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Erica Carter, Bettina Malcomess, Eileen Rositzka

MAPPING THE SENSIBLE

DISTRIBUTION, INSCRIPTION, CINEMATIC THINKING

CINEPOETICS ESSAY

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Erica Carter, Bettina Malcomess, Eileen Rositzka
Mapping the Sensible

Cinepoetics Essay

Edited by
Hermann Kappelhoff and Michael Wedel

Volume 3

Erica Carter, Bettina Malcomess,
Eileen Rositzka

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Preface and Acknowledgements

The conclusion to every book project, joyful as it may be, is also a moment of loss: the end of a journey of intellectual discovery, and in the case of this volume of deepening friendship. The loss in this case is acute. In May 2021, midway through work on this book, our friend, colleague, and co-author Eileen Rositzka passed away. We are still reeling. Our project on mapping had been Eileen's brainchild; she spotted our affinities, inspired conversations, nudged us into action to identify common threads. In the early days of Covid-19, we set up an online reading group, shared regular video calls, laughed our way through the pandemic's darkest days.

The worst of those came suddenly. May 2021 brought an urgent call for us to contact friends in Berlin. Then the news of Eileen's sudden, inexplicable passing. A full year on, the devastation remains. Eileen was luminous: a scintillating presence, a wicked wit, an intellectual who wore her erudition lightly, a gifted musician, a loyal friend. We met when she was a postdoctoral researcher at the Cinepoetics Center for Advanced Film Studies in Berlin. Erica Carter was a visiting Senior Research Fellow, Bettina Malcomess a seminar participant and co-organiser of a spring 2021 workshop on mapping that was also an ideas laboratory for our joint book. Eileen had graduated in 2017 with a PhD from the University of St Andrews, Scotland. Her first monograph was published in 2018 by De Gruyter as *Cinematic Corpographies. Re-Mapping the War Film Through the Body*. Readers familiar with this and other writings by Eileen will recognise how formative her thinking has been for our research. We take from her many of the central tenets that inform our three essays: her conception of the map not as representation, but as a set of operations; her conviction that the map is a performative entity that makes and remakes territories of memory and belonging; her related understanding of the map as an instrument of subjectivisation – a tool of emplacement of subjects and bodies in imagined but also concretely experienced worlds.

It took longer than we had hoped to bring this book to fruition after Eileen's death. Working on her essay draft brought her voice to life, but confronted us too with the absence of that voice in our ongoing conversations on mapping and its relation to film and cinema. Many friends and colleagues helped us to hear Eileen anew. In December 2021, the Cinepoetics Center staged a workshop on Eileen's work. Michael Wedel, Christina Schmitt, and Hannes Wesselkämper assembled a compendium of extracts from her writing; their insight and encouragement has been invaluable throughout the process of completion of our three essays. Francesco Casetti and Robert Burgoyne contributed papers at the 2021 workshop. Their incisive comments filled gaps in our own understanding and

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significantly shaped our thinking as we worked on the volume introduction. Robert Burgoyne and David Gaertner read early essay drafts. Their comments were incisive, generous, and an indispensable guide as we completed the final manuscript. Conversations with Hermann Kappelhoff, Regina Brückner, Tobias and Annika Haupts, Lynne Cameron, Danny Gronmaier, and Catherine Wheatley were a source of encouragement as we moved towards completion. Other Cinepoetics colleagues, doctoral students, Fellows and Associate Members formed a web of support that sustained us through the hardest moments. More recently, Maja Roth, Iris König, and Octavia Rudek were simply superb in their help with proof-reading, copy-editing, picture research, and image preparation. We thank Christina Schmitt in her role as Cinepoetics publications coordinator, as well as Stella Diedrich from De Gruyter. We owe them a debt of gratitude for their patience, tact, and unerring support throughout this volume's gestation.

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Bettina Malcomess thanks Ahmed Veriava, with whom she read Jacques Rancière's *Disagreement*, along with those who have been constant interlocutors and guides in her reading and research: Chloé Samala Faux, Craniv Boyd, Abri de Swardt, Alexander Opper, and John Peffer. She also thanks Wits School of Arts for their support of her research into intersections of colonial history and visual technology, especially the ARA program administered by Christo Doherty and Zanele Madiba. And as always thanks to Meryl Franks and Peter Malcomess for their support of her travel between Johannesburg, Berlin, and London.

All screenshots were generated by the volume contributors. Image credits are included as in-text captions, with the exception of Eileen Rositzka's essay. Her screenshots from PATIENCE (AFTER SEBALD) (Dir. Grant Gee, UK 2012) have been left free of captions to allow the free association of image, narrative, and concept with which both W. G. Sebald and Grant Gee operate, and which finds echoes in Rositzka's own writing. Thanks also to director Maria Govan, and producer Francis J. Kuzler of Dedalus VII, for permission to use a production still from RAIN (BS 2008) for our cover. We have made every reasonable effort to ensure other rights holders have been contacted for permission prior to reproduction of their work. Any omissions or errors are inadvertent and will be corrected for future publication on written notification by the rights holder or their representative.

We thank, finally, Josef and Alice Rositzka for encouraging us to complete this volume. It is dedicated to the memory of Eileen Rositzka: a beloved colleague, a sparkling intellect, and a much-missed friend.

Erica Carter, Bettina Malcomess
June 2022

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Introduction: Mapping the Sensible

Erica Carter, Bettina Malcomess, Eileen Rositzka

In academic and public discourse, "mapping" has become a ubiquitous term. Migrating from geography, mapping now figures pervasively across the humanities and social sciences as a conceptual metaphor and a heuristic for representing and explaining spatial, but also textual, intertextual, historical, and social relations and networks.[1] Digital humanities might understand mapping as a mode of "distant reading" of digital landscapes; cinema studies turns to geospatial digital mapping as a means of grasping the "multiple cultural intersections which constitute each cinema-going experience".[2] In political science, mapping may have the evidentiary function of tracing geopolitical shifts and territorial conflicts; it may be normative, providing "roadmaps" towards new futures; or it may be resistant, reorienting political imaginaries by "dislocat[ing]" and "disorient[ing]" the "traditional geopolitical gaze".[3] In media and systems theory, mapping can be an instrument of power; in cultural and film theory, it may be cognitive in Frederic Jameson's sense: a mode of epistemological and aesthetic worlding shaping the relations between physical, imaginary, and geopolitical territory – or what Tiago de Luca has termed "world and earth".[4]

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1 See e. g. Barbara Piatti: Literary Cartography. Mapping as Method. In: Anders Angeberg-Pedersen (ed.): *Literature and Cartography. Theories, Histories, Genres*. Cambridge, MA 2017, 45–72; Marion Picker: Zum Mapping als kulturwissenschaftlicher Methode. In: Jean-Marie Valentin (ed.): *Germanistik im Konflikt der Kulturen, Band 5: Kulturwissenschaft vs. Philologie? Wissenschaftskulturen: Kontraste, Konflikte, Synergien. Editionsphilologie: Projekte, Tendenzen und Konflikte*. Bern 2008, 47–51; Sybille Krämer: *Medium, Messenger, Transmission. An Approach to Media Philosophy*. Amsterdam 2015, 188–191.

2 Giulia Taurino / Marta Boni: Maps, Distant Reading, and the Internet Movie Database. New Approaches for the Analysis of Large-Scale Datasets in Television Studies. *media/rep* 14 (2018), 24–37; Deb Verhoeven / Kate Bowles / Colin Arrowsmith: Mapping the Movies. Reflections on the Use of Geospatial Technologies for Historical Cinema Audience Research. In: Michael Ross / Manfred Grauer / Bernd Freisleben (eds.): *Digital Tools in Media Studies. Analysis and Research. An Overview*. Bielefeld 2009, 69–81, here 69.

3 Yogendra Kumar: *Geopolitics in an Era of Globalisation. Mapping an Alternative Global Future*. New Delhi 2021; Anna W. Moore / Nicholas A. Purdue: Imagining a Critical Geopolitical Cartography. *Geography Compass* 8/12 (2014), 892–901, here 893.

4 Lev Manovich: The Mapping of Space. Perspective, Radar, and 3-D Computer Graphics. http://manovich.net/index.php/projects/article-1993 (last accessed 13 June 2022); Bruno Latour: Visualization and Cognition. Thinking with Eyes and Hands. *Knowledge and Society. Studies in the Sociology of Culture Past and Present* 6 (1986), 1–40; Frederic Jameson: Cognitive Mapping. In: Cary Nelson / Lawrence Grossberg (eds.): *Marxism and the Interpretation of*

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As we seek to show in this volume, mapping is however more than a method of collecting data, a tracking of relations, a form of projection; it is also a perceptual and affective practice, a mode of expression, a form of spatial, topological, and geopolitical thinking, and a modality of affective belonging. We speak of mapping accordingly as a media(ted) experience that communicates how shared realities are perceived, subjects situated in the world, and world views as well as political dynamics inscribed into aesthetic regimes that in turn define subjectivities and their relations to the other subjects and worlds. The term becomes here a multifocal lens through which the complex of cinematic experience can be refracted to reveal its embedding within poetic, aesthetic, and historico-political modes of spatial practice. We differentiate throughout between "maps" as static forms of representation, and mapping as practice and process. As geographers Rob Kitchin and Martin Dodge write,

> [m]aps are of-the-moment, brought into being through practices (embodied, social, technical), always re-made every time they are engaged with; mapping is a process of constant re-territorialization. As such, maps are transitory and fleeting, being contingent, relational and context-dependent. Maps are practices – they are always mappings.[5]

In this conception, a film (like a map) creates a territory, rather than just depicting it. This creative process is not restricted to representational codes, nor to the spectator's cognitive capacities. It is governed instead by what Sibylle Krämer describes as a combination of the "logical and mathematical laws of cartographic projection" and the "technical, semiotic, aesthetic, political, and ideological conditions of mapmaking".[6] Maps, then, are reified manifestations of performative practices that occur within and are shaped by regulatory "laws" as well as locally situated contingencies. But maps are shaped at the same time by what Krämer terms "aesthetic conditions": cultural and media-environmental frameworks: in this volume specifically, the environments of film and cinema within which poetic, technological, or social practice may transform existing or emergent cartographies into the space of a cinematic experience.[7] Tom Conley's *Cartographic Cinema* clarifies this strange affinity of maps, films, and cinema when he discusses the bilocational

Culture. Chicago 1988, 347–357; Tiago de Luca: Earth Networks. "The Human Surge" and Cognitive Mapping. *NECSUS* 7/2 (2018), 121–140, here 125–126.

5 Rob Kitchin / Martin Dodge: Rethinking Maps. *Progress in Human Geography* 31/3 (2007), 331–344, here 331.

6 Sibylle Krämer: Karten erzeugen doch Welten, oder? *Soziale Systeme* 178/1–2 (2012), 153–167, here 155.

7 This is a variation of Michel de Certeau's distinction between place and space: "In short, space is a practiced place." Michel de Certeau: *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley 1988, 117.

effect of seeing a map in a fiction film. The map in film, he contends, exposes "the weightless fact" that we are both watching from our position inside the cinema or before the screen, and that we agree to the "fallacious authenticity of a place" in the film of which the map is a guarantee.[8] For Conley, cinematic language is itself always engaged in producing the geographical fiction of place, space, motion, in a process that is both physical and psychological. "In sum a film is a map",[9] he writes, and thus the reading of film and cinema too is a process akin to mapping both a cartographic field and a mental geography.

Assemblage, Provincialising, Travelling

In this volume, we address, but also seek to amplify this and related conceptions of mapping as cinematic practice.[10] Erica Carter brings together the writings of Pan-African thinker and sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois with the political aesthetics of Jacques Rancière to situate mapping as a practice that is embedded in the act of walking to the movies. In the segregated moviegoing context of the post-World War II Bahamas, mapping is productive, suggests Carter, of the specific subjectivity and sensibility that she terms colonial whiteness.[11] Bettina Malcomess draws on case studies from the South African War (1899–1902, aka the Boer War or Anglo-Boer War) to consider the actuality film as an inherently cartographic form that is also entangled within communication and visual technologies employed for military purposes within late British Empire. Eileen Rositzka meanwhile explores Grant Gee's essay film PATIENCE: AFTER SEBALD (UK 2012), reading Gee's meditative journeys around itineraries from W. G. Sebald's 1995 prose work, *The Rings of Saturn*, as an experience of navigating through space and time, but also a poetic practice of sense-making, memory work, and historical reflection occurring in and through cinematic images.

Three core terms – assemblage, provincialising, travelling – shape the understanding of mapping underpinning our three case studies. A conception of assemblage as cinematic process shapes, first, our shared understanding of

8 Tom Conley: *Cartographic Cinema*. Minnesota 2007, 4.
9 Conley: *Cartographic Cinema*, 5.
10 For a selection of perspectives from screen studies research on mapping since Conley's intervention, see Giorgio Avezzù / Teresa Castro / Giuseppe Fidotta: Special Section: #Mapping. *NECSUS* 7/2 (2018), 85–251.
11 W. E. B. Du Bois: The Souls of White Folk [1920]. In: id.: *Darkwater. Voices from within the Veil* [1920]. London / New York 2016, 17–29; Jacques Rancière: *The Politics of Aesthetics. The Distribution of the Sensible* [2000], trans. by Gabriel Rockhill. London 2004.

film and cinema as spatio-temporally situated concatenations of forms and movements through which camera, filmmaker, and spectatorial bodies move in a perpetual process of sense-making, emplacement, and subjectivisation. That conception is best exemplified by Bettina Malcomess's account of early film. When Malcomess places films from the South African War in dialogue with the stereoscope as a modern technology of militant vision, she echoes historians of audiovisual culture and media perception including Jonathan Crary, Wolfgang Schivelbusch, Anne Friedberg, Mary Ann Doane, Michael Wedel, or Dimitris Eleftheriotis, who locate film similarly as one amongst a multiplicity of modern technologies of mobile vision including the nineteenth-century panorama, lantern slides, chronophotography, the zoetrope, and other early moving image technologies, but also the railway, or window-shopping as a proto-cinematic practice of gendered flânerie.[12]

For Malcomess, this expanded understanding of the cinematic shows film's place within an "assemblage of visual, cartographic, and communication technologies pervasive in the late nineteenth century" and late Empire. Read within this media archaeological framework, the South African War films make evident how early cinematic practices are implicated in the production of a "spatial and temporal sensibility deeply enmeshed within both the colonial and the modern imagination".[13] Erica Carter's essay is indebted similarly to an understanding of cinema as what Francesco Casetti terms "an alterable complex of components" that "recompose themselves" according to location and circumstance.[14] But the essay is also aligned with the so-called new cinema history, which emphasises cinema's nature as an ensemble of media forms that moves beyond the cinema auditorium to shape surrounding social environments and popular-cultural milieux. For Robert Allen for instance, cinema as a domain of social experience within audiovisual culture must be conceived not merely in

12 Jonathan Crary: *Techniques of the Observer. On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge, MA 1990; Wolfgang Schivelbusch: *Geschichte der Eisenbahnreise. Zur Industrialisierung von Raum und Zeit im 19. Jahrhundert*. Berlin 1979; Anne Friedberg: *Window Shopping. Cinema and the Postmodern*. Berkeley 1994; Mary Ann Doane: *The Emergence of Cinematic Time. Modernity, Contingency, the Archive*. Cambridge, MA 2002; Michael Wedel: *Pictorial Affects, Senses of Rupture. On the Poetics and Culture of Popular German Cinema, 1910–1930*. Berlin / Boston 2019. Dimitris Eleftheriotis provides an excellent overview of approaches to movement and cinematic time in his "Movement, Vision and Subjectivity in the Nineteenth Century". Dimitris Eleftheriotis: *Cinematic Journeys. Film and Movement*. Edinburgh 2010, 7–36.

13 Bettina Malcomess: The Illegible Field, 83.

14 Francesco Casetti: *The Lumière Galaxy. Seven Key Words for the Cinema to Come*. New York 2015, 10 & 67–97.

respect of film as its preeminent media form, but as an aggregate formation (a *dispositif)* in which film works together with architecture, print media, fashion, popular music, built form, and public space to constitute the "immediate social, sensory, performative context of reception".[15]

Though indebted in general to this new cinema history, and in particular to Monique Toppin's pioneering history of cinema in the postwar Bahamas, Carter's essay parts company however with Allen and others in its eschewing the text/context, film-cultural/social distinction on which a cinema history conceived as a social history of audiences and reception rests.[16] Her account of cinemagoing as racialised mapping draws instead methodologically on family memoir, oral history, urban phenomenology, and media anthropology, but also on cinema histories (the work of Annette Kuhn or Chenshu Zhou for instance) in which what Allen terms "context" is refigured as a shifting configuration of media forms, all of which may have a status as textual (or better, aesthetic or cultural) form. Mapping features in Carter's account, then, as an audience practice that stretches beyond the cinema auditorium, reaching into a media assemblage that includes built form and urban topography, eliciting practices that are equally and simultaneously social and cultural, because no part of the cinemagoing experience remains unmediated by cultural or aesthetic form.[17] Here, then, this volume's conception of the cinematic extends outward from the film frame, assembling under its purview objects and physical spaces offscreen that provide the experiential scaffolding for nights out at the movies. Eileen Rositzka's account, by contrast, reverses the centripetal dynamic by which the film experience moves outwards into surrounding architectural, urban, and, in Carter's account, racialised physical space or geopolitical territory. Rositzka's interest instead is in film itself as "an optical-environmental arrangement or *assemblage*": the product of centrifugal forces that draw multiple "signs" and "materialities" into the restricted space of the film frame, making of the latter a "framework within

15 Robert C. Allen: From Exhibition to Reception. Reflections on the Audience in Film History. *Screen* 31/4 (1990), 347–356, here 352.

16 Monique Toppin: *Cinema and Cultural Memory in The Bahamas in the 1950s*. Unpublished DPhil, University of Stirling 2019. On conceptions of cinema history as social history, see e. g. Richard Maltby: New Cinema Histories. In: Richard Maltby / Daniel Biltereyst / Philippe Meers (eds.): *Explorations in New Cinema History. Approaches and Case Studies*. Chichester 2011, 1–40; and Richard Maltby: On the Prospect of Writing Cinema History from Below. *TMG Journal for Media History* 9/2 (2006), 74–96.

17 Annette Kuhn: *An Everyday Magic. Cinema and Cultural Memory*. London / New York 2002; Chenshu Zhou: *Cinema Off Screen. Moviegoing in Socialist China*. Oakland 2021.

which the spectator can negotiate reality", and of the film experience a heightened encounter with familiar, but always poetically reconfigured worlds.[18]

As Rositzka elsewhere emphasises, film creates in this process of assembling, distributing, and reconfiguring not just an experienced "world", but also "a territory": one that is moreover not simply depicted, but performatively made.[19] This emphasis on territorial mapping as performative, discursive, or poetic production aligns Rositza's contribution with the discussions of Empire and colony, centre and periphery that shape the essays by Carter and Malcomess. These too are rooted in accounts of territory, understood now more explicitly in terms outlined in postcolonial spatial histories and cultural or political geographies of imperial milieux. The philosopher and political scientist of the postcolony Achille Mbembe distinguishes "territory" from "place", for instance, by virtue of the former's malleability within geopolitical and spatial orders. While place is for Mbembe (following Michel de Certeau) a "settled" spatial configuration in which "elements are distributed in relations of coexistence", territory is in his account a fluid configuration whose internal organisation as well as the delineation of its contours are the object of political *agon*. Territory for Mbembe, then, exists not as fixed and bounded spatial element, but as a "set of possibilities" that are "resisted or realised" by "historical actors" in specific moments and locations. Thus, while in regions considered to be "the margins of the world" (his example is the African continent), space has historically been "dominat[ed]" and "put […] to different uses", local histories from the so-called periphery highlight "new forms of territoriality and unexpected forms of locality" in which rights to territory are claimed and denied, negotiated, suppressed, or creatively asserted.[20]

Mbembe's analysis suggests that local studies "from the margins of the world" may be especially revealing of the force field of (geo)political, socio-cultural, and intersubjective relations within which territories are formed through cartographic practice. Mindful of this potential of the local, the particular, and the minor or marginal not just to illuminate histories of domination and violence, but to uncover traces of quietly dissident spatial imaginaries, Rositzka includes in her essay the voices of artists recounting and refiguring the historical violence whose imprint Sebald registers on his East Anglian journeys. Joining these in Malcomess's

18 Eileen Rositzka: A Saturn State of Mind, 134.
19 Eileen Rositzka: *Cinematic Corpographies. Re-Mapping the War Film through the Body*. Berlin / Boston 2018, 7.
20 Achille Mbembe: At the Edge of the World. Boundaries, Territoriality, and Sovereignty in Africa, trans. by Steven Rendell. *Public Culture* 12/1 (2000), 259–284, here 260–261. See also de Certeau: *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 117.

contribution are diary entries written in the siege of Mafeking by Solomon T. Plaatje, a founding member of the South African Native National congress; or in Carter's essay scenes from a decolonial cinematic remapping of Bahamian journeys in Maria Govan's 2008 film RAIN (BS). This emphasis on voices from the assumed periphery is amplified by a commitment in our three essays to what can be termed, following the historian Dipesh Chakrabarty, a provincialising of the historical aesthetics of mapping in respect of cinema and film. Chakrabarty called many decades ago for a postcolonial scholarship that engages with such universals of modernity as "the abstract figure of the human or that of Reason" (or, one might add in the present content, of aesthetic judgement) that were "forged in eighteenth-century Europe and that underlie the human sciences". At the same time, Chakrabarty demanded a spatio-temporal realignment in conceptions of the modern. To write historically requires from his postcolonial perspective a multiplicious temporal understanding that encompasses simultaneities, breaks, and recursive loops as much as linear developments or teleologies.[21]

Chakrabarty speaks in this context of a historical time "out of joint with itself": of both parallel and divergent, but always uneven developments in a global history conceived within a temporal schema of fractures, frictions, simultaneities, parallels, and anachronisms.[22] That this temporal refiguring entails a spatial realignment of historical and analytical perspectives becomes evident when Chakrabarty further proposes, akin to Mbembe, an understanding of modernity re-visioned from the plural margins. His demand is for an evaluation of how "categories and strategies we have learned from European thought" are "both indispensable and inadequate" in representing "a non-European modernity".[23] Our volume responds in ways specific to film and cinema studies to Chakrabarty's call. The categories and strategies at issue for us are cinematic and film-historical; they relate to the question of how the sensory and aesthetic experience that we call mapping defines territories, forges senses of place, and situates filmmakers and spectators as embodied actors within shifting orders of

21 Dipesh Chakrabarty: *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference.* Princeton / Oxford 2008, 68–72.

22 Ibid., 28. Chakrabarty's critique of European historicism resonates with reflections at a 2017 Cinepoetics colloquium series on "Historicity and Historical Experience". Discussions informing our three essays centred in that series among other sources on Reinhart Koselleck: Perspective and Temporality. A Contribution to the Historiographical Exposure of the Historical World. In: id.: *Futures Past. On the Semantics of Historical Time.* New York 2004, 128–151; Paul Ricoeur: Narrative Time. *Critical Inquiry* 7/1 (1980), 169–190; Miriam Hansen: Film, Medium of a Disintegrating World. In: id.: *Cinema and Experience. Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno.* Berkeley / Los Angeles / London 2012, 3–39.

23 Chakrabarty: *Provincializing Europe*, 20–29.

space and time. We have noted our debt to scholarship that situates film and cinema as site, not sight: a set of assemblages, then, in which the cinematic *dispositif* is spatialised, and vision only one of the faculties engaged in the navigational processes through which we orient our perceptions of the world.[24] Much of the literature on cinema thus conceived has however taken as its model the audiovisual cultures of western metropoles. Histories of mobile visuality begin regularly with Benjamin and Baudelaire in the Paris arcades; cinematic practices of *flânerie* are seen to emerge with the advent in European and North American imperial centres of mass manufacturing, urbanisation, and spectacular visual economies arranged around consumer display; and the panoramic perception of an early cinematic sensibility oriented towards mobile flows is presented as linked to the development of the railway – an emblematic technology of modern vision emerging, again, in the industrial economies of the Global North and West.[25]

Priya Jaikumar has called by contrast for a spatial turn in film historiography that confronts "epistemic questions of category – of where, why, and how we situate/d colonial objects, people and places then and now – are fundamentally spatial ones".[26] Michael Wedel has answered this and related calls for a recalibrating of film historiographies written from an assumed European "centre" with a plea for a film-historical method understood as "work on the margins". Wedel's attention not to established teleologies, but to the "analysis of 'situations' and [their] interweavements, bifurcations and dispersions", is a further source, alongside Jaikumar and Mbembe, for our own account of cinematic cartographies. For Wedel, what Mbembe might call territorial borderlines "become decipherable and potentially meaningful" in a film and cinema history that situates its objects as spatial thresholds "in which aesthetic meanings and cultural meanings converge".[27] Taking our cue from this account of the threshold as a

24 See also Volker Pantenburg: The Cinematographic State of Things. In: id. (ed.): *Cinematographic Objects. Things and Operations*. Berlin 2015, 9–21; and Amy Herzog: Assemblage, Constellation, Image. Reading Filmic Matter. *Discourse Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 38/2 (2016), 215–234.

25 Walter Benjamin: *The Arcades Project,* trans. by Howard Eiland / Kevin McLoughlin. Cambridge, MA 2002; Eleftheriotis: *Cinematic Journeys*; Doane: *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*; Friedberg: *Window Shopping*; Schivelbusch: *Geschichte der Eisenbahnreise*; Vanessa R. Schwartz: *Spectacular Realities. Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-Siècle Paris*. Berkeley / London 1998.

26 Priya Jaikumar: An "Accurate Imagination". Place, Map and Archive as Spatial Objects of Film History. In: Lee Grieveson / Colin MacCabe (eds.): *Empire and Film*. London 2011, 167–188, here 167.

27 Wedel: *Pictorial Affects, Senses of Rupture*, 1–2. See also Michael Wedel: *Filmgeschichte als Krisengeschichte. Schnitte und Spuren durch den deutschen Film*. Bielefeld 2011.

site of cultural-historical convergence and emergence, we engage in this volume in explorations primarily of "threshold" objects: case studies from minor cinemas – an essay film by a British documentarist, cinema culture in the Bahamas as a small island archipelago, and an early experiment in camera technology with William Dickson's Biograph – each chosen not for any emblematic or ideal-typical quality, but for its location in liminal environments whose investigation reveals both the contingent particularity and the larger spatio-temporal entanglements of cinema's maps of experienced worlds.

