Che, divide the sentence into ten parts, one word per image, then add the photo that corresponds to the meaning either with or against it" (Godard 1968).<sup>15</sup> Godard's works with the *CINÉ-TRACTS* is in a genre that should be informational and documentary (thus near to the newsreel), but his personal contributions are not at all. They differ from the more traditional militant messages of 1968 because their pragmatic aim is not just agitation or counter-information. Godard's tracts, indeed, show not reality but, with techniques often very close to those of visual poetry, constitute a philosophical critique of the language of the power not so far from the "semiological guerrilla", widely theorized the previous years by, among others, Umberto Eco (1967) and McLuhan ([1964] 1995).

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15 A similar revolutionarily elementary approach to images and words is also evoked in Sarris (1970: 58): "Godard explained the austere aesthetic of *SEE YOU AT MAO* [1970] in terms of an interesting dialectic of image and sound: 'I keep my image simple as opposed to Hollywood' (Hollywood for Godard is virtually everything except Godard and Mao.) 'Hollywood provides many images and not enough sound, many pictures but few words. We in France saw nothing of Algeria on television, but the Word was powerful enough to mobilize us against the Algerian War. Here in America, you see many images of Vietnam on television, but few words to explain the situation. Even the slogan 'get out of Vietnam' is completely out of date because Nixon is carrying the war to Laos and Cambodia. It's better to have no images than too many. The Chinese don't have millions of books like us. They have only one, and that's all they need'".

Fig. 4: JLG, Still from *Ciné-Tract n. 40*



FILM-TRACT N°: 1968 (often called *LE ROUGE*), a special issue of the tracts series, is a cinematic version of a poster created by Gérard Fromanger during the Ateliers Populaires de l'École des Beaux-Arts workshop, out of which came the most famous graphic symbols of May '68 (cf. Fromanger quoted in: Brenez 2001: 335-338). After a handwritten title (on a page of *Le Monde* with the title "Contestation" underlined!), the first frame is completely red, then the zoom out shows that the red is paint being slowly poured over a white surface. The zoom out continues, showing the red paint spreading on the white and the blue stripes of a three-colored French flag canvas laying on some newspaper; then the film zooms back in to the flag, which, centered in the photo-frame, appears in its final immobility (the credit "Réalisation technique Gérard Fromanger, Jean Luc Godard" ends the tract). The symbolic political value of the revolutionary red covering the other surfaces is here obvious.

1968 is also the restless year in which Godard, together with Jean-Pierre Gorin, founds the *Group Dziga Vertov* (GDV), a Marxist collective devoted to the creation of revolutionary movies. Concerning the collective's name,

we should remember that an opposition between “fathers” similar to that between Méliès and Lumière was also applied to the figures of Eisenstein and Vertov.<sup>16</sup> The two, treated almost as opposite poles, embodied, for Godard the two directions of cinema, Eisenstein representing the “artistic” form (and consequently a reactionary bourgeois product), and Vertov the “materialistic” and avant-gardist, therefore militant and progressive, cinema. In an interview given to Kent E. Carroll in 1970, Godard explained the symbolism of Vertov’s name:

“The group name is meant to indicate a programme, to raise a flag, not just to emphasize one person. Why Dziga Vertov? Because [...] he was a really Marxist moviemaker [...] He wasn’t just an artist. He was a progressive artist who joined the revolution and became a revolutionary artist through struggle. He said that the task of the *kinoki* was not moviemaking [...] but to produce films in the name of the World Proletarian Revolution.” (Carroll 1970, now in Brown 1972: 50)

Following Godard in the years 1968-1972, Eisenstein’s dialectic—trying via the editing to develop its revolutionary effect while remaining embedded in the traditional cinematic theatre—still represents a reactionary form of bourgeois dramatics “reconstruction”, while Dziga Vertov comes to revolutionize not just the contents of the cinema but its form itself (“*Voir et montrer le monde au nom de la révolution soviétique*”). Quoting Mao, Godard says in *LA CHINOISE* that:

“Nous exigeons l’unité de la politique et de l’art, l’unité du contenu et de la forme. L’unité du contenu politique révolutionnaire et d’une forme artistique aussi parfaite que possible. La seule œuvre qui manque de valeur artistique, quelque avancée qu’elle soit au point de vue politique reste inefficace. Nous devons, en littérature et en art mener la lutte sur deux fronts.”<sup>17</sup>

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16 Godard is, however, too much of an anarchist to center on a fixed theory, and the name of Eisenstein, outside the period around the GDV, is evoked more favourably.

17 See also *Godard 1967b. Mao’s speech, in English as follows*: “What we demand is the unity of politics and art, the unity of content and form, the unity of revolutionary political content and the highest possible perfection of artistic form. Works of art which lack artistic quality have no force, however progres-

This way of “making films politically” is more than a concern of aesthetics or production; it is also ideological, and Godard affirmed in 1972 that “a movie is not reality, it is only a reflection. Bourgeois filmmakers focus on the reflection of reality. We are concerned with the reality of that reflection” (Carroll 1970: 83). The militant movie proposed by Godard is opposed to the “film ‘Internationale’”, the archetypal Communist propaganda movies produced by Mosfilm, the Sovietic equivalent of Hollywood, judged to be “revisionist”.

“Il y a deux sortes de films militants : ce que nous appelons les films ‘tableaux noirs’ et les films ‘Internationale’, celui-ci qui équivaut à chanter l’Internationale dans une manif, l’autre qui démontre et permet à quelqu’un d’appliquer dans la réalité ce qu’il vient de voir, où d’aller le récrire sur un autre tableau noir pour que d’autres puissent l’appliquer aussi.” (Godard 1998: 348)<sup>18</sup>

The blackboard movies differ from traditional propaganda movies in that they avoid the Russian-American format of cinematic propaganda and deal with the construction of an active political thought, turning the film screen into an interface for consideration and debate rather than a medium for passive consumption.

The period which encompassed the end of 1968 and the Dziga Vertov Group is that in which Godard created a revolutionary cinema on the basis of political theory and militant journalism. The DVG movies demonstrate thus an internationalist interest in the foreign struggles. ONE AM [ONE AMERICAN MOVIE], the unfinished PBL 1968 project then produced, realised and edited by D. A. Pennebaker and R. Leacock, under the name ONE PM [ONE PARALLEL MOVIE] [1972], contained a long segment about the Black Panther Party (a secondary subject of ONE PLUS ONE [1968]). UN FILM COMME LES AUTRES [1968] shows discussion between French workers

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sive they are politically. [...] We must carry on a struggle on two fronts” (Tse-tung 1942).

18 I offer here my translation: “There are two kinds of militant movies: those we call ‘blackboard films’ and those known as International features. The latter are the equivalent of chanting *L’internationale* during a demonstration, while the former prove some theories that allow one to apply to reality what he has seen on screen, or in order to make others abide by it.”

and students, while the Palestine Liberation Front is portrayed in the never completed movie *JUSQU'À LA VICTOIRE* [1970]. The opening narration of *BRITISH SOUNDS* [1969], another TV commission about the political situation of workers in the UK, speaks about the new-born Godardean science of image, stating reference points such as the opposition of “documentaire/fiction”. Two other television commissions followed the same year: After *PRAVDA* [1969], shot in Czechoslovakia and commissioned by the National Party, and *LOTTE IN ITALIA* [1969], shot between Paris and Italy and commissioned by RAI, both of which were rejected by the respective productions. Frustrated with the situation, Godard told Andrew Sarris:

“We made a movie and they criticized it. It was a disaster, and we tried to find out why it was a disaster. [...] We are always learning. The important thing is to look at film from a political point of view rather than an individual point of view. Anyway, Czechoslovakia had been invaded by American tanks from United Artist long before the Russians came in.” (Sarris 1970, now in Sterritt 1998: 55)

After the flops of *PRAVDA* and *LOTTE IN ITALIA*, Godard and Gorin abandoned the anti-fictional format and returned to a Brechtian theatrical fiction to produce *LE VENT D'EST* [1970], the real manifesto of the GDV, which was followed by *VLADIMIR ET ROSA* [1970] and *TOUT VA BIEN* [1972]. The research on the medium was in any case not ceased and in 1973 Godard spoke of *TOUT VA BIEN* as “a white blackboard”:

“What you learn from *TOUT VA BIEN* depends on your background and your condition of life. We like to consider the screen as a blackboard, a white blackboard. On this blackboard we put three elements, three social forces, which are represented by three ‘noises’. The management, the voice of the boss; the CP voice; and the leftist voice – I don’t like to call it that, let’s say the voice of the far-out people. These are the three social forces at work in France today. We have taken those three noises out of reality. We didn’t invent them, we just assembled them in a certain order. In fact this movie is just a newsreel. In a way we summed up the last two years in France in an hour and a half.” (Koller 1973: 132)

“Enquête sur une image” (Godard 1972), presented to the reader of “*Tel Quel*” Godard and Gorin’s original French version of the fifty-minute speech contained in *LETTER TO JANE* [1972], the more cerebral GDV fea-



ture. The movie consists of a critical response to a newspaper photograph of Jane Fonda (who was the main actress in *TOUT VA BIEN*) talking to North Vietnamese people.<sup>19</sup> The movie is composed mainly of stills: the camera is set for long periods on the photograph, occasionally switching to other photos or movie stills, while Godard and Gorin discuss, among other things, the implications of Fonda's facial expression and why that photo was so widely distributed in European newspapers. One of the main theses of the contribution was "la nécessité pour le capital de masquer le réel au moment même où il le démasque" (Godard 1972: 81).

His experience as a Marxist revolutionary allows Godard to bring the revolution inside the cinema, undermining socialist realism. This is to say that Godard produces a counter-information that is not simply 'information against information' but also a critique of communication and information as languages. *LA CHINOISE*'s pressbook, distributed during its first screening in Avignon, presented a manifesto against the hegemony of American (and other majors countries') cinema:

"MANIFESTE. Cinquante ans après la Révolution d'Octobre, le cinéma américain règne sur le cinéma mondial. Il n'y a pas grand-chose à ajouter à cet état de fait. Sauf qu'à notre échelon modeste nous devons nous aussi créer deux ou trois Vietnams au sein de l'immense empire Hollywood, Cinecittà, Mosfilms, Pinewood, etc., et tant économiquement qu'esthétiquement, c'est-à-dire en luttant sur deux fronts, créer des cinémas nationaux, libres, frères, camarades et amis." (Godard 1998: 303)<sup>20</sup>

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19 *L'Express*, 31 July 1972. The photo appeared with the title: "Jane Fonda interrogeant des habitants de Hanoï sur les bombardements américains". See also Koller: RPK: "We think we can use videotape to communicate with people" JLG: "To communicate what? What kind of information? We can't speak of information per se, in heaven. In our still of Jane Fonda we have seen how in information there is a process. There is a very strong relationship between the cheapness and the cost of information." (Koller 1973: 131)

20 Press book for *LA CHINOISE*, 1967, reproduced in Benez 2006: 88, translation in Milne 1972: 243: "Fifty years after the October Revolution, the American industry rules cinema the world over. There is nothing much to add to this statement of fact. Except that on our own modest level we too should provoke two or three Vietnams in the bosom of the vast Hollywood-Cinecittà-Mosfilm-Pinewood- etc. empire, and, both economically and aesthetically, struggling on

To fight this tendency Godard proposes a kind of Cinematic International formed by the national cinemas in order to counter the imperialistic American civilization. For Godard, mainstream cinema has become an instrument of capitalistic power, a centralised imposition of a standard of ideologies, values and ideas:

“Le Centre [National du Film], c’est le kapo. [...] C’est un organisme politique nuisible à la fois à l’industrie et à l’esthétique du cinéma. C’est aussi ce qui fait que, même en Russie, le cinéma est devenu ce qu’il est... C’est bien un cinéma d’Etat, mais au plus mauvais sens du terme, dans la mesure où il a été nationalisé sur les idées mais pas sur la forme [...] Sans compter que là comme ailleurs, on importe ce qu’il y a de pire dans le cinéma occidental. [...] Si j’ai une définition du cinéma, c’est celle-là: le cinéma est devenu l’agit-prop du capitalisme.” (Godard 1967b: 26)

Visiting California the following year, he insisted: “I see no difference between Russian and American movies. They are both bad” (Youngblood 1968: 13).<sup>21</sup> The didactic aim of the blackboard movies was somewhat continued by Sonimage, a production and distribution company established in 1973 by Godard and his wife Anne-Marie Miéville and described by the former as “une société d’information. [...] Le but est de faire de l’information au sens large, allant plus vers la fiction que vers le documentaire. Etre un AFP du spectacle. Pour moi l’information ça serait cela” (Godard 1975: 11). The metalinguistic aspect that appeared in the early 1960s, denouncing the clichés and the language that composed the *nouvelle vague* cinema, became in the late 1960s the central discourse of the features, resurfacing in the television reports of the late 1970s.

One of the first products of Sonimage is ICI ET AILLEURS [1974], a reworked version of the footage of JUSQU’À LA VICTOIRE [1970], the never-completed GDV’s project documenting a PLO group. Even on this occasion, Godard calls into doubt the veracity of the film’s production demonstrating how he had manipulated his own footage, such as when he used a close-up to conceal the fact that a Lebanese woman, explaining how proud

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two fronts as it were, create cinemas which are national, free, brotherly, comradely and bonded in friendship.“

21 See also Godard’s observations on Eastern Communist cinema in Sterritt 1998: 21-22; 32; 55.

she was to be bearing a child that might one day reinforce Palestinian troops, was in fact clearly not pregnant. In 1976, Sonimage commissioned a TV-series of six double episodes to be shown on FR3 Sundays evening between 25 July and 29 August that year. The 600 minute-long TV program, shot in three months and entitled *SIX FOIS DEUX / SUR ET SOUS LA COMMUNICATION* [1976], was mainly focused on the relationship between medium and message, and aroused the interest of Gilles Deleuze, who was following Godard's experiments at the time and was inspired by his praxis.<sup>22</sup> Between the end of 1977 and the beginning of 1978, Sonimage presented *FRANCE / TOUR / DÉTOUR / DEUX ENFANTS*, another TV series composed of a dozen of episodes of about 26 minutes each. The twelve-part project for and about television, commissioned by ANTENNE 2 and produced in partnership with the Institut National de l'Audiovisuel, deals with philosophy and sociology. It offers a study of the effect of television on contemporary French families and is constructed around Godard's interviews with Camille and Arnaud, a young girl and boy representing the new middle-class French youth. In the same year, Godard and Miéville travelled to Mozambique on the invitation of the new independent government to advise the latter on the start-up of a national broadcast television system. Godard wanted to use the experience as raw material from which to produce a video project which was to be named either *NORD CONTRE SUD* or *NAISSANCE (DE L'IMAGE) D'UNE NATION* (cf. Fairfax 2010) and would deal with the problems of the new national approach to moving images.