Mbembe and Chakrabarty, meanwhile, encourage us to provincialise our account of cinematic mapping, situating our essays within a multiplicitous, uneven, and globally dispersed history of cinematic modernity: one that begins its narratives of mobile visuality not with European railways, but with military movements across the *veld* of colonial South Africa; or that inhabits localities on the fringes and margins of western metropoles – in our case, the Bahamas, South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal, and rural English East Anglia. These analyses of the minor, the peripheral, or the liminal will, we hope, afford insight into mapping as a multipolar and decentred cinematic practice through which film responds to the contingent conditions of locality, while "dynamically situat[ing]" itself within history (and we would add also in place, space, and what Mbembe calls the negotiated territories of marginal belonging).[28]

This focus on minor objects and historiographically marginal modes of cinematic apprehension is also central – and this is the third common thread uniting our contributions – to what might be called the travelling methodologies that shape not just our analyses, but also our strategy of essay writing as perambulant critical form. Eileen Rositzka cites in this context Rebecca Solnit, whose approach to thought and/as movement shapes Rositzka's own understanding of cinematic thinking in Gee's essay film. PATIENCE, like Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn*, is structured as a series of walks through East Anglian rural landscapes. Rositzka turns for a critical approach to walking in Gee's film to Solnit's "comprehensive account of walking as political, aesthetic, and social activity", *Wanderlust*. She finds here models for understanding "walking as thinking" that are similarly mobilised (though they derive from different journeys around their objects) by Carter and Malcomess.[29] Walking for Solnit is a bodily action whose rhythms and trajectories afford experience of the multiple temporalities and intersecting spatial matrices of place and landscape. For Solnit, "the rhythm of walking generates a kind of rhythm of thinking", while spatial transit – the passage through a landscape –

28 Wedel: *Pictorial Affects, Senses of Rupture*, 3.
29 Rositzka: A Saturn State of Mind, 143.

stimulates "thought" as a process of sensory, cognitive, and affective appropriation of, and projective refiguring of surrounding worlds.[30] Solnit's account, which Rositzka remodels for her own analysis of walking as (cinematic) thinking, finds echoes in Erica Carter's cinema history of walking to the movies in downtown segregated Nassau. Carter draws among other sources on Annette Kuhn's study of British cinema history and memory, *An Everyday Magic,* to situate walking as a "pragmatic practice of bodily mobility": one that embroils her own study's white cinemagoers in racial practice, as they navigate the overlapping regimes of black/white segregation shaping urban experience in the late 1940s Bahamas.[31]

For both Carter and Malcomess, moreover, walking is just one amongst a range of more or less laborious, because neither mechanical nor automated modes of transit around colonial environments. Both writers structure their essays around journeys: in Carter's essay, walks to the movies by white expatriates through segregated downtown Nassau; in Malcomess's chapter, the journeys of cameras and their operators, but also of soldiers, horses, military hardware, stereographic cards, telegraphic messages, and transportation vehicles (carts, shipping, air balloons) across the geographical field of the South African War. The arduousness of the perambulatory movements required to generate actuality films from a distant war underlines, meanwhile, the spatio-temporal, micro- and geopolitical distinctions and hierarchies between walking as thinking across variable geopolitical arenas.

In Rositzka's account of Grant Gee's film, walking has a mnemotechnical function as a practice of European remembering in which the narrator's subjectivity becomes a filter for traumatic memories ranging across two world wars, colonial terror, environmental degradation, regional impoverishment, and more. Rositzka turns in this context to Andrew Hoskins for an account of what he terms "connective memory": a term read by Rositzka as a sense-making and historicising activity that destabilises social divisions and epistemological hierarchies, enabling an experience of "complex temporalities of self and others" and "simultaneous" connections between present and past.[32]

Mapping here is a spatial practice that is enacted through the walk, and that unfolds in time as a reconfiguring of landscape to reveal a historical geology of sedimented trauma and loss. Carter too is concerned, if differently, with walking as a practice of apprehension of historicity. Drawing on the

30 Ibid.; Rebecca Solnit: *Wanderlust. A History of Walking*. New York / London 2000, 5–6.
31 Erica Carter: White Bodies in Motion, 27; Kuhn: *An Everyday Magic*.
32 Rositzka: A Saturn State of Mind, 147; Andrew Hoskins: Media, Memory, Metaphor. Remembering and the Connective Turn. *Parallax* 17/4 (2011), 19–31.

place-based phenomenology of Edward Casey, as well as philosophies and theories of race (Du Bois, Brock Bahler), and oral, social, and political histories of segregation in the colonial Bahamas, Carter shows how walking in her Bahamian colonial context functions as a durational gesture of sensory apprehension, but also emplacement within a historical racial matrix.[33] Walking becomes mapping in Carter's account through the experience it enables of racial boundaries drawn by successive colonial, mercantile, and white supremacist regimes.

Malcomess shares with Carter this emphasis on the racial partitioning of ambulant mobilities in colonial space. Hence the appearance in her study of black South Africans conscripted by the British as carriers facilitating troop movements: figures glimpsed briefly in the war actualities, reminding viewers of the status of walking as labour and, with this, of the raced, classed, and gendered hierarchies underpinning perambulant mobility in an imperial war. For Malcomess, the movement of human bodies alongside a "constellation of information and communications technologies" may also be recognisable as mapping in Carter's sense, as the slow appropriation through embodied movement of that pattern of gestures, directional movements, involuntary impulses, and prohibitions shaping the sensibility which Carter terms colonial whiteness. But Malcomess's emphasis is more centrally on movement across military terrain as the prerequisite for "a form of gathering and transmitting of intelligence".[34] This understanding of the map is distinguished from Foucauldian accounts that locate cartographic entities as epistemological abstractions: graphic representations generated within imperial discourse, serving the purposes of colonial biopolitics, and conveying a "form of geographical certainty that guarantees both knowledge and hence control of a colonial territory".[35] For Malcomess, the map is an abstraction of a different kind: an element or node of information that finds its historical place not only in the order of discourse, but more centrally through what Jacques Rancière would recognise as the differential distribution of sensory stimuli and sensible experience across a complexly constituted communicative and experiential field. Mapping in this context becomes a geographically and historically situated, but always mobile practice of assemblage: a perpetual arrangement and rearrangement of diagrams, images, telegraphic messages, maps, bodies, photographs, and technical apparatuses enacted in the time and space of (largely)

33 Edward Casey: *Getting Back into Place. Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World*, Second Edition. Bloomington / Indianapolis 2009; Edward Casey: *The World on Edge*. Bloomington / Indianapolis 2017; Du Bois: The Souls of White Folk, 17–29; Brock Bahler: Introduction. In: id. (ed.): *The Logic of Racial Practice. Explorations in the Habituation of Racism*. Lanham 2021, 17–39.
34 Malcomess: The Illegible Field, 87.
35 Ibid.

pedestrian movement and producing (or, in Malcomess's terms, enunciating) landscape as the multiply divided territory of a colonial war.[36]

Essay Writing as Mapping

In all three essays, then, mapping figures as a sensory, cognitive, and affective practice of worldmaking embedded in a larger geography of actions including the physical journeys of objects, images, and bodies across landscapes; communication around information circuits; and virtual or imaginary circulations through cinematic worlds. But mapping is also a practice that shapes our writing in this volume. This book is published in a Cinepoetics series dedicated to the critical essay as a "virtual testing ground" for exactly those modalities of mobile perception that we have encountered in our studies of cinematic mapping.[37] The essay as form, writes Theodor W. Adorno, is "interwoven in [its] object"; so essay writing is for him a way of entering a milieu or, in our terms, a map as that assemblage, field, environment, or territory in which the act of critique is as intimately enmeshed as are the cultural forms to which it attends.[38]

Walter Benjamin performs exactly this form of materially entangled media critique when he writes in memorably ekphrastic prose of film as a technology that ruptures perception of "familiar objects and common place milieus", bursting "this prison-world asunder by the dynamite of the tenth of a second, so that now, in the midst of its far-flung ruins and debris, we calmly and adventurously go traveling".[39] This image of film as a technology that explodes existing epistemologies and perceptual economies is drawn from the perspective of a traveller amongst media forms: one who himself experiences the explosive shocks of media encounters, and reproduces that experience in rhythmic critical poetry. Such views from within the maelstrom of contemporary media experience are common, affirms Christoph Ernst, amongst twentieth century critics and media

36 Rancière: *The Politics of Aesthetics*.

37 Michael Cowan: Moving Picture Puzzles. Training Urban Perception in the Weimar "Rebus Films". *Screen* 51/3 (2010), 197–218, here 218. Though focusing on the rebus films themselves as a training ground for modern perception, Cowan makes clear that the films arose out of and contributed to a lively interwar public discourse on urban modernity and its perceptual innovations.

38 Theodor W. Adorno: The Essay as Form [1958], trans. by Bob Hullot-Kentor / Frederic Will. *New German Critique* 32 (1984), 151–171, here 170.

39 Walter Benjamin: The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction [1936]. In: id.: *Illuminations,* trans. by Harry Zohn. New York 1968, 217–252, here 236.

philosophers who emulated in their practice of what Robert Musil called "essayism" the transformations in aesthetic experience that they both viscerally lived and critically analysed in their theorisations of contemporary media practice and its political effects.[40] Ernst cites Adorno (in turn citing Max Bense) on the essay as a spatio-temporal ensemble in which the object of critique is "turned this way and that": a mobile formation, then, whose irregular form annuls "theoretically outmoded claims of totality and continuity", locating the writer instead as a travelling "collector" of multi-perspectival insights that "put [...] into words what the object allows to be seen under the conditions established in the course of writing".[41]

This conception of writing as a movement in multiple dimensions, both of the essay's accumulated objects and of a writing subject "roaming around in intelligible worlds", has significantly shaped our contributions to this volume. It is evident first in our conceptions of research method, which includes (though it is by no means exhausted by) our own peripatetic journeys across unfamiliar geographical and archival terrain. This we have traversed in what anthropologists Tim Ingold and Jo Lee Vergunst might recognise as the spirit of the participant observer or embedded interlocutor, one who "makes their way through a world-in-formation, in a movement that is both [...] resonant with the movements of others around us [...] and open-ended" with "no fixed destination". Like this ambulant observer, we have eschewed the abstractions of the map as a set of fixed coordinates establishing "a relation of external contact or correspondence [with] objectively given conditions".[42] We have in no sense avoided linguistic abstraction as one element in our own essayism. What we have attempted however is a version of "thinking in movement" in which abstract designations of the processes we understand as mapping are themselves events in writing: signposts that interrupt the flow of any essayistic roaming, three instances of which we offer now finally as nodal points of articulation for an understanding of cartographic processes as they are practised and

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40 Christoph Ernst: Der Essay als Form der Medientheorie – Max Benses essayistische Medienreflexion. In: Elke Uhl / Claus Zittel (eds.): *Max Bense. Weltprogrammierung*. Stuttgart 2018, 121–131, here 122; Robert Musil: *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*. Hamburg 1970, 253. See also Robert Musil: Über den Essay. In: id.: *Gesammelte Werke, Band 5: Prosa und Stücke, Kleine Prosa, Aphorismen, Autobiographisches, Essays und Reden, Kritik*. Reinbek bei Hamburg 1978, 1334–1337; and Christoph Ernst: *Essayistische Medienreflexion. Die Idee des Essayismus und die Frage nach den Medien*. Bielefeld 2005.

41 Adorno: The Essay as Form, 64. See also Max Bense: Über den Essay und seine Prosa. *Merkur* 1/3 (1947), 414–424, here 418.

42 Tim Ingold / Jo Lee Vergunst: Introduction. In: id.: *Ways of Walking. Ethnography and Practice on Foot*. Abingdon 2008, 1–19, here 2.

enacted differently, but also with correspondences and resonances across three case studies situated in dispersed global locales.[43]

Signposts: Distribution, Inscription, Cinematic Thinking

In the conclusion to her essay, Rositzka writes that "cinema can be considered a superordinate concept for the circulation and distribution of images within audiovisual cultures".[44] Though she refers elsewhere to channels of distribution in the sense in which that term is used in industry and exhibition studies, as the transport of physical and virtual objects across physical spaces and digital platforms, distribution is for Rositzka not primarily understood in terms either of an industry history of infrastructure and circulation, nor a media history of audiovisual cultures. For her, distribution is instead an aesthetic operation in which "cinematic images appropriate various traits from other media and art forms (painting, literature, music, art installations, video games, etc.)", to create "cartographies of different expressivities and viewpoints that in turn facilitate a *new view* onto the world" and "new trajectories along which cinema can circulate and continue to live".[45]

Rositzka's understanding of distribution as an aesthetic operation that assembles, configures, and projects everchanging expressivities and viewpoints is indebted to writing by Hermann Kappelhoff on cinematic thinking and senses of commonality. For Kappelhoff, as Rositzka elaborates, filmic images have a status as a "socially, culturally, and historically situated mode of cinematic thinking" involving "a permanent reconfiguration of the spatiotemporal coordinates to which we orient our perception of the world".[46] Such thinking is "situated" socially and culturally through its function as the locus of competing (democratic,

43 "Thinking in movement" is a term borrowed from dance studies, which is in turn influenced by phenomenologies of thinking that, to quote Maurice Merleau-Ponty, refuse understanding of movement as a "way of designating things or thoughts", considering instead movement as a mode of enacting "the presence of that thought in the material world." Maurice Merleau-Ponty: *Phenomenology of Perception,* trans. by Colin Smith. New York 1963, 182. Quoted in Maxine Sheets-Johnstone: Thinking in Movement. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 39/4 (1981), 399–407, here 405.

44 Rositzka: A Saturn State of Mind, 152.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid., 136; see Hermann Kappelhoff: *Kognition und Reflexion. Zur Theorie filmischen Denkens*. Berlin / Boston 2018, 14 & 17.

patriotic, socialist etc.) senses of community.[47] Kappelhoff observes how, already in Kant's *Critique of Judgement,* the judgement of the beautiful in the encounter with the aesthetic object is productive of what Kant terms *sensus communis*: a communal sense that is both the immediate product of sensory perception and its attendant pleasures or unpleasures, and that becomes social by virtue of its communicability as aesthetic judgement.[48] He follows Hannah Arendt, however, in kicking away the ladder of Kantian idealist aesthetics from the ground of considerations of *sensus communis*. For Kappelhoff, as for Arendt, senses of commonality are rooted in judgement not (as in Kant) as a universal faculty, but as a mode of thinking that adjudicates in historically specific ways between mutually dissonant and incommensurable positions of aesthetic experience.[49]

Arendt's critique of Kantian notions of universal humanity as the origin of aesthetic judgement also facilitates for Kappelhoff a shift in perspective from the Enlightenment social figure of universal humanity to human beings in the plural: collectivities that may be audiences, filmmakers, or other subjects, who inhabit cinema as a site of aesthetic experience furnishing forms of collectivity that are the affective ground for the political, "common sense" in its definition as a feeling for or sense of commonality.[50] Also identified by Kappelhoff, however, in discrepant judgements of what is good, what is beautiful, what is ugly, and so on, are traces of an antagonism that bedevils concrete cultural communities in their articulation of the limits of commonality within a shared and mutually sensually apprehended social world.[51] The essays by Carter and Malcomess suggest connections between this articulation of the limits of commonality defined through a differential distribution of aesthetic experience and mutually communicable judgement, and writings on politics and aesthetics more centrally concerned with histories of both class hierarchy, and the politics of race and Empire. Carter identifies for instance in the writings of W. E. B. Du Bois a concern with racialised aesthetic modes that divided blackness and whiteness between the segregated realms of the wonderful and the disgusting.[52] Both she and Malcomess draw further for their accounts of imperial or colonial community, but also segregation

47 See Hermann Kappelhoff: *Front Lines of Community. Hollywood between War and Democracy*, trans. by Daniel Hendrickson. Berlin / Boston 2018, 351.
48 See ibid., 348; Immanuel Kant: *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, trans. by Paul Guyer / Eric Matthews. Cambridge 2013, 173–176.
49 See Kappelhoff: *Front Lines of Community*, 348–349; also Hannah Arendt: *Das Urteilen.* Munich 2012.
50 See Kappelhoff: *Front Lines of Community*, 348 & 7.
51 See ibid., 348–351.
52 Carter: White Bodies in Motion: 38; Du Bois: The Souls of White Folk, 17.

and violence, on Jacques Rancière's understanding of political subjects formed through a "distribution of the sensible". In Rancière's political aesthetics, the "apportionment of parts and positions" in social worlds is based on "a distribution of spaces, times, and forms of activity that determines the very manner in which something common lends itself to participation and in what way various individuals have a part in this distribution".[53] Carter's discussion of colour in Bahamian urban form (Colonial Pink) as the chromatic embodiment of coercive racial histories is one example in this volume of what the historian of film colour Michelle Henning calls, recalling Rancière, a "distribution of sensory capacity" geared to "normative whiteness".[54] Malcomess too draws on Rancière to gloss her definition of the media-technological arrangement in the field of war: "an aesthetic assemblage or form", as she writes, that exists "in relation to the political, as in the conditions of participation in constructing the common".[55]

But Malcomess also echoes Fatimah Tobing Rony in placing alongside distribution a second term – inscription – as a mental figure (*Denkfigur*) for considerations of mapping.[56] Archival historian Karl-Magnus Johansson defines inscription as "a situated archival moment that is constituted by the materialisation of statements".[57] Tracking the use of the term across the work of cultural theorists but also writers on media, technology, and archives, Johansson identifies two general tendencies: first an archival inflection where inscription is a directly physical process of marking, cutting into, or recording a trace made directly by the object registered onto a sensitive surface (scientific recording processes for example). The mark must however undergo a secondary process that makes it permanent in some way; historically, the baking of cuneiform stone tablets is a point of reference. The trace therefore is not enough; it must assume a material and indeed a legible form that can be archived, and even if digital inscription complicates this form of permanent storage, it is still discussed in relation to these older material forms.[58] On the cultural theory side meanwhile, inscription refers to a more subjective process that is also implicated in the ideological, cultural, and epistemological

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53 Rancière: *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 12.

54 Michelle Henning: The Worlding of Light and Air. Dufaycolor and Selochrome in the 1930s. *Visual Culture in Britain* 21/2 (2020), 177–198, here 189.

55 Malcomess: The Illegible Field, 110.

56 Fatimah Tobing Rony: *The Third Eye. Race, Cinema and Ethnographic Spectacle*. Durham / London 1996, 21–73.

57 Karl-Magnus Johansson: Inscription. An Expanded Editor's Note. In: id. (ed.): *Inscription*. Göteborg 2018, 1–82, here 23. Here the author is quoting Michel Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge* [1969], trans. by A. M. Sheridan Smith. London / New York 2002, 112.

58 See Johansson: Inscription, 17–19.

formation of subjects, such as the individual body "inscribed" by gender significations: "It is inscription that produces the subject via various regimes, classification schema and control of the body […]."[59] Common to these two tendencies of thinking about inscription is thus the idea of a recording surface on which a set of signifying marks, whether ontological or semantic, become visible, and legible through the medium of "reading".

In Malcomess's essay, those recording surfaces are the plates, film reels, screens, or print interfaces; but also the bodies inscribed by the biograph (an early camera and distant relative of the cinematograph), the telegraph, the cinema projector, the stereoscope, and the map. That the word "graph" recurs across these now outdated technologies situates their mode of "recording" or transmission in proximity to writing, another form of the mark. Thus Malcomess adds to the arrangement of early film, media, and communication technologies the war diary: a directly textual modality which, like mechanical media forms, inhabits the archive, but is distinguished from them by its primary function as a technology of subjectivisation. Working through the frame of Francesco Casetti's and Christian Metz's work on cinematic enunciation, Malcomess shows how multiple modalities of subjectivisation and inscription condition the late nineteenth-century viewer and reader to assume their place within a colonial ordering of space and time. The war diaries in Malcomess's essay certainly stand in part as documents of white mobile masculinities in the frame of Empire. But as Malcomess shows, they are also shot through with cartographic processes that locate these masculine subjects within a specific constellation of mobile media-technological inscriptions: one that is in turn implicated in an operation of abstraction that maps a territory as a field of action and attention for colonial subjectivities.

In Rositzka's essay, finally, both inscription and distribution become subsets of the cartographic operation she terms cinematic thinking. Film-theoretical approaches to cinematic mapping have tended to focus on the formal elements of film itself: filmic syntax and narrative; the symbolic function of landscape in film in shaping individual and national identities;[60] the spectator caught up in the reality effect of cinema; the cognitive activity of spectators. For Rositzka however, those approaches mask the different levels of sensuous subjectivity shared between film and spectator, omitting the multisensory as well as the somatic appeal of cinematic images to an audience that conceives of the cinematic world as a

59 Ibid., 15. Johannson is here quoting Beverly Skeggs: The Problem of Identity. In: Angel M. Y. Lin (ed.): *Problematizing Identity. Everyday Struggles in Language, Culture, and Education*. New York 2008, 11–34, here 18.

60 Cf. Martin Lefebvre (ed.): *Landscape and Film*. London / New York 2006.

shared reality. Such cinematic worlds have moreover for Rositzka not just a spatial but also a temporal dimension: they unfold through movement-images that make sense in and beyond the frame, articulating a certain experience of navigating through time rooted in the present of film viewing.[61]

This processuality leads Rositzka to conceive cinematic mapping as a poetic practice and act of meaning-making that conflates images of the past with the present, not to conserve the latter as artefacts of bygone moments, but rather, as Giuliana Bruno writes, to compare the present with the past. This then is a way of fabricating a commonly shared and densely historical reality and experience: a process of subjectivisation, evaluation, perspectivisation, and localisation that is presaged by Bruno, but also points to a phenomenological and Deleuzian understanding of mapping as a timed, placed, and cultured process creating "a web of interacting possibilities".[62] Mapping can thus be understood as a mode of cinematic thinking insofar as it describes an associative and poetic process of (self)orientation through audiovisual movement-images. Those processes take place moreover (as we see also in Carter's discussion of urban form or Malcomess's of the stereoscope) not just in cinema, but across art forms and imaginary objects, from fictional navigations through the mind of a narrator to symbolisations in other languages and audiovisual media. Cinematic thinking is understood here, then, not just as a practice of assemblage but, more specifically, a mode of intertextuality allowing cultural practices to interact with one another and make what they have appropriated their own.

Rositzka's account of the map is, in sum, one that opens up its "territories" to exactly those forms of local reconfiguration which are for Mbembe the site of creative potentialities situated "at the edge of the world". The African-American writer Maya Angelou knew well what is at stake in such processes of cartographic production. Writing of her childhood in the segregated lumber town of Stamps, Arkansas, Angelou observes: "Entering Stamps, I had the feeling that I was stepping over the border lines of the map and would fall, without fear, right off the end of the world. Nothing more could happen, for in Stamps, nothing happened."[63] In Rositzka's writing on cinematic thinking, as indeed in Angelou's own prose and poetry, something astonishing does nonetheless eventuate: an exchange and

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61 Rositzka: A Saturn State of Mind, 135.

62 Giuliana Bruno: *Atlas of Emotion. Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film*. New York 2002, 418; Rob Kitchin / Chris Perkins / Martin Dodge: Thinking about Maps. In: Martin Dodge / Rob Kitchin / Chris Perkins: *Rethinking Maps. New Frontiers in Cartographic Theory*. Abingdon 2009, 1–25, here 16.

63 Maya Angelou: *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. London 1984, 86.

convergence of cultural practices, from which cinema or film making and viewing stand out as privileged sites, providing settings and spatiotemporal dynamics for a remaking of the world.

Filmography

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White Bodies in Motion: Mapping Cinema and Whiteness in the Postwar Bahamas

Erica Carter

> Then the Portuguese, rounding the continent, burst […] unexpectedly and disastrously from that unknown and impenetrable sea […]. New maps were made, complete maps, so that every inch was accounted for, and everyone now knew who they were, or at least who they belonged to. (Abdulrazak Gurnah)[1]

> The borders imposed between things here are many. One must pay attention to them and navigate them, which ultimately protects everyone from perilous consequences. (Adania Shibli)[2]

White Bodies in Motion

On what I imagine to have been a bright October day in 1948, a young white woman, diminutive in size, but notable for her girlish elegance and strongly accented Germanic English, disembarked in her new professional destination, Nassau, capital of the then British colony, the Bahamas. Though no records of her journey exist, the Austrian émigré nurse Erna Felfernig would certainly have been en route for at least a week, first by ocean liner to New York or Miami, then onward to Nassau, probably with a less prestigious but perhaps still bustling regional shipping line.[3] Erna arrived in the Bahamas on the threshold of a new professional life within the British Colonial Nursing Service, the organisation charged with creating "ordered, hygienic and traditionally 'British' treatment environment[s]" across territories remaining after 1945

1 Abdulrazak Gurnah: *By the Sea*. London 2001, 15–16.
2 Adania Shibli: *Minor Detail*. New York 2020, 54.
3 This was the winter tourist season, and the tourist trade was beginning to recover after the end of World War II. Passenger transport to the Bahamas was still largely maritime, though air travel had also been developing since the late 1920s. See Gail Saunders: The Changing Face of Nassau. The Impact of Tourism on Bahamian Society in the 1920s and 1930s. *NWIG: New West Indian Guide / Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 71/1–2 (1997), 21–42, here 26. See also Gail Saunders: *Race and Class in the Colonial Bahamas 1880–1960*. Gainesville, FL 2016, 211; and Michael Craton / Gail Saunders: *Islanders in the Stream. A History of the Bahamian People. Vol. 2.: From the Ending of Slavery to the Twenty-First Century*. Athens / London 1998, 302–333.

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under British colonial rule.[4] Nassau was a staging post in a transatlantic journey that had begun with Erna's arrival in London from Wels, Upper Austria, in December 1937 to work first as an au pair, later a trainee nurse at Kingston and Epsom County Hospitals. By July 1947, she had gained British citizenship. Erna was interviewed in March 1948 by the Overseas Nursing Association, the service charged by the Colonial Office with nurse recruitment, and accepted for colonial service with a start date of October 1948.