JLG: "I [...] have a project [...] in Mozambique. [...] In Mozambique, the image is the raw material. [...] They're beginning TV there and are afraid of following the paths of everyone else. They have a small cinema institute, built on Cuban model, but it's too theoretical for Mozambique. The government wants to make the movies work in conjunction with TV, like brother and sister. So we have a two-year contract to go six or seven times to talk, study and make films. (Cott 1980, quoted in: Sterritt 1998: 95)

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22 A brief survey of Godard's relationship with contemporary French philosophy can be found in Giovannoli 2013.

## HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA AND THE NATIONAL CINEMAS

Summing up our short survey, if Godard started defining a national French identity via the bias of his journalistic-fiction movies, from the very beginning he questioned not only the system he was portraying but also the language of the information media itself. In his Marxist period, this critique attacked the globalized language of the US, bringing Godard's cinema in the direction of a new, autonomous national cinema.

Gavin Smith: "Yet your kind of filmmaking has always represented a counter-cinema."

JLG: "Today it *is* in fact against, but I don't worry about it anymore. When I'm making a big film. I don't say to myself, it's against this kind of Hollywood picture, this kind of French picture – it's just the picture I'm doing. I know that I'm definitely the opposition, but it's a big land, too." (Smith 1996, quoted in: in Sterritt 1998: 179)

In 1982, commissioned by the City of Lausanne on the occasion of its 150th anniversary, Godard shot the poetical-philosophical "documentary" LETTRE À FREDDY BUACHE [1982], but generally the 1980s represented for him a return to somewhat more mainstream narrative cinema. This period is marked by traditional fiction movies such as SAUVE QUI PEUT (LA VIE) [1980], PASSION [1982], PRÉNOM CARMEN [1984], JE VOUS SALUE, MARIE [1985], GRANDEUR ET DÉCADENCE D'UN PETIT COMMERCE DE CINÉMA [1986]. If the 1980s were marked by some attempts at fiction cinema, Godard never ceased to write articles and texts about the relationship between cinema, fiction, documentary and power.

At the end of the decade, after the experimental KING LEAR [1987], Godard returned to the newsreel and to explicit reflection on the cinematic language with HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA [1988-1998], an examination of the history of cinema and its relations with the 20th century as well as a critique of the 20th century and how society has perceived it through movies. This 8-part 266 minute video project, begun in the late 1980s and completed in 1998, demonstrates Godard's partially new attitude toward cinema. Unlike the journalistic-pop surveys of the early and mid-1960s, the didactic agit-pros produced after 1967 and the communicational essays produced by Sonimage, HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA represents a more placid and reflex-

ive discourse about cinema as *spectacle*. If the tracts were produced with the intention of demystifying medias and changing society, the four double episodes of HISTOIRE(S) were conceived to analyse the Western history of the 20th century through Western cinema production, and vice versa.

The first episode of the HISTOIRE(S), entitled “CHAPITRE UN (A) TOUTES LES HISTOIRES”, reproduces scenes of newsreels footages and obsessively refers to Nazism and the Holocaust. One of the first phrases of the film, “histoires du cinéma | actualité de l’histoire | histoires des actualités | histoires du cinéma | avec des s | des SS” (Godard 1999, 1a: 10),<sup>23</sup> connects the newsreel and the fiction cinema through emphasis of their usually common political goals. Katherine Dieckmann (1993: 66) observes a sequence of HISTOIRE(S): “gritty newsreel footage of war mingles with an image of the 20th Century Fox logo and its sweeping klieg lights, with the none-too-covert message that these forms of spectacle aren’t completely separate”.

Not only “tous les grands films de fiction tendent au documentaire, comme tous les grands documentaires tendent à la fiction” (Godard 1998: 144), but the power that produces Hollywood fiction (the consensus-maker of the capitalist system) is the same that constructs “la bataille de Bagdad | racontée par CNN | le triomphe de la télévision américaine | et des ses groupies (Godard 1999, 3a: 8).<sup>24</sup> Newsreel and cinema can be seen as the two faces of the same system, and are treated in similar critical and deconstructivist manners, having been picked up on one hand as an “evident proof” and on the other as fragments of a more complex syntax and meaning created by the collage-director himself. The cutting used to connect or oppose images (and sounds) is used in HISTOIRE(S) to show and demystify the inner ambiguities of cinema. In 1994 Godard wrote, clearly pointing to the Hollywood system: “La beauté, le maquillage. Dans le fond, le cinéma n’a jamais fait partie de l’industrie des communications ni de celle du spectacle, mais de l’industrie des cosmétiques, de l’industrie des masques, succursale elle-même de l’industrie du mensonge” (Godard 1994; cf. Godard 1999, 1b: 47). Great movies are for Godard those that allow a nation to truly “look at itself”, movies which analyse society and are not used to impose

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23 English translation in Godard 1999, 1a: 38 : “history(ies) of the cinema | news of history | histoires des actualités | histoires du cinema | with esses | with SSes”.

24 English translation in Godard 1999, 3a: 32: “[...] the battle of Baghdad | as told by CNN | the triumph of American television | and its groupies”.

thoughts from above. Godard's cinematic language and Marxist ideology are complementary, organised inside a critique of the American globalization of cinema. Even if HISTOIRE(S) is mainly focused on American, French, Italian and German cinema, its title, in a plural form, could also be directed towards the idea of a cinema seen from the point of view of plural nationalities.<sup>25</sup> But a simply "not-American" national cinema is not enough if it lacks truth, and indeed, Godard has never tried to produce a real civic cinema, also because, as he affirmed to MacCabe, the good movies produced after 1945 were a response to the need for the European nation to show "reality in a new way through a new form" (MacCabe 1992: 101). Also, evoking similar observations by Bazin and Deleuze, Godard says that:

"Movie-making at the beginning was related to the identity of the nation and there have been very few 'national' cinemas. In my opinion, there is no Swedish cinema but there are Swedish filmmakers – some very good ones, such as Stiller and Bergman. There have only been a handful of [national] cinemas: Italian, German, American, and Russian. This is because when countries were inventing and using motion pictures they needed an image of themselves." (MacCabe 1992: 98)

In this sense, the cinematic medium is a mirror with which one can look at oneself in order to discover, not only in a historical sense or in a diachronic way, but also through daily consumption, one's own, inner identity:

"[...] le seul film au sens de cinéma | qui a résisté à l'occupation du cinéma | par l'Amérique | à une certaine manière uniforme | de faire le cinéma, ce fut un film italien | ce n'est pas par hasard | l'Italie a été le pays | qui s'est le moins battu | qui a beaucoup souffert | mais qui a trahi deux fois | et qui a donc souffert de ne plus avoir d'identité | et s'il l'a retrouvée avec ROME, VILLE OUVERTE | c'est que le film était fait par des gens sans uniforme | c'est la seule fois | les russes ont fait des films de martyre | les américains ont fait des films de publicité | les anglais ont fait ce qu'ils font toujours | dans le cinéma | rien | l'Allemagne n'avait pas de cinéma | plus de cinéma | et le français ont fait SYLVIE ET LE FANTÔME | les polonais ont fait deux films

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25 In a monologue of *LE PETIT SOLDAT*, Michel Subor says: "C'est drôle, aujourd'hui tout le monde déteste les français. Moi je suis très fier d'être français, mais en même temps, je suis contre le nationalisme. On défend des idées, on ne défend pas des territoires".

d'expiation | [...] | et un film de souvenirs, [...] | tandis qu'avec ROME, VILLE OUVERTE | l'Italie a simplement reconquis le droit | pour une nation de se regarder en face | et alors est venue l'étonnante moisson | du grand cinéma italien." (Godard 1999, 3a: 12-14)<sup>26</sup>

During almost seven decades of making cinema, Godard has experimented with different forms of struggle with, or resistance to, the American globalizing cinema. This is particularly true from the decade after 1968, which had embraced the various national liberation fronts, then Vietnam and Palestine and afterwards the independent Québec, making a new critical kind of cinema not enslaved by national or nationalistic models but nevertheless capable to constitute free national identities, or a new "Cinematic Internationale". Even today, Godard's journalist-cinema, through denouncing the capitalist and globalised system and its refusal to deal with the features market, pitches in against American globalization, and by being therefore politically and cinematically anti-colonialist creates national movie resistances.

Gavin Smith: "What moments defined that fall [of the cinema as a medium, as described in GERMANY YEAR 90]?"

JLG: "The First World War and the Second World War. World War I was an opportunity for American cinema to beat French cinema, which at the time was more

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26 English translation in Godard 1999, 3a: 36-37: "[...] the only film in the cinema sense | that resisted the occupation of the cinema | by America | a certain uniform way | of making cinema, was an Italian film | it wasn't by accident | Italy was the country | that fought least | that suffered greatly | but that twice changed sides | and therefore suffered from loss of identity | and the reason it got it back with ROME, OPEN CITY | was that this film was made by people out of uniform | that was the only time | the Russians made films of martyrdom | the American made advertisements | the British did what they always do | in the cinema | nothing | Germany had no cinema | and the French made SYLVIE ET LE FANTOME | the Poles made two films of expiation | [...] | and a film of memoirs, [...] | while with ROME, OPEN CITY | Italy simply reconquered the right | of a nation to look itself in the eye | and there followed the astonishing harvest | of great Italian cinema." Godard is here dialoguing with André Bazin's essay *Le réalisme cinématographique et l'école italienne de la libération*.

powerful and well known. Pathé, Gaumont, Méliès; Max Linder was a huge star. The French were weak after the war, and it was a way for Americans to disembark in European cinema for the first time. And they had linked to German cinema. Half of Hollywood was filled with [Germans]; Universal was founded by Carl Laemmle. The Normandy beaches were the second invasion, World War II was a way to take Europe definitively. And now, as you see in politics, the way Europe is incapable of doing anything without the OK of the U.S. government, now in the movies America has taken control of the whole planet. So what was democratic in a lot of ideas disappeared at a time that I will study in my next [HISTOIRE(S) DU CINEMA] – a very specific time, with the fact of the concentration camp, that it was not shown [by cinema], it wasn't answered.” (Smith 1996, quoted in: Sterritt 1998: 180)

But HISTOIRE(S) adds to all that a new element, which is in reality—as the reference to ROMA, CITTÀ APERTA suggests—Godard's return to his neo-realist roots: the idea that the “poor newsreel cinema” could purify national cinemas, free them from their masked ideology and bring them back to truth:

c'est le pauvre cinéma des actualités | qui doit laver de tout soupçon | le sang et les larmes | comme on nettoie le trottoir | lorsqu'il est trop tard | et que l'armée a déjà tiré sur la foule || ce qu'il y a de cinéma dans les actualités de la guerre | ne dit rien | il ne juge pas | jamais de gros plans | la souffrance n'est pas un star | ni l'église incendiée | ni le paysage dévasté || l'esprit de Flaherty et celui de Epstein | ont pris la relève | et c'est Daumier | et c'est Rembrandt | avec son terrible noir et blanc || peu de panoramiques | une plongée peut-être | mais c'est parce qu'une mère | pleure l'enfant assassiné [...] || et si George Stevens n'avait utilisé le premier | le premier film en seize couleurs | à Auschwitz et Ravensbrück | jamais sans doute | le bonheur d'Elizabeth Taylor | n'aurait trouvé une place au soleil || trente-neuf quarante-quatre | martyre et résurrection | du documentaire (Godard 1999, 1a: 14 et seqq.).<sup>27</sup>

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27 English translation in Godard 1999, 1a: 42: “it's the poor news cinema | that has to wash clean of all suspicion | blood and tears | just as the pavement is swept | when it's already too late | and the army opened fire on the crowd || what there is of cinema in war newsreels | says nothing | it doesn't judge | never in close up | suffering is not a star | nor is a burned church | nor a devastated landscape || the spirit of Flaherty and that of Epstein | have taken over | and it's Daumier | and it's Rembrandt | with his terrible black and white || few panning shots | perhaps a



After so many years of criticizing the information media, a real declaration of love to the newsreel! In more recent years Godard continued to work with the newsreel form, emulating or integrating it in his cuttings, collages and superimpositions, as for example in ALLEMAGNE ANNÉ 90 NEUF ZÉRO [1991], DE L'ORIGINE DU XXIÈ SIÈCLE [2001], NOTRE MUSIQUE [2004], and in the third episode of FILM SOCIALISME, entitled NOS HUMANITES [2010], and in ADIEU AU LANGAGE [2014]. Because, in fact, if information and show are two sides of the same coin, it is within the “poor newsreel” that the apparatus is normally less present (or clearly exposed), permitting this humble form of identity construction to remain more pure than its more “fictional” counterpart. Furthermore, the raw material of the newsreel offers the cinéphile (and the historian) an analysis of “the interrelationship of films, national identity, and the construction of nationhood” (Witt 2013: 135), those relationships being obviously mutual.