Erna's story is an especially intimate point of departure for this essay. Ernestine Susanna Felfernig, aka "Susie" the colonial nurse, later Susan Carter, the white British middle-class housewife, was my mother: an Austrian émigré-turned-British-colonial-subject, who would live and work for twelve years across the territories of late British Empire, before returning in 1960 to Britain to settle on the farm in picture-postcard Cornwall that was my childhood home. This essay does not, however, take the form primarily of personal or family memoir. There exists a substantial body of white Colonial Service life writing: biography, autobiography, diary, edited letters, and family memoir, much of it penned in a spirit of approbatory testament to – to quote former Secretary of State for the Colonies Alan Lennox-Boyd – "the men and women of [an] era who [...] can rightly feel that they belonged to the best Service in the world".[5] Pervasive in the genre is a nostalgia for lost colonial worlds, and a style of confessional life-writing that creates for its characters the fiction of authentic personhood by reconstructing from remembered "episodes, sketches, stories, anecdotes" an "impressionist picture" that "when viewed from a distance, will build up into a coherent whole".[6]

Writerly penchants for totality, expressed here in the diary scribblings of former colonial officer Tim Johnston, have been critiqued by narratologists who identify in popular life writing an approach that, to cite critic David McCooey, "valori[ses] embodied experience" as well as personal memory, but denies the "aestheticisation" and "narrativity" of lived experience. McCooey points as an alternative to life-writing from the social periphery that contests "universalised and limited" conceptions of the autobiographical subject as "male, European, self-

4 Jessica Howell / Anne Marie Rafferty / Anna Snaith: (Author)ity Abroad. The Life Writing of Colonial Nurses. *International Journal of Nursing Studies* 48/9 (2011), 1155–1162, here 1162.

5 Alan Lennox-Boyd: Editorial. *Corona. The Journal of His Majesty's Colonial Service* (December 1962). Quoted in Anthony Kirk-Greene: *Aspects of Empire. A New Corona Anthology*. London 2011, xii. The Colonial Service was a government *service* tasked by the Colonial Office – a government *department* within the UK Home Civil Service – with recruitment and management of British personnel serving in British colonial territories.

6 Tim Johnston, quoted in Carolyn Johnston (ed.): *Harmattan, a Wind of Change. Life and Letters from Northern Nigeria*. London 2010, 3.

present and autonomous".[7] Such self-reflection is rare in colonial life-writing; so my own essay is offered as a semi-autobiographical corrective – a counterpoint to the numerous narratives that recentre white subjects as the authors of a self-made and progressive history of late Empire. I write from the perspective of a daughter wishing to unpick a white colonial family heritage; and I attempt this through archival and oral history as well as memory work that historicises my mother's passage into colonial whiteness, the subjectivity she learned to occupy, I will suggest, in her early years in Nassau.

Colonial Lifeworlds: A Cinematic History

The melding of my mother's life experience with what Walter Mignolo terms the "racial matrix" of late British colonialism occurred however – and this is perhaps the more unusual contribution I seek to make to colonial cultural history – through experiences that were always already mediated through cinema and media forms.[8] Writing, then, not just as a daughter, but also and principally as a cinema and cultural historian, I use an account of my mother's cinema experiences in Nassau as a test case for a mode of historical narration that is properly attentive to the mediated nature of colonial experience. My search below will be for narrative strategies that refocalise Erna's story, dislodging my mother from centre stage as historical protagonist, and situating her as a body and subjectivity embedded in the ensemble of media forms and movements that constituted the Bahamas as late British colonial milieu. Paradoxically, this history that refuses the atomistic model of personhood shaping colonial life-writing will recentre Erna's body, its movements, gestures, and affective attachments. In what follows, I explore film, cinema, and other popular media forms – photography, newspapers and illustrated magazines, but also streets and buildings – as what postcolonial anthropologist Brian Larkin calls an "infrastructure" for "the ambient conditions of everyday life". Larkin writes in this context of "our sense of temperature, florescence [...], a way of tuning into the desire and sense of possibility expressed in the very materials of infrastructure".[9] Infrastructure in Larkin's expanded anthropological sense extends beyond technological constructions to form what Catherine Fennell has termed the "ambient envelope" of lived experience: an experiential scaffolding that exceeds the technical

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7 David McCooey: The Limits of Life Writing. *Life Writing* 14/3 (2017), 277–280, here 279.

8 Walter D. Mignolo: Racism as We Sense It Today. *PMLA* 123/5 (2008). Special Topic: Comparative Racialization, 1737–1742, here 1738.

9 Brian Larkin: The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 42 (2013), 327–343, here 337.

functioning of, say, media or transportation networks as channels of distribution, becoming instead a semiotic, aesthetic, and formal assemblage that "put[s] bodies in the path of things that hum, radiate, flicker, corrode, and lurch […], send[ing] them careening, changing their relationship to space and time".[10]

Fennell's emphasis on movement across surrounding worlds suggests that it may be in the experience of locomotion – embodied movement, but also "careening" bodily encounters with barriers and obstacles – that daily experience coalesces into conscious apprehension of place and time. Secretary of State Lennox-Boyd remembers the last days of Empire as a much-lamented moment of failure for European and, most specifically, British models of colonial modernity. We will later encounter colonial policies enshrining British commitments to processes of modernisation that are embodied not just in discourses of government, but in textual and urban forms that materialise, to quote Larkin again, "ideas [as] a sensing of modernity, a process by which the body, as much as the mind, apprehends what it is to be modern, mutable, and progressive".[11]

Such bodily apprehension of modernity, I will contend, was enabled, amongst numerous other practices of mobility, by white colonial cinemagoing, a practice that I will present as one of embodied mapping of and self-positioning within late colonial lifeworlds. Walking to the movies will feature here as a cartographic practice that produces or entrenches racialised senses of self, situating social subjects temporally within late colonial modernity, and socio-spatially within local and transnational communities of white colonial belonging. An advance note is in order on the approach to colonial cinema history that this project demands. Contemporary screen studies has addressed from technological and media-historical perspectives what Larkin or Fennell understand anthropologically as an enfolding of intimate lives in media infrastructures. Studies of contemporary media cultures have explored the digital distribution of moving images across multiple platforms and formats; the relocated practices of consumption that thereby eventuate; and modes of viewership that travel with spectators across mobile phones, laptops, and public screens, reconfiguring media experience as an "interactive and multi-functional" engagement with ever-shifting environments and formats. Francesco Casetti is a prominent commentator on this "relocation" of cinema and, with it, the accelerating dispersal of viewer experience across multiple screen worlds.[12]

10 Catherine Fennell: Emplacement. *Society for Cultural Anthropology Editors' Forum: Theorizing the Contemporary* (24 September 2015). https://culanth.org/fieldsights/emplacement (last accessed 22 April 2022). See also Larkin: Politics and Poetics.

11 Larkin: Politics and Poetics, 336.

12 Francesco Casetti: *The Lumière Galaxy. Seven Key Words for the Cinema to Come*. New York 2015, 3.

Casetti joins other scholars, however, in cautioning against teleological histories that assume a radical break, with the advent of digital moving image, in historical processes of cinematic subjectivisation and community-formation. Michael Cowan has written for instance of interwar modes of interactive cinema that subsisted alongside narrative features and the long film programme, engaging a "mobilised gaze" that intersected but was not synonymous with absorbed spectatorship in the black box movie theatre. In studies of mobile puzzle pictures ("rebus films"), cinematic shooting galleries, or participatory engagement by popular film fans in interwar European film magazines, Cowan identifies a communicative mode that moves beyond film to encompass "physical presence[s]" – other media, but also "ritual forms" of popular communication – which together make of moviegoing a pursuit that must be "cultivated through mutual interactions [...], a communal undertaking that relies on [...] simultaneous engagement with and through specific media".[13]

Cowan's conception of analogue spectatorship as a practice of interactive engagement with dispersed media forms will resurface when I later discuss Erna's walks to the cinema in postwar Nassau. I will join Cowan and Casetti in considering modes of mobile spectatorship that reach back before the advent of digital media, shaping the quotidian experience of white colonial expatriates not just through encounters with film and cinema, but with an intertextual tapestry of media and material cultural forms. I follow here cinema historians, amongst them Annette Kuhn, whose oral history of British audience memories from the 1930s, *An Everyday Magic,* is the *locus classicus* of a conception of cinemagoing as a mode of embodied cartography: a spatial practice, in Michel de Certeau's terms, that produces the map not as visual abstraction, but as a sensed and felt "geography of actions" within now interconnected, now bounded local and translocal territories.[14]

The signal geographical action in Kuhn's study is walking, which features in her informants' accounts as a pragmatic practice of bodily mobility (the "default mode of getting around" for her 1930s generation of interwar filmgoers) but also a way of practising belonging or non-belonging to place through "bodily immersion" in the built environment and urban space.[15] Typically, Kuhn tells us,

13 Michael Cowan: Learning to Love the Movies. Puzzles, Participation, and Cinephilia in Interwar European Film Magazines. *Film History* 27/4 (2015), 1–45, here 2. See also Michael Cowan: Interactive Media and Imperial Subjects. Excavating the Cinematic Shooting Gallery. *NECSUS. European Journal of Media Studies* 7/1 (2018), 17–44.

14 Annette Kuhn: *An Everyday Magic. Cinema and Cultural Memory*. London / New York 2002; Michel de Certeau: *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley / Los Angeles 1984, 116.

15 Kuhn: *Everyday Magic*, 35.

her interviewees begin with memories of walking to the movies as a mode of embodied and affective mapping of neighbourhood or locality. These ambulant stories produce in Kuhn's case a "memory-map" that may "vary in style and detail", but whose function is "always to lay out a mise-en-scène for the recollections which follow".[16] Kuhn's concern is with a cinema history accessed through personal and cultural memory; other cinema historians have turned to archival evidence to arrive at cognate understandings of the movie theatre as a stage or location – a mise-en-scène in the theatrical or cinematic sense – for audience reception as a collective performance of embodied commonality. Microhistorical studies of cinemas in urban and suburban locations have also identified a blurring of boundaries in the cinema experience between film as aesthetic object, the movie theatre itself, and its surrounding environments.[17] Robert Allen echoes interwar cultural commentators including Walter Benjamin and Siegfried Kracauer in his portrait of a 1920s US cinema culture in which moviegoers

> were attracted to the theatre by the theatre itself, with its sometimes bizarre architectural and design allusions to exotic cultures, its capacious public spaces, its air conditioning in the summer, and its auditorium, which may have been decorated to resemble the exterior of a Moorish palace at night – complete with heavenly dome and twinkling stars.[18]

The cinema auditorium becomes here just one amongst a range of architectural and urban spaces that prefigure the film experience "proper" by transporting audiences perceptually and imaginatively to a heterotopic "elsewhere" (the Moorish palace, the heavenly dome).[19]

In this context, walking to the movies can be understood as akin to a fluid establishing shot in which the spectator's peripatetic body prefigures the work of the camera in film, becoming a recording instrument mobilised to establish

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16 Ibid., 19.

17 See e. g. Robert C. Allen: From Exhibition to Reception. Reflections on the Audience in Film History. *Screen* 31/4 (1990), 347–356. For overviews of the field, see Richard Maltby / Daniel Biltereyst / Philippe Meers (eds.): *Explorations in New Cinema History. Approaches and Case Studies*. Hoboken, NJ 2011; and Daniel Biltereyst / Richard Maltby / Philippe Meers (eds.): *The Routledge Companion to New Cinema History*. Abingdon 2019.

18 Allen: From Exhibition, 352–353. Miriam Hansen has observed how Jakob von Uexküll's perspectives on environmental formations as a "multitude of interpenetrating, lived *Umwelten*" contributed similarly to Benjamin's conception of a fluid cinema experience that blurs the lines between film viewing as an immersive imaginary and sensory encounter with an aesthetic object, and cinemagoing as a kinaesthetic experience of movement through socio-cultural and built environments. Miriam Hansen: *Cinema and Experience. Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin and Theodor W. Adorno*. Berkeley 2011, 154.

19 On "elsewhere" as the heterotopic space towards which cinema moves its subjects, see Casetti: *Lumière Galaxy*, 144.

the space-time of the film experience already in the very act of going to the show.[20] Walking figures accordingly in my own essay as a practice located in urban form as its mise-en-scène, and whose analysis renders historically legible the forces shaping white cinema experience in one postwar British colonial territory. I will ask the reader's assistance in making historical sense of a story that comes to me, as Erna's daughter, in fragmented and fugitive form. I did not know the Erna who disembarked in Nassau in 1948. Her Bahamas story belongs for me to a time before memory, when the young, unmarried, and as yet childless Erna began, as I surmise (because I cannot fully know this), her transition from her perception of selfhood as a bold but traumatised young Austrian émigré making her difficult way in wartime London, to the Nassau senior nurse and vivacious Bahamian presence I encounter in this essay, and thence again to the British housewife and mother I knew better: Susan Carter, lifelong Conservative, mainstay of middle-class community, fiercely loyal to the social values and, to my lifelong chagrin, the racial norms of late Empire.

I understand Erna's story here as one of a slow passage into late colonial whiteness: a specific modality of white subjectivity forged in experiences of British colonial life at the end of Empire, but resonating still today in a pervasive, indeed – at the time of writing – an energetically resurgent British yearning for imperial greatness and white hegemony. Erna's journey into British colonial subjectivity was marked, as are all life trajectories, by repetitions and circulations, barriers, blind alleys, and traumatic caesura. I attempt to reconstruct something of this mobile and fractured experiential assemblage with a recursive essay structure that loops back repeatedly to view its subject from different vantage points. Tracing successive routes around the urban fabric of Nassau, to and from its cinemas, and into film experiences offered most particularly in the city's whites-only cinema, the Savoy, I hope to render something of the cumulative significance of Nassauvian place and sensible ambience for the processes of white racialisation that shaped not only my mother, but also those amongst her generational peers whom I have met in the archives, in my own memories, or in oral history interviews from my own research visits to Nassau since the mid-2010s.

20 See also Charlotte Brunsdon on London streets as the mise-en-scène for the experience of a city "already thick with stories and images". Charlotte Brunsdon: *London in Cinema. The Cinematic City since 1945*. London 2007, 9.

Journeys in Writing 1–4

My essay charts four routes through Erna's history. Each has its own guiding question. Asking simply, "Why Erna?", I answer first with reference to the experiences of migration, expatriate recruitment, belonging, and racialisation that shaped Erna's early working life. Transnational travel gave Erna a peripatetic identity first as an immigrant leaving Austria for a new life in London, later a colonial expatriate moving around the Bahamas, Ghana, and Nigeria. Situating Erna's story in a broader cultural history of colonial service in the postwar context of declining Empire and expanding British Commonwealth, I explore conjunctions between the experiences of transatlantic mobility shared by Erna and her postwar expatriate peers, and a white sensibility that pivots, as Pan African and civil rights thinker and sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois observed in 1910 of "the soul of white folk", around the colonial traveller's racialising gaze.[21]

In Route 2, I move on to consider the pertinence of Du Bois's association of white mobility with racialised identity to the multiply mediated context of mid-twentieth century colonial expatriate experience. My question is that of the place of cinema in the cultural processes that formed my Austrian mother as a "European" in the racialised sense in which it figures in colonial discourse. Émigré white subjects arriving, as did Erna, in colonial territories including the Caribbean found their Europeanness reconfigured as a racial category that opposed black and brown "natives" to "European" subjects. White subjects were bundled, put differently, into a discursive category whose defining feature was white skin and white ethnicity, even while their countries of origin encompassed North America; the then British dominions including Canada, Australia, and New Zealand; the Central European nations from which they had fled in fear of racial or political persecution; or European settler communities in colonial territories stretching from the Caribbean to East Africa to India and beyond.[22]

Those reflections provide a further point of departure for my Bahamian journey: the question of the relationship between cartography, white colonial subjectivity, and the modes of cinematic mapping we address in this volume. I draw on reflections by Du Bois on colonial travelling, situated now alongside Krista A. Thompson's seminal art-historical study of visual culture and figurations

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21 W. E. B. Du Bois: The Souls of White Folk [1920]. In: id.: *Darkwater. Voices from within the Veil* [1920]. London / New York 2016, 17–29.

22 See e. g. Claus-Dieter Krohn / Patrik von zur Mühlen / Gerhard Paul / Lutz Winckler (eds.): *Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration 1933–1945*. Darmstadt 1998; and Joanna Newman: *Nearly the New World. The British West Indies and the Flight from Nazism*. New York / Oxford 2019.

of race and class in the colonial Bahamas. One important passage in Thompson's book centres on undersea film: a technology first developed in the Bahamas, but shifting historically from static and frontal presentation of underwater worlds (what Jon Crylen calls the "cinematic aquarium"), to an organisation of vision around flows of embodied movement into and across undersea locales.[23] This movement from colonialism's hierarchical gaze on captive bodies towards a horizontal organisation of tropicality as an experience of fluid immersion in pleasurable environments prompts me to rethink the questions of racialisation with which Thompson is concerned. At the conclusion of Route 2, I join historian of film colour Michelle Henning in considering cinemagoing in the Bahamas as a practice that Jacques Rancière for instance (whom Henning cites) might recognise not as one of vertical hierarchisation around a colonial gaze, but of the racialised distribution and partition of sensible experience.

That reconceptualisation elicits three further lines of enquiry. Routes 3 and 4 return to my mother, reconstructing her moviegoing experiences in a speculative journey with Erna through the streets of postwar Nassau. Erna's walk to the movies is considered under three headings: navigation, immersion, and counter-mapping. Drawing on phenomenologies of place, mobility, and location – especially the work of philosopher of place Edward Casey –, I first use Erna's fictive walk to examine cinemagoing in postwar Nassau as an experience that is intimately entwined with processes of racialisation – most particularly, but by no means solely in the famous-notorious whites-only cinema in Nassau, the postwar Savoy. Urban form is conceived here as one element in a complex media assemblage shaping a racialised cinemagoing experience. For media scholars, such environments invite investigation under the sign of embodied "navigation": a "creative mode of vision" associated today primarily with digital and mobile interfaces, but evident too in a "much older paradigm of relational mobility" whose "cultural logic" long predates mobile screen devices.[24] Historians of Jim Crow racial segregation draw similarly on metaphors of navigation to capture the "generative capacities of black

23 Jonathan Christopher Crylen: *The Cinematic Aquarium. A History of Undersea Film*. DPhil, University of Iowa 2015. https://iro.uiowa.edu/esploro/outputs/doctoral/The-cinematic-aquarium-a-history-of/9983777257702771?institution=01IOWA_INST (last accessed 25 April 2022); Jon Crylen: Aquariums, Diving Equipment, and the Undersea Films of John Ernest Williamson. In: James Leo Cahill / Luca Caminati (eds.): *Cinema of Exploration. Essays on an Adventurous Film Practice*. London / New York 2020, 143–157.

24 Nanna Verhoeff: *Mobile Screens. The Visual Regime of Navigation*. Amsterdam 2012, 30 & 42.

subjects negotiating segregated spatial regimes".[25] Bahamian anthropologist Nicolette Bethel adds spatio-temporal specificity in her account of Bahamian identities structured around archipelagic experiences of maritime mobility. Citing fellow anthropologist Ulf Hannerz, Bethel situates the Bahamas within a Caribbean island network (other territories include the Cayman Islands and Bermuda) formed not primarily through slave-economy histories of plantation agriculture – though there was certainly slavery in the Bahamas, the Bahamian climate and soil were unfavourable to plantation development – but through maritime economies involving "piracy, wrecking, fishing, turtling, seamanship, logcutting, smuggling and small-scale agriculture".[26]

Bethel understands Bahamian subjectivities accordingly as structured around a "cognitive archipelago, in which different points of reference are used [...] in a series of navigations of selfhood."[27] That understanding shapes a concluding coda to this essay on counter-cartographies, where I counterpose Erna's postwar narrative of travelling white selfhood to a case study from contemporary Bahamian film: Maria Govan's RAIN (2008), a title that remaps the archipelago, reclaiming spaces of colonial whiteness including the tourist shoreline, the multi-ethnic district of Gambier, and tourist landmarks now refigured as loci of black Bahamian belonging in the postcolonial present.

Why Erna? Mapping the Commonwealth

The critical vocabulary shaping my account of white subjectification derives from both early twentieth-century and contemporary theorisations of screen media's formation and transformation of popular subjectivities. In early film theory, the material "substrate" of media development is situated, in Béla Balázs's resonant phrasing, as "the subject, the human subject in her social being".[28] Balázs's figure

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25 Paula Austin: *Coming of Age in Jim Crow DC. Navigating the Politics of Everyday Life*. New York 2019, 7. See also David H. Kaplan: *Navigating Ethnicity. Segregation, Placemaking, and Difference*. Lexington 2017.

26 Ulf Hannerz: *Caymanian Politics. Structure and Style in a Changing Island Society*. Stockholm 1974, 20. Quoted in Nicolette Bethel: *Navigations. The Fluidity of Identity in the Post-Colonial Bahamas*. Unpublished DPhil, University of Cambridge 2000, 13. See also Nicolette Bethel: Navigations. Insularity versus Cosmopolitanism in the Bahamas. Formality and Informality in an Archipelagic Nation. *Social Identities* 8/2 (2002), 237–253.

27 Bethel: *Navigations. The Fluidity*, 28.

28 Béla Balázs: The Spirit of Film. In: Erica Carter (ed.): *Béla Balázs. Early Film Theory*. Oxford / New York 2010, 93–230, here 96.

of a human body and subjectivity produced in and through mass media's "visual regimes" echoes also through more recent media philosophies in which digital media's "mobile dispositive" "brings about a change in the subject" by constituting new relationships between "the spectator or subject, space and time".[29]

My answer to this essay's first question – why Erna? – is however that this understanding of media consumption as a practice of subjectification demands historicisation, in this essay through a specific focus on formations of colonial subjectivity in the immediate postwar. After World War II, the colonial authorities were remarkably explicit in their formulation of a project for the cultural reinvention of raced and classed colonial subjects. British colonial policy had shifted during the mid-twentieth century from the imperial principle of British hegemony over subordinate peoples, to an ideological vision of political interdependence emblematised in the idea of a British Commonwealth. After World War II, the Commonwealth, comprising as yet only the white Dominions as "autonomous communities within the British Empire", was to be gradually extended as colonial nations gained independence from British rule.[30] This project of political modernisation demanded what the Colonial Office (CO) was already terming in 1943 a "new type of white officer": demobilised soldiers, in the first instance, enlisted during recruitment campaigns in the immediate aftermath of war, when a million pamphlets on "Appointments in the Colonial Service" were distributed with accompanying application forms to returning soldiers.[31] The desired new colonials were also a rising generation of the socially displaced: bright young working-class men like my father John, denied a university education by class and economic disadvantage, but trained in agricultural college for a career that would grant accelerated social mobility, lifting him in twelve short years of colonial service from a status as working-class Londoner to property-owning farmer in the rural idyll of the British South-West.

And there were women. Nearly 300 posts were filled annually between 1947 and 1952 by women serving, like Erna, in the modern women's professions of

29 Verhoeff: *Mobile Screens*, 30, 43 & 49.

30 Arthur Balfour: The Balfour Definition of Dominion Status 1926. Quoted in Ronald Hyam: *Britain's Declining Empire. The Road to Decolonisation 1918–1968*. Cambridge 2006, 70.

31 R. D. Furse: An Inquiry into the System of Training the Colonial Service with Suggestions for its Reform to Meet Post-War Conditions. Memorandum (27 February 1943). Quoted in Chris Jeppesen: "Sanders of the River, still the Best Job for a British Boy"; Recruitment to the Colonial Administrative Service at the End of Empire. *The Historical Journal* 59/2 (2016), 469–508, here 483. See also Anthony Kirk-Greene: *On Crown Service. A History of HM Colonial and Civil Services, 1837–1997*. London 1999, 199–201.

teaching, nursing, or other female-dominated public services.[32] As that group penetrated the colonial expatriate milieu, along with members of a university-educated black and brown elite seen as typifying "a new type of Coloured Man", there emerged a newly hybridised colonial middle class, whose defining characteristic was not inherited class status, nor even "race" or skin colour (though with the exception of India, senior officers of colour were exceptionally rare), but instead a shared history of social and territorial dislocation and a concomitant anxiety around issues of white middle-class belonging.[33]

That the Colonial Office recognised the cultural challenges of this refiguring of colonial community is evident from an initiative set in train as part of a package of reforms to modernise imperial government. In February 1949, the Colonial Service launched *Corona. The Journal of His Majesty's Colonial Service*. The journal's founding editorial was penned by Secretary of State for the Colonies Arthur Creech Jones. A Labour government appointee with a history as a conscientious objector, trades unionist, and Fabian democratic socialist, Creech Jones moved now into a role as standard bearer for a Labour administration that foresaw liberal-democratic political modernisation and economic development as prerequisites for a gradual transition to "self-government" across the territories of former Empire.[34] In the founding issue of *Corona*, Creech Jones made the following plea:

> The world today becomes steadily smaller, but its problems more complex. You in Africa, the West Indies, in the Far East, the Pacific, in capitals or up-country, in land-locked interiors or island stations – wherever you may be and whatever your work – you are all members of a team devoted to a great constructive task – the task of bringing forward to self-governing responsibility those among whom you work, so that they may take their rightful place in our

32 See Kirk-Greene, *On Crown Service*, 50–53. See also Overseas Nursing Association Collection: Register of Nurses January 1939 – March 1951. Archive of the Overseas Nursing Association. Ledgers and Registers, 1896–1967; Overseas Nursing Association Collection: Files of Individual Nurses 1936–1965. MSS Brit Emp s.400.130; Overseas Nursing Association Collection: General Files on West Indies. MSS Brit Emp s.400.138; all in: Bodleian Library, Oxford, UK.

33 As Alison Light notes, the English middle class underwent "radical revision" between the wars: hence not only must "any use of the term" attend to the "manifold differences" amongst middle-class subjects; it must also register the "insecurities" prompted by "the complex and changing nature of class references" throughout the twentieth century. Alison Light: *Forever England. Femininity, Literature and Conservatism between the Wars*. London 1991, 12 & *passim*. According to Anthony Kirk-Greene, almost half the serving officers in India by 1947 were of Indian descent. The "accelerated promotion of Africans" became a priority by the late 1950s, but Colonial Service officers continued throughout the decolonisation period to be recruited predominantly from a white British "public (and later grammar) school-derived and university-educated elite". Kirk-Greene: *On Crown Service*, 94.

34 Hyam: *Declining Empire*, 131–132.

> Commonwealth of free and independent peoples, contributing with mutual respect and common loyalties to each other's prosperity and to world stability and fellowship.[35]

For Creech Jones in this passage, winding up Empire involves a modernisation of the British geopolitical imaginary – and this not centrally by Whitehall or Westminster, but by colonial administrators and professionals engaged in vernacular practices that remap the space of Empire from the imperial margins. Creech Jones was mindful perhaps of previous (failed) efforts to redraw the map of Empire from vantage points in the colonial metropole. Such endeavours had included, notes the imperial historian Ronald Hyam, a pre-World War I regionalisation and federalisation of Empire as the "geopolitical blueprint" for post-imperial governance and a late 1930s re-partition of Central Africa that bolstered Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's appeasement policy by restoring to Germany its former colonial territories in Togoland and Cameroon. Against this "farcical" but "elaborate" reconstruction of imperial cartographies,[36] Creech Jones pits a post-1945 vision that renounces grand-scale blueprints, pleading instead for a dispersed and participatory media strategy that recruited British colonial administrators and professionals for their own adventures in revisioning and redrawing imperial maps. "If we are to succeed in the great job in hand", Creech Jones continues,

> we must all develop the habit of looking beyond our own immediate boundaries, of seeing the greater scene of which we are all a part [...], looking back to see if our own part fits aptly into the whole [and] widening our horizons [...] right from the start [...].[37]

Knitting together a new community of "progressive citizens"[38] united in the common pursuit of late imperial reform demanded, then, from colonial employees a range of quotidian and collaborative practices of cartographic revisioning ("looking back" and "widening our horizons") that forged a new spatial imaginary of postwar (white, middle class) Commonwealth. In articles, journals, poems, letters, or travelogues narrativising their experience of far-flung colonial tours, contributors are asked to engage in creative autobiographical acts: performative adventures in writing that enable their own self-insertion into the geopolitical space of the postwar Commonwealth.[39] Solicited alongside these contributions to Creech

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35 A. Creech Jones: Foreword. *Corona. The Journal of His Majesty's Colonial Service* (January 1949), 3–5, here 3–4.

36 Hyam: *Declining Empire*, 9 & 43–44.

37 Creech Jones: Foreword, 3–5.

38 Ibid., 4.

39 See Sidonie Smith / Julia Watson: *Reading Autobiography. A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*. Minneapolis 2010; also Howell et al.: (Author)ity, 1156.

Jones's cultural cartography of the "greater scene of which we are a part"[40] are reviews or advance notices of art exhibitions, theatres, book clubs, design shows, music festivals, and also films. In this British colonial version of Michael Cowan's interwar vernacular media commentary, new maps of Empire are forged by colonial subjects themselves as they contribute insights on "beautifully written", "entrancing", "original", or sometimes merely prosaically "useful" books, films, art shows, poems, and concerts "right from the start, without waiting for others to take the first plunge".[41]

A gendered dimension of participatory colonial media practice emerges in writing and photography circulating amongst Erna's generation of colonial nurses. From the earliest years of the organisation's foundation, the ONA Secretary encouraged members to send letters, photographs, and memoirs affording insight into nursing lives abroad. Selected letters were published in the Royal College of Midwives magazine *Nursing Notes;*[42] photographs were chosen for exhibition at nursing conferences or as frontispieces for Annual Reports; and letters and reports in ONA files afforded to London-based administrators as well as prospective recruits glimpses of the "beautiful building[s]", the "fascinating" and "charming" hospitals, and the "lovely" plants and flowers awaiting British nurses in exotic overseas milieux.[43]

Media semioticians might recognise in the work of the Colonial Office and the ONA a cultural policy designed to delineate a "space of communication" amongst British expatriates living and working across the dispersed territories of late Empire. Correspondents contributing newsletters, members' letters, photographs, and other amateur journalistic forms would appear in this context as actors within a communications network that forged amongst colonial expatriates senses of shared spatio-temporal presence (a common "*hic et nunc*") as well as

40 Howell et al.: (Author)ity, 1157.

41 KB: Alan Paton: "Cry, the Beloved Country" (1948). *Corona. The Journal of Her Majesty's Colonial Service* (January 1949), 26; Anon: "Traveller's Joy" (Criterion). *Corona. The Journal of Her Majesty's Colonial Service* (January 1949), 29; Anon: J. J. Adaye: "Mmodenbo bu Mmusu Abasa so" (1948). *Corona. The Journal of Her Majesty's Colonial Service* (January 1949), 28; Anon: Colonial Film Unit. *Corona. The Journal of Her Majesty's Colonial Service* (January 1949), 25–27, here 25; Creech-Jones: Foreword, 5.

42 Later the *Nursing Notes and Midwives' Chronicle*, 1908–1939; and *Midwives Chronicle and Nursing Notes*, 1940–1957.

43 Letter from Miss Middleton to Miss E. Mona Thompson. 7 April 1914; Letter from Miss Middleton to Miss E. Mona Thompson. 1 January 1914; Letter from Miss E. Mona Thompson to Miss Dalrymple-Hay. 17 January 1913; all in: Overseas Nursing Association Collection: Letters from Nurses in the West Indies 1910–1950. MSS Brit Emp s.400.140/5. Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, UK.

what Roger Odin calls a "therapeutic" vision of shared futures.[44] Such an analysis is certainly suggested by one Miss Coggins, municipal midwife in Berampur, India, who sees in her own letters, reports, and articles the communicative ground of an "*esprit de corps*" amongst midwives across India and back home in the English metropole.[45] But ONA records also highlight other cultural forces forging senses of community amongst Erna Felfernig's colonial peers. As a matter of routine, ONA recruits were questioned at interview on their attitudes to "coloured patients" and "coloured doctors"; they were warned "that you may be in a hospital where all your patients, assistants and servants are coloured" and "you may be required to work under doctors of a different race from your own".[46] Interviewers attended further to the class demeanour ("manner and presence") of new recruits, and to behavioural norms appropriate to what nursing historian Anne Marie Rafferty calls nurses' "emblematic" position as embodiments of the "authority of the colonising power".[47]

ONA recruiters, then, situated sensitivity to racial difference and intersectional hierarchy as a core criterion in the selection of nurses for service abroad.[48] Their attention to affective inclination ("attitude"), bodily habitus (questions on hygiene were key), or correct social demeanour eludes capture by theories of community as a communicative ensemble structured around discursively articulated enunciations of positionality and individual or collective voice. Nurses were for instance unlikely to give expression to racial prejudice in interviews for a service explicitly dedicated to cosmopolitan visions of nursing as "a bridge across frontiers from human beings

44 Roger Odin: *Les espaces de la communication. Introduction á la semio-pragmatique*. Grenoble 2011, 50.

45 Miss Coggins: News from India. An Interesting Case. *Midwives Chronicle and Nursing Notes* (May 1947), 112.

46 Interview notes, Mary Nicol. 31 January 1938. In: Overseas Nursing Association Collection: Files of Individual Nurses 1936–1965. MSS Brit Emp s.400.130/1. Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, UK.

47 Interview notes, Isabel Gillanders Duguid. 21 October 1938. In: Overseas Nursing Association Collection: Files of Individual Nurses 1936–1965. MSS Brit Emp s.400.130/1. Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, UK; Anne Marie Rafferty: The Seductions of History and the Nursing Diaspora. *Health and History* 7/2 (2005), 2–16, here 7.

48 Kirk-Greene describes Colonial Office recruitment policy as explicitly opposed to "racial snobbery" and "colour prejudice"; yet his research on the class, professional, and educational backgrounds of colonial administrators, as well as on recruitment processes stressing "character" and "personality", reveals a recruitment process favouring the "character-training of the boarding school" (K. G. Bradley), with its concomitant ethos of hierarchical differences between the "detached and self-reliant" administrator and the peoples of the colonial territories. Kirk-Greene: *On Crown Service*, 96–97.

to human beings"[49]. At the same time and contradictorily, sensitivity to racial distinction and hierarchy was made a *sine qua non* of colonial recruitment.

Cinema, Whiteness, Mobility

This tension between a discourse that embraces universalist ideals as pathways to human community, and a sensibility affectively attuned to racial distinction and hierarchy, is addressed in an earlier moment of black and anti-colonial resistance by the US civil rights leader, sociologist and Pan-Africanist historian W. E. B. Du Bois. Reflecting on white sensibilities in an extended essay on "the souls of white folk", Du Bois recognises white domination on the one hand as legitimated by fully articulated theories of epidermal difference that "imprison" human subjects – black, brown, "yellow", "mongrel", and "mulatto" – within racial phantasies of white superiority. But whiteness, Du Bois continues, is not organised in every case around overt articulation of racist attitudes; it is instead a mode of being and feeling that has "worked [its] way through the warp and woof of our daily life".[50] Whiteness for Du Bois inspires "wonder", it is "ineffable", its subjects "enthralled". Blackness, by contrast, prompts white disgust at black subjects as "unclean *canaille*": a "bad taste is 'brown', the Devil is 'black'".[51] Mobilising the language not of ideology, but of aesthetics, Du Bois describes race, then, as an embodied principle of social organisation that engages affect, inspires judgements of taste, organises social divisions and hierarchies, and prompts violence born of visceral revulsion at infringements of the racial colour line.

Du Bois's essay provides a second response to my question, "Why Erna?" My mother belonged, as I have briefly shown, to a generation of new recruits to a British Colonial Service that was rhetorically committed to a modernised and allegedly post-imperialist array of humanist and cosmopolitan goals. At the same time, ONA recruitment practices demanded continued cultivation of a colonial sensibility organised around practices of racial boundary-marking. In Erna's case, that practice of racialisation had a specific inflection relating to her status as recently naturalised émigré. No records survive of Erna Felfernig's interview with the ONS, nor of her response to routine questions probing her sensitivity to questions of racial difference and hierarchy. What is clear is that her move to the Bahamas involved a

49 Edith M. Pye: Vita donum dei. Presidential Address, Annual General Meeting, College of Midwives. *Midwives' Chronicle and Nursing Notes* (June 1947), 122.
50 Du Bois: White Folk, 25.
51 Ibid.

racialising redefinition of the category of "European" émigré. Erna's "European" identity had been a source of trouble during her London years. In 1939, Erna narrowly escaped internment as an enemy alien: an experience whose aftershocks (shame, bewilderment, humiliation) were only partially mitigated when the internment order was replaced by compulsory weekly reports to the local police station.[52] Her apparently German accent also aroused suspicion amongst her British-born wartime peers; indeed my mother's decidedly Germanic spoken English, and a written prose still sprinkled years after her arrival with idiosyncracies of spelling, idiom, and tone, attracted anti-German sentiment amongst compatriots long after her British naturalisation in 1948.

Erna developed in this context numerous strategies of retaliatory self-reinvention. Family lore recalls her introducing herself to new friends on her first ocean crossing to the Bahamas as "a little Hungarian": a playful reference to her diminutive size ("five feet and half an inch", as she often repeated) as well as to the imaginary persona she concocted for the father whom she never knew, but who was certainly a citizen of Austro-Hungary, possibly the wayward son of the Viennese Jewish household where my grandmother worked in domestic service during World War I. Perhaps, then, there was a grim relief in the requirement on her arrival in Nassau that Erna relocate herself once again, this time however within "Europeanness" as a social category reserved for white elites. Certainly, Europeanness was for Erna now no longer a designation rooting her within what remained for many Britons the ethnically and politically dubious cultural identity of the German émigré. In postwar Nassau, it was instead a racial category occupied exclusively by white colonial and US expatriates, white tourists, and the white Bahamian oligarchy that controlled trade, commerce, and the archipelago's flourishing tourist industry.

A return to Du Bois sheds further light on the specific dimension of colonial experience that welded Erna's Europeanness to the racial category of colonial whiteness. In a seminal passage from his earlier *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), Du Bois had described the double consciousness fostered in black subjects by racial boundary-formation (or, in terms from that period, by the black-white "colour-line"). Attributing to the "Negro" the "gift" of "second sight", Du Bois writes of "this American world" that "yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelations of the other world". The "peculiar sensation" that Du Bois famously terms double-consciousness involves therefore

52 See Ernestine Felfernig. Female Enemy Alien. Exemption from Internment – Non-Refugee. Police Registration Certificate No. 051646. 15 November 1939. findmypast.co.uk (last accessed 6 May 2022).

a "sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's self by the tape of a world that looks on with amused contempt and pity".[53]

Blackness appears in this 1903 text as a positionality forged within a violently racialising regime of vision: one in which the black look is doubled and destabilised, while the white gaze appears singular, and fixed in a position of hierarchical sovereignty. Du Bois's 1919 postscript to "The Souls of White Folk" adopts, however, a contrasting perspective on racialisation and the black-white colour line. In 1903, Du Bois had written metaphorically of the black subject as a veiled figure crouching out of sight of travellers on the highway, awaiting a historical moment adequate to the "raising and unveiling of that bowed human heart".[54] In "The Souls of White Folk", Du Bois elaborates further the triple metaphor of the veiled corner, the traveller, and the highway. "I have been *in* the world", he writes, "but not *of* it. I have seen the human drama from a veiled corner, where [...] the human scene without has interpreted itself to me in unusual ways."[55] From this veiled corner, Du Bois continues, he has witnessed white figures who flit past as "travellers", or else as "colonial composites" enmeshed in nostalgic sentiment ("dear memories"), established representations ("words"), and exoticising "wonder".[56]

Here, then, the marginal position of the veiled black observer affords privileged insight into a "composite" (or, we might say, historically fabricated) white colonial subjectivity defined not centrally by modes of vision structured around fixed hierarchies that segregate, order, and regulate black bodies, but by the distinction between an observing black subject held in place in a "veiled corner" and the colonial traveller passing on the highway. Racial positioning is then for Du Bois at once the product of a visual order structured around vertically ordered binaries of self/other, white/black, centre/periphery, and so on; and of a more mobile organisation of colonial perception around fluctuating relations of mobility and immobility, stillness and motion, proximity and distance, veiled corner and circuit of migration and transitory belonging.

53 W. E. B. Du Bois: *The Souls of Black Folk* [1903]. Mineola, NY 1994, 5.
54 Du Bois: *Black Folk*, 24.
55 W. E. B. Du Bois: Postscript [1919]. In: id.: *Darkwater. Voices from within the Veil* [1920]. London / New York 2016, ix.
56 Du Bois: White Folk, 17.

Roots to Routes: Underwater Film in the Bahamas

What postcolonial and cultural theorists would later propose as a shift in cultural enquiry from roots to routes – from ontologies of difference to fluid epistemologies of circulation, translation, and circulation – suggests that Erna's status as a migrant subject who crossed numerous borders before finally making landfall on postwar New Providence may make of her story a particularly resonant case in the study of colonial subjectification as an event reconfigured repeatedly as white subjects travel through space and time.[57] The concomitant movement that Du Bois proposes from a focus on the visual hierarchies that locate white subjects in fixed positions of dominance, to mobile visuality as a source of colonial power, represents moreover a heuristic shift with special pertinence to film and visual culture in the Bahamas. The art historian Krista A. Thompson has written of films that take a place, alongside photography, postcards, popular illustration, and painting, within a Bahamian visual culture of what she terms, following the tourism scholar Kye-Sung Chon, "destination images": pictures that mobilised desires for travel to and around this archipelagic island nation.[58]

Tracing the "tropicalisation" of the Bahamas from the mid-nineteenth to the late twentieth century, Thompson first sees in these images traces of what historians of colonial cartography term the "cartographic panopticon": hierarchical orderings of tamed nature and ordered indigenous bodies that serve as "visual testaments" of the capacity of colonial and neo-colonial orders to regulate unruly Caribbean landscapes and bodies.[59] In this account, Thompson's tropical picturesque becomes a disciplinary regime that organises colonial vision around visible geometries of class, sexual, and racial power. By way of illustration, Thompson devotes a section of her book to the history of underwater filming. Underwater film technology was first developed in the Bahamas by British early film pioneers John Ernest and George Williamson, who founded the Williamson Submarine Corporation in the early nineteen-teens as a platform for experiments using the Williamson photosphere (Fig. 1). As the film scholar Jonathan Crylen notes, the photosphere – a large spherical chamber

57 See James Clifford: *Routes. Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, MA 1997, 1–16 & *passim*.

58 Krista A. Thompson: *An Eye for the Tropics. Tourism, Photography, and Framing the Caribbean Picturesque*. Durham / London 2006, 5; Kye-Sung Chon: The Role of Destination Image in Tourism. A Review and Discussion. *The Tourist Review* 45/2 (1990), 2–9.

59 Thompson: *Eye for the Tropics*, 194. See also Jamie McGowan: Uncovering the Roles of African Surveyors and Draftsmen in Mapping the Gold Coast, 1874–1957. In: James R. Akerman (ed.): *Decolonizing the Map. Cartography from Colony to Nation*. Chicago 2017, 205–251.

equipped with thick glass windows, powerful electric lights, and space for cameras and operators – replicated structures of undersea display that emerged with the nineteenth-century aquarium. This popular middle-class visual technology structured spectator vision around conventions of static framing within the borders of the tank, as well as frontal display and a pleasurable distance established by the aquarium's "clear demarcation between inside and outside as well as separation of human bodies from water".[60]

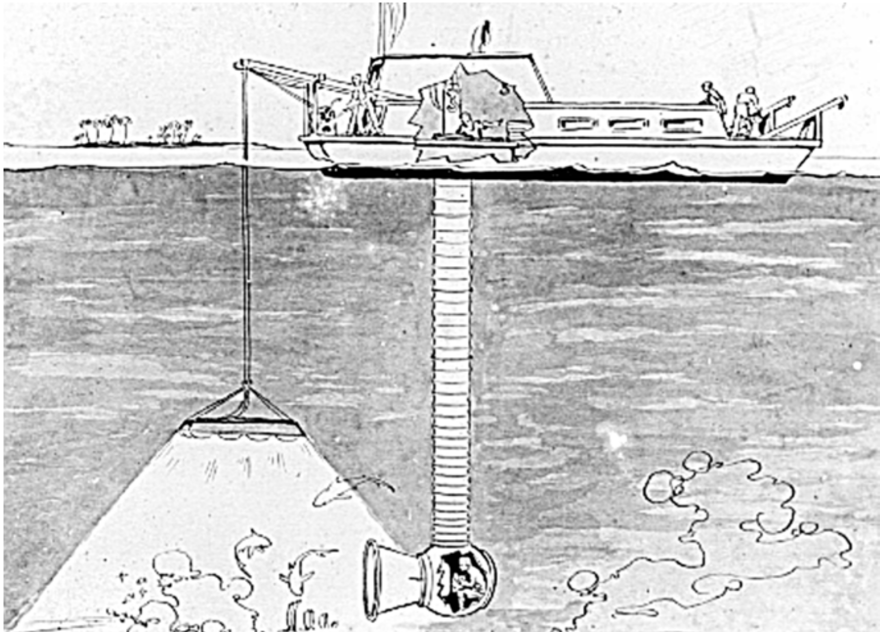

Fig. 1: The Williamson Photosphere (n.d).
Source: Thanhouser Company Film Preservation, Inc.

Crylen's concern is with habits of cinematic vision fostered by new underwater technologies including the photosphere. Thompson's art-historical account pertains rather to the specific visual history of the Bahamas and the articulation within it of a political aesthetics of the underwater tropical picturesque. For her, the Williamson company's numerous interwar live-action shorts, narrative features, and underwater documentaries, as well as an undersea Post Office that opened the aquarium experience to tourist visitors in 1941, entrenched in

60 Crylen: *Cinematic Aquarium*, 25.

picturesque conventions including aquarium framing and distanced vision that rendered Bahamian seascapes "inhabitable, domesticable, knowable, and conquerable" – and thus also consumable as tourist objects.[61]

This is, however, just one element in Thompson's compelling discussion of the destination image in Bahamian visual culture. Her work orients attention to a second transformation of Bahamian visuality that links her discussion to Du Bois's reflections on the travelling visuality of the white subject. As both Thompson and the sociologist of Caribbean tourism Mimi Sheller make clear, the history of both Bahamian and other Caribbean touristic mobilities is not solely that of perceptual arrangements designed around the regulatory gaze of the colonial picturesque.[62] Between 1937 and 1949, maritime cartographers began work on a "General Plan for the Improvement of Nassau Harbour". A map published by the Bahamas Maritime Development Board outlines an engineering and construction programme of grandiose proportions: a dredging project that was to expand, in some cases indeed to double or triple existing harbour depths to create a turning basin and dock for large passenger liners (Fig. 2). The plan foresees the construction of a pier and passenger terminal to facilitate throughput of passengers directly to downtown Nassau; and it envisages a "revised length" for Hog Island, the islet northward of the Nassau shoreline that had served for many years as an elite tourist destination and was now slated for tourist development under new nomenclature as "Paradise Island".[63]

In the mid-1960s, construction would finally begin on an artificial island with new wharfage to allow access for large cruise liners.[64] The larger natural formation that had been Hog Island was also now extended, and renamed Paradise Island by its then new owner, the US-American A&P supermarket tycoon Huntingdon Hartford. Nor was this "glittering offshore resort rivalling Miami Beach" the end of the chain of effects set in train by the 1937 map. In 1994, Paradise Island was purchased and redeveloped by South African developer and business magnate Sol Kerzner. Kerzner transformed Paradise Island into "Atlantis": a giant aquarium and hotel complex touted by one Kerzner admirer as "a

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61 Thompson: *Eye for the Tropics*, 201. The earliest extant film using Williamson brothers footage is In de Tropische Zee [In the Tropical Seas]. Dir. Carl Louis Gregory. Submarine Film Company / Thanhouser, Bahamas / US 1914.

62 See Mimi Sheller: Aluminium across the Americas: Caribbean Mobilities and Transnational American Studies. *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 5/1 (2013), 1–19; and Mimi Sheller: *Consuming the Caribbean. From Arawaks to Zombies*. London / New York 2003.

63 Maritime Board for the Bahamas: *Improvement of Nassau Harbour. General Plan*. New York 1937. 1937 appears to be the completion date of the map; the copy held at the British Library shows a publication date of 1949.

64 See Michael Craton: *A History of The Bahamas*, Second Edition. London 1968, 281.

Fig. 2: Maritime Board for the Bahamas, Nassau – Bahamas: *Improvement of Nassau Harbour*. *General Plan*. Frederick Snare Corporation. New York 1937.
Source: British Library, London.

Fig. 3: Aquarium glass tunnel to see predators. Hotel Atlantis. Paradise Island, Nassau, New Providence Island, Bahamas, Caribbean.
Source: Sergi Reboredo / Alamy Stock Photo.

revolutionary 2,300-room resort that include[s] one of the world's largest man-made marine habitats and the Caribbean's biggest casino".[65]

The Nassau Plan and subsequent development of Hog Island suggest a disruption in the fixed perspective of picturesque vision, and an organisation of Bahamian visuality instead around the dispersed and mobile gaze of the white traveller. The new cruise liner wharfs foreseen by the development plan facilitated rapid throughput of tourist visitors, who now disembarked directly onto walkways towards the adjacent Bay Street – Nassau's main boulevard, which runs immediately behind and in parallel with the city's northern shore. Further peripatetic experiences of tourist travel were offered by evening shoreline promenades, or Surrey carriage rides departing from Bay Street and meandering southward to take in the delights of this quaint colonial outpost.[66] Feeding similar penchants for mobile

65 Anon: Sol Kerzner 1935–2020. Visionary South African Hotelier Left an Indelible Mark on the Global Hospitality Industry. Obituary, *Hospitality Net* (22 March 2000). https://www.hospitalitynet.org/news/4097694.html (last accessed 24 April 2022).

66 One of the earliest known accounts of the evening promenade as a feature of Bahamas white tourism is Miss Hart: *Letters from the Bahama Islands*. Philadelphia 1827. Miss Hart writes, "It is the

visual pleasure was meanwhile from 1994 a new walk-through glass tunnel in Sol Kerzner's Paradise Island aquarium: an underwater facility which, as Thompson points out, explodes the bounded frames and geometric perspective of the Williamson photosphere, offering instead the immersive sonic and visual experience of mobile transit through underwater worlds (Fig. 3).[67]

From Panoptic Vision to the Distribution of the Sensible

The history of underwater vision in the Bahamas offers one example of the oscillation that Du Bois identifies in racialised regimes of vision between a black-white-brown matrix that fixes racial boundaries and borders, and a mobile field populated by travelling white bodies whose mastery derives from their capacity to navigate exotic worlds. This points in turn to the specific understanding of racial mapping that shapes the rest of this essay. We saw in the essay's opening the Colonial Secretary Creech Jones calling on colonial administrators and British expatriates to engage in a participatory remapping of the space of Empire. Imperial cartographers had always mobilised colonial subjects – European cartographers, but also indigenous recruits – to sail, ride, and walk the territories of Empire, using diverse surveying technologies to transform the "smooth and undifferentiated space of the old blank map" into the "striated and specialised space" of imperial cartographies. During Empire's nineteenth-century heyday, this translation of physical space into the ordered abstraction of the imperial map enabled "cadastral possession" of colonial territories.[68] The 1949 Nassau Development Plan suggests however a different entanglement of cartography with popular aesthetics. The plan, as we have seen, prompted a reorganisation of urban and maritime topography to facilitate fluid movement around the urban and underwater landscapes of postwar Nassau. The tourist, but also the colonial expatriate who arrives (remember Erna) on Nassau's postwar shores, discovered thus a landscape devoted, especially following its postwar

fashion for every person who keeps an equipage, to drive after dinner, and in the course of half an hour, you have the pleasure to bow to almost all of your acquaintances. Those who cannot ride, promenade up and down the bay; and the main street, at the hour of sunset, presents an animated appearance. […] [Y]ou often see the ladies, with their cavalieri serventi, walking by moonlight, and sometimes you hear stealing through the silence of the night, the soft notes of the harp, piano and flute" (82–83).