For Godard, moreover, the newsreel format has also conserved the same “light” of the good old cinema of the 1930s through the 1960s, the poetry of a definitively lost world, which he strongly (at least cinematically) regrets. After all, in 1972, summing up his twenty years of critical and cinematic actions and prophesising the more than forty years that would have followed, Godard stated:

“Generally speaking, reportage is interesting only when placed in a fictional context, but fiction is interesting only if it is validated by a documentary context. The Nouvelle Vague, in fact, may be defined in part by this new relationship between fiction and reality, as well as through nostalgic regret for a cinema that no longer exists.” (Milne 1972: 192)

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high angle shot | but it's because a mother | is crying for a murdered child [...] ||  
and if George Stevens hadn't been first to use | the first sixteen millimetre colour film | at Auschwitz and Ravensbrück | there's no doubt that | Elizabeth Taylor's air of wellbeing | would never have found a place in the sun”.

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# Between Migration and Integration

Representing Religious Boundaries in Swiss

Documentaries

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## INTRODUCTION

Migration has been and continues to be fundamental to economical production and public services in Switzerland, yet it is also a hotly contested topic in both political and public discourse. In February 2014, for example, Swiss voters narrowly accepted—with 50.1 percent in favor—an initiative of the populist rightwing SVP (Schweizerische Volkspartei [Swiss People's Party]) Party to restrict immigration. Subsequent media discussion made evident the diversity of possible interpretations of this outcome, but undoubtedly the result of this debate was its expression of the discomfort certain groups felt about the number of immigrants—entering Switzerland every year. According to Swiss national statistics for 2013, 23.3 percent of the population does not have Swiss citizenship<sup>1</sup> and a total of 34.7 percent (including the 23.3 percent of the population without Swiss citizenship) are first or second generation immigrants, some of whom have been naturalized.<sup>2</sup> Public and cultural life in Switzerland mirrors these statistics, as im-

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1 [http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/de/index/themen/01/02/blank/key/alter/nach\\_staatsangehoerigkeit.html](http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/de/index/themen/01/02/blank/key/alter/nach_staatsangehoerigkeit.html) [June 15 2016].

2 <http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/de/index/themen/01/07/blank/key/04.html> [June 15 2016].



migration and cultural diversity both enrich and challenge Swiss society. Switzerland's multicultural character leaves distinct traces across cultural fields, including the media.<sup>3</sup>

In this chapter I explore the representation of cultural-religious identities in two Swiss documentaries, *BETWEEN TWO WORLDS* [ZWISCHEN ZWEI WELTEN] (Yusuf Yesilöz, CH 2006) and *OUR GARDEN EDEN* [UNSER GARTEN EDEN] (Mano Khalil, CH 2010). Both films were made by immigrants, and both address migration and religion, raising questions about the formation of identities and processes of integration and exclusion.<sup>4</sup> The films are discussed here as heuristic reflections on religion and identity under circumstances of migration.

In examining the interaction of religious identity, migration, and documentary film, I argue that questions of migration can be located within a variety of geographical, economic, and cultural spaces. Documentaries offer a specific form of cultural space for the migration event in which production, representation, and communication are intertwined. Filmmakers, social actors, and audiences become active protagonists in processes of migration as they draw and cross boundaries within notions of a "Swiss" and other cultures. They communicate with cultural-religious codes, linking production, representation, and communication together. Employing the concept of religious boundaries, I show how the migration of values and worldviews is reflected in documentaries and how this process provides a space in which cultural-religious identities are constructed and negotiated.

The analysis is divided into three parts that scrutinize the relationship between filmic representation of immigrants (cf. Hall 1997), immigrants' self-expression, and filmic discourse about immigrants (cf. Fiske 1987; 2011; Nichols 1991). First, I consider the social actors' religious back-

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3 <https://www.bfm.admin.ch/content/dam/data/migration/statistik/auslaenderstatistik/2013/auslaenderstatistik-2013-12-d.pdf> [June 15 2016].

4 I locate processes of identity formation within boundary-making theories (cf. Dahinden/Moret/Duemmler 2011; Sökefeld 2011; Wimmer 2010), noting how religion generates boundary markers. The boundary concept discussed here is rooted in the social sciences and analyzes two processes: one process describes how individuals connect with other individuals in order to create a sense of belonging to a specific group through inclusion, and the other process describes how individuals deal with exclusion from groups.

grounds and the use of religious markers in the filmic narration—the films are about Alevis and Muslims—asking how the films link religious references by migrants to Swiss religious, cultural, and political spaces. Second, by drawing into my analysis information about the films, directors, and production, I consider the documentaries' depiction, adaptation, and transformation of religion in context. And finally, I discuss how documentaries as communication spaces (cf. Odin 2012: 155 et seqq.) contribute at a theoretical level to filmic discourse about religion, migration, and integration in Switzerland.

## RELIGION IN THE MEDIA

This paper is framed by an approach that understands religion as a cultural phenomenon involved in multiple interactions with other cultural fields and therefore emphasizes the construction of religion in the public sphere (cf. Casanova 1994; 2008; 2009) and at various levels of communication (cf. Stolz: 2001a; 2001b). For their conception of religion, Fritz Stolz and Stewart Hoover link Clifford Geertz's anthropological approach (cf. 1966) to Niklas Luhmann's system-based approach (cf. 1998). Although specific criticisms of both approaches are certainly justified (cf. Assad 1993; Kippenberg/von Stuckrad 2003; Üehlinger 2006), in studies of media, communication theory provides a useful means of approaching religion (cf. Woodhead 2011; Krech 2012).

The use and processing of media reconstruct and transform symbolic systems within religion not only in the sense of interpreting but also generating ideas about the world (cf. Gladigow 2005: 34-39). This chapter considers such communication within religion by focusing on representations of religious identities in documentary media, supplemented by consideration of the two ends of these representations—production spaces and communication spaces. At each end we find protagonists with an active role in medial communication, as makers and consumers. Additionally the medium has its own fund of symbols and codes that can be used to address, process, and transmit ideas about cultural-religious identity. An understanding of religion that places communication at center stage links production and multiple communication spaces with levels of activity (cf. Krech 2012). These

points of reference mark out the framework within which religion and the media can be examined.

The topic of migration opens up three constitutive perspectives on religion in society. First, we can adopt an emic-practical perspective, according to which social actors, religious specialists, citizens and immigrants perform religious rituals, reflect on religion, and/or interact within religious communities. These participants express their own opinions about religion. Second, terms and concepts employed in the humanities and social sciences are indicative of an analytical-scientific perspective defining or offering heuristic tools how to work with or how to understand religion. And finally, journalists, filmmakers, photographers, artists and other media actors generate a third perspective, which can be defined as the media perspective: they write, report, and speak about religion and construct religious categories in their own ways, transmitted through the media. A fourth perspective comes into play through documentaries, as the connections between the emic-practical and media perspectives are engaged through the involvement of immigrants as directors, writers, and social actors. The differentiation of these four perspectives is a theoretical concept, which intersects, complements, and diverges in specific cases.

According to Stewart Hoover, research in the field of media and religion has taken two primary directions: (1) examination of the ways in which religious groups and traditions use the media in the practice of their religion and (2) investigation of the engagement of the media with religion (cf. Hoover 2005; Linderman 1997). In the Swiss documentaries discussed here, which were produced by or represent immigrants, the second approach is key: the films provide a space within which individuals and groups reflect upon religion, belonging, and identity. Contemporary life is increasingly complex; institutional means of orientation, such as specific churches, may be lacking in the immigrants' new environment such that individuals thus are left without the institutional support or control they had been used to.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, documentaries should be conceptualized as spaces in which producers and consumers can engage in an exchange about concepts of religious and cultural identity.

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5 See also the term "self-narratives" introduced by Marjo Buitelaar and Hetty Zock (2013).

## CONSTRUCTIONS OF IDENTITY IN BOUNDARY-MAKING PROCESSES

In the following discussion identity is understood not as a fixed concept but as something arising from processes in which social actors deal with varied affiliations (cf. Bochsinger 2012; Allenbach 2011; Faltin/Wright 2007). Stuart Hall refers to this conceptualization of identity in his paper *Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representations* (2004: 386-397), in which he underscores that “cultural identity” is created and refined through fragmentation, difference, and heterogeneity. In the “act of an imaginative re-discovery” (Hall 2004: 387), individuals produce an artificial unity that determines “their” cultural identity. This act can be understood as a practice and can be represented by and through different forms of (artistic) expression, such as documentaries. As Hall notes, identity is a matter of becoming: “Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation.” (ibid.: 388). That act of transformation can be described as an “imaginative re-discovery” (ibid.: 387) and is central to practices of identification, which are in turn processes that undergo continuous modification.

Like Hall, the Swiss anthropologist Andreas Wimmer underscores that boundaries between groups and ideas are constantly shifting:

“A boundary displays both a categorical and a social or behavioral dimension. The former refers to acts of *social classification and collective representation*; the latter to everyday networks of relationships that result from *individual acts of connecting and distancing*. On the individual level, the categorical and the behavioral aspects appear as two cognitive schemes. One divides the social world into social groups—into “us” and “them”—and the other offers *scripts of action*—how to relate to individuals classified as “us” and “them” under given circumstances. Only when the two schemes coincide, when ways of seeing the world correspond to ways of acting in the world, shall I speak of a social boundary”. (2008: 975)

With such an interpretation in mind, I discuss documentaries as a cultural practice through which boundaries can be drawn and negotiated. The social dimension of ‘belonging’ concerns individual acts of connecting and distancing while categorization addresses social classification and collectively shared representations.

Identity-shaping processes found in the media are varied and can involve individuals or communities and typically express tensions generated by sociocultural boundaries and demarcations. Narratives of migration are particularly striking when the perspectives of migrants are set alongside the perspectives of the indigenous population, as in the two examples considered here. We must recognize within the processes that shape identities both those which operate at the individual and collective levels, and the interaction of these levels, but we must also take care to distinguish between attributions to a self and to the other as another crucial aspect. If we talk about identity-shaping processes in the media the perspective from which such processes are communicated needs to be considered. The question of who is representing whom is central and frames the relation between production and representation.

As noted, this chapter sits at the intersection of religious identity and representation-focused documentaries. Also under our lens is the role played by religion and culture in documentaries, including the ways in which religious symbol systems provide orientation for subjects and communities. While religious and cultural affiliation can be understood as a means of disassociation, such affiliation can also be seen as a means of association, be it with individuals or groupings. These mutually-constituting and diametrically opposed practices, association and dissociation, are the principal practices of boundary-making processes. Boundaries therefore not only determine categories but are also socially- and behaviorally-constituted (cf. Wimmer 2005: 32-41). Audio-visual representations—and here specifically documentaries—provide a practical context in which theoretical definitions of religious symbols and elements, powerful boundary markers, are given form.

## **THE COMMUNICATION SPACES OF DOCUMENTARY MEDIA**

The concept of documentary media, which covers television documentaries, television reporting, reality series, documentary films, and educational films, is based on the semio-pragmatic model developed by Roger Odin (cf. 2000; 2002; 2011; 2012). This approach situates audiovisual media in tension with film and the communication spaces within which media function

(cf. Kessler 2002: 106). In place of the binary categories of fiction and non-fiction, semio-pragmatics posit a theoretical approach based on the variety of situations in which communication takes place, including a reception context that allows for a documentarizing reading. This reading is generated and steered both by clues within the media itself (internal reading instructions) and also by information provided by the medium's context (external reading instructions). The institutional context within which the audiovisual sources are distributed is an additional facet impacting the communication spaces of documentary media.

The two documentaries on which the following discussion focuses, *BETWEEN TWO WORLDS* and *OUR GARDEN EDEN*, were both co-produced and distributed by SRF, the Swiss national television channel. The institutional framing of these documentaries enables their official screening within publicly funded television programming. The Swiss national organization *Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung* [Education for Sustainable Development] and its German partner organization *Evangelisches Zentrum für entwicklungsbezogene Filmarbeit* [Protestant Center for Development-related Film] have provided pedagogical material related to *BETWEEN TWO WORLDS* for teachers' use in the classroom.<sup>6</sup> *OUR GARDEN EDEN* also received additional institutional support when it was awarded the European Media prize given by Civis in 2012. Civis holds that "to accept the ethnic, cultural and religious changes as reality and to positively shape them is one of the central tasks of the European societies and politics."<sup>7</sup> Recognition by an institution such as Civis fosters and defines *the communication spaces* in which the film might be received.

Odin refers to a semiotic tradition which underscores that each signifier does not refer to a stable, fixed, and signified world. Constraints such as political, sociological, psychological, or religious contexts will bolster specific interpretations. Distinct *communication spaces* recognize different contexts within which receivers are situated. We have, for example, institutionalized religious communication spaces alongside communication spaces determined by the documentary's spaces of production and representation. In the process of filmmaking religious codes pass from the space of produc-

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6 <http://www.filmeeinewelt.ch/deutsch/pagesnav/framesE4.htm?..pageswrk/52022a.htm&KA> [June 15 2016]

7 <https://www.civismedia.eu/index.php?id=9&L=1> [June 15 2016]

tion to the spaces of representation and communication, from where they can flow on in an extending process of cultural production.

Cultural-religious symbols and references incorporate a complex codification that relates to, indeed intersects with, other code systems in society. The result is a cultural tension in which values, habits, and practices meet or even collide. Building on Hall's critical evaluation of the encoding-decoding model (cf. 2006; Stevenson 2004), this chapter distinguishes between the diverse codifications of cultural-religious symbols. Codes function as links between producers and filmmakers, documentaries, and communication spaces. Highly conscious of this tripartite structure with its interconnected elements, the analysis differentiates between codification levels. The profilmic event, "what occurre[s] in front of the camera" (Nichols 1991: 25), is already extant and found in elements in documentaries such as social actors, language, and clothing; specific filmic-generated codes form representation such as sound, frame, and editing (cf. Odin 2000; Fiske 1987). The variance between social-profilmic codes and specifically audiovisual codes (representation) helps to determine the level at which the message is constructed and how the filmmaker communicates that message through the film. Additionally, social-profilmic codes and filmic codes can be linked whereby certain attributions are produced aesthetically.