67 See Thompson: *Eye for the Tropics*, 198–199.

68 Thomas Richards: *The Imperial Archive. Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire*. London 1993, 14.

remodeling, to mobile immersion in the perceptual and sensory adventure that was downtown white Nassau.

The historian of film colour Michelle Henning comments helpfully on the place of film in such immersive experiences of tropical landscapes. Writing on the "worlding of light and air" in interwar experiments with film colour in colonial landscapes, Henning turns to the political aesthetics of Jacques Rancière to propose an understanding of colonial relations as produced through what she calls a "distribution of sensory capacity". Rancière, Henning explains,

> rejects the concept of the apparatus in favour of the *dispositif*, treating technologies and instruments as means for the production of relations, for making partitions and arrangements, drawing the line between the perceptible and the imperceptible [...].[69]

In this distributed and processual model, inequalities, hierarchies, and violent exclusions emerge through a practice of repetitive partition and re-partition of sensible experience. What Rancière terms the "distribution of the sensible" thus uses "self-evident facts of sense perception" to apportion "parts and positions" within an aesthetically defined political community.[70]

Drawing on this Rancièrian understanding of social divisions, hierarchies, and exclusions that are determined by "sensory capacity [...], the availability of sensual experiences, sensitivities, tastes and inclinations", Henning arrives at a conception of "normative whiteness" as "a perceptive universe [...], a way of being, saying and seeing".[71] There are connections here with Du Bois's understanding of "white folk" conjoined in common sense perceptions of black bodies as sources, variously, of fascination, wonder, or disgust. Like Henning and Rancière, Du Bois understands social divisions – in his case, race – in terms of a partition of sensible experience. That partition is however also facilitated by the embodied engagement of social actors with their surrounding worlds. For Du Bois, white folks become complicit in the organisation of social perception around racial hierarchies through a white embrace of geographical and social mobility that sets its subjects travelling, both metaphorically and actually, on racially exclusive highways. For Rancière too, there is an "apportionment", and by implication a subject or agent drawing the boundaries between that which is shared and that which is

69 Michelle Henning: The Worlding of Light and Air. Dufaycolor and Selochrome in the 1930s. *Visual Culture in Britain* 21/2 (2020), 177–198, here 189; Jacques Rancière: *The Politics of Aesthetics. The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. by Gabriel Rockhill. London 2004.

70 Rancière: *Politics*, 12.

71 Henning: Worlding, 189.

excluded from "common elements of the community".[72] To these philosophical reflections, Henning adds a specific historical focus on colonial sensibilities and racial hierarchies. Her concern is with photographic practitioners experimenting with new colour technologies across the Empire. These (often amateur) innovators with colour technology, she argues, solidified racial hierarchies on the one hand by establishing new conventions for the organisation of space, scale, depth, and movement within the frame, but also their very "ways of moving, observing and photographing – ways of being a photographer".[73]

Racialisation in Henning's account, then, is an embodied media practice that is generative both of moving image artefacts and of the photographer herself as participating subject. Echoing Henning, I myself move now to a portrait of Erna as a travelling colonial subject engaged through media practice in processes of racial boundary-formation. Erna, I will argue, became through her own adventures in cinemagoing and amateur photography a participant at once in Creech Jones's mode of participatory affective-cognitive mapping as a practice of self-production of new colonial subjects, in Du Bois's as well as Rancière's mobile production of a segregationist aesthetics, and in practices of self-insertion into colonial history as a white subject operating within the singular space-time of the postwar Bahamas.

Moviegoing as Racial Mapping

It would have taken time for Erna to retrieve in Nassau the moviegoing habit she acquired in her London nursing years. The Bahamas General Hospital in the city's downtown, together with its overflow facility, the Prospect Hospital to which she was posted on the city's outskirts, boasted by 1947 a team of eight white nurses from Britain and Canada: a Matron, a Senior Sister, and six Sisters, now including Erna, alongside five trained "native nurses" and a further forty-six in training under the tutelage of the white Anglo-Canadian team.[74] The newly-arrived Erna faced a strenuous work schedule running an operating theatre; travelling by seaplane with hospital doctors to deliver medical assistance to the Bahamian Out Islands; and supervising successive cohorts of Bahamian nurses

72 Rancière: *Politics*, 12.

73 Henning: Worlding, 178.

74 Matron Margaret Batchelder: Questionnaire. 1947. In: Overseas Nursing Association Collection: General Files on the West Indies. MSS Brit Emp s.400.138/1. Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, UK.

working towards local certification as nursing assistants or, in occasional cases, towards further UK training as fully-fledged State Registered Nurse (SRN).[75]

Provision was nonetheless made by the Colonial Nursing Service (CNS) for leisure facilities tailored to the tropical Bahamas context.[76] Responding in 1947 to a Colonial Office questionnaire on overseas nursing, the Bahamas General Matron, Margaret Batchelder, reported on a "healthy climate", but working conditions that were "rather trying for highly strung people", especially in the summer months.[77] Sources of respite included, she continued, a tennis club, bicycling, and bathing. Erna's meticulously captioned Bahamas photo album shows her enjoying to the full these and other leisure opportunities beyond her hectic nursing life. Snapshots from fishing expeditions, tennis and beach parties, and a Jamaica visit to a friend from her expanding expatriate network show Erna immersing herself in the white tropical leisure culture that Batchelder describes. Cinema's centrality to that culture is affirmed by cinema historian Monique Toppin. In her oral history of cinema in the 1950s Bahamas, Toppin draws on urban sociology and the new cinema history to present cinema in Nassau as a "third place" of "pure sociability" serving to "unify neighbourhoods", "introduce newcomers", "encourage friendships", reinforce territoriality, and "provide a gathering ground" for communities in 1950s Nassau.[78] Confirmed by Toppin's study is also the function of cinema in cementing racialised modes of black and white Bahamian belonging.

By 1948, Nassau boasted three major cinemas: the whites-only Savoy, the putatively non-segregated Nassau Theatre (a venue in fact rarely visited by white moviegoers), and the Cinema, located southward of Nassau's predominantly white downtown venues and the only cinema catering specifically for a black clientele. Cinema programmes were published in similarly racially divided local press organs. Erna – a lifelong and avid reader of conservative white British broadsheets – would certainly have shunned the *Nassau Tribune,* the "voice for the leaders of the nonwhite community" since 1903, and, under the editorship of the mixed-heritage journalist and politician Etienne Dupuch,

75 The SRN title was initially reserved for white Europeans but was available from the mid-1940s to a small selection of black Bahamians receiving Colonial Development and Welfare Scheme scholarships for advanced training in the colonial metropole. Ibid.; and see also Harold A. Munnings / Virginia Ballance: *Healthcare in The Bahamas. 200 Years of Growth and Development*. Nassau 2014, 119–133.

76 The Colonial Nursing Service remained the formal designation for the Service until 1954, despite the renaming of the Colonial Nursing Association as the Overseas Nursing Association in 1919. See Fn.43.

77 Batchelder: Questionnaire.

78 Monique Toppin: *Cinema and Cultural Memory in The Bahamas in the 1950s*. Unpublished DPhil, University of Stirling 2019, 102–103, on territoriality 95.

a postwar platform for anti-discrimination campaigns, including against racial segregation at the whites-only Savoy.[79] Erna's paper of choice would instead have been the *Nassau Guardian,* the established mouthpiece for the so-called "Bay Street Boys", the white agro-commercial oligarchy that took its name from Nassau's north shore main street and sustained a hold on the Colony's public culture through their dominance of trade, commerce, and electoral politics.

One prominent Bay Street Boy and House of Assembly member was Charles Bethell, the archipelago's premier white cinema entrepreneur, who held monopoly control of Nassau cinemas throughout the early postwar years and solicited audience loyalty with poster campaigns, promotional booklets, and weekly adverts in the *Guardian* and *Tribune*.[80] Entertainment ads from the *Guardian*'s February 2nd 1948 edition (Fig. 4) provide a snapshot of the embedding of moviegoing in a more extensively segregated white leisure culture. The Savoy, the Nassau, and the Cinema feature on the page's centre-left, evoking an urban landscape in which two of the three movie theatres nestle on Bay Street alongside retail outlets including haberdashers, grocery stores, and a downtown ironmonger serving a middle-class and predominantly white clientele. Larger ads promote downtown and shoreline high society and luxury tourist venues, including "exclusive" fashion outlets (Fine's at the Windsor Hotel); air-conditioned and "tree-shaded" restaurants (the Carleton); the dancefloor and cocktail and dining patios of the Royal Victoria Hotel; and two further hotels known for the most "vicious" forms of racial segregation, Fort

79 Saunders: *Race and Class*, 44. In her chronicle of family life in the postwar Bahamas, *A Shift in the Light*, the novelist and poet Patricia Glinton-Meicholas pictures the Savoy as a touch paper igniting political sentiment against segregation. When anti-discrimination resolution, presented to the House of Assembly by Etienne Dupuch, passed in the House of Assembly in 1956, the narrator's fictional father observes: "In 1956 things were happening for The Bahamas and some Bahamians, as well. [...] Mr Dupuch was going to present a resolution in Parliament to end the foolish state of affairs where a man, woman or child could not enter certain public places in their own country. Not that we wanted to sit in the Savoy for any length of time, Daddy said. He was not the one to waste too much time at the pictures, but he and others should have the right to do so if they wished, and in any cinema they chose. Grand Central Restaurant couldn't fry an egg for him, he said, but Bahamians from any walk of life should be able to eat there if they had the money and behaved themselves. But it was of that year's general election that Daddy and Papa spoke incessantly, as if it were worth their very lives." Patricia Glinton-Meicholas: *A Shift in the Light*. Nassau 2001, 45.

80 See Craton / Saunders: *Islanders*, 17–18 & *passim*; Toppin: *Cinema*, 59. The British colonial authorities faced repeated resistance from Bay Street to impose executive authority over a legislature that defended the economic and political privileges of the Bahamian white minority; see e. g. former Colonial Secretary Alan Burns on "a legislature which was always suspicious of [the Colonial Secretary's] motives and determined to assert its independence". Alan Burns: *Colonial Civil Servant*. London 1949, 266–274.

Scientists Find 36 BARRELS OF HUMAN BLOOD

DEPARTMENTAL NOTICES

NOTICE

NOTICE

REMOVAL NOTICE

THERE'S ALWAYS FUN IN THE JUNGLE

SAVOY THEATRE

AIR CONDITIONED FOR YOUR COMFORT

TUESDAY — WEDNESDAY

Van JOHNSON

Romance of Rosy Ridge

ADDED ATTRACTION: CHAPTER TEN OF "THE BLACK WIDOW"

Hamilton Hardware Co.

NASSAU THEATRE

TUESDAY — WEDNESDAY

Bogart Bacall

DARK PASSAGE

CINEMA THEATRE

TUESDAY — WEDNESDAY

BAXTER

The Crime Doctor's Gamble

ADDED ATTRACTION: CHAPTER ELEVEN OF "THE VIGILANTE"

FINE'S

WINDSOR HOTEL — BAY STREET

A FULL LINE OF

Guatemalan Garments

Suitable For BEACH AND SPORTSWEAR

MADE OF

HANDWOVEN INDIAN TEXTILES

— ALSO —

Mexican HAND MADE

Jackets, Skirts, Blouses

— and —

JEWELRY

TRULY EXCLUSIVE

Royal Victoria Hotel

FOR GOOD FOOD and TROPICAL ATMOSPHERE

Outdoor Cocktail and Dining Patios

FORMAL DINNER DANCE

Every Wednesday Night

Tea and Cocktail Dancing in the Garden

MUSIC BY CHARLES CAREY AND HIS ROYAL VICTORIANS

Carlton House

A LA CARTE MENU

Boxing Show

COMMUNITY ARENA

BAY AND MACKEY STREETS

Gimlet

The British Colonial

WATER FOLLIES

Greatest Group of Aqua-Stars Ever Presented!

Thursday, February 5th

9 P.M.

STARRING

Peter Fick — Sam Howard

Charlie Diehl — Vic Zoble

Jean & Joyce Fitzsimmons — Frank Snary

Earle Clark — Helen Howard

Water Ballet - Comedy - High Diving

LIMITED SEATING!

Reserved Seats £1 — General Admission 12s.

Make Your Reservations Early Call 2081

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PRESENTS

Monday - Tuesday (THIS WEEK)

FINAL APPEARANCE

★ JOHN BOLES ★

Hollywood Star of Stage, Screen and Radio Fame

FIRST FLOOR SHOW EACH NIGHT at 11 p.m.

DANCING from 8.30

with MOXIE WHITNEY His Singing Guitar and HIS ORCHESTRA

Distinctive Service At The Jungle Club Grill — Phone Maitre d'Hotel At 3341 For Reservations

Wines and Spirits Choice Selection — PAUL H. BORRADAILE, General Manager

Fig. 4: *Nassau Guardian* (2 February 1948).
Source: British Library, London.

Montagu Beach, situated eastward of downtown on East Bay St, and the British Colonial westwards of Prince George Wharf, owned by the notoriously illiberal white steamship entrepreneur Frank Munson.[81]

Navigating Segregation

Few archival records remain of cinemagoers navigating the reticulated network of interlocking colour-lines traversing downtown Nassau. The interpenetration of cinema with a US-dominated and racially segregated tourist sector, as well as middle-class white and, in Bahamian parlance, near-white dominated leisure forms including shopping, dancing, and fine dining, is certainly signalled in the *Nassau Guardian* by entertainment billings in segregated venues for white stars of "stage, screen and radio fame", including Hollywood actor John Boles, remembered for starring roles including a 1937 appearance alongside Barbara Stanwyck in King Vidor's STELLA DALLAS (US). Oral history and autobiography suggest, equally, a pervasive sensitivity to the intricacies of racial boundary-marking in downtown Nassau.[82] As one narrator, Rachel, recalls to Monique Toppin of the whites-only Savoy, "Black people knew that wasn't for them, and you didn't, you didn't worry about it. You passed by, and you didn't even want to, I personally didn't want to go there, 'cause they didn't even want me there, you know."[83]

My own interviews with white cinemagoers suggest, similarly, a leisure habitus shaped by the privileges of access that are the fruit of acquiescence in segregationist norms. One narrator, Joy Pyfrom, confirms the Savoy as a white destination of choice. On one occasion, she comfortably slept through a screening,

81 Etienne Dupuch charged Munson with "vicious prejudice", a claim ratified by eye-witness accounts of anti-Semitic and negrophobic employment practices rife in Munson's hotels. Etienne Dupuch: Editorial. *Nassau Tribune* (6 February 1926 and 16 December 1983). Quoted in Saunders: *Race and Class*, 129. See also Craton / Saunders: *Islanders*, 245.

82 I am grateful for insights into these constraints from my own oral history interviews with Bahamian residents including Paul Aranha: Interview with Erica Carter. Lyford Cay, Bahamas. May 2016. Erica Carter, Private Collection; Dr Michael Gerassimos: Interview with Virginia Ballance and Erica Carter. Fox Hill, New Providence. May 2016; Nurse Flora Hanna, née Coakley: Interview with Erica Carter. Nassau, Bahamas. July 2019; Joy Pyfrom: Interview with Virginia Ballance, Ros Seyfert, and Erica Carter. Governor's Harbour, Eleuthera. May 2016. Interviews with Gerassimos, Hanna, and Pyfrom are held by the Oral and Public History Institute, University of the Bahamas. Nursing Oral History Project. https://cob-bs.libguides.com/nursinghistorybahamas (last accessed 27 June 2022). Formal segregation was finally outlawed in The Bahamas in 1956.

83 Rachel, quoted in Toppin: *Cinema*, 99.

after a night with a plague of sand flies “so bad that we decided to go the Savoy because they had air conditioning”.[84] Joy’s account of a white and near-white cinemagoing community so intimately trusted that it felt safe to sleep right through a public screening at the Savoy is confirmed by my own memories of bedtime stories recounted to me by Erna. Erna never mentioned the Savoy; but her stories were certainly populated by numerous friends left behind in 1950s Nassau, their names cherished (uncomfortably from my own daughterly perspective) as mnemonics for her own once unfettered single life. Though eight years Erna’s junior, Joy too remembered my mother’s colleagues, recalling for instance the surgeon under whom Erna had worked in theatre, Leonard C. Huggins, as well as Royal Air Force surgeon Meyer Rassin, and Nurse Sybil Carey, whom she remembered as stationed as a nurse at Governor’s Harbour, Joy’s home on the island of Eleuthera until her death in 2017 at the age of 91.

Joy’s tales of Nassau nights with friends, including dentists, doctors, and nurses recalled by name despite the almost seven decades since her city trips during early marriage, join my own family memories in pointing to the embedding of medical personnel of Erna’s generation in the close-knit middle-class white archipelagic social networks to which both Joy and Erna belonged. I cannot know for certain the routes followed by this expatriate coterie on moviegoing trips in downtown Nassau. In what follows, I offer instead a necessarily speculative historical reconstruction. Tracing what I suggest is a plausible route taken by Erna to a night out at the Savoy, I propose three terms – landmark, limit, edge – as framing concepts for a historical phenomenology of postwar white cinemagoing that is attentive to Nassau’s segregated urban topography, to the Savoy’s positioning within it, and to a regional history of practices of navigation of postwar segregated milieux. Cinemagoing emerges in this context, I hope to show, as one amongst a range of modes of white mobility that produced in the group of white expatriates to which Erna and Joy belonged a sensible experience of racialised belonging.

Landmark, Limit, Edge

The whites-only Savoy was by the late 1940s a prominent landmark on the Nassau waterfront. Toppin cites in this context a 1940 review of the Savoy from the US-American *Film Daily*. Boasting 645 seats – 510 in the orchestra, 125 in the balcony – this newly renovated cinema, writes the newspaper’s correspondent, is “modern in its appointments, the walls of the auditorium decorated with panelled monotone mural paintings of picturesque street scenes from the British

84 Pyfrom: Interview.

Isles".[85] From the street, the cinema solicited visual attention with poster displays, supported, as we have seen, by newspaper advertisements, and imbued, as the interior murals suggest, with nostalgia for the distant landscapes of an English picturesque. The cinema's interior décor, its prominent frontage, and its obtrusive media visibility made of the Savoy, put differently, a spectacular focal point, situated within Nassau's postwar attention economy as a space of white modernity and colonial belonging. As the philosopher of place Edward Casey helps us see, it was also a material actor in cultures of white mobility, organising not only attention, but also directional movement as one force in the processes of white colonial subject-formation with which this essay is concerned.

For Casey, the Savoy's status as landmark gives it a special function in the organisation of attention and mobility along the Nassau shoreline. The landmark in his account has a specific semiotic but also perlocutionary function as a "locative sign of where I am, or more exactly, can come to be".[86] Casey echoes phenomenologies of body and *Umwelt* by writers including Jakob von Uexküll, Edmund Husserl, and Inga Pollmann when he conceives body and place as "congruent counterparts" in the instantiation of place as a lived and concrete event.[87] Place, then, is for Casey ontologically dependent on the concrete engagement of the human sensorium; bodies and place become, he writes, "conjoint" and "coeval" through corporeal action in determinate spaces and times.[88] But place is also constituted for Casey by concrete human actions including emplacement (what he calls "getting into place"), orientation, and inhabitation. These and related activities "enunciate" place by establishing relations between the situation "here" in which bodies are positionally located and an elsewhere to which they relate either deictically or temporally – so this place is now, but it has been then and will be in future or even "prepositionally" (I am "in" place, so I inhabit it; I move "through" space, so I use it operatively, and so on).[89]

The landmark – which may be a monument, a building (a cinema), a feature of physical geography (beach, hill, island, underwater cave, and so on) – features in this account as an important prompt to what Casey terms corporeal action.

85 Anon: Strange Customs for Nassau Theatregoers. *Film Daily Yearbook of Motion Pictures* (8 June 1940), 39. As cited in Toppin: *Cinema*, 59.

86 Edward Casey: *Getting Back into Place. Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World*, Second Edition. Bloomington / Indianapolis 2009, 46.

87 Ibid., 103. See also Inga Pollmann: *Cinematic Vitalism.* Amsterdam 2018; and Jakob von Uexküll: *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans; with a Theory of Meaning,* trans. by Joseph D. O'Neill. Minneapolis 2010.

88 Casey: *Getting Back*, 102 & xxv.

89 Ibid., 23.

Landmarks provide points of perceptual orientation within the present moment; they trigger too a "corporeal intentionality" that prepares bodies for spatial displacement towards a future elsewhere.[90] Such displacements have, moreover, not just a spatial but also a temporal function as acts of self-positioning within past and future histories. The landmark for Casey has historical significance as a location saturated with the "sedimented traces" of previous human presences and actions. The ability of the landmark to collapse into a single space the residues of multiple experienced histories makes it an especially dense incarnation of the divisions and hierarchies that haunt social experience. Imprinted on the landmark for Casey are therefore the same lines of class, race, gender, or sexual division that are the "furnishing dimensions" of embodied sociality in past and present time.[91]

Movement towards landmarks becomes in Casey's account a mode of self-insertion into history; it affirms those landmarks' significance as "scenes for bodily action" and lends agency to bodies seeking to locate themselves in relation to socially fractured worlds.[92] This conception is helpful in understanding the racialising dimensions of white expatriate journeys to the Savoy. To join the flows of white bodies orienting themselves on Nassau evenings towards the city's only whites-only cinema might constitute in Casey's terms a practice of self-production as a white subject acquiescing through bodily praxis in the colony's segregationist racial norms. Such a view would accord with phenomenologies of race which suggest that racial thinking is "primarily a *praxis* before it is articulated as an epistemological claim". Race and racism, explains philosopher Brock Bahler, thus call for an understanding as "embodied habits that have become sedimented into our ways of being-in-the-world, instilling within us racialised (and racist) dispositions, positions, and bodily comportments".[93]

Casey and Bahler are helpful in showing how Nassau's segregated urban topography might have shaped the racialised habits, dispositions, and bodily comportments common to white cinemagoing in the immediate postwar moment. The Savoy was just one nodal point within an urban matrix patterned in downtown Nassau by intersecting segregationist regimes. In the late eighteenth century, the arrival of black slaves accompanying an incoming population of Loyalist planters had prompted legislation requiring the domiciling of people of colour beyond the city limits. Though domiciliary segregation was never absolute – historian Gail Saunders writes of a pervasive colourism in downtown Nassau, with light-skinned

90 Ibid., 102.
91 Ibid., xxv.
92 Ibid., 48.
93 Brock Bahler: Introduction. In: id. (ed.): *The Logic of Racial Practice. Explorations in the Habituation of Racism.* Lanham 2021, xvii–xxxii, here xviii.

"mixed-race" people passing for white and being accepted by the elite[94] – racial divides were cemented following the 1807 abolition of slavery. Freed slaves were allocated to black suburbs (Grants Town and later Bain Town) situated south of downtown in the district known locally as "Over-the-Hill". The resultant urban structure mirrored the classed and raced spatial segregation common to colonial cities across the Empire: a hierarchical division between predominantly European urban and suburban areas boasting spacious accommodation, expansive boulevards, and low residential density; and indigenous, slave, or migrant settlements with high residential density, inadequate amenities, poor transportation, and squatter settlements populating the urban fringe.[95]

At the same time, the Bahamas' longstanding economic, cultural, and sociopolitical connections to the US southern states left their imprint on urban form in topographical and social boundaries mirroring not just European colonial topographies, but the white supremacist logic of Jim Crow. The influence in the Bahamas of a US white *nouveau riche* expanded during the early twentieth century, when profits from tourism, but also bootlegging during the Prohibition era, drew to the archipelago a new white American immigrant class fraction within the white elite. As Gail Saunders explains, American investment also

> brought more than money to the Bahamas. With the arrival of Americans such as [hotelier] Frank Munson came the Jim Crow attitudes and system of segregation practiced in the hotels and exclusive clubs [and fostering] increasingly blatant discrimination against brown and black people in public places and educational establishments.[96]

A speculative reconstruction of a moviegoing expedition by Erna helps show how both British colonial and Jim Crow segregationist practices shaped white cinemagoing in the early postwar years. Erna's working days saw her shuttling between the Prospect Hospital to the south-west of downtown Nassau and the nurses' quarters in the former Bahamas General, located today in the city's present-day downtown public hospital, the Princess Margaret.[97] The hospital

94 Saunders: *Race and Class*, 40.

95 The seminal, if latterly contested version of this analysis is Anthony D. King: *Colonial Urban Development. Culture, Social Power and Environment*. London 1976, esp. 22–40.

96 Saunders: *Race and Class*, 143. See also Ruth M. L. Bowe with Patrice Williams: Grants Town and the Historical Development of "Over the Hill". *International Journal of Bahamian Studies* 3 (1982), 22–28. Clarifications in brackets are mine.

97 Nurses were required to work for "not less than" 54 hours weekly. Memorandum: From the Office Administering the Government of the Bahamas to Secretary of State for the Colonies. 16 February 1949. In: Overseas Nursing Association Collection: General Files on West Indies. MSS Brit Emp s.400.138. Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, UK. The memo confirms, as did Erna's former nursing trainee Nurse Flora Hanna, that there was hospital transportation between the nurses' quarters and

sits, now as then, on the corner of Shirley Street and Elizabeth Street (formerly Union Street), a scant 350 metres north of Bay Street, Nassau's main street since the city's seventeenth-century founding and still today Nassau's metropolitan heart. Returning downtown by shuttle bus after long shifts at the Prospect, Erna might have tarried for the evening in her bedroom; or the heat of tropical nights might have drawn her outward, seeking evening and weekend entertainment with friends from the scenes of leisure and pleasure populating both her photo album and her later bedtime reminiscences.