## **BOUNDARY-MAKING PROCESSES IN *BETWEEN TWO WORLDS* AND *OUR GARDEN EDEN***

In what follows I discuss *BETWEEN TWO WORLDS* and *Our Garden Eden* in light of boundary-making processes. First, by looking at the director's context, I consider the relationship between an emic-practical perspective and a media perspective in the spaces of production, representation, and communication of *BETWEEN TWO WORLDS*.

Filmmaker Yusuf Yesilöz (born 1964) emigrated from Kurdistan to Switzerland in 1987. He has been a Swiss citizen since 1995 and is politically active, specifically as an immigrant, in providing the public with information about persecuted people in Kurdistan, a theme that has also been the focus of several novels he has authored. *BETWEEN TWO WORLDS* tells of the successful integration of Güli Dogan, a Kurdish woman who immigrated to Switzerland as a child. In one sequence religion is introduced

through footage from a television report from 1984: while we hear Güli's mother answering questions asked by the director in Kurdish-Zaza, footage is cut in. At the beginning of this report Güli Dogan as a child is sitting with her family on the sofa in their apartment. The family is filmed in a medium shot and the camera pans from left to right showing the whole family. Her mother is wearing a headscarf and other family members' clothing, language and habitus refers to a foreign culture. The television reporter asks Güli from off-screen: "How was it for you when you came to Switzerland?"<sup>8</sup> While Güli is answering the question, the visual narration cuts again to the younger Güli who is filmed in a shoulder close-up (see Fig. 1).

*Fig. 1: Güli Dogan as a child in a television report from 1984*



Source: BETWEEN TWO WORLDS, Yusuf Yesilöz, CH 2006, Distributor: Filme für eine Welt, Bern/CH

The report is cross cut by a more recent interview with the adult Güli in her apartment during which she reminisces about her time at school and the dif-

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8 The English dialogue given here is drawn from the subtitles of the DVD edition (Distributor: Filme für eine Welt, Bern 2006).



difficulties she faced when she immigrated to Switzerland. The difference between the two shots of Güli as child and as adult is remarkable. The viewer is aware of more than the passage of twenty years—she/he witnesses Güli's transformation from an insecure Kurdish girl, obviously recently immigrated, to a self-conscious Swiss woman in a modern setting (see Fig. 2).

*Fig. 2: Güli Dogan as an adult and married woman with two children*



Source: BETWEEN TWO WORLDS, CH 2006

In the second part of the footage Güli is asked to explain what she thinks the greatest differences between Turks and the Swiss are. Her response:

Güli: They think differently.

Reporter: How so?

Güli: The Turks are a bit too traditional and more God-centered. They also live and dress differently.

The narrative switches to the adult Güli speaking about how ashamed she was of her parents' appearance. She is now partly speaking in Kurdish-Zaza: "I was ashamed of them. Especially of my mother and her headscarf." A Kurdish-Zaza extradiegetic female voice fades in, singing a traditional song over a montage of some photos of Güli as a child. After this sequence adult-Güli reflects again on the restrictions she experienced during

her puberty as a female teenager. In one case “one of those pious conservatives”, as Güli remembers, saw her outside hanging around with young people. He threatened to tell her father that she had been socializing with boys. “It was his daughter who always flirted with the boys in the Koran course. This injustice almost made me burst,” Güli recounts. During this last statement the shot changes to television footage of the Swiss channel from 1992 filmed in Basel. We see a shot of a Muezzin from the rear calling for the evening prayer. In the following shot the muezzin is filmed from the front view. On the right margin of the frame such “pious conservative” men are entering the mosque for the prayer, the consecutive editing suggests (see Fig. 3).

*Fig. 3: The television footage of a Mosque in Basel 1992 shows “pious conservative” Muslim praying.*



Source: BETWEEN TWO WORLDS, CH 2006

The director reports in the voice-over: “The new wave of fundamentalism in the Eighties fell on fertile ground with the immigrants in Switzerland.” He explains how men with a “village-type religion” became fundamentalist after moving abroad. In the next shot a madrassa is shown. Muslim girls in headscarves are sitting in front of the Koran reciting prayers. Yesilöz nar-

rates how Güli's father sent his children to the madrassa in Winterthur, apparently not the one reported in the footage, although he was of the Alevite faith, because he didn't want to appear irreligious. The editing shifts to the more recent interview with Güli, in which she expresses disapproval about the courses in the madrassa because the teachers "bought off" the children with chocolate and coke.

This short sequence is indicative of how Yesilöz adopts an emic-practical perspective of the religious affiliation of immigrants in Switzerland in the production space. The filmmaker explores the issues of belonging in a digression on a fundamental Muslim movement in Switzerland. Yesilöz, who is Kurdish, is obviously critical of this Muslim community and favors, as it becomes clear, the Alevis, a separate Muslim community. Although Güli Doğan is not herself an active member of the Alevi community, she expresses interest in the faith and plans to introduce her two daughters to it. Despite Güli not being active in the faith, at the end of the film Yesilöz shows an Alevitic ritual in great detail (see Fig. 4).

*Fig. 4: The display of the Alevite ritual favors the Alevis, a separate Muslim community.*



Source: BETWEEN TWO WORLDS, CH 2006

Within the space of representation, the film seeks to delineate the boundaries between different Turkish people by drawing religious borders within the aesthetic of the film. These demarcations are introduced and cultivated,

in this case, by the filmmaker and not by the subjects of the documentary. The director's voice-over acts as a strong means of producing and highlighting the differences between Kurds and Muslims. Throughout the narration filmic parameters shape and interact with religious codes, symbols, topics, and statements by the subjects of the documentary. In a highly simplified manner, Yesilöz' dramaturgy connects Alevism with the educated and successfully integrated Güli Dogan, juxtaposing her with less educated, non-integrated and more traditional Muslims. The film expresses the specific worldview of one Kurdish immigrant, a view that is close to that of the documentary's main protagonist.

Despite the simplistic narrative portrayed in the documentary's space of representation, varied perspectives are possible in the space of communication. Alevi's interpretation of the film may be different from that of Muslims, who may be offended by what they see. The possible audiences are, however, many, and include professional critics, Turks, and Swiss citizens. The social actors portrayed in the documentary offer diverse perspectives, but in light of her successful integration, Güli Dogan still occupies a privileged position.

In *OUR GARDEN EDEN*, the depiction of migrants is as intimate as that in *BETWEEN TWO WORLDS*, but concerns several biographies. The analysis of the second example focuses on the profilmic, cultural-religious codes in the space of production and the editing in the space of representation. These codes identify diverse groups that distance themselves from one another through boundary-making processes.<sup>9</sup> The story depicts people of different cultural backgrounds. Although they all share a single barbecue in their garden, the Muslims among the gardeners cannot grill their meat on a spit, which was previously used to cook pork. To solve the problem, one member decides to build a barbecue with two spits—one for those who eat pork and one for those who do not eat pork. The narrative of the film is structured around the construction of the second barbecue spit (see Fig. 5).

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9 The Swiss director Mano Khalil (born 1964) has Syrian-Kurdish roots and lives in Switzerland since 1996. After studying history and law in Damascus, he immigrated to Czechoslovakia where he studied film; he later worked as an independent filmmaker for Slovakian television.

*Fig. 5: The construction of a pork spit structures the narration.*



Source: OUR GARDEN EDEN, Mano Khalil, CH 2010, Distributor: Look Now!, Zürich/CH

In the following close reading of a sequence I situate the cultural-religious codes in the profilmic production space because I assume that they exist before and external to the shooting. Almost all of the senses are involved in the boundary-making processes that are a product of the interaction of the people in this allotment garden. On the auditory level French, German, Serb, Portuguese, and Turkish are all heard. On the visual level, each person's clothing provides a conspicuous line of demarcation: while traditional clothing and scarves cover the whole body of the Muslim woman, the Portuguese women and men are dressed in more revealing leisurewear. The members of the allotment garden discuss food rules, and are shown preparing food or while eating. The cultural groups discuss different food regulations in the garden in a sequence that also draws boundaries within the senses of smell and taste as each group speaks about what they like to eat and what they dislike. Most of the Muslims disassociate themselves from the pork-eating group by underscoring that they will not contravene their religious laws, as demonstrated in the following example from the Muslim women (see also Fig. 6):

*Fig. 6: The Muslim woman Fatma explains her food rules.*



Source: OUR GARDEN EDEN, CH 2010.

Women 1: Normally it's made with meat or fish, but here it's only with vegetables.

Fatma: Because of Fatma?

Woman 2: But you eat fish too?

Fatma: Yes, but no pork.

Two further codes related to national identity and gender are used to draw boundaries between men and women, and between individuals' cultural backgrounds. The people portrayed in the documentary are originally from Portugal, Poland, Italy, Serbia, and North Africa, and they underscore and explain their own behavior as well as the actions of the others by referencing nationality and cultural background. For the Swiss-African couple, who have been together for more than thirty years, the conflict about the barbecue is without foundation. The wife has Christian roots, while the husband was raised Muslim. They humorously explain their tolerant attitude by an allegorical comparison of their relationship with a pig and a lamb going on a walk (see Fig. 7).

*Fig. 7: Swiss-African couple*

Source: OUR GARDEN EDEN, CH 2010.

Wife: They [the spits] don't even touch each other. I can't understand the hardliners. The pig doesn't touch the lamb, the lamb doesn't touch the pig. There should be no problem.

Husband: The fire burns the fat automatically. Since the lamb is on the top and the pig on the bottom, the [pig's] fat doesn't drip onto the other meat.

Wife: Yes, they don't touch each other.

Husband: It's like when we take a walk together. [Both laughing]

Wife: Pig and ... [Pointing to her husband]

Husband: Pig and lamb. [Both laughing]

In their dialogue, the couple draws a clear boundary between pork eaters and non-pork eaters and positions themselves in Christian and Muslim contexts, but their communication of this demarcation goes even further. When the husband points to his (Christian) wife calling her a pig and himself a lamb while they cross their arms pretending to walk together as pig and lamb, they clearly communicate the belief that the two can coexist. They subvert the boundaries between him as a Muslim and her as a Christian "pork eater" with this humorous wordplay and action. Their behavior seems contagiously jolly as each enters verbally and bodily the space occupied by the other. The short scene about the barbecue is intercut by further opinions about and of Muslim people. While the other social actors vocalize a clear

boundary between Muslim and non-Muslim, the Swiss-African couple uses intimacy and humor to cross boundaries.

Within the space of representation, the narration is determined through a specific editing strategy, which interweaves national, cultural, food, language, and religious codes expressed by the social actors. The montage generates a discourse about food and social negotiations in a multicultural setting. The topic of the barbecue structures the narrative into chapters, within which the participants from the allotment garden reflect upon their lives, challenges, joys and fears.

In the space of communication, responses to the social actors' statements will be determined by the perspectives and interests each individual or group brings to the viewing experience. An audience member with no experience of allotment gardens will likely be distanced from the plot, while a passionate allotment gardener might recall similar incidents. A Muslim might feel a certain closeness to the Muslims in the documentary who are facing the challenges of sharing a barbecue. The documentary chooses a well-balanced view of the various parties, avoiding one-sided representational codes.

## **RELIGIOUS BOUNDARIES IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE**

The two documentaries illustrate the interaction of three different spaces in negotiating religious identity through boundary-making processes. Religious codes are strategically used and shaped in both examples, sometimes similarly but just as often in markedly different ways. I conclude with some comparative thoughts about the three spaces of the two documentaries:

(1) The space of production: The directors are immigrants, and this cultural background is crucial for the thematic development of their works, for they bring their experiences and concepts into the production process. Both films were shot in Switzerland, thus determining the setting. The social actors including the filmmakers imbue the profilmic space with their religious codes.

(2) The space of representation: Conventional filmic codes that structure the narration allow both internal and external perspectives of cultural-religious identity. The social actors draw specific boundaries within and between various groupings by displaying cultural-religious codes such as food



laws, which are used as demarcation lines, as a means of defining themselves and others through principles of inclusion and exclusion.

(3) The space of communication: The audience actively participates in this filmic discourse about religious identity because the documentaries present and encourage diverse perspectives. Through the expression of pre-determined judgments, *BETWEEN TWO WORLDS* becomes more polarized. The social actor Güli Dogan is central to the narration and her depiction is orientated toward a progressive take on traditional values and regulations. The emic-medial perspective of filmmaker Yesilöz favors Güli's position as he contrasts her cultural-religious background with a fundamental Muslim group; this representation strategy leaves little room for other opinions. Khalil's intent, by contrast, is to foster diversity, and because *OUR GARDEN EDEN* does not have the same focus on an individual case, the social actors can themselves embody diverse opinions. This representational strategy allows for a plurality of communication spaces to be formed between audience and social actors.

Even while their filmic perspectives on religious identity vary, these documentaries contribute to themes of migration and integrational practices by staging religious boundaries in one place adopted from another. They negotiate religious concepts and traditions, disseminating them from filmic production spaces via representation and communication into a cultural production space offered to the audience. Documentaries are laboratories in which migration processes can be examined and activated. Depending on the documentary's approach it might result in integrational proposals. On a theoretical level, the investigation of migration and integration highlights the value systems generated in such processes. Documentaries of this kind can reveal the codes behind the (re)construction of religious symbols and references and might shed light on the function of religious elements within the public sphere, which constantly changes not only but also through immigration (cf. Taylor 2011).

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# Re-marking of Differences: Culture Television and Art Interplaying

Variability of Cultural Magazines and their  
Heterogeneous Dispositions

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Media act as regimes of knowledge and truth, mediating what “world” or “culture” is or should be. In this sense, television broadcasts and televisual cultural magazines in particular are often considered transparent sources of daily events. From the perspective of media studies, however, cultural television as a medium acts not primarily as a transparent window on the world, but as a mirror, as a multilayered and ongoing historically variable projection screen (cf. Lacan 1998; Silverman 1996).

Cultural magazines provide televisually framed segments of information and entertainment, re-presenting sections and fragments of the cultural reality. Like the “bard” who, according to Fiske and Hartley (2003), continually interprets the socio-cultural activities and collects, re-combines, and processes the fundamental myths of a society into extensive mythologies, cultural magazines constitute and construct culture by selecting and presenting it.

The televisual regimes of gaze in cultural magazines are always historically variable and underlie specific patterns of representation. It is primarily due to the multidimensionality of audiovisual communication and the continually rendering problematic of its own *dispositif* (Foucault 1977) that television operates as a complementary medium of socio-cultural modernization processes (Hickethier 1994). Especially because of television’s “con-

stitutive heterogeneity” (Weber 1996: 110), we are facing a constant renewal and reformulation of familiar perception aesthetics of televisual discourse. The intermedial exchange between television and other media demonstrates a curious oscillation between simple re-production and innovative re-configuration of the visible and articulable.

Since their inception, public service broadcasts in German-speaking Europe have been subject to a prescribed public task that includes a ‘cultural assignment’. This assignment has always been broadly formulated and does not provide specific details for its realization. However, in the last decades it has been exposed to fundamental transformations and caesura with the introduction of the dual broadcasting system in 1984. The program formats and contents of the public service broadcasters thereafter must be—according to their own description—factual and informative, primarily to distinguish their broadcasts from the commercial offerings of private channels. The increasing economization of the medium motivated public service television to accentuate its main focus on information and culture.

Conceived as a sort of mediating authority for culture, televisual cultural magazines mainly cover contemporary popular cultural events in Europe. From the perspective of media aesthetics, however, the surface of the television picture itself becomes a space of re-visualized media and arts (cf. Casetti/Odin 1990; Eco 1984). Therefore, cultural magazines follow journalistic principles when approaching themes of innovatory value and allow, for instance, for a television-suitable personalization. However, the peculiarities of the heterogenous medium call for more detailed and carefully considered reflection: *we must put the collective forms of perceptions in a society up for negotiation*. The analysis of television therefore enables insight into the conditioning of specific views and the patterns of perception.

Consequently, I am considering cultural magazines as an epochally complex format in which the shifting variability of mediated pictures and reality is exposed. Televisual magazine reports establish a varying tension between a detached indifference to other media and arts, which in the context of re-visualization are appropriated, and an innovative *marking of difference*—in the deconstructive sense of *différance* (Derrida 1984)—of televisual possibilities. In order to examine the televisual mediation of culture and its re-staging of arts with regard to the interplay of different notions of image, I would first like to discuss interferences of television and culture. How are magazines structured, which cultural assumptions do they incorpo-

rate, and in which discursive formations do they articulate culture? To what extent does the broadcasting format promote an appropriately complex and ambivalent view of their cultural settings, and how are audiences' modes of perceiving these television programs literally "programmed"? In a further step, I would like to analyze aspects of the aesthetics of television, since—as Roland Barthes (2005) has shown convincingly for the medium of photography—televsual aesthetics participate substantially in the connotation of the staged and presented artifacts.

Studies concerning television in the 1980s (i.e. Caldwell 1995) underline that the medium mainly mediates re-visualizations; pictures or media integrated into different daily practices by means of re-presentation obtain a completely different visibility and function. This shows that television positions itself less according to its picture of the world, than its continuous processing and differentiation of internal and external pictorial forms. Discussing selected magazine reports I will therefore, in a final step, articulate how television deals with artworks and analyze how the transformation of pictures into screen images enables a reflection on different notions of the category of the image.

## **TRANSLATION PROCESSES BETWEEN TELEVISION AND CULTURE**

As a media format, cultural magazines are always part of technical, socio-cultural and aesthetic frames. In order to describe their specific ways of presenting and re-presenting culture and art, the interdependencies of culture and television have to be analyzed. Cultural magazines are both products of a televsual dispositif and intermediaries for cultural practices, discourses and regimes of the gaze. Already in the mid-1960s, the German-speaking television broadcasters had been increasingly addressing the category entitled "culture" and reported at regular intervals on what they considered to be current cultural events.

In this initial phase, culture had been mediated mostly in televsual magazines, which are a mixture of feature stories and newscast. Seen from a media-historical point of view, the genealogy of the format can be traced to the very early stages of the US commercial television where the format had developed in the context of product advertising. Pat Weaver's maga-



zine plan, for example, focuses in particular on the commercial blocks, which were framed by the rest of the program (cf. Schumacher 1994).

The fragmentation of television programs allowed for promotion of the typical, additive structure of the magazines (cf. Hickethier 1988). While the cultural assignment had initially been limited to literature, art and theatre, the field of music was soon incorporated. Over time, the concept of culture portrayed through television was extended even further. For instance Reinhard Hoffmeister, former chief editor and moderator of the cultural magazine ASPEKTE for the Second German Television Channel (ZDF), described the understanding of culture in 1973 quite paradigmatically: “In our times culture doesn’t mean solely literature and fine arts [...] especially that, what gets under the skin belongs nowadays to culture: housing, leisure time, the environment. Not an elite minority but all people should be addressed by ASPEKTE” (Hoffmeister 1973, quoted in: Schumacher 1994: 148, translated by the author).

Expressed even before the beginning of the competition in the context of dual broadcasting, this extended understanding of culture indicates a tendency towards entertaining programming. The introduction of private broadcasters from the mid-1980s onwards led to “culture” being conceived of as a distinct part of the overall programming. From this, the public service broadcasters hoped to secure further funding and ensure their continued existence. In 1984, the director of the Second German Television channel (ZDF) Dieter Stolte emphasized: “The social responsibility of television extends to the production of culture. The contribution of television to the entire culture is not insignificant. Television is itself a part of culture, which has won its place with original artwork and music” (Stolte 1984, quoted in: Von Hagen 1985: 112, translated by the author).

The media caesura in the 1990s transformed the meaning of television as a cultural tool into an audience-oriented service provider. Public service broadcasters still had to comply with their cultural provision while remaining economically competitive, a fact which is reflected in the ongoing modification and renewal of the corporate design and the studio architecture of cultural magazines. For example, until 2010, the cultural magazine KULTURPLATZ of Swiss Television (SRF) had a studio painted all white, famous as a sort of *televisual white cube*—in all its metaphorical senses (see Fig. 1). In subsequent corporate design renewals, the program operations remained unchanged, while the aesthetics of the studio architecture

was completely transformed (see Fig. 2). The magazine was now presented against a backdrop of imitation wood side paneling, which evoked similarities to other programs, such as the health magazine PULS or the consulting show NACHTWACH (see Fig. 3). The press subsequently complained about the studio design, describing it as “romanticism of (boy)scouts” lacking only a “camp fire” (Tagesanzeiger 2011a, translated by the author). I will return to this fundamental modification of the program’s concept.

*Fig. 1: SRF’s KULTURPLATZ as a White Cube*



Source: Still, KULTURPLATZ, 9.12.2009.

Along with the rapid re-launch of new corporate designs, the economic discourse of highest viewership affected the conception of cultural television in so far as it let so-called “third party channels” such as regional stations or the cultural programs on 3sat or ARTE interfere with the public cultural assignment of television. Even today, similar contentual paradoxes and an open-ended tension to define an ‘adequate’ notion of culture can be observed. As intermediary between elitist cultural institutions and a broad television audience, cultural magazines “should overcome the polarization between elitist entertainment and general culture, this is the difference between a culture for the few and a program for the many in a medium for the masses” (Kreutz/Rosenstein 1993: 5, translated by the author).

*Fig. 2: “(Boy)Scouts’ romanticism” in KULTURPLATZ after the studio’s re-design*



Source: Still, KULTURPLATZ, SRF, 22.6.2011.

*Fig. 3: Woodlike décor in the consulting show NACHTWACH*



Source: Still, NACHTWACH, SRF, 15.10.2013.

The result of this effort has been a rise in virulent contradictions between culture and television: On the one hand, cultural magazines contribute to the prestige of the public service broadcasters by highlighting the aesthetic difference between their broadcasts and trash programs. On the other, the

unfocused and fragmentary magazine format corresponds to the economy of attention, established and promoted by television. Since the 1960s, cultural television has therefore been able to legitimize its ongoing peripheral existence. From the economic perspective, the format tries to function as a form of distribution for the range of possibilities presented by televisual communication. Heidemarie Schumacher expressed this poignantly: “Anything can be combined with everything, the medium serves as a preparer and machine of reproduction of a colorful, accidental and incoherent empiricism, such as it is offered by the world of warehouses, department stores or supermarkets” (1994: 104, translated by the author).

Nowadays cultural magazines increasingly resemble each other both in terms of format and content. Moreover, they tend to surrender to the pressure of ratings and the normative forms of presentation of an easy and entertaining mediation of culture. It is only in the late night hours when the medium—as Volker Panzer describes it—“is still allowed to dream” (1999: 78, translated by the author), that the magazines realize an aesthetically experimental reflection of culture and the possibility of their formats.

The brevity of reports and the flexibility of their content—a major component of the television and cultural criticism caused by the so called “snack culture”—doesn’t allow for an adequate presentation of culture or art events. The cultural magazine KULTURPLATZ for example, has not received any praise from the press for its daring realignment at the end of 2011: it is produced at a different place of cultural production with the intention of turning itself into an object of the report every week. The magazine despite its good intentions, seems overloaded with chitchat. The Swiss newspaper *Tagesanzeiger* criticized it, saying that “less would have been more, particularly in relation to cultural issues” (*Tagesanzeiger* 2011b, translated by the author). At the same time, the televisual translation of artworks has also not been spared from criticism: “the filmed artworks didn’t show a lot, because the cameraman recognized himself as an artist. Whoever was able to catch single picture fragments should have known for himself what she was looking at, because neither paintings nor sculptures have been defined” (*ibid.*, translated by the author). The expectation of a complete and factual illustration of culture implied by these critiques, however, cannot be met—not least because the imagination of television as a “neutral window view” disregards the framing heterogeneity of the medium.

## INTERMEDIAL AESTHETICS BETWEEN CULTURE TELEVISION AND THE ARTS

Televisuality re-stages and re-produces specific views of culture whereby the inconclusive discourses of what should be mediated *as culture* emerge. These conventions of ‘given to be seen’ are both normative and innovative and refer to the open-structured configuration of heterogeneous representations and forms of narration in television. In this sense, media studies claim that since the 1980s, television has merely presented re-visualizations (cf. Caldwell 1995; Adelman/Stauff 2006).

As John Thornton Caldwell (1995) has suggested, the excessive use of strategies of visualization leads to a hyperactive process of presentation and a specific “performance of style”, which is primarily formed by the use of different intermedia methods. The television therefore does not illustrate the world; instead, it processes and differentiates its own as well as other visual forms. Cultural magazines’ reports on artworks in particular apply visual forms and aesthetic concepts resulting in a ‘visualized visualization’. Culture television seems to bring pictures and media closer while simultaneously drawing boundaries between the two, and demonstrates how, in the words of Sam Weber, “we see at a distance” (1996: 116). In other words, “what television transmits is not so much images [...]. It does not transmit representations but rather the *semblance of presentation as such*, understood as the power not just to see and to hear but to place before us” (ibid.: 117). Television, he thus explains, oscillates between exposure and neutralization of a mediated view. The specificity of television therefore lies—following Weber’s argument—in its “specific and constitutive heterogeneity” (ibid.), which describes the constant differentiation from its own mediality. The ability of television to produce and record vision refers to the crucial function of the screen. In Weber’s words:

“the television screen can be said to live up to its name in at least three distinct, contradictory and yet interrelated senses. First, it serves as a screen that allows distant vision to be watched. Second, it screens, in the sense of selecting or filtering, the vision that is watched. And finally, it serves as a screen in the sense of standing between the viewer and the viewed, since what is rendered visible covers the separation that distinguishes the other vision from that of the sight of the spectator sitting in front of the set.” (ibid.: 122-123)

In this sense, the screen is a constitutive medium for the visualization of the world, configured by a historically alterable regime of the gaze. Regimes of gaze then constitute specific discourses of gestures and gazes, which, as cultural repertoires of images are mediated by means of the televisual screen, are as much concerned with self-perception as with the perception of world (cf. Silverman 1996). The screen's surface becomes a heterogeneous space of the televisual itself. Television's decisive factor is thus not its capability to illustrate, but the medial techné of a *machine of imaging and image processing*, and the re-staging of other media in flexible configurations performing, as Caldwell mentions, "the act of consuming images" (1995: 147). Through the adaption and (re-)appropriation of other media and arts, culture television seems to continually resist its own medial specificity (cf. Bolter/Grusin 1999; Friedberg 2009; Manovich 2001; Spielmann 2001). "Through intermedia and pictorialism", Caldwell argues, "television becomes a boundaryless image machine. [...] Television favors images that are specifically about consuming images. In this case the intermedia mode is a key strategy that works to satisfy the medium's appetite for and consumption of imagery" (ibid.: 151). In contemporary television, the perception and definition of reality, what Caldwell calls the *reality effect*, doesn't play a major role. Instead, the differentiation of pictorial form, the so-called *picture effect*, plays a significant role. The aesthetic diversity of picture treatment and collection of the visual culture is performatively displayed such that the picture effect doesn't replace the reality effect. Depending on the broadcasting service or format, these effects are deployed with different strategies and serve as a consolidation of the corporate design and as such clearly differentiate televisual programs.

## **SCREEN IMAGES: PROCEDURES OF RE-APPROPRIATION OF THE ARTS**

In its early days, television was described as a medium which "already [...] is art and with certainty will be the art of tomorrow" (Eckert 1953, quoted in: Daniels 2002: 243, translated by the author). However, in the process of being transformed into a mass medium, it has been conceptualized by media studies and art history mainly as the image-hostile and anti-artistic medium *par excellence*. Television's specific visualizations of art are still of-

ten devalued as mere representations of art. Despite this alleged devaluation, cooperation was established between television stations and art. Gerry Schum, for example, understood television as a new space for art education in which, in line with Malreaux' *Musée imaginaire*, art could address an audience outside of museum and gallery visitors.