The advertisements from the *Nassau Guardian* I discussed earlier are one instance of local media signposts prompting Erna to orient her excursions northwards towards Bay Street. Figure 5a plots a possible route for Erna's short walk (just over one kilometre) from Shirley Street to Bay Street, and onward to the Market Street junction and the doors of the Savoy. The dotted line shows an imagined Erna leaving her "individually furnished bedroom[...] (American

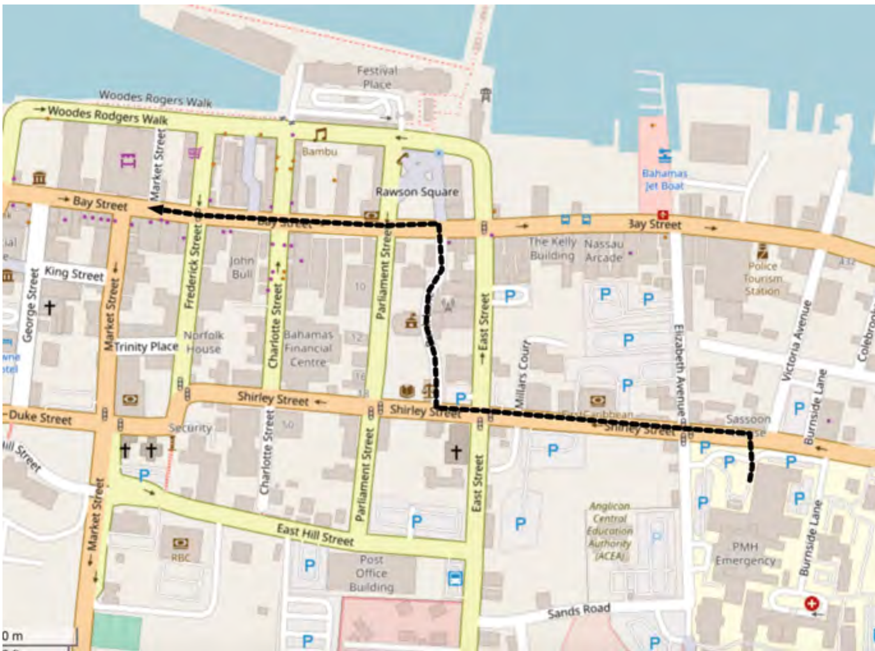

Fig. 5a: Erna's walk to the Savoy.
Source: Open Street Maps (16 June 2022).

the Prospect. Nurse Hanna herself would often walk, since the European nurses took precedence. Hanna: Interview.

Army Hut Type)"[98] to stand atop the hill that slopes gently northward from the hospital entrance towards Bay Street and Prince George Wharf. Scanning the horizon, Erna would not yet have glimpsed the colourful façades and shop window displays of her Bay Street destination. Her perception of the Nassau cityscape would however already have been shaped by tacit knowledge of the racial borders and boundaries – what the historian of segregation Paula Austin calls the "structural impediments" – that she needed to navigate as she traversed this segregated milieu.[99]

Casey is again helpful in elucidating the relation between the buildings that Erna might have glimpsed from her vantage point on a Nassau hilltop and walking as an activity requiring embodied mapping of racial boundaries. In his study of what he calls "the world on edge", Casey distinguishes between what he terms the "edge" and the "limit". Both edge and limit are for Casey part of the scaffolding of everyday worldmaking; they enable, as does the landmark, self-positioning by sentient subjects in geographical space and historical time. They are however distinguished by their division between a quality of singularity and formal abstraction (the characteristics of the limit), as distinct from the edge, which is praxiological and multifarious, "always altering, ever becoming".[100] The limit, Casey continues, is "something determinate and often quantitative". The product of epistemologies that situate bodies and objects within "a conceptual home and a rational wall", the limit is a perceptual and cognitive instrument that points both to the spatial boundaries of known worlds and to a realm beyond them, which may be that of the "nondeterminate [...], the excessive and the monstrous" but is certainly a region whose inhabitants elude "orderly experience".[101] The edge, by contrast, is a form enabling not the rational ordering of space, but a place-based experience of the changing contours of intersubjective and what Austin terms "infra-ordinary" encounters.[102] Such phrases as "edging over the limit" point for Casey therefore to the "elasticity of edges as enacted concretely in relation to limits".[103]

For Austin and other historians of racial segregation, the edge might be reformulated as the site of an encounter with what is for black and brown subjects the "exigency and duress" (Tina Campt) of racialised spatial regimes.[104] For Erna as a white expatriate navigating late 1940s Nassau streets, the encounter with limit and

98 Memorandum: From the Office.

99 Austin: *Coming of Age*, 7.

100 Edward Casey: *The World on Edge*. Bloomington / Indianapolis 2017, 51.

101 Ibid., 49.

102 Austin: *Coming of Age*, 3.

103 Casey: *The World*, 45–49.

104 Tina Campt: *Listening to Images*. Durham, NC 2017, 10. Quoted in Austin: *Coming of Age*, 3.

edge might conversely be understood as belonging to an experience of white racial mapping that aligned her cinemagoing with the participatory cartography of late Empire advocated, as we saw earlier in this essay, by Colonial Secretary Creech Jones. To explore that proposition further, let us rejoin Erna at the entrance to the Bahamas General. Though Edward Casey emphasises the primacy of vision in establishing the limit as "something that cannot, or should not be transgressed", he nonetheless notes that in everyday encounters with limits, we also "project beyond them", practising a form of "'tele-vision', or seeing into the distance" that affords knowledge both of visible landscapes and of projected spaces beyond.[105]

Erna's grasp of the racialised "limits" borders of downtown Nassau might in the first instance have facilitated precisely this form of distanced vision of a colonial landscape: one that extended beyond the Bahamas islands, reaching into precisely that geopolitical space of late colonial community to which Creech Jones points. Standing at the hospital entrance, Erna might have glanced westward towards Government House (see Fig. 5b), an imposing specimen of Georgian colonial architecture nestling on one of Nassau's rare high points. Turning her gaze southward, she would have spied the water tower marking Fort Fincastle, one of three eighteenth-century British fortifications built to deter French and Spanish marauders. A prominent landmark of Empire, Fort Fincastle is also a marker of the city's racial "limits" in Casey's sense. I have noted how racialised urban planning practice consigned Nassau's black populations after Abolition to segregated settlements in the Over-the-Hill districts southward of Fort Fincastle. As a serving colonial nurse, Erna would have experienced at first-hand the effects of a more recent colonial modernisation of racial segregation structured around conceptions of Empire as a civilising force, and focusing on urban planning as a technology of racial hygiene. In 1927, Bahamas tourism was under threat from cases of typhoid fever reported amongst US white tourists. Wilfred Beveridge, Director of Hygiene at the British War Office, was charged with evaluating healthcare and making recommendations for hospital and health administration reform.[106] The report brought substantive changes to the topography of public health and hygiene on the island of New Providence.

Beveridge was damning in his criticism of a healthcare system plagued by faulty sanitation; poor disease control; and crowded accommodation that assembled maternity cases, children, tuberculosis, and leprosy sufferers on a single site. By the time of Erna's arrival, a separate Leprosarium had been constructed off Carmichael Road, several miles south westward of the city. In 1956, a new mental

105 Casey: *The World*, 46–47.

106 Wilfred Beveridge: *Report of the Public Health and Medical Conditions in New Providence, Bahama Islands*. London 1927. See also Harold A. Munnings: *Princess Margaret Hospital. The Story of a Bahamian Institution*, Second Edition. Nassau 2014, 37–47.

Fig. 5b: Plan of the City of Nassau, New Providence.
Source: Mary Moseley: *The Bahamas Handbook*. Nassau 1926.

health facility would open on Fox Hill Road in the island's south-east; and work remained ongoing from the early 1930s on a (still today not universally accessible) municipal waterworks and sewage system designed to combat disease and linked to other public works including the dredging plan for Nassau's main harbour entrance channel discussed earlier in this essay.[107] That these were also reterritorialisations establishing new epistemic as well as classed and raced territorial "limits" in Casey's sense is evident from the separations and reorderings both of medical facilities and of public health policy that were implemented in the wake of the Beveridge report. While white nursing spaces were remodelled and partitioned – white CNS nurses did not regularly serve, for instance, in the new Leprosarium –, the report generated New Hospital Rules structured around revised distinctions between the infirm and the mad (housed now in the newly designated "lunatic asylum"); the "inmate" and the superintendent; or the monied and the indigent,

107 See Munnings / Ballance: *Healthcare*, 61–64.

the latter subjected to punitive regimes including solitary confinement or, for "pauper female[s]", assignments to work in hospital laundries.[108]

Viewed from the standpoint of Casey's phenomenology, Brock Bahler's "logic of racial practice", or indeed Du Bois's division of bodies between the white traveller and the spatially constrained black onlooker, these medical reforms can be understood as a re-worlding process that locates Erna's white colonial body within the newly delimited space of a modernising postwar Commonwealth. Yet as she steps, in my imagined moviegoing expedition, outwards from the Bahamas General and towards the Savoy, Erna also encounters what are in Casey's terms the more ambivalent "edges" structuring urban experience in segregated milieux. Historians of race in the Bahamas distinguish between a British colonial order structured around imperial modernity's distinctions of European from native, primitive from modern, sanitary from unsanitary, or moneyed from indigent; a stratified Caribbean "hierarchy of cultural differences" including "racial descent

108 Munnings: *Princess Margaret*, 45–46.

and family ties, inheritance of status, property, education abroad, quasi-hereditary organisational position, and associational exclusiveness"; and ideologies of racial purity, including Jim Crow, that "harden [...] racial barriers" around an assumed bipolar distinction between black and white.[109] The indeterminacy of those barriers, their shifting quality in the face of vernacular contestation and quotidian use, is exemplified by one last "edge" in my narrative of Erna's navigations of downtown Nassau.

Setting off northwards to the Savoy, my fictive Erna was flanked immediately to her right by a looming barrier: the Collins Wall, topped on its original construction with "broken glass, nails and rough-edged shells", and forming the perimeter of a large estate built originally by the white bootlegging millionaire, Ralph Collins.[110] Collins belonged to the new class fraction of white US immigrants who had made fortunes rum-running between the Bahamas and the US southern coast during Prohibition. The influx of this US millionaire class multiplied the racial boundaries segmenting downtown Nassau. Overlaying a British racial matrix structured around the binary logics of imperial rule was now a latticework of racial relationships shaped by the white supremacist logic of Jim Crow.[111] The Collins Wall was the most palpable example of this more overtly violent racial regime. Constructed in the 1930s to protect Collins's vast property, the Wall remained standing in the early 1940s after developers purchased the estate. The buyers converted Collins's mansion into a racially segregated private school, sold lots within the newly renamed "Centreville" to white and mixed-race buyers as well as "upwardly mobile blacks", and established Nassau's first suburban shopping centre at the heart of the former Collins estate.[112]

As the scholar of Bahamian race relations Colin Hughes explains, the presence of some black residents in Centreville, along with Collins' own protestations of his commitment to black inclusion, in no sense muted the racial tensions surrounding the Collins Wall. A "physical representation" of discrimination, the Wall prompted petitions submitted in 1955 to the House of Assembly by the anti-discrimination Bahamas Democratic League and later by residents from Centreville's more multiracial

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109 M. G. Smith: *Stratification in Grenada*. Berkeley 1965, 251. Quoted in Colin A. Hughes: *Race and Politics in the Bahamas*. Nassau 2010, 27. See also Saunders: *Race and Class,* 114.

110 Saunders, *Race and Class*, 235.

111 I understand white supremacy as a historically specific constellation of "attitudes, ideas and policies" emerging in the US "during the colonial period and the years following Independence" and including colour bars, racial segregation, and restricted citizenship rights. Tomás Almaguer: *Racial Faultlines. The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California*. Berkeley 2009, 18. See also George M. Frederickson: *White Supremacy. A Comparative Study in American and South African History*. Oxford 1981.

112 Hughes, *Race and Politics,* 49. See also Craton / Saunders: *Islanders*, 267–268.

southern edge. Black domestic servants and other workers from the "densely settled Negro areas" south of the estate, meanwhile, "placed ladders at strategic points along the wall and – men, women, and children – clambered over the wall about their daily business".[113]

Viewed in the framework of Casey's phenomenology of place, the Collins Wall appears as one element in an "informal geometry" of racialised edges constituted not by the formal logics of colonial policy, nor even the explicit colour bars imposed by Jim Crow's most vehement defenders in postwar Nassau.[114] Like other edges in Casey's account, racial barriers were instead "enacted concretely" through embodied actions on the street. They were subject in this process to contestation, whether by black workers scaling the Collins Wall, or in the Savoy, by Bahamians passing for white and evading in so doing the cinema's otherwise stringent enforcement of a racialised colour line.[115] Or they were entrenched by white city dwellers more respectful of the racial colour line – including, in my imaginary walk with Erna, my mother as she turns westwards from her hospital residence to set out for a night at the whites-only Savoy.

Immersion: The City as Mise-en-Scène

As I have so far stressed, my walk with Erna has the status of a thought experiment designed to understand the encoding of racial boundaries in Nassauvian urban form, and the implications of that encoding for cinemagoing as a white racial practice. The emphasis has been on constraints and boundaries – or, in Casey's terms, on the limit and the edge. To understand better the more pleasurable sensory enticements impelling my (often timid) mother to navigate the elastic configuration of edges and limits, bars, prohibitions, and unexpected openings shaping cinema culture in segregated Nassau, I turn finally to a different account of downtown walking: one that conceives the walk no longer solely as navigational practice, but an act of immersion in a sensory experience rich with perceptual triggers for white colonial nostalgia and imperial affect.

113 Hughes: *Race and Politics*, 49.

114 Casey: *The World*, 49. Casey is here citing the phenomenological geometry of Edmund Husserl. See Edmund Husserl: Die Frage nach dem Ursprung der Geometrie als intentional-historisches Problem. *Research in Phenomenology* 1/2 (1939), 203–225.

115 One of my white Bahamian oral history informants reported informally and off-microphone that he himself had never had difficulties entering the Savoy, but that another family member with darker skin had never tried because she wanted to avoid the humiliation of being disbarred.

I earlier proposed the route in Fig. 5a as one that Erna might plausibly have followed north-westward from the Bahamas General and the Collins Wall. Turning left on Shirley Street, she might have paused to admire a further landmark of Empire: the neoclassical frontage of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of Empire (IODE), a women's charitable organisation devoted since its turn-of-the-century founding to child welfare and other community service, including during mid-century wartime a canteen offering dance nights, games, and movie screenings to wartime US forces stationed on New Providence.[116] After a brief moment at the IODE, Erna's penchant for formal gardens might have drawn her further along Shirley Street, where the Nassau Public Library, home to the city jail from 1799 until its repurposing as a library in 1879, marked the opening to a tropical garden leading further north towards the city's municipal heart. Ambling through the evening heat, Erna would have passed the Supreme Court to arrive at Parliament Square, home during the colonial period to the Post Office and Legislative Council; the Colonial Secretary's Office and Treasury; and the House of Assembly, housing an elected legislature dominated in Erna's time by the local Bay Street white and near-white oligarchy.

Few photographs remain of the 1940s Savoy cinema towards which Erna would now have turned. One undated colour photograph, much circulated on internet platforms, does however tell us something of the experience of sensory immersion that she might have experienced on her walk to the Savoy. The photo shows the pink façade of the building's rear, captured in medium long shot from a vantage point in the sea on Nassau harbour and emblazoned with the capitalised name "THE SAVOY" (Fig. 6). The camera's location at a point on or perhaps just westward of the city's main point of tourist disembarkation at Prince George Wharf offers a southward view towards Bay Street. The perspective would have been familiar to passengers and crew on Out Island trading and fishing boats or tourists and Out-Islanders (Joy Pyfrom, for instance) incoming on ferry boats from neighbouring islands or cruise liners anchored in the bay.[117]

This first sighting of Nassau encompassed not just the Savoy but with it the fretwork of complementary built structures embedding the cinema visually in a racially segregated urban milieu. Westwards of the camera vantage point lies Government House, possibly already glimpsed by Erna in my account of her walk northward from the Bahamas General, but also an important navigational point for incoming shipping as well as city visitors. Architectural historian Andrew Gravette

116 See *Nassau. Magazine of International Life in the Bahamas*. Anniversary Issue (1942), 20.
117 Large passenger boats would not anchor at the wharf until the harbour was dredged in the mid-1960s, though plans for that development had been ongoing at least since the late 1930s. See Maritime Board for the Bahamas: *Improvement*.

Fig. 6: The Savoy Theatre, Bay Street, Nassau (n. d.).
Source: Ken McIntyre (contributor) / cinematreasures.org.

describes this “magnificent edifice” as the “finest example”’ of “Bahamian-British, Loyalist American colonial-influenced architecture”.[118] Gravette’s verbal convolutions convey the intricacy of colonial histories that situate Government House, the postwar Savoy, and other buildings of note in downtown Nassau as interconnected nodal points within a racial cartography shaped in a time predating both colonial modernisation through public hygiene, and twentieth-century iterations of US-influenced white supremacy and Jim Crow.

Both Government House and the Savoy were painted in shades of Colonial Pink, the paint colour unofficially prescribed during the colonial period for Bahamian government buildings, and still today the standard set by the Bahamian Department of Public Works for “Courts, Administration Buildings, Public Health Clinics, etc.”.[119] The city’s rectangular grid structure, formally laid out already in the early 1700s, provides a spatial framework that inserts these painted structures within a city-wide pink-hued latticework. Parliament Square is a veritable rhapsody in Colonial Pink: the colour engulfs the parliament buildings facing Bay Street, the Law Courts and Library, the IODE, and indeed the hospital buildings that were Erna’s home. Architectural

118 Andrew Gravette: *Architectural Heritage of the Caribbean. An A-Z of Historic Buildings*. Kingston, Jamaica 2000, 89.
119 Email to Felicia E. Armbrister, Special Collections Librarian, University of the Bahamas, from Melanie Roach, Government of The Bahamas Department of Public Works (9 July 2019).

style embeds municipal architecture meanwhile in a colonial history of *longue durée*. The Parliament buildings are said to be modelled loosely on eighteenth-century precursors in New Bern, capital of the North Carolina colonial government until the American revolution, when white Loyalists from across the US southern states migrated in large numbers to the Bahamas.[120]

The settlers were dominated by a white plantocracy and brought with them models for a Bahamian planter racial economy, attempting (unsuccessfully) to use the slaves they brought with them to establish plantation agriculture on the islands' arid soil. When cotton and sugar growing failed, some Loyalists departed, leaving a rump merchant elite within the Bay Street mercantile oligarchy that prospered from the import-export trade, retained a grip on "the political and constitutional machinery" as well as "land resources", and contributed in so doing to cementing "a segmented society dominated by the white elite".[121] As Gravette describes, the American Loyalists also left an imprint on Nassau architecture and urban form. The town, he observes, "became a city, with the immigrants building mansions, often after the English Georgian design". A Loyalist sensibility shapes for instance the American colonial style of Parliament Square, including its decorative use of columns, pediments, and classical porticoes; and its ubiquitous deployment of Colonial Pink as the chromatic embodiment of colonial legacies.[122]

This architectural history highlights the symbolic, affective, and locative significance of the Savoy's pink rear façade for cinemagoers in postwar Nassau. Urban form in downtown Nassau is revealed as recalling a longer history of black subjugation: one that reaches back to the late eighteenth century, the American War of Independence, and a Bahamian history of white elite attachment to slave economies born in an earlier moment of colonial conquest and settlement. Architecture, city streets, and design elements including colour conspire here to generate what the historian of Chinese cinema Chenshu Zhou calls (echoing Larkin) the infrastructure, but also the mood and atmosphere of cinema experience in postwar Nassau. Zhou chooses the term "cinema off screen" to describe what she calls a commonly overlooked mode of "atmospheric spectatorship". Drawing on writings on screen experience by Francesco Casetti, John Durham Peters, and Weihong Bao, Zhou calls for an understanding of spectatorship as occurring in a broad "sensory field": ambient sound and light within and beyond the moviehouse,

120 See Gail Saunders / Donald Cartwright: *Historic Nassau*. London / Basingstoke 1979, 18. See also Maya Jasanoff: *Liberty's Exiles. The Loss of America and the Remaking of the British Empire*. London 2011, esp. 215–244.

121 Saunders: *Race and Class*, 7–8. See also Hughes: *Race and Politics*, 6; Craton: *A History*, 162–172; Gravette: *Architectural Heritage*, 89.

122 Gravette: *Architectural Heritage*, 88.

temperature, architectural form, natural landscapes – environmental elements that open spectatorial perception to "the surrounding area and the flow of life".[123] Her work draws attention to the signal sensory experience of Erna's walk to the Savoy: the experience of colour or, more specifically, of what the archipelago's inhabitants still today recognise under its colonial nomenclature as "Colonial Pink". Immersion through walking in a world painted in Nassau's many hues of Colonial Pink can be seen to have established for Erna's generation of moviegoers, as it does still today in downtown Nassau, associations between such prominent landmarks of leisure and public culture as the Savoy and a local (downtown) and regional (Bahamian and southern US) network of chromatically interlinked built forms. The common historical feature of those buildings was their association with colonial heritage. Walking through the city promoted in this context a form of mobile ocular relay around this visual network: a perceptual and imaginative process that intensified through repetition and cumulative sensory impact the affective charge of pink as a colour nostalgically associated with colonial pasts.[124]

Coda: Counter-Mapping: Performing the Map in Maria Govan's RAIN

My focus in Route 4 has been on colour as a perceptual prompt to pleasurable immersion in a colonial imaginary. From my own memories, but also from W. E. B. Du Bois as well as recent theorists including Sara Ahmed, Carolyn Korsmeyer, Tina Kendall, or Jennifer Barker, I know how easily this penchant for chromatic immersion shades into a political aesthetics of (racial) disgust.[125]

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123 Chenshu Zhou: *Cinema Off Screen. Moviegoing in Socialist China*. Oakland 2021, 114–115. See also Casetti: *Lumière Galaxy*; John Durham Peters: *The Marvelous Clouds. Toward an Elemental Philosophy of Media*. Chicago 2015; Brian Larkin: *Signal and Noise. Media, Infrastructure, and Urban Culture in Nigeria*. Durham, NC 2008; Weihong Bao: *Fiery Cinema. The Emergence of an Affective Medium in China, 1915–1945*. Minneapolis 2015.

124 Colour, of course, has no single historical meaning or association. There are numerous examples of buildings in contemporary Nassau that reimagine pink as the colour of Afro-Bahamian and indigenous historical memory and artistic practice. The exteriors of the superbly restored Pompey Museum of Slavery and Emancipation, formerly the Vendue House slave market, as well as of the National Art Gallery of The Bahamas are two contemporary examples.

125 Sara Ahmed: *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Ann Arbor 2004; Carolyn Korsmeyer: *Savoring Disgust. The Foul and the Fair in Aesthetics*. Oxford 2011; Tina Kendall: Introduction. Tarrying with Disgust. *Film-Philosophy* 15/2 (2011), 1–10; Jennifer Barker: Chew on This. Disgust, Delay, and the Documentary Image in FOOD, INC. *Film-Philosophy* 15/2 (2011), 70–89.

What was for Du Bois a repudiation by white subjects of black *canaille* was also for my mother a visceral response to colour both as decoration and as epidermal difference. Erna recoiled at clashing hues, "garish" décor, or, to my daughterly fury, at intimate contact – outside and beyond her medical practice – with the skin of Du Bois's "black folks". She was in this sense not simply the inheritor of, but also an agent within a Bahamian colonial history that established pastel shades as the proper environment for racially segregated white experience in tropical urban milieux.

As recalled by the late Flora Hanna, a black Bahamian nurse tutored by Erna at the Prospect Hospital, Erna was however also and contradictorily a "friendly" presence: a teacher unusually attentive to the nurses' "inner feelings [...], the ins and outs of the things you know".[126] A sequel to this essay would probe this dialectic of intimacy and distance: the alternating absorption and repulsion of black subjects by a white nurse enjoined by her Colonial Nursing Service recruiters to cultivate a "deep interest in humanity, in men, women and children of all races, colours and creeds", yet also to nurture a "temperament" fitted to that "nucleus of people" encountered in "Tropical" countries as European friends.[127] That study would situate Erna's Bahamas experience no longer within urban form as media environment, but within the ensemble of vernacular media practices through which Erna and her peers performed their own emplacement as participating actors in late colonial visual culture. Erna bequeathed to her family a lavish photo album: the product of a camera she must have purchased for the journey to Nassau, since few photographs remain of her life before 1948. Her photos echo in pose and gesture the visual lexicon of glamour photography, magazine features, and news photos announcing visitors to Nassau and environs.[128] They resonate too with amateur film and photography from white tourist visits to the postwar Bahamas. White bodies here travel island locations or pose to camera and wave in a deictic gesture that belongs temporally to the tense of

126 Hanna: Interview.

127 Information Regarding Appointments for Women. Colonial Service Recruitment, Pamphlet 9 (March 1945). Extract reproduced in Kirk-Greene, *On Crown Service*, 196–197, here 197.

128 Visiting celebrities included in the winter tourist season 1948–1949 radio singer and actress Jo Stafford; Gene Liggett – "a star of the silent movies as Gene Gautier" –; and Leslie Charteris, author of the "Saint" novels, but appearing in the high society tourist *Nassau Magazine* as yachting partner to Hollywood icon and occasional Bahamas visitor Gregory Peck. *Nassau. Magazine of Life and Times in the Enchanted Bahamas*. Pre-season edition (1948–1949), 8. My mother too recalled to me as a child the film stars encountered on downtown Nassau streets, including Errol Flynn, who sought by her account to recruit white nurses for partying adventures on his regular yachting trips to Nassau.

the future anterior – "I will have been here" – and stakes a claim therefore to shared futures in tropical worlds.

In this account, Erna would emerge as the subject of exactly that mode of vernacular media production encouraged by the British colonial authorities to cement expatriate community in a late colonial world. But this is a project for a different moment. I opened this essay with a pledge to dislodge the white subjects of colonial history from our positions of authority and narrative sovereignty. To that end, I have presented Erna as an often disembodied presence: not the full subject of autobiographical colonial narrative or family memoir, but the meeting point of movements, directions, and trajectories through which I have reconstructed the racial practices of Du Bois's white traveller. For decolonial thinkers, however, such deconstructions of white colonial positionalities are insufficient. Achille Mbembe suggests as a minimal requirement a shared redistribution of knowledge within a newly constituted common.[129] Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh favour an approach via what they term relationality: a practice of participatory thinking in which "different local histories and embodied conceptions and practices of decoloniality [...] can enter into conversations and build understandings that both cross geopolitical locations and colonial differences".[130] This strategy of interdependent thinking became for me a palpable practice in visits to the Bahamas. My understanding of postwar cinemagoing was shaped *in situ* in library and archive visits as well as my own ambulatory journeys around Nassau and environs. But I learned most through the kindness of strangers: scholars, archivists, and librarians; writers and poets; filmmakers and students; as well as the several oral history narrators who shared with me their histories and memories of postwar cinemagoing. In the spirit of Mignolo and Walsh's relational critical mode, I want, then, to cede place as a narrator of Bahamian stories to a filmmaker who revisits and refigures colonial maps not from the perspective of a white British colonial daughter, but of a queer, feminist, postcolonial practitioner with deep knowledge of the Bahamas islands and its imaginary geographies.