The *Television Gallery* was thought to establish new forms of mediating art by using the screen as a two-dimensional exhibition space. The screen was conceived as a space of art education in which different media and their diverse aesthetics could be put in relation to one another (cf. Dobbe 1994; Daniels 2002). Therefore, the reports of cultural magazines allow observation of visual interludes between television and arts, enabling further reflections beyond the conceptualization of television as a *machine of image exploitation* that neutralizes the imagery of images. Analysis of the televisual handling of artworks thus can illustrate how images are transformed into screen images, and what impact this transformation has on contemporary visual cultures. The image of art, circulated by culture television, provides further information about the specificities of television's visual aesthetic. The intermedial aesthetics between arts and television establish, in addition, a renewed question concerning the contemporary conceptualization of the image.

The fundamental characteristics of media differences between television and diverse artforms are scarcely reflected in the reports of cultural magazines. Nonetheless, there are sequences in which, for example, the camera follows the ductus of the painting, or tries to reproduce the formation of the picture through re-staging the painting act in the studio.

Similar to newscasts, reports on art in cultural magazines are characterized by standardized forms of presentation: the overarching format is characterized by three sub-segments, as Gerd Steinmüller (1997) has analyzed in detail. In the context of *identifying segments*, artists are presented through self-portraits or in person— usually in the typical talking-head-format. *Contextual segments*, by contrast, show additional material, such as further works from the artists. Finally, *exploratory segments* translate the visualized art works into a televisual picture language. The arrangement of these segments is always flexible and contributes to the rhythmatization of the reports. The arbitrary nature and interchangeability of the visual elements go together with a general image acceleration, which dissolves any possibility of clear differentiation between the segments.

According to Gundolf Winter (2000), televisual art education creates its own picture stories by means of fragmentation and invariant arrangements of different artworks. These stories do not have much in common with the image-based narration of the respective artworks. Analogous to certain research traditions of art history on the mostly male artistic genius and on great biographies, artworks in the televisual reports are often used to underline the ingenuity of the artist. The above-mentioned *exploratory segments* do not show the artworks in their entirety, but represent them as disassembled fragmentations. In this way television reveals its own manner of seeing and its specific televisual view on art by intervening in the familiar contemplation of art. According to Winter “the imaginary is only authorized within the meaning of the television picture” (ibid.: 455, translated by the author). A self-organized illustration of images is established at the expense of internal image narrations. With the *exploratory* procedures “television generates new images from the imaginary” (ibid., translated by the author) and accentuates its specific capacity to create, to process and mediate images consistently.

By way of intertwining different pictorial principles and notions of imaginary, television acts not only as an allegedly neutral mediation authority but creates new types of images by showcasing their performativity. Winter assumes the suspension of all types of imaginary within the framework of culture television. This seems problematic because he starts with a specific concept of the picture based on dichotomies of reality versus simulation, original versus copy. Postmodern conceptions of pictures from visual culture studies, media studies or art history and artistic approaches—from Duchamp, Warhol or appropriation artists such as Sherrie Levine, Louise Lawler or Richard Prince—paradigmatically illustrate that appropriating media or pictures can in no way be understood as a unidirectional strategy. Rather, appropriated media or pictures initiate the condition of the possibility to consider art as a complex interplay—in the sense of *art pour l’art* (cf. Crimp 1993; Graw 2004; Imesch 2006). Hereby, the discursive formation of art, as well as the strategic re-appropriation of mediality and imaginary, is addressed, and consequently artistic and medial strategies are emphasized as interdependences of indifference and settings of difference. This appropriation and re-staging of already existing images as main modalities of culture television can be related to previous artistic methods and practices of pastiche. However, in contrast to the intention of artistic practices, cul-



ture television always strives to institutionalize itself as *Musée télévisonnaire*, which seeks to structure our view on artworks. Other media and art are televisually incorporated to establish the potency of television as a machine of image generation, rendering televisuality a ubiquitous performance of perception. The interrelationship between cultural magazines and their re-visualized objects cannot—as I have argued—be thought of as a unilateral mode of visualization. During the intermedial processes between and with other media, televisuality is constantly exposing itself. This can lead to a hybridization of the category of the picture as it is negotiated on the screen surface. The indifferent visualization and specific experimentations with other media operate not as an “either-or”, but consist in an ongoing shift and oscillation between difference and indifference.

I would like to illustrate the diverse procedures for the transposition of art in televisual cultural magazines with two examples which show the extensive variety of televisual re-mediation of art. The report about Frida Kahlo in Berlin by the cultural magazine KULTURZEIT (3sat) pursues the myth of the famous female artist by featuring an extensive exhibition in Berlin. Already in the context of the magazine’s introduction the moderator reflects the phenomenon of ‘Fridamania’ and refers to the continuous re-staging of the artist’s life and suffering as manifested in her pictures. In accordance with the traditional perspective of art history, the report emphasizes the biographical history of artist’s suffering and the re-production of the mythological creation of an icon by means of art exhibitions. The commercialization of art is further reflected in the introduction of a café called Frida Kahlo. Similarly, the author of the piece comments on long queue in front of the exhibition: “the pilgrimage to her exhibitions is a must; already on the opening day” (translated by the author). Thereupon several photographs of Kahlo are reproduced, evoking the impression that the artist is an important personality or superstar. A presentation of neatly lined up exhibition catalogues emphasizes once again the wide circulation of Kahlo’s images via the mass media. The artworks are displayed in the mode of a simple, quasi-neutral visualization using fast camera movement that resembles a slide show. Additionally, the exhibition’s curator, Helga Prignitz-Poda, interprets the self-portraits in relation to the artist’s biography. Surprising aspects of Kahlo’s work are reproduced in the *exploratory segments*: The *portrait with mask* is not only presented by means of zoom method but also through techniques of dissolving, the picture of the mask appearing to inex-

orably approach the viewer. In front of the assumed hidden self-portrait is a *crying coconut*. For this piece, a real coconut is held up to the camera as a duplication of the metaphor from the previous artwork (see Fig. 4). The report's focus is on the mass media's fascination with Frida as an icon, plausibly re-staged in relation to her tragic biography by means of her self-portraits. Nonetheless, sequences such as the crying coconut refer to and at the same time ironically refuse a reference to the artist's manic occupation with the self as well as the commercialization of the female artist.

Fig. 4: Frida's 'hidden' self-portrait as a "crying coconut"



Source: STILL, KULTURZEIT, 3SAT, 5.5.2010.

A very different and innovative approach is offered by/in the report published in the cultural magazine *aspekte* (ZDF) on the exhibition *Gerhard Richter: Panorama* which was staged in the New National Gallery of Berlin. The report is mixed with aesthetics of a music clip: rap music, off-screen commentary, and both a detailed and overall view of the work are projected in turns on a wall of the metro. Of these, only the last sequence provides insight into the exhibition. At the beginning of the sequence, a quote of Richter, "to paint is a core characteristic like dancing or singing" (translated by the author), is displayed. Forthwith, a young man starts rapping while emphasizing the lyrics with gestures. This magazine report adapts the displayed Richter quote by way of intermedial processes. However, it is not the world famous artist who advances as the central figure in

this report but the young rapper. Through his rapping and gestures, he explores the variable contexts and contents of the works further processing them in a new media frame (see Fig. 5). As in most cultural magazines, the focus of this report is not the exhibition and the personality of the artist, but rather the thoughts that are evoked by pictures of Richter, which are at the same time reflected in the rap song and the rapper's gestures.

*Fig. 5: Thinking and rapping with Richter's paintings.*



Source: STILL, ASPEKTE, ZDF, 10.2.2012.

## TELEVISUALITY AS A REFLECTION OF CONTEMPORARY CONCEPTS OF THE IMAGE?

Through a generally open-structured and historically variable format, cultural magazines are particularly well integrated into aesthetic, socio-cultural and technical frames. The televisual frame demonstrates itself in its own ongoing de-framing. The televisual *dispositif* consequently constitutes itself in its specificity only in the interplay between culture and the arts, which are presented and re-presented in cultural magazines. As such, the *dispositif* of culture television takes part in the formation of a spectatorship's self-perception and the ideal. It does so through its televisual procedures, which oscillates continuously between standardization and innovation, and to a lesser extent through supposedly neutral mediation and report.

Televisual magazines, which are subordinated to the public's cultural remit, have specific but flexibly structured implications. Cultural magazines aim to illustrate the cultural diversity of a nation. However, reportable events should not be presented as neutrally as the political news. On the contrary: according to its own description, products with an autonomous value have to be created. In this view, the explicit norm of the culture remit has a restrictive effect, insofar as the magazines mediate the cultural events they consider relevant, in a comprehensible way, thereby making culture available to a broad audience. It is hardly surprising that since the 1970s our understanding of culture has been continually popularized, has been and is being discussed in close connection with the increase in audiences. This, however, implies a specific and problematic tension between culture and television.

Most recently, with the advent of digital media, culture television has shown an intermedial capacity of appropriating, which always presents self-reflexive moments contrary to the "classic" discourse of the immediate illustration of "world". The re-presentation of museal or performative arts in magazine reports in particular indicates the ongoing dialectic, by challenging different forms of media-enabled perception and views on art, culture and society. In contradiction to traditional approaches of media and television studies, a postmodern concept of media and picture offers further perspectives: The particular focus now rests on the double indifference of the televisual medium towards its appropriated media on the one hand, and the reflexive notion of difference of each re-visualized media on the other. To act as a constitutive frame of what is *given to be seen*, television therefore must continually risk its own televisuality. In the mode of re-representation, culture television may expose the representation of other media on the television screen by means of making visible the perspective of any screen in its re-configuration. The simultaneous presence of various media on the screen surface therefore allows a reflection of different concepts and notions of image.

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# Constructing an Emancipated Culture of Art Spectatorship?

The Ambiguity of Ben Lewis's Reportage-Series

ART SAFARI (2003-2006)

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MARCEL BLEULER

## TELEVISION AS A COUNTER-DISOURSE

In 2010, television stations from various parts of the world reported on Marina Abramović's retrospective and her three-month performance entitled *The Artist Is Present* that took place at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York. In her performance, Abramović remained motionless on a chair in the museum's foyer for seven hours each day for the entire duration of the show. An empty chair was placed before the artist for the visitors, who, one by one, could take a seat and look into her eyes for as long as they wished. As I was studying Abramović's work at the time, I monitored the internet for newscasts and reports on the event, which could often be streamed on the video-sharing website YouTube or directly from the television stations' homepages. Most broadcasts reported on *The Artist Is Present* with respectful amazement. They showed footage of the thousands of visitors who came to MoMA, and explained this massive interest by referencing Abramović's crucial role in modern art history. These reports affirmed and reproduced the image of Abramović as the museum promoted it: Abramović emerged as a seminal performance artist with incomparable charisma.



However, I also remember seeing more skeptical accounts. In particular, I came across some reports that questioned the hype surrounding *The Artist Is Present*. I remember reporters who, for instance, interviewed museum-goers standing in line for Abramović's performance, commenting either on their frustration (because it was almost impossible to get up to the sitting artist) or their often irrational expectations of what would happen to them when sitting in front of the artist. Other reports questioned the authenticity of Abramović's performance by speculating about what gadgets she might be wearing under her dress that helped her maintain the pose, or that prevented her from wetting herself during the seven-hour sittings.<sup>1</sup>

Rather than borrowing the sophisticated vocabulary and interpretative framework that the art world (i.e. art critics and the MoMA) provided for the interpretation of her work, these accounts confronted Abramović's performance and the public's reaction to an onlooker's perspective with trivial concerns and from this perspective, the art world's declaration of the show's historical importance and exceptional power suddenly became highly disputable.

Sitting in front of my computer, I perceived these polemic accounts as a critical and antagonistic contribution to the mediatization of *The Artist Is Present*, undermining the promotional discourse of the MoMA distributed through the internet in the form of interview-clips with the artist, a live-stream of her performance, and, most strikingly, highly aesthetic photographs of people crying in front of Abramović. In contrast to this sublime image the MoMA created, the polemic reports revealed the conditionality of the event, the mundane dimension of its actual realization, tracing the full range of reactions within general public, from frustration to the hope for illumination.

In this sense, the reports featured a bottom-up approach, which distinguished them from conventional educational television's tendency to lecture. Confronting the event with a non-specialist's perspective, they shared the rhetoric of online blogs, which were similarly characterized by taking a 'consumer's perspective' when commenting on Abramović's show and referring to its trivial aspects. The reports thereby acted as a foil for the strikingly homogenous and uncritical picture that the MoMA produced. This

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1 Such speculation can also be found on several blog entries posted during the *The Artist Is Present* show, cf. Paskin 2010; Sauers 2010.

discrepancy between the official mediatization of *The Artist Is Present* and the counter-accounts in television led me to consider the critical potential of such reports: to what extent do they construct a different and possibly antagonistic culture of art spectatorship?

## **AGAINST THE STULTIFICATION OF THE AMATEUR SPECTATOR**

Since the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, spectatorship has been a widely debated topic in the realm of contemporary art. Especially in regard to artistic practices that involve the viewer's participation, which are usually subsumed under notions of "participatory art" (cf. Bishop 2012) or "relational aesthetics" (cf. Bourriaud 2002), artistic projects have been discussed in terms of the modalities and the politics of spectatorship they construct.