In 2008, Bahamian director Maria Govan released her first full-length feature production, RAIN. Set in Nassau and New Providence locations, but emphasising the Bahamas' archipelagic topography with opening sequences on Ragged Island,

129 See Achille Mbembe: Decolonizing Knowledge and the Question of the Archive. Public lecture at the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research (WISER) (2015). https://worldpece.org/content/mbembe-achille-2015-%E2%80%9Cdecolonizing-knowledge-and-question-archive%E2%80%9D-africa-country (last accessed May 6 2022).

130 Walter Mignolo / Catherine Walsh: Introduction. In: id (eds.): *On Decoloniality. Concepts, Analytics, Practice*. Durham / London 2018, 1–12, here 1–2.

over 300 kilometres to Nassau's south, the film tells the coming-of-age story of the eponymous Rain (Renel Brown), a teenager raised by her grandmother Rosalie (Irma P. Hall), but forced to reconcile with her mother Glory (Nicki Micheaux) when Rosalie dies in the family home on Ragged Island. Glory has succumbed to crack addiction and the ravages of HIV; but in a moment of queer redemption, Rain is rescued by her lesbian teacher Ms Adams (CCH Pounder), who spots her talent for track running, nurtures her capacities as a future athlete, and helps both Rain and Glory to rescue potential futures from the ruination of impoverished black lives.[131]

Govan's film refigures the archive of colonial media practice to generate new cartographies of the Bahamas islands. In Erna's photographs as in postwar home movies, glamour images posed in the manner of Nassau's visiting white celebrities evince in their proprietary gesturology an organisation of Bahamian visual space around the privileged mobilities of perambulant white bodies. Govan, by contrast, populates her film both with Bahamian celebrities (Marion Bethel, the attorney, writer-poet, and gender rights activist who plays the teacher Ms Wells) and stars of African-American film and television at the turn of the millennium, including the primetime TV drama SOUL FOOD (Nicky Micheaux; CA / US 2000–2004); crime drama THE SHIELD (CCH Pounder; US 2002–2008); and the Coen brothers' THE LADYKILLERS (US 2004), which starred Irma P. Hall as the elderly but dauntless amateur detective Marva Munson. Govan's casting strategy situates her film on a Bahamian-US-American image circuit that disrupts trajectories of colonial or touristic white belonging, evoking instead a long history of black kinship ties as well as labour migration that bind North America and the Bahamas archipelago. Those ties are evident in longstanding histories of Bahamian migration to jobs in US plantation agriculture and urban industry; but they are visible too in migration patterns within the film industry, attested by stars including the early blackface virtuoso Bert Willams, but also and most prominently during Erna's Nassau sojourn, the Bahamian-born Sidney Poitier, the star already during my mother's Bahamas years of Joseph L. Manciewicz's *noir* portrait of US racial violence NO WAY OUT (1950).[132]

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131 Ann Stoler distinguishes between the ruin, which is subject to aestheticisation as a site of Romantic melancholy, and ruination, a concept that foregrounds "the ongoing nature of imperial process". Ann Stoler: Preface. In: id. (ed.): *Imperial Debris. On Ruins and Ruination.* Durham / London 2013, ix–xi, here ix. Maria Govan spent two years researching RAIN amongst peripheralised communities in New Providence; her film echoes Stoler's term in its depiction of the ravaging of Glory's body under the pressure of impoverishment, drug use, prostitution, and HIV infection.

132 Monique Toppin examines the controversial censorship campaign against NO WAY OUT in the Bahamas in Toppin: *Cinema,* 141–143.

Poitier and Williams were only the most prominent amongst generations of black Bahamian performers who moved throughout the twentieth century to try their luck in Hollywood and beyond. Williams performed in Europe, while Poitier's contemporary Etta Cameron found stage and screen stardom in European locations including Denmark and 1960s East Germany.[133] Govan's reversal of this migratory circuit in RAIN – her stars move from the US mainland southward to the Bahamas – is just one aspect of her film's forging of a counter-cartography of black affiliation. Her refiguring of the Bahamas visual archive also produces other remappings of space, community, and cultural memory. A shot of Rain washing off the sweat of a run at a public standpipe recalls the earliest known film from the Bahamas, a 1903 Edison actuality of a woman washing her child in an outdoor washtub. In RAIN, this fragmentary image is resituated in a mise-en-scène that makes of black settlements and the multi-ethnic suburb of Gambier "a particular Bahamian space [...] to which Nassauvians can claim familiarity and affinity".[134] In another scene, Fort Charlotte – a sister construction to Fort Fincastle – is repurposed as a site of black physical endeavour when Rain climbs the staircase to practise her endurance as a budding athlete.

And then there are the runs. Punctuating Govan's film are running sequences that chart Rain's emerging capacity to claim as her own the physical and imaginary space of the contemporary Bahamas islands. In two opening runs, Rain tests her skills as she sure-footedly navigates the shoreline and alleyways of her Ragged Island family home. Reprising the migrant journeys of generations of Out Islanders on sea voyages to the Nassau metropole, Rain then travels by boat to Nassau, arriving visibly unsettled by the port's unfamiliar sights: Sol Kerzner's Atlantis behemoth rising in the background, a bustling fishing quay she nervously scans as she awaits the mother she has never known and will not recognise.

A third, more uncertain run down Nassau streets marks out in a montage of point of view shots the space of Rain's coming-of-age narrative. Mobile cameos of multi-ethnic street life show men playing cards in a sunlit front yard; a street-corner scrapyard; or signposts down Dead Cat Alley, a cut-through joining the interwar Out Island migrant settlement Mason's Addition with the North Street cul-de-sac, still in the early 2000s the recognised delineation of "an imaginary line

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133 There is little writing in English on Etta Cameron's work in Europe. In Denmark and East Germany, by contrast, she became briefly a household name. See Michael Rauhut: *One Sound, Two Worlds. The Blues in a Divided Germany, 1945–1990*. Oxford / New York 2019, 155; and Bo Østlund: *Etta Cameron. Hun gav smarten vinger* [She Gave the Pain Wings]. Copenhagen 2007.

134 Ian Strachan: Goin' Back to de Islan'. Migration, Memory and the Marketplace in Bahamian Art. *International Journal of Bahamian Studies* 20/1 (2014), 52–62, here 57.

to a point at the centre line of Collins Wall".[135] A fourth, quietly exuberant running sequence is edited in slow motion, the music track one of the film's numerous black music numbers from artists including Cello Tha' Black Pearl; soul singer TaDa; Bahamian hip-hop artists El Padrino and Daddy Whites; Junkanoo carnival band The Saxons; and, in a brief gospel interlude, the All Eleuthera Gospel Choir. Held for most of the run in centre frame and close shot, Rain ponders a question from Ms Adams – "So you like to run. Why?" – sharing with the viewer no longer her views of Nassau, but her insistent bodily presence as she propels the camera forward, creating in the spectator the vertigo of backward motion as we are pushed by her running body in reverse direction through Nassau streets.

The answer Rain delivers to Ms Adams – "When I run, everything goes away. My feet … they ain't even touchin' the ground" – suggests her running routes as sites not just of grounded bodily motion (though this is certainly implied by regular cutaways to her running feet) but, more centrally, of an imaginary world whose contours she is creating in the embodied act of circumnavigating her new island home. Two further brief runs on a racetrack prove her athletic prowess with a film language redolent on the one hand of the sports movie (tense body shots on the start line, faces straining in close-up), but also the iconography of global Caribbean sport celebrity embodied for instance by Jamaica's Elaine Thompson-Herah, Shelly-Ann Fraser, or Usain Bolt.

But the turning point in Rain's coming-of-age story comes when she leaves the running track to dwell in a lengthy early morning training episode on the beaches and public spaces of Nassau's northern shore. Echoing earlier sequences on Ragged Island, Rain first jogs with Ms Adams along the shoreline highway, then trains on the steps and pathways of Fort Charlotte and environs, before resting on the parapets of this colonial landmark to ruminate with her teacher on the Bahamian lives and peoples who populate the narrative of Govan's film. These conversations on black lives discompose the colonial narrative order embodied by Fort Charlotte, as does the R&B anthem, TaDa's "OK", which runs throughout this sequence and feeds its buoyant mood. When Ms Adams recruits Rain to train for the pan-Caribbean CARIFTA (Caribbean Free Trade Association) Games, Govan's protagonist seems to complete a black, female, intergenerational, Out Island migrant, and queer remapping of the Bahamas that begins with Rain's

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135 First schedule. Limits of the Pollings Divisions of New Providence. Bains Town and Grants Town. 2007. In: *Subsidiary Legislation Made under the Parliamentary Elections Act* (Chapter 7). Parliamentary Elections (Polling Divisions) Order, 2007, 14–192. http://www.caribbeanelections.com/eDocs/legislation/bs/bs_Parliamentary_Elections_Polling_Divisions_Order_2007.pdf (last accessed 18 June 2022). On the history of Mason's Addition, see Craton / Saunders: *Islanders*, 248.

Ragged Island sprinting, continues through her increasingly assured perambulations of Nassau streets and the New Providence shoreline, and culminates in a final tournament at the film's dénouement.

But it is the film's last shot that is arguably the most unsettling for postwar Nassau's colonial racial cartography. A match cut moves Rain's final run – a sprint at the film's closing tournament – from the running track to an unmarked beach that has Rain running towards the image background of shimmering blue sea. The indeterminate perspective suggests in temporal terms an open future for Rain's adventures in counter-mapping. Spatially and geopolitically, the shot gestures to an Atlantic-Caribbean territory situated no longer within a neo-imperial Commonwealth imaginary, nor the white space of a regionally and globally dominant US, but on a postcolonial horizon hovering somewhere inside the scintillating image of Govan's wide blue ocean. Erna's story may have helped me map a history of embodied racial cartography through the streets of postwar Nassau. But RAIN, as this last shot indicates, emphatically protests that colonial legacy, offering one especially rich filmic resource for a counter-cartography of a Bahamian archipelago's multiple futures.

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The Illegible Field: The Journey of a Signal, a Soldier, and a Camera

Bettina Malcomess

> [...] It consisted in entering laboriously in pencil the outline of Tanganyika on my beloved old atlas, which, having been published in 1852, knew nothing, of course, of the Great Lakes. The heart of its Africa was white and big. (Joseph Conrad)[1]

> Our extreme forward position enables us to witness these occurrences by the aid of a good spyglass, but unfortunately they are not within biographic distance.
> (William K. L. Dickson)[2]

The journey this essay will take the reader on has no map, but it coheres around the map, first as an essential geographical technology amongst other visual, inscriptive, and sonic technologies that while modern and scientific remain implicated in sustaining what Joseph Conrad calls a "geography militant" and what Edward Said refers to as "imperial geography".[3] Second, the map is extended to think about "mapping" through the conceptual, narrative, and diagrammatic forms by which an "imaginary"[4] of space and time is inscribed

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1 Joseph Conrad: Geography and Some Explorers. *National Geographic* (March 1924). https://w3.ric.edu/faculty/rpotter/temp/geog_and_some.html (last accessed 31 May 2021).

2 William K. L. Dickson: *The Biograph in Battle. Its Story in the South African War Related with Personal Experiences* [1901]. Wiltshire 1995, 104.

3 Conrad: Geography and Some Explorers. In this meditation on geography, Joseph Conrad reflects on how in the nineteenth century, a "geography militant" displaces the "geography fabulous" of a former era of colonial exploration, and while this anticipates the more neutral "descriptive geography" of modernity based on scientific observation, it is still caught within an imperialist and military imagination. Conrad reflects on his own love of "map gazing", and in my introductory quote, he refers to his own pleasure at "drawing" in the missing outline of "Tanganyika" (Tanzania) and the Great Lakes. This personal geographical inscription bears out some sense of the white European nineteenth-century subjectivity of the ordinary traveller, author, sailor, soldier, and cartographer; European masculine figures of early modernity. Their gendered "boyish" inscriptions resonate with what Edward Said calls "imperial geography" in *Culture and Imperialism* (New York 1994, 50 & 166–175).

4 Here I draw on the work of several writers on visuality and histories of vision from Nicholas Mierzoeff's *The Right to Look* to Jonathan Crary's *Techniques of the Observer* to what film historian Priya Jaikumar calls "logics of seeing, being and thinking", as well as on Said's invocation of the "imaginary" in *Culture and Imperialism*, to understand how the West imagines and thus constructs its other. To place the production of the "image" within the register of the imaginary is to think not simply about the visual or vision as "produced" by hegemonic structures and thus fixed, but to think about an ongoing operation of imagination situated at the

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within what I argue to be a field of attention and action constituted through a spatial and temporal arrangement of cartographic, communication, and visual technologies from the late colonial period of British Empire. This chapter tracks a series of filmic, visual, and narrative journeys during the South African war. Some are physical and located, some are abstract and un-located, constituted by conceptual and immaterial movements of myself as researcher within museums, archives, and online searches, as well as the textual histories of technology and perception.

The analysis centres around two actuality films shot during the South African War, BATTLE OF SPION KOP / AMBULANCE CORPS CROSSING THE TUGELA RIVER (UK 1900), shot by William K. L. Dickson, and WAR BALLOON AND TRANSPORT CROSSING THE VAAL RIVER (UK 1900), shot by Joseph Rosenthal. I discuss these films in relation to several autobiographical accounts of the war, including filmmaker Dickson's *The Biograph in Battle. Its Story in the South African War Related with Personal Experiences* (1901) and Boer soldier Deneys Reitz's *Commando. A Boer Journal of the Anglo-Boer War* (1913)[5]. Brief reference is also made to *The Mafeking Diary of Sol. T. Plaatje* (1973)[6], a South African literary and political figure who was British court translator during the war, and to the collection of letter diaries and maps of British officer Captain Clive Percy held in the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives in London. I read these films, personal accounts, and letters in relation to a collection of stereographic photographs of the South African War and archival work on telegraphic communication campaigns on Boer and British sides.

The chapter unravels the operations of a number of historical journeys within the geographical field of the South African War in order to understand film as part of an assemblage of visual, cartographic, and communication technologies

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intersection of a field of social and political forces that constitute what Rancière describes as a "distribution of the sensible", both a subjective and institutional set of processes of image making and image reception. The imaginary implies a logic of seeing and thinking, an operation of vision, but also of sound and touch, encompassing what Raymond Williams calls a structure of feeling. See Nicholas Mierzoeff: *The Right to Look. A Counter History of Visuality*. Durham, NC 2011; Jonathan Crary: *Techniques of the Observer. On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge, MA 1990; Priya Jaikumar: An "Accurate Imagination". Place, Map and Archive as Spatial Objects of Film History. In: Lee Grieveson / Colin MacCabe (eds.): *Empire and Film*. London 2011, 167–188, here 167; Said: *Culture and Imperialism*; Jacques Rancière: *The Politics of Aesthetics. The Distribution of the Sensible* [2000], trans. by Gabriel Rockhill. New York 2004; Raymond Williams: *Preface to Film*. London 1954.

5 Deneys Reitz: *Commando. A Boer Journal of the Anglo-Boer War* [1913]. Johannesburg 1998.

6 Solomon T. Plaatje: *The Mafeking Diary of Solomon T. Plaatje*, Centenary Edition [1973], ed. by John Camoroff. Cape Town 1999.

pervasive in the late nineteenth century. Film emerges as a defining co-ordinate within a constellation of media and technological forms including the telegraph, the photographic camera, the stereograph, and the map. The expanded understanding of the "cinematic" that the chapter proposes thus moves beyond film as medium and material form to trace the emergence of a situated mode of observation that structures a spatial and temporal sensibility deeply enmeshed within both the colonial and the modern imagination.

In order to make this connection across cinematic and written forms and the media of vision and communication, I employ the conceptual constellation of *inscription*, *arrangement*, and *field*. Inscription speaks to the graphic nature of media such as the stereograph as analogous to forms of writing and recording much like the cinematic process. My use of inscription extends however to include transmissions of information by telegraphy and forms of geographical representation in cartography, treating these as inscriptive gestures that arrange positions and potentials within a spatial and temporal field. I extend this understanding of cinematic and photographic registration as a form of arrangement via theories of mapping and cinematic enunciation to articulate an understanding of the colonial "distribution of the sensible"[7] that structures this field of vision as a field of information.

Part of my intention is to resituate the South African War in relation to a larger history of technology implicated within a modern and colonial geopolitics. The War is often read exclusively within the South African national narrative, mythologised as the root of the bitter Afrikaaner nationalism that shaped apartheid, with hardly any attention paid to the transnational forces that cast it as a colonial media war in relation to several other colonial conflicts captured on film. My re-reading of this war history within a media archaeological framework is a double gesture intended to entangle two divergent historicities. On the one hand this history becomes unrooted from the national South African narrative and comes to be read in relation to a transnational history of an emerging technologically determined global imaginary. On the other hand, media archaeological studies of histories of perception and communication become bound to histories of Empire and colonial war from which they are normally kept separate.

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7 Rancière: *The Politics of Aesthetics*.

Journey 1: The Signal (Points of Departure and Arrival)

We begin with the journey of a signal and a steamship:

> Unknown to anybody in London that early evening, a telegraph message was on its way to the office of Reuters News Agency from its correspondent in the enemy capital, Pretoria. It had been dispatched at 11:35am, local time. It arrived in the noisy crowded news room in London [...] at exactly 9.17pm, 18 May, 1900. It read: "It is officially announced that when the laagers and forts around Mafeking had been severely bombarded the siege was abandoned by the Boers. A British force advancing from the South then took possession of the town." [...] It was to be, perhaps, the most sensationally received telegraph message of history.[8]

In this unashamedly jingoistic account of the siege of Mafeking, popular historian Brian Gardner describes the context in which a telegram arrives from the South African War front. Mafeking was positioned at a strategic point near to the South Africa – Botswana (then the Orange Free State and British Bechuanaland) border, and had been held in a protracted six-month siege, during which large numbers of the local population, British, settler, and African, died of starvation. The siege is recounted in detail in the diary of Sol Plaatje, who would later become one of the founding members of the political organisation that would become the African National Congress (ANC). The news of the end of the siege caused spontaneous and unprecedented public processions and cheering crowds gathered in London, Brighton, Leicester, even as far as Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Dublin.

The Mafeking communication affords brief insight into the contribution of media, communication, and transportation technologies to British superiority in the South African War. Stephen Badsey notes how the telegraph "ma[de] it possible for the first time for events on a distant battlefield to be reported to the metropolis, by methods other than those under government and military control."[9] The history of the journeys undergone by the technological apparatus of telegraph transmission underlines the strategic significance of this spatio-temporal capacity in times of war. In October 1899, the Dunnotar Castle, an iron steam and sail passenger ship, had departed from Southampton to the port of Durban, the capital port city of the British colonial territory of Natal. Aboard ship were two crates containing possibly the first wireless field telegraphic

8 Brian Gardner: *Mafeking. A Victorian Legend*. London 1966, 6.
9 Steven Badsey: The Boer War as a Media War. In: Peter Dennis / Jeffrey Grey (eds.): *The Boer War. Army, Nation and Empire*, Conference Publication. Canberra 2000, 1–10, 2. Note that the numbering of the conference publication is done paper by paper.

equipment purchased for the purposes of war. The crate was originally destined for the ZAR, the South African Republic or Transvaal Republic; it had been ordered by C. K. van Trotsenburg, General Manager of the Telegraph Department of the South African Republic, established by Paul Kruger as part of the state military in 1890. The crates, however, would never reach the South African Republic. They were intercepted by the British aboard the Dunnotar castle, confiscated, and later plundered for the British army's own wireless telegraphic signalling corps, set up in Cape Town.[10]

The wireless field telegraph was at this point in the war still a largely untried and untested technology. The signalling corps consisted of an ad hoc assembly of engineers, who upon arrival in the Cape found themselves enlisted for military service, forming the Royal Telegraphic contingent. Their efforts at setting up wireless field telegraphic stations on the front in the Northern Cape were disastrous, owing to weather conditions, ground conductivity, and poor material choices.[11]

Despite these setbacks, the British telegraphic corps conducted a relentless communications campaign by wire telegraph that was central to British military success. This suggests a relationship between the British military campaign and the spatio-temporal operations of the telegraph as an early communications technology. Figure 1 shows a diagram sent by Von Trotsenburg to the telegraphic company Siemens.[12] It details the projected position of the field telegraphs ordered after protracted correspondence with the German supplier. The points on the diagram refer to three strategic geographic vantage points outside Pretoria, the Transvaal Republic's capital. The diagram suggests not centrally a geographical territory, but a field of military operation that is constituted by the transmission of a telegraphic signal between three actual or imagined stations of potential vision and action. While the diagram is based on a map, it is distinct from the cartographic technologies and the geography that it relies on. It is instead a performative "mapping" in which a field of space is opened onto a spatio-temporal line that connects abstract co-ordinates by a drawing that indicates

10 See Duncan C. Baker: Wireless Telegraphy During the Anglo Boer War. *Military History Journal* 11/2 (1998). http://samilitaryhistory.org/vol112db.html (last accessed 20 May 2021). As this journal article was accessed online, I cannot provide page references for Baker's incredibly thorough archival research, but note that his work is based on original sources and correspondence kept within the National State Archives in Pretoria, South Africa, and the GEC Marconi archives in Essex, England, as well as various journals such as the *Electrical Review* (1898), the *Royal Corps of Signals* (Royal Signals Institution, 1958) and the *South African Corps of Signals* (South African Defence Force (SADF) Documentation Services).

11 See Baker: Wireless Telegraphy During the Anglo Boer War.

12 Author's drawing based on Baker's reproduction of the original.

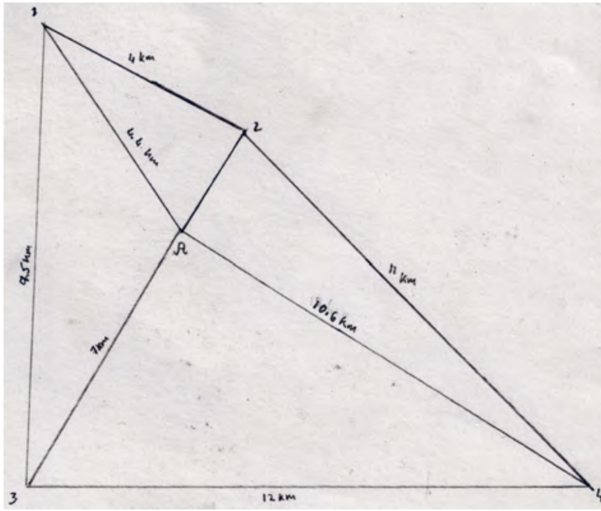

Fig. 1: Diagram sent to Siemens by ZAR proposing positions for field telegraphs outside The South African Republic (ZAR) capitol, Pretoria, 1899.
Source: Drawn by author.

the path of a theoretical radio signal sent by the field telegraphs, in a kind of spatial-temporal equivalent of a future present tense.[13]

Thomas Richards's readings of several late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century fictional and filmic texts places this understanding of performative mapping within a longer history of a shifting colonial imagination of the relationship between knowledge, information, and state control.[14] In his discussion of the

13 Referring to an action already completed in the future, often a conditional statement for further future action: "by the time you read this, I will have already left". The performative quality of the diagram signals a conditional and continuous potential for future action – the lines of the transmission are not physical wires but abstract axes of transmission that can be potentially travelled or are already travelled at any moment in the circuit of the wireless signal's journey between points. Here, I draw on Deleuze's understanding of the diagram as an agent of construction that projects a set of future possibilities or orientations. It is in excess of a mere schematic representation, and rather a synthesizer or catalyst of difference, a radical agent that breaks through a current regime of representation and is the condition of new forms of thought or action in the future. See Kamini Vellodi: Diagrammatic Thought. Two Forms of Constructivism in C. S. Pierce and Gilles Deleuze. *Parrhesia* 19 (2014), 79–95, FN 44: "Deleuze conceives of the diagram as a map of new concepts/thought, whose function is not to summarize/reflect, but to act as a pilot."

14 See Thomas Richards: *The Imperial Archive. Knowledge and Fantasy of Empire*. London / New York 1993, Introduction and Chapter 1. This fascinating literary study is referenced in

British India Survey, Richards investigates what he argues to be the beginnings of an information society within the frame of Empire. He uses a reading of Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1901) to make the argument that "geography, unquestionably the queen of all imperial sciences in the nineteenth century, is especially inseparable from the domain of official and unofficial state knowledge".[15] Richards bases this contention on the mapping of the uncolonised territory of Tibet by British surveyors disguised as Buddhist monks. Kipling's novel portrays the mapping of Tibet in the context of the larger India Survey; and it presents the state, according to Richards, as the apparatus and holder of the "capture, channelling, and storage of secret information".[16]

In a fascinating colonial instrumentalisation and co-option of movement, "basic instrumentation – compass, sextant, and thermometer" were carried in secret pockets lining the monk-surveyors' robes. The measure of their steps was used to map distances, keeping count using specially made rosary beads "built with 100 rather than 108 beads so they could be used as decimal abacuses".[17] Central to the emerging colonial logic underpinning the monks' journeys is less the map as form of geographical certainty that guarantees both knowledge and hence control of a colonial territory, but the act of mapping as a form of gathering and transmitting of intelligence in the form of information, which may or may not be acted on. Kim's role is one of gatherer of information in Kipling's novel and through the operation of his very own movement links surveying to a form of image in motion: "Trained in surveying, Kim learns to 'carry pictures in thine eye' instead of writing them down".[18] If the images are not written down, I would argue that another form of inscription or registration is at work here, one that treats the journey itself as a set of mapping operations, which produce not just a map, but the mapping of positionalities in a field of potential actions.

The mapping of the South African War through telegraphic technology (see Fig. 1) can be seen as an historical extension of Richards's mapping as performative operation during the British India Survey. The India Survey was established in 1767 (but completed between 1802 and 1852) to assist the British East

Mary Ann Doane's *The Emergence of Cinematic Time* in her footnotes to the chapter "The Instant and the Archive" (FN 28) in relation to early cinematic time and thermodynamics (Mary Ann Doane: *The Emergence of Cinematic Time. Modernity, Contingency, the Archive*. Cambridge, MA 2002). Richards's unusual argument folds a cybernetic approach to information theory and entropy into his reading of Victorian literature's representations, both explicit and implicit, of British Empire.

15 Richards: *The Imperial Archive*, 14.

16 Ibid., 24.

17 Ibid., 18.

18 Ibid., 28.

India Company in mapping territory for the purposes of administration, taxation, and military regulation. The Survey relied throughout the nineteenth century on a constellation of media technologies including cartographic drawing, reproductive technologies such as photozincography, and information transmission via the bodies of mobile travellers (Kipling's Buddhist monks) to maintain and extend imperial governance in India. The case of the South African War suggests a related but later mode of imperial mapping as a practice dependent on an interlocking ensemble of media and communicative operations. When the wireless field telegraphs discussed above set off for Durban, they did so in the company of one William K. L. Dickson, a filmmaker employed by the Mutoscope and Biograph production/distribution company to document the war. Dickson travelled with the wireless telegraph crates on the Dunnotar Castle and arrived in South Africa transporting a large Biograph camera. He disembarked alongside other white masculine subjects significant for British histories of the South African war, including Winston Churchill, then a young journalist who would become famous through his account of escape as a prisoner of war, and who it is rumoured also had unrealised plans to film the war.

The simultaneous arrival on South African shores of the wireless telegraph, the Biograph camera, and would-be filmmakers to record military action in combat zones suggests a plausible relation between Richards's account of British Empire as a field of information mapped by mobile operators employing multiple technologies of information-gathering and transmission, and the South African War as a field constituted similarly by a later but analogous assemblage of communication, cartographic, visual, and combat technologies. When the motion camera is inserted into the field of this colonial war, moving with the advancing British army across South Africa, it enters into a constellation of information and communication technologies – the telegraph, but also the aerial photograph, the cartographic map, and widely distributed forms of visual culture and media, consumed as both leisure and knowledge, such as the stereographic photograph, the photographic postcard, and the lantern slide. It is to this mediatised nature of the South African War in a nascent information society that I now turn.[19]

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19 My reading of Richards's formulation of Empire as a nascent information society is shaped by my reading on histories of cybernetics and networks via the work of Orit Halpern: *Beautiful Data. A History of Vision and Reason since 1945*. Durham, NC 2014; and Laura Otis: *Networking. Communication with Bodies and Machines in the Nineteenth Century*. Ann Arbor 2001. Halpern's approach to the histories of visualisation spans modernism and early computing. I employ her approach to think about transmedial histories of technology as a "matter of densities and probabilities" (*Beautiful Data*, 36) in my essay "The Structure of Feelings. Gestures, Operations,

From Map to Mapping: A Field of Information

Dickson's biographic "picture" BATTLE OF SPION KOP, shot in January 1900, captures the returning of British troops and the wounded to behind the British lines. While the camera remains stationary, the actuality shows an astonishing depth of field and makes visible details of troop motion in the foreground, midground, and background of the frame. Complementary to the film is Dickson's written account in his diary of his camera crew's experiences during the war. Here, descriptions of the camera's passage are far outnumbered by descriptions of non-passage: delays, storms, failed crossings, blown up bridges, poisoned rivers are amongst various obstacles to the journey of the Biograph. It is not only the camera and crew that are delayed, but the passage of the films themselves, as Dickson notes in a transcription of a telegram sent to his British Mutoscope and Biograph production headquarters in London: "[w]e are sending our first Bio picture of a train-load of troops for Mooi River. Estcourt cut off. Cannot proceed yet."[20]

Here, the passage of the unprocessed film through the field of war is entangled in a material way with physical movement: the train, the crew who cannot move, and the telegraphic communication which articulates the logistics of passage to metropolitan distributors. A map entitled "Disaster at Spionkop 20th/25th January 1900" further emphasises this relationship between mobility and immobility, information and transmission, and the constitution of the map within the field of war.[21] This map in Figure 2 is not an original document but a historical composite constructed retrospectively from topographical information and historical sources, including *The Times*'s war map of South Africa published in 1900. Directional lines indicate the movements and positions of Boer and British armies in what was one of the most disastrous battles of the war, with extreme losses on the British side, such that, as the description states, "it became impossible even to clear the trenches of the dead".[22] The neutral cartographic and diagrammatic language of the map excludes such violent details however, showing the battle as a play of vectors indicating motion and firing

Abstractions" (in: Katharina Fink / Alexander Opper / Nadine Siegert (eds.): *Das Bauhaus verfehlen / Missing the Bauhaus*. Bayreuth 2022, 102–139).

20 Dickson: *The Biograph in Battle*, 49.

21 J. L. Smail: *Monuments and Battlefields of the Transvaal War 1881 and the South African War 1899 to 1902*. Cape Town 1996, Map 21. A rather curious publication with no introduction or methodological framing that consists of a series of chronologically and geographically arranged cartographic reconstructions of major South African War battles, based on the author's interpretation of historical research and data.

22 Ibid.

Fig. 2: Disaster at Spionkop, 20/25th January 1900.
Source: J. L. Smail: *Monuments and Battlefields of the Transvaal War 1881 and the South African War 1899 to 1902*. Cape Town 1996.

lines: the British assault route, the lines of Boer artillery and cannon fire, and the positions of enemy regiments on the summit of the hill. This is, then, less a map than a mapping combining both details of the geographical site and a temporal record that is directional and durational. It inscribes a geographical space with indexical markers that attempt to convey the full day's battle in a singular visual field. As no real sequence of events is legible in the markers and arrows, the field is constituted by relations and positions, functioning much like the telegraphic diagram discussed in the opening section of this essay: an abstraction that reconstitutes the historical event as a field inscribed by a series of positionalities and potentials.

A Media War?

In calling the South African War the first "media war", Stephen Badsey offers pointers towards an understanding of the relationship between the Biograph camera in Dickson's war account and information technologies, communication systems, and mapping in the context of a media war. Badsey writes of the South African War as a conflict located at the intersection of several vectors of development in media news reporting, travel, and communication technologies. Modern war reporting in the form of illustrated print journals was supported by

> the double revolution in communications technology in the 1830s, the development of railways and steamships and of the electric telegraph, which between them allowed both physical travel and the transfer of information on scales, at speeds, and over distances that were unprecedented.[23]

He includes within his conception of "media" the dissemination of lightweight film and photographic cameras, such as the Pocket Kodak from Eastman, invented in 1897 and widely in use during the war, producing "some of the more dramatic images" in contemporary pictorial newspapers or on picture postcards. Badsey further includes within his definition the "Imperial Penny Post", a postage stamp that made it possible for letters to be sent virtually anywhere in Empire. This, together with the telegraph, meant that the Boer War could be reported in a manner and on a scale not seen before in history.[24]

The letter diaries of British Officer Captain Clive Percy show how what Badsey terms the "media of war" reconfigured space-time relations between home

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23 Badsey: The Boer War as a Media War, 1.
24 Ibid., 2.

front and war theatre. The South African war was one of the first cases of media control and censorship, and the "military belief that recent changes to press behaviour, public sensibilities and media technology posed a new and dangerous threat to their ability to carry out military operations".[25] The presence of media censorship is highlighted within Percy's letters when he refers his wife to the daily newspapers by which the news of the battles would have reached her sooner than his own letter. The latter would also have had to exclude any actual details of battle.[26] A catalogue for the film production and distribution company Warwick Trading contains reference to an official permit granted for filming: "[T]his is the first time in history where the cinematograph is officially recognised by the War Office, and our staff and operators are the only ones accorded the privileges and facilities of regular correspondents [...]."[27] These new media technologies including the telegraph, photography, and the Biograph accelerated the transmission time of news from the battlefront. Steven Bottomore's study of the early war film notes the novelty of an information economy that "sen[t] war correspondents and artists to the seat of wars". This was "an expensive business, especially given the high costs of telegraphing dispatches back – sometimes running into hundreds of dollars for a single telegram".[28] Bottomore describes the production of an intermedial assemblage of war images, including illustrations of battle, which was considered to be best captured by drawing, not photography. While photographs were instead usually used to capture the background of the war's logistics, illustrations would reconstruct actual combat.[29]

Biographical accounts show how the war also furnished opportunities for new media developments in which experimentation with war photography went hand in hand with a sophisticated and developed approach on the British side to the use of technology and cartography in the field. The decreasing cost of half tone printing meant that several publications, such as *The Black and White Budget*, began to use photography more frequently. Hot air balloons were operated by the Royal Engineers from the beginning of the war. They were

25 Ibid., 6.

26 Capt. Clive Archer Percy: Letter Book [Vol. I] January–April 1900. In: Personal Collection of Capt. Clive Archer Percy. GB0099 KCLMA Clive PA. Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, Kings College London, UK.

27 J. H. De Lange: *The Anglo-Boer War 1899–1902 on Film*. Pretoria 1991, 112.

28 Steven Bottomore: *Filming, Faking and Propaganda. The Origins of the War Film, 1897–1902*. Unpublished DPhil, Utrecht University 2007, Chapter 1, 5. Note that the numbering of the thesis is done chapter by chapter, hence I refer here to chapter 1, page 5. Bottomore's PhD thesis remains unpublished in book form but is available for download via the University of Utrecht. It provides an amazing repository of archival research on the early war film.

29 See ibid., Chapter 1, 6 & 9–10.

employed for aerial observation, often towards the drawing of maps, and reconnaissance, as well as ground to air communication during battles over large distances. Figure 3 is a stereographic image of military heliography, a form of signalling with sunlight that echoes film in framing the field of war as a site of mobile attention and information transmission.[30] I shall return to these stereographic images later in the chapter.

Fig. 3: Underwood and Underwood: sample of a collection of 79 stereographs of the South African War.
Source: Author's Collection.

While the South African War claims its place as one of the first wars captured on film, it was also an incredibly difficult war to document photographically, narratively, and cinematically. As many as eight "camera workers" (a phrase borrowed from a contemporary publication in 1900) were sent to the field by the British. All male, and operating largely autonomously albeit with unnamed assistants, they consisted of both amateurs and professionals. The latter were more

30 These 79 stereoscopic cards are entitled *South African War through the Stereoscope Pt 2 Vol 1*, published by Underwood and Underwood and produced by Works and Sun Sculpture Studios (1901). They are housed in the National Army Museum in London. I rescued a set of five stereograph cards found in an Art Deco cinema in the town of Victoria West in the Northern Cape, where they were being mishandled and kept in poor storage conditions. The Art Deco cinema remains a highly contested heritage site that at the time, in 2012, was occupied by a corrupt local town faction. Figure 3 shows heliographic signalling, which consists of the use of specially designed mirrors to reflect light signals at a distance of up to fifteen kilometres.

seasoned filmmakers who had shot footage in other wars, including the Spanish-American war in Cuba and the Battle of Omdurman in Sudan, and had significant studio experience. Cameras were as varied in size and sophistication as the camera workers' skills. The early cinematographic and Biograph cameras, even the smallest and more easily transported, were large and cumbersome, generally requiring a tripod and hand winding, and the use of telephoto lenses was rare. There is also clear evidence of competition amongst production companies vying for actuality or staged and even fake footage,[31] as well as a number of print journalists, press and stereographic photographers, war artists and illustrators. All faced varying levels of censorship and control of their movements by the British military, and permits were issued by war office for the first time in history.

Dickson's Biograph crew, to cite one instance, carried a well-worn letter of permission from General Buller in the Natal campaign, which had to be shown to suspicious officers as they moved into and out of zones of conflict. But by mid-1900, when the Boer leadership had fled the capital of Pretoria and the war seemed won, these journalists and camera crews began to leave. There is also evidence of the British clamping down further on the presence of media during the more extreme scorched earth campaign launched by Generals Roberts and Kitchener in response to relentless Boer raids, which saw the burning of civilian farms and the creation of a vast network of fatally ill-equipped and overcrowded concentration camps across the country.

Journey 2: The Scene of Operations

> We fastened the Biograph to the back seat, so as to be able to fire at a moment's notice, the whole to be elevated and lowered at will from the pole, or cart-shaft.
>
> (William K. L. Dickson)[32]

Very little combat can be seen in the surviving actualities; they were mostly occupied by the logistics and infrastructures of war, while many battle scenes were staged in a slew of fakes generated by production companies, often in parallel to the footage shot by their cameramen in the field.[33] The long range of modernised

31 See Bottomore: *Filming, Faking and Propaganda*, Chapters 1–2; and De Lange: *The Anglo-Boer War 1899–1902 on Film* for a comprehensive catalogue of actualities and fakes compiled from all production and distribution listings.

32 Dickson: *The Biograph in Battle*, 36.

33 See Bottomore: *Filming, Faking and Propaganda*, Chapter 4, 23; and De Lange: *The Anglo-Boer War 1899–1902 on Film*, xxv-xxviii.

artillery and field guns, and the use of automatic weaponry and smokeless gunpowder used in Mauser and Lee-Metford cartridges also made for a less than spectacular war. Added to this, Boer concealment, using their knowledge of the local geography, meant that the more visible mass of British troops was often firing onto an invisible enemy. Actuality films did however make some version of "The War" visible for the largely western (European, American, and Colonial Commonwealth) audiences drawn to "War Shows" and film exhibitions staged in cosmopolitan metropoli, often accompanied by lantern slide shows, stereoscopic views, and other entertainment and actuality forms.[34]

The catalogues of films made during the South African war, especially the actualities, reveal, as a common denominator with Richards's discussion of imperial mapping in Kipling's *Kim*, a striking obsession with movement. The departures and arrivals of the steam ships that would carry troops and cameramen to and from the front, the crossing of rivers and the marching of troops, title after title bears out the descriptive force of motion[35] in the early modern imagination. Two actuality films that show the crossing of a river visualise this privileging of motion as an index of the operations of war. They also offer insight into the relation between early moving image technologies and mapping practices: a relation that becomes especially clear if we read them with the journals of mobile, white masculinities operating alongside the film camera within the field of the war: specifically, the diaries of filmmaker Dickson, Boer soldier Deneys Reitz, and British officer Captain Clive Percy.

WAR BALLOON AND TRANSPORT was shot by Joseph Rosenthal for Warwick Trading; while BATTLE OF SPION KOP was shot in the field following the battle of Spionkop by Dickson for the competing production house, British Mutoscope and Biograph Company. WAR BALLOON AND TRANSPORT makes a technology of visual reconnaissance its central subject, showing the British army's Balloon Corps crossing of the Vaal River, the natural geographical border of the Transvaal and Free State Republics. Visible in the two minutes of film documenting the rather banal trajectory of the crossing is a line of ox-drawn wagons carrying supplies, the balloon transport contingent consisting of soldiers and men on foot and horseback directing the operation. The Corps required seven wagons to move the entire section, and the two minutes of Rosenthal's film reveal,

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34 See Bottomore: *Filming, Faking and Propaganda*, Chapter 4, 15–18 & 23.

35 By this phrase I encapsulate the economies of vision and mobility that Jonathan Crary and Mary Ann Doane write about in their histories of vision and cinema respectively centered on the observer/spectator. Both studies emphasise how proto-cinematic media such as the stereograph, photograph, and chronophotograph establish a hegemonic form of realism where showing "movement" within the frame or across frames conditions a modern spatial and temporal sensibility. See Crary: *Techniques of the Observer*; Doane: *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*.

accordingly, an astonishing amount of activity and labour to ensure the movement of the balloon across often trecharous geographies. Clearly visible too are well dressed black South Africans enlisted in the service of the British army for its massive infrastructural operations, although the details of their labour and enlistment remain largely unaccounted for in historical surveys of the war.

Less visible by contrast is the function of the balloon as a communications technology involved in mapping the Transvaal as a field of war. A special wagon was built by the Royal Engineers to transport the three balloons, which were used throughout the war for direct observation, complete with an air-to-ground telegraphic cable for immediate communication of field observations. The balloon became in this context another node of Imperial connectivity:

> tether cables complete with signal wires carrying a small electric current from the bank of Obach cells, unwound as the balloon with its payload of observers and equipment in the basket dangling below it gently rose to the required height with the wagon providing the secure point. [36]

Balloons were also used for aerial photography and for the purposes of cartographic observation; wireless telegraphy and experiments with voice exchanges were carried out via balloon, anticipating the more modern air to ground communication used in WWI.[37]

The temporal immediacy and efficiency of this use of aerial observation and transmission technology is instructive in the way it collapses time, space, and action into a single field. An aerial photograph (Fig. 4), shot from one of the war balloons and captioned as the first known aerial photograph,[38] introduces a register of war images that is much more familiar for a twenty-first century viewer than the two-tone illustrations of battle scenes taken from newspapers and the photographic post-cards and pre-arranged stereographs from the period. The aerial photographic image, used for both mapping and reconnaissance, folds the photographic register into a wartime visuality that is legible in the frame of Paul Virilio's work on war and cinema, and the "operational images" described by

36 Keith Smith: Air Craft in the Boer War. *The Australian Boer War Memorial* (28 July 2009). https://www.bwm.org.au/aircraft.php (last accessed 15 April 2022).
37 "The man in the balloon telegraphs down a wire directions about the gunnery, and the shells are fired accordingly" (12 May 1900). A. B. Paterson: *From the Front. A. B. (Banjo) Paterson's Dispatches from the Boer War*, ed. by R. W. F. Droogleever. Sydney 2000, 331.
38 This image was sourced online where it was displayed upside down on the website. This is a cropped version sourced by the website author from Emanoel Lee: *To the Bitter End. A Photographic History of the Boer War 1899–1902*. London 1985, 35. However, the original uncropped image is printed from a glass plate negative held in the Local History Museum, Durban, South Africa.

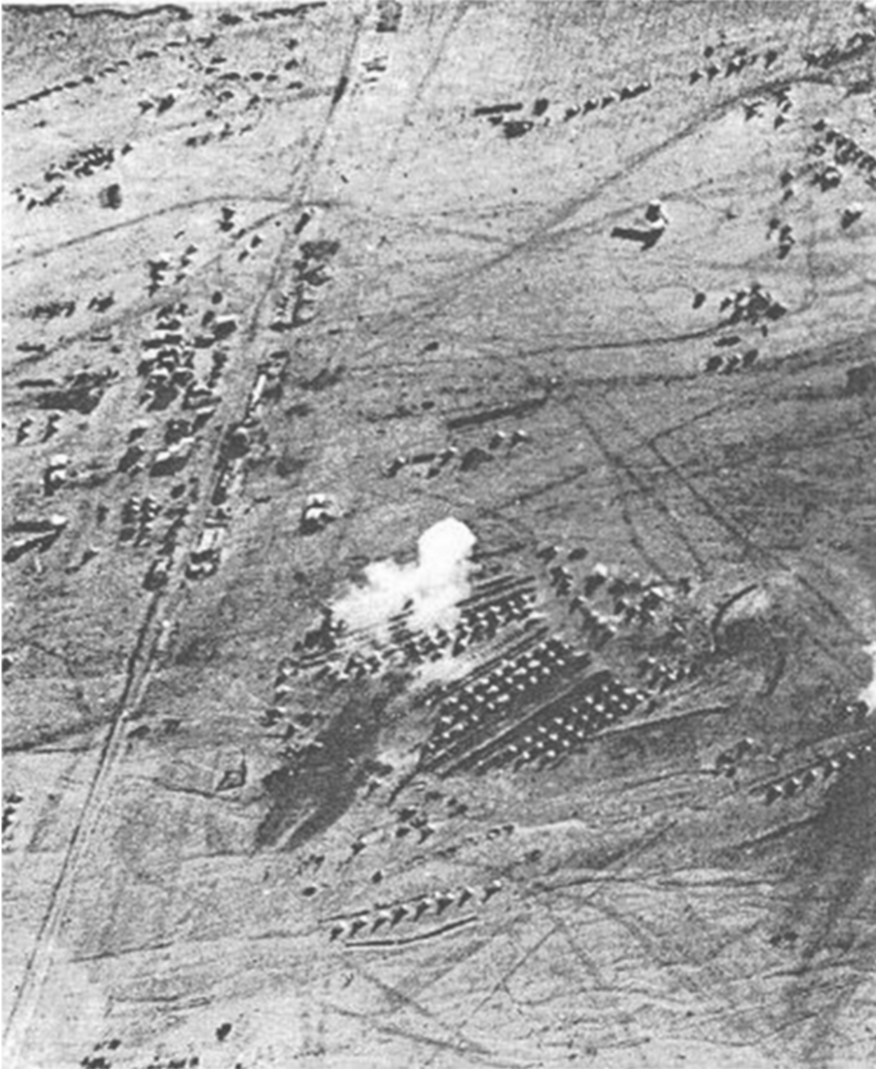


Fig. 4: One of the first aerial photographs – British Camp Balloon Base from 1000 feet.
Source: https://www.bwm.org.au/aircraft.php.

Harun Farocki in his film BILDER DER WELT UND INSCHRIFT DES KRIEGES (IMAGES OF THE WORLD AND THE INSCRIPTION OF WAR, D 1989).[39] The juxtapositions of media technologies including the telegraph, aerial photography, and the photographic and cinematic camera during the South African War make clear its place on the cusp of modern war communications, anticipating the central role cinema and aerial photography would play in World War I and II.

Journey 3: Operators and Inscriptions

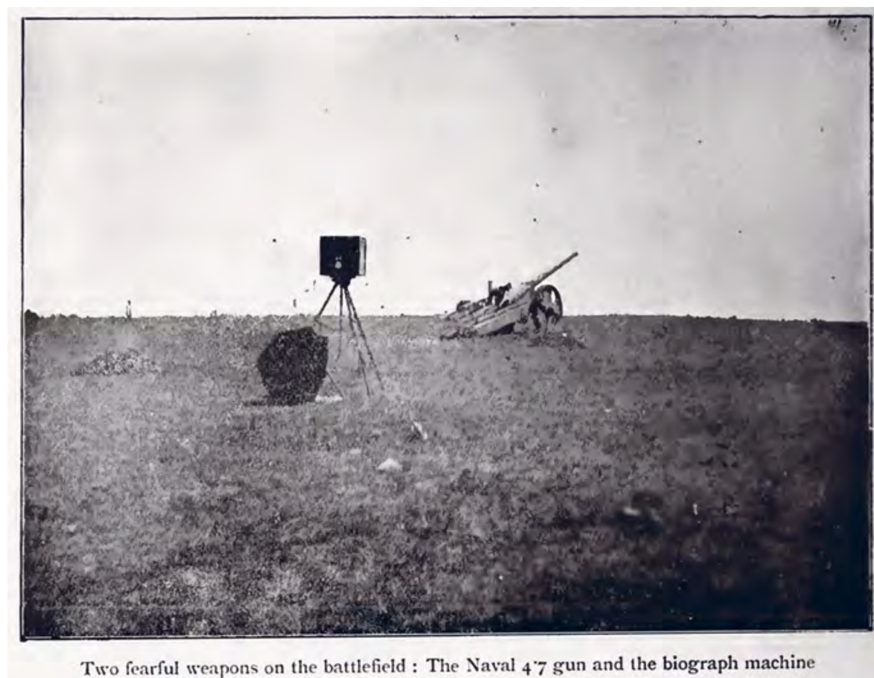
To understand the place of the Biographic film camera as an extension and counterpart of this incredible operation of military motion, communication, and technology, I now turn to the published account of Rosenthal's competitor, Dickson's *The Biograph in Battle*. Dickson, originally an employee of Thomas Edison, was responsible for several innovations in camera design, and had a hand in the design and construction of Edison's fabled Black Maria film studio. He was also one of several camera operators, of varying levels of experience (many were self-taught amateurs), who were sent to film the war by competing distribution companies. Dickson published an edited version of his diaries of filming the South African War, *The Biograph in Battle*, in 1902, just after the final surrender of the Boer Republics. His account spans the period from his arrival with the Dunnotar Castle in October 1899 until his departure in June 1900.

The heroic and at times jarringly cheerful tone of Dickson's account is undone by his many ellisions and obfuscations: of the crew he never names and the African labourers he mentions in passing, as well as the brutal facts of the text itself in a journey defined by treacherous crossings, continuous delays, extreme food rationing, non-permission, casualty, and death. No other filmmaker

39 The phrase "operational images" Farocki first uses ten years later, in his exhibition cycle *Eye / Machine* (2000–2003). It largely relates to computer and military imaging systems, where operation refers to a mode of autonomous imaging, produced by an automated process outside of human capacities (https://www.harunfarocki.de/installations/2000s/2003/eye-machine-iii.html (last accessed 18 June 2022)). The phrase is picked up in several books on cinema and media, such as Volker Pantenburg (ed.): *Cinematographic Objects. Things and Operations*. Berlin 2015. Paul Virilio's study of the use of aerial photographic and cinematic technology (and even search lights) during WWI and WWII makes the argument that the form of modern war is irreversibly altered by a newly mediated modern visiuality, and that the battlefield is constructed not by the soldier on the ground, who is in fact rendered blind, but by a form of montage, a retroactive reconstruction of the field via composites of aerial imagery and film. See Paul Virilio: *War and Cinema. The Logistics of Perception*, trans. by Patrick Camiller. London / New York 1989.

or photographer is mentioned in Dickson's travels, although there were other camera operators in proximity to his crew. His emphasis throughout is on the "picture", the capturing of the scene or the scene to be captured, even if this often remains a potential unrealised by the massive Biograph camera, which shot on 68-millimetre cellulose-nitrate film, producing some of the most visually captivating imagery of the war.

In a newspaper account from the period in the periodical *The Black and White Budget*, a striking caption accompanies an image of the Biograph camera alongside a 4.7-inch gun: "[t]wo fearful weapons on the battlefield" (Fig. 5).[40]



Two fearful weapons on the battlefield : The Naval 4·7 gun and the biograph machine

Fig. 5: Two Fearful Weapons on the Battlefield: The Naval 4.7-inch gun and the Biograph machine.
Source: *Black and White Budget* (17 February 1900).

40 *Black and White Budget* (17 February 1900). https