Even if I use the term 'constructing spectatorship' to describe these debates, it is important to mention that they do not continue the legacy of poststructuralist and feminist writings, which, most notably in the 1970s, adopted psychoanalytic concepts of a visual field structuring among other factors subjectivization and on these grounds critically analyzed visual culture in regard to the construction of the spectator as a decentered and gendered subject. The discourses surrounding participatory art are hardly concerned with visibility or with gender, and they are generally less strict—or less conceptualized—in regard to the 'constructivist' understanding of the spectator's subjectivity.<sup>2</sup> On the contrary: the recent debates often envision a spectatorial subject that overcomes heteronomy and that reaches a state of self-possession and self-definition (which, from a poststructuralist or femi-

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2 Like feminist criticism, the discourses surrounding participatory art are loosely informed by an originally Marxist critique of the manipulation of society through unmarked effects of commodity culture (cf. Debord 1967), or of authoritative social and political institutions. However, unlike feminist criticism, the debates at the turn of the century typically use, as Bishop puts it, "vocabularies of social organization and models of democracy" (2012: 7). Instead of being informed by psychoanalysis, they adopted reflections of the field of sociology, spatial theory (e.g. Rosalyn Deutsche, Miwon Kwon) or political philosophy (e.g. Jürgen Habermas, Jacques Rancière).

nist standpoint, would have to be criticized as naïve essentialism). The expectation here is that spectators' reactions would not be predetermined by artistic or institutional formations; instead, that he or she participates in the creation of meaning, and be 'constructed' (which I suggest be understood as 'addressed') as an unpredictable, potentially antagonistic subject of the art world.

As the popularity of philosopher Jacques Rancière's book *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation* (1991) and essay *The Emancipated Spectator* (2007) in the art world indicates, recent discourses on spectatorship are oriented towards a claim for democratization and eventually emancipation of the spectator.<sup>3</sup> However, art historian Claire Bishop, who has contributed substantially to these debates, observes that these claims are hardly put into practice, since the realm of contemporary art mostly addresses specialized spectators who already share an intellectual background and agree on specific ideas (cf. Bishop 2004: 66 et seq.). Bishop convincingly argues that from a constellation in which the audience is a group of insiders who celebrate and eventually defend mutual interests, no antagonism and no need for emancipation will arise.

This 'insider's constellation' has been criticized not only in regard to participatory art. Art journalist Nicole Zepter, for instance, recently published a book entitled *Kunst hassen* (2013) [*To Hate Art*], that sharply criticizes the tendency of today's art world to perpetuate and promote the discourses it favors, instead of putting them up for discussion. Like Bishop, although in a much more polemic manner, Zepter calls for a culture of antagonism that contrasts with the consensus of the art world and that confronts its specialized discourses with the perspective of those outside the art establishment.

My observations of the reporting on Abramović's MoMA-performance suggest that television has the potential to construct this called-for perspective of the art world, especially segments of news shows or lifestyle pro-

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3 In 1996, the German art historian Wolfgang Kemp observed the growing popularity of such claims with artists and art critics whom he contemptuously called the "Viewer Liberation Front (VLK)" (1996: 13). Kemp's irony is, of course, strategic, since the so-called "VLK" implicitly (but radically) questioned the foundation of his method "Rezeptionsästhetik".

grams, which inform and comment on art but not to the extent or with the expertise of cultural films.

A rare example of scholarly work that takes into consideration such ‘incidental’ television productions on art is Inga Lemke’s book *Documenta-Dokumentationen* (1995), [*Documentations of documenta*], a study of the reporting on the quinquennial international art exhibition *documenta* in the West German public broadcasting service between 1955 and 1987. By analyzing newscasts and short reports, Lemke brings into focus not only how art is explained to the general public, but also how non-specialized agencies (i.e. the television commentators and news teams) convey art to a likewise non-specialized audience (the parts of the West-German society watching prime time television). I am interested in such a non-specialists’ constellation because, as Lemke points out, it brings up questions regarding the legitimization and comprehensibility—respectively *incomprehensibility*—of contemporary art that specialized discourses often disregard.

As the polemic reports on Marina Abramović’s *The Artist Is Present* indicated, it is a popular standpoint to regard the globally marketed art world as a socially relevant but also corrupt realm that ultimately dupes the public. However, educational films tend to do away with such skepticism. For instance, by postulating the great meaning and art historical importance of Abramović’s performance, they implicitly stultify those who are skeptical. This happens quite clearly in the documentary *THE ARTIST IS PRESENT* (2013), in which experts such as philosopher Arthur C. Danto or Abramović-specialist Chrissie Iles comment on the performance, elucidating its meaning and relevance. Their expertise leaves hardly any room for the lay-audience’s potential doubt about Abramović’s work. In this sense, educational cultural films implicate an authoritarian model of knowledge transmission: experts give lessons to amateur viewers who lack the expertise to talk back.

In many cases, this authoritarian model also underlies the culture of art spectatorship constructed and perpetuated in museums and art galleries. Traditionally, these institutions are regarded as an embodiment of expert knowledge that the general public does not possess. In this constellation, the spectator who does not understand is made to feel ignorant.

Of course, this description falls rather short, and there are attempts within art institutions to break with this authoritarian model of art display.<sup>4</sup> However, as Ben Lewis illustrates in the first episode of his reportage-series ART SAFARI (2003-2006), there is a certain truth to it. ART SAFARI was co-produced by several West European television stations and originally consists of eight half-hour episodes,<sup>5</sup> each of which portrays an internationally successful artist's oeuvre. Its author is the British filmmaker and art critic Ben Lewis, who acts as the series' reporter and who leads the audience through the episodes. The series was broadcast by two renowned cultural institutions: the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the European Cultural Channel ARTE. As such, it is directly positioned in the realm of educational television. However, when the BBC and ARTE first broadcast the series, they seemed to avoid labeling ART SAFARI as an educational show. Instead, both stations announced ART SAFARI as an entertaining, casual, and unprecedented approach to art, intended to break with conventional, authoritarian models of knowledge transmission and with the tendency of patronizing the spectator. The BBC advertised the series as a "close, informal and laidback encounters with artists," (BBC announcement of ART SAFARI 2003) and ARTE emphasized that it would stir up the common opinion that contemporary art is incomprehensible and boring (cf. ARTE announcement of ART SAFARI 2003).

In the first episode, Lewis starts his "adventure" through the art world by confronting the incomprehension of spectators in the museum. With a microphone in his hand and a camera team at his back, he enters Matthew Barney's retrospective *The Cremaster Cycle* (2003) at the Solomon Guggenheim Museum in New York. After browsing Barney's show, he focuses on the spectators who, as Lewis puts it, view the various exhibition pieces as if they were a "divine revelation."<sup>6</sup> However, when Lewis starts inquiring about Barney's art, none of the spectators can explain its meaning. Even when asked to respond subjectively and share what *The Cremaster Cycle*

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4 For an in-depth discussion of such a critical self-conception, cf. Marchart 2005.

5 The official DVD ART SAFARI includes only six episodes (on the artists Matthew Barney, Sophie Calle, Maurizio Cattelan, Wim Delvoye, Gregor Schneider, Santiago Sierra). Two episodes (the one on Takashi Murakami, and the episode on "Relational Aesthetics") were only broadcast on television.

6 All quotes from the original English version of ART SAFARI released on DVD.

reminds them of, they cannot reply. One young man, for instance, pauses for several seconds before admitting laconically: "I don't know."

At first, this opening scene of *ART SAFARI* creates the impression that Lewis would go on ridiculing spectators, like the polemic reporters who questioned museum visitors standing in line for Abramović's performance about their irrational expectations. But as the episode goes on, it becomes clear that Lewis tries to face the difficulty for amateurs to comprehend and interpret contemporary art. In the course of the episode he insistently inquires about the meaning of Barney's oeuvre, eventually encountering the artist himself. This encounter in particular shows quite plainly whose side the reporter is on: instead of just agreeing with the artist, who describes his ideas very seriously but enigmatically, Lewis expresses his confusion. He tries to comprehend and to summarize Barney's statements in more pragmatic terms, but he repeatedly fails.

It is specific to the series that, instead of deleting this scene, its oddity and the apparent difficulty of translating the artist's intentions into something broadly understandable are part of the account. In *ART SAFARI*, the difficulty of comprehension, which in other contexts might make the spectators feel ignorant, is presented as a completely acceptable reaction, that ultimately challenges the legitimacy of, in this case, Barney's success in the art world. In this sense, the series claims a change of perspective: instead of 'elevating' the audience to an expert comprehension, art is brought to account by a non-specialized audience. By undermining the authority structure, *ART SAFARI* radiates an antagonism that, like the polemic reports on Abramović's performance at the MoMA, challenges the promotional and overly sophisticated discourses surrounding contemporary art.

However, contrary to the reports on Abramović, the counter-discourse in this case is launched by established authorities. Not only are the BBC and ARTE major cultural channels, but the series' author is also much more of an expert than he appears to be in his show. Ben Lewis studied art history himself and he proves, in the course of his series, to be a friend of the art world's protagonists, and well-informed on the theorems that define expert discourses. It is fair to say that Lewis is himself an insider and certainly more of an expert than the lay audience, whose perspective and vocabulary he adopts. This constellation makes *ART SAFARI* an ambivalent show. The series narrates the story of the empowerment of an amateur, although the narrator himself cannot be considered an amateur at all.

Clearly, such a masqueraded educational model has its own set of authoritarian traits. It only overcomes the opposition of knowledge and ‘ignorance’ by implying a false sense of equality. Against this backdrop, it appears debatable to what extent ART SAFARI critically engages authoritarian models of art display. However, it is nevertheless fair to say that the series *suggests* an emancipated culture of art spectatorship by constructing such a one within its narrated world. It thereby points to a destabilization of the authoritative models, and, possibly, transforms its audience’s thinking about art spectatorship at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

With this ambiguity in mind, I will explore in the following the expectations ART SAFARI raises of ‘constructing’ an emancipated culture of art spectatorship, which eventually will lead me back to a clarification of what is involved in and meant by ‘constructing spectatorship’ in this specific context.

## **IMITATING AN AMATEUR’S PERSPECTIVE**

First of all, my observation that Ben Lewis operates from the position of an amateur needs further elaboration. By ‘amateur’ I mean an art spectator who is not an insider of the art world and who does not possess expert knowledge of it. With his ‘common-sense approach’ Lewis shares the perspective of a general audience, inviting the viewers to perceive him as ‘one of them.’ His renunciation of a specialized and sophisticated approach is further expressed through his interest in the practical dimension of artworks and their production, which often leads him to visit factories and to talk to technicians and craftsmen. In the episode on the Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan, for instance, Lewis interviews two artisans who manufactured some of Cattelan’s works. Besides inquiring about the process of their work for the artist, he also asks about their impression of Cattelan and their reading of his art. These individuals, depicted as typical members of the working class, are presented as the true authority of the episode. In particular, one of them articulates a reading of Cattelan’s oeuvre that is much more tangible than the earlier statements made by curators. Lewis uses this amateur reading as a crucial reference for the interpretation he develops in the episode. It is with such scenes, in which outsiders of the art world make meaningful contributions to the episode’s narrative and the final interpretation of an art-

ist's oeuvre, that ART SAFARI creates the impression of a self-empowered amateur-culture of art spectatorship.

While craftsmen become specialists of art, the art world's designated specialists and insiders, such as curators and art critics, are depicted as overly "intellectual" to the point where their statements appear hollow and meaningless. This skeptical stance towards the 'experts' is made explicit in the episode on the Belgian artist Wim Delvoye. Lewis visits an exhibition of Delvoye's artworks where a curator lectures about the utopian dimension of the artist's digestive machine *Cloaca* (2000-2007) that turns food into feces. Lewis, in a later interview with the curator, emphasizes that his interpretation has no tangible connection to the artwork at all. From the perspective that ART SAFARI takes, the curator's insistence on the term "utopian" seems completely detached from any concrete observation that might be made about *Cloaca*, and therefore comes across as absurd. By challenging the specialist's authority and exposing it to ridicule, Lewis positions himself firmly within the outsider's perspective, according to which the significance and legitimacy of specialized discourses surrounding contemporary art appear dubious—a point which Lewis apparently wants to make. It would, of course, have been easy to cut out his conversation with the curator, which has no substantial function in the episode's following narration. However, by including such scenes, Lewis creates the impression of 'revealing' the art world and of giving an uncensored account of the oddity and emptiness of the so-called specialist's reflections.

A recurring indication of the art world's alleged emptiness is the speechlessness that Lewis's pragmatic questions provoke in several interviews. In general, it is not the art spectators who become speechless, as in the episode on Matthew Barney, but the experts and the artists themselves. In the episode on German artist Gregor Schneider, for instance, the artist often falls completely silent when Lewis inquires about his work. At an early point in the episode, Lewis asks Schneider why a certain space he plans to produce as an artwork is important to him, but the artist cannot reply. The camera tracks him in silence for more than ten seconds, which is a considerable duration for the series' usually high cutting rate.

By showing Schneider repeatedly unable to answer Lewis's straightforward questions, the artist's speechlessness becomes an almost comic element that creates the impression that even the artist himself cannot explain his artworks. With the author of the work unable to provide any meaningful



insight, the episode casts doubt on whether there is any sense or meaning in his pieces at all, and on whether the artist is even capable of properly expressing himself. In fact, this doubt is not 'cast' in the sense of a cognition that emerges in the course of the episode: it corresponds to the first impression that the episode creates. Gregor Schneider's art is introduced as weird and inaccessible, and this impression is strengthened by the depiction of the artist as an escapist 'weirdo.' In this sense, Lewis does not approach Schneider in order to challenge the first impression, but rather to perpetuate it.

This observation can be applied to the whole series. On closer consideration, Lewis's common-sense approach serves not so much to reveal a formerly unknown complexity about art, but rather perpetuates a preexisting cynicism about the (lack of) significance of artistic and intellectual work. By stultifying the artists and the experts, ART SAFARI often turns the tables of conventional knowledge transmission, which might be entertaining and which might be a long overdue revenge of the 'ignorant' on the authorities of the art world. However, the series thereby sustains the opposition of outsiders and insiders established by the same authorities it rebels against. Instead of enhancing their mutual comprehension, it just inverts their positions of power.

Furthermore, taking one step outside of the narrated world and considering that the series' author is an insider to the art world himself, it appears disputable whether ART SAFARI, instead of empowering the amateur, in fact caricatures him. While a traditional educational television show might assume a certain amount of ignorance on the part of its audience, Lewis's accounts insinuate that the general audience is not only ignorant but also unwilling to learn about the specialized and sometimes odd mindset of artists and critics. Thus, on closer consideration, one could argue that Lewis, in fact, perpetuates a cynicism about the outsider spectator.

## **THE CODES OF BEN LEWIS'S CHARACTER**

Despite its ambiguity, Ben Lewis's approach to contemporary art is not only characterized by his (perhaps cynical) construction of an amateur's perspective, but also by his attempt to break with the passivity of the viewer and his willingness to expose his personal investment. As a character in his

own show, Lewis interacts with the art world and interprets the artistic oeuvres against the backdrop of his own subjective findings and experiences.

By saying ‘a character’ I wish to emphasize that the Ben Lewis in ART SAFARI appears at least partially ‘an act,’ meaning that, rather than thoroughly authentic he appears to be enacting a constructed cultural identity, namely that of the spectator of contemporary art at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As such, Lewis’s characterization bears certain codes that, as I will show in the following, are ‘dated’ in as much as they mirror, albeit in a rather simplistic manner, dominant paradigms of contemporary art criticism.

The Lewis-character’s approach complies with the call for a destabilization of the interpretation of art required under the notion of a “performative writing” by post-hermeneutic theorists such as Amelia Jones at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and, more recently, by art historian Philip Ursprung, who coined the term “performative art history” (2008: 13 et seq.). Of course, ‘performativity’ has become a broadly and imprecisely-used term that today describes all sorts of artistic practices and methodological unorthodoxies, and that has mostly been excised from its originally sophisticated conceptualization informed by feminist and poststructuralist theory. Nevertheless, performativity in this context is generally understood as a method that demands that critics and art historians reveal the contingency and conditionality of their interpretations. As Amelia Jones and art historian Andrew Stephenson put it, the method is a strategy to critically contrast the premise of conventional discourses on art:

“Adopting the notion of performativity as a critical strategy within the study of visual culture thus enables a recognition of interpretation as a fragile, partial, and precarious affair and, ultimately, affords a critique of art criticism and art history as they have been traditionally practiced. Since meaning is negotiated between and across subjects and through language, it can never be fully secured: meaning comes to be understood as a negotiated domain, in flux and contingent on social and personal investments and contexts. [...] Interpretation itself is a performance between artists (as creators, performers, and spectators of their work) and spectators (whether ‘professionals’ or non-specialist).” (Jones/Stephenson 1999: 1-2)

Based on the premise that there is no such thing as one true interpretation of an artwork Jones and Stephenson argue that there are as many interpretations as there are spectators. They regard ‘the meaning’ of art as something

that is established in relation to the spectator who interacts with the art in a specific context and under personal preconditions. Thus, Amelia Jones speaks of “interpretation-as-exchange” (Jones 1998: 9), a term through which she emphasizes that meaning results of a contingent exchange between an artwork’s properties and the spectator’s personal investment and subjective interests.

In each episode, ART SAFARI foregrounds precisely this contingent exchange between Ben Lewis’s character and the artistic oeuvre (or the artist) he tries to understand and interpret. His figure negotiates the meaning of an artwork on the grounds of his personal investments, instead of reproducing a seemingly objective interpretation. It is crucial for the culture of art spectatorship constructed in ART SAFARI that this contingency and the obvious partiality of interpretation does not lend dullness to Lewis’s characterization but that it is presented as a valid and productive approach. These traits of the critical performative method encode Lewis’s approach as anti-authoritarian. It is expressively *not* based on the premise that the spectator must learn about the ‘true meaning’ of art or that expert knowledge is needed to derive meaning from art; rather, Lewis shows that the spectator can produce the artwork’s meaning based on his own personal investment and capacity.

By further considering the traits of Lewis’s act, it becomes clear that his character’s insistence on interacting with the art world exceeds the aim of pursuing a subjective exchange: He seeks not only to participate in the creation of meaning but, more invasively, to become part of the artworks. This happens quite literally in the episode on Wim Delvoye, who is known for tattooing pigs, whose skin, after their natural death, he sells as artworks. When visiting Delvoye’s pig farm in China, Lewis convinces Delvoye to tattoo one of the same motifs the artist is tattooing on a pig’s back on his own shoulder. Thus, Lewis explicitly exceeds the role of the spectator and becomes a carrier of the art project, which, by animating the artist to apply the tattoo on a human body, he even leads in a new direction.

Similarly, in the episode on the French artist Sophie Calle—notably, the only female artist whose work is presented in ART SAFARI—the Lewis-character seeks to interfere in the artistic project and blur the boundaries between recipient and producer. Inspired by Calle’s collaborations with other artists, such as Paul Auster or Damien Hirst, he tries to initiate a project that should reflect her artistic interests. The episode documents Lewis’s letters

to the artist, in which he suggests ideas for projects they could realize together. Unlike Delvoy, Sophie Calle does not show interest in collaboration with the reporter and turns him down repeatedly. Even if she does not allow Lewis to become a co-creator of her art, their communication is crucial to the episode's narrative and to the modality of spectatorship presented here: the Lewis-character is not just inspired by her art, but it appears to come naturally to him to react on the same level as the artist.

With this intrusive behavior, the Lewis-character casually dismisses the opposition of art creator and spectator, foregrounding the aspect of participation, which, as I mentioned, is a key concept of artistic discourses and of art criticism at the turn of the century. In this context, the concept of 'participation' is mostly linked to a critique of the 'spectacle,' which goes back to the Marxist analysis *Société du Spectacle* (1967) by French writer and artist Guy Debord. Broadly speaking, Debord's notion of the spectacle is based on a critique of passive consumption and it implies a pejorative understanding of spectatorship, which the philosopher Jacques Rancière summarizes in his essay *The Emancipated Spectator* (2007):

"Being a spectator means looking at a spectacle. And looking is a bad thing, for two reasons. First, looking is deemed the opposite of knowing. It means standing before an appearance or the reality that lies behind it. Second, looking is deemed the opposite of acting. He who looks at the spectacle remains motionless in his seat, lacking any power of intervention. Being a spectator is separated from the capacity of knowing just as he is separated from the possibility of acting." (Rancière 2007: 272.)

This description is, of course, highly polemic and it is important to mention that Rancière himself renounces the idea of a passive spectator typically connected to the notion of the spectacle. However, it is based on this simplistic and pejorative understanding of the spectator's relation to the spectacle that participation has been proclaimed, for instance by French curator Nicolas Bourriaud, as a critical strategy of dismissing passive consumption. It is understood that, by participating, the spectator overcomes his separation from the realm of the creators, asserting his equality with them, and that he eventually becomes empowered in his own capacity of knowing.

On the grounds of such an understanding, participation implies emancipation, and it is further clear that the Lewis-character's ostentatious interaction with the artworks can be read as a code for precisely this kind of effec-

tive, if not necessarily subtle, emancipation. Through his intrusive behavior Lewis demonstrates his overcoming of the spectator's distance from the artworks. Instead of merely looking, he expressively unravels the conditionality of the artistic oeuvres that he approaches, investigating their production and thereby tracing the realities that lie behind them and the mechanisms that finally shape our perception of them. By dismissing the opposition between looking and acting in his position as an art spectator, the Lewis-character embodies the claim for empowerment and puts the equality of creators and spectators to the test.

It is further an important nuance for the culture of spectatorship constructed in ART SAFARI that Lewis's character interacts and participates with the artistic oeuvres, whether he was invited to or not. He does not wait to be prompted into activity and agency by the artworks or their creators. This nuance encodes Lewis's character as inherently activated and—according to the aforementioned rather simplistic understanding—emancipated. His character pursues a subjective, interactive approach regardless of the directions established by the artworks and their display. He thereby embodies an unpredicted spectatorship.

## **ART SAFARI'S LACK OF SELF-REFLECTION**

Such an *inherently* activated approach is also required of ART SAFARI's television-viewing audience, since the series itself does not tear its viewers out of their alleged passivity by instructing them to be critical towards the narration. On the contrary: while Lewis exposes the art world's oddity and the conditionality of artistic productions, he does not extend the same critical eye to his own show's conditionality. The audience does not get any insight into its production or into the agreements between Lewis and the art institutions he reports on. However, there must have been several agreements with these parties that eventually influenced the series' narrations. In spite of the Lewis-character's empowerment within the narrated world, ART SAFARI cannot have stayed aloof from the terms of the depicted artworks' copyright owners in the real world. Also, he cannot have completely hidden his agenda to take an antagonistic or ironic stance, which was certainly no secret after the first four episodes were broadcast in 2003. The series is

clearly based on dialogues, decisions, and agreements, which, however, are not traced within the diegesis.

This observation about the series' lack of open self-reflection raises questions about the authenticity of Lewis's revelations and the allegedly emancipated approach of his figure. To put it plainly, the Lewis-character interacts with the artworks without having been invited to *in front* of the camera. However, he might well have been invited to *off* camera. It is further plausible that Lewis manipulated his footage, which is edited to the effect of entertainment. In the episode featuring Gregor Schneider, for instance, in which the artist falls silent several times, it may well be that Schneider did answer Lewis's questions after all, but that his answers are cut out in order to create a coherent image of the artist as a 'weirdo' who is as inaccessible as his artworks' meaning. However, it is also unlikely that Schneider only learned that he was cast as a 'weirdo' after the series was aired. It is rather likely that the artist agreed with the portrayal and that he followed Lewis's script. Maybe they had even fun enacting his speechlessness.

In general, Lewis's relationship with the artists portrayed in ART SAFARI is kept inscrutable to the viewer, as are his reasons for presenting these specific high-profiled artists. Again, this lack of insight into the series' background calls for speculation. Is Lewis friends with the artists he depicts, and would they otherwise let him make fun of them? And why is Sophie Calle the only female artist depicted in the series? Did other women not approve of Lewis's pally behavior, or did he not bother to engage other female artists in his series?

To put it briefly, ART SAFARI is produced as a distant spectacle. Ben Lewis may disturb the rules and the self-adulation of the art world, but he does not disturb the pleasure of watching his series. In this sense, one could claim that there is a discrepancy between the construction of emancipated spectatorship within the narrated world, and the 'passive consumption' the series constructs with its own audience. This claim would, however, be based on the assumption that emancipation has to be instructed. And this assumption must raise suspicion, since it leads to the paradoxical expectation that a spectator should overcome the instruction that tells him to overcome this same instruction.

In line with Jacques Rancière's concept of emancipation, the observation that ART SAFARI is produced as a distant spectacle does not categorical-

ly disqualify the show from being a critical account. On the contrary, Rancière regards it as a misunderstanding that spectatorship “must be torn into activity” (2007: 279), and he goes as far as to disqualify the attempts on the part of the creators to willingly activate the spectator and instruct him to be critical. In his essay *The Emancipated Spectator*, which is based on a lecture held in the context of theatre studies, Rancière illustrates such an activation with the paradigmatic examples of Bertolt Brecht’s epic theatre, which distances the viewer by emphasizing the spectacle’s conditionality, and of Antonin Artaud’s *Theater of Cruelty*, which involves the viewer and puts him under pressure up to the point where he intervenes (2007: 272). Rancière argues that such attempts to activate the spectator perpetuate an inequality between the audience and the creators, since the attempt to lead the spectators out of their alleged passivity is, in fact, a paternalistic gesture.

In this sense, the fact, that ART SAFARI does not reveal its own conditionality but rather provokes its viewers to notice this withheld aspect, may be considered an indication of the series’ resistance to establishing an authoritarian constellation of knowledgeable mediator and an ignorant viewer who has to be taught to be critical. By *not* instructing the spectator to be critical, the series assumes its audience capacity to critically responding by its own. And indeed, it might be a subjective observation but it is precisely the ambivalence of the emancipatory construction within the diegesis, and the series’ ‘uncritical’ enunciation, that constructs me as an activated spectator. As a viewer I oscillate between the identification with the series’ aspects of an anti-authoritarian culture of art spectatorship, and my rejection of its overly bold, cynical, or ‘uncritical’ style. This oscillation makes me follow the series without being completely on its side; instead I find myself consistently examining my own response to it.

As part of this constant examination I also find myself trying to decide whether ART SAFARI can be regarded as an antagonistic counter-discourse similar to the polemic reports on Marina Abramović’s performance *The Artist Is Present* that I described at the beginning of this essay. Like these reports, ART SAFARI creates a counter-discourse that considers non-specialist’s observations and that does not reproduce the usual explanations of the art institutions that are usually in power of the discourse on contemporary art. It therefore creates an anti-authoritarian space and constructs a culture for which antagonism is a basic principle. However, in terms of its

pragmatic status in the 'real world' and the position ART SAFARI takes in regard to the institution of educational television, the series appears less of a counter-discourse. Like the polemic accounts on Abramović's show, it adopts a rhetoric related to the current blogger-culture, which is characterized by using an informal vocabulary and a subjective perspective to report on topical phenomenon. However, as opposed to the polemic reports on Marina Abramović that were broadcast by regular television stations, ART SAFARI was broadcast by specialized cultural channels that, in spite of their aim to address a general audience, indeed reach an audience with likewise specialized interests. Contrary to most of the polemic accounts on Abramović that were at least temporarily available on YouTube, ART SAFARI could never be watched on an open online platform. Instead, in its edited DVD-version that was published in 2006, the series has been available in libraries notably specializing in contemporary art.

The series does not break with traditional principles of knowledge transmission, but it eventually empowers them. By incorporating an antagonistic rhetoric and an amateurish approach to contemporary art, the major cultural channels BBC and ARTE demonstrate their willingness to innovate the format of educational television, anticipating the criticism of patronizing their audience. The institution, however, remains the same. There are no outsiders reporting and producing a show, but only an insider with the authorities at his back enacting an emancipated culture of art spectatorship.

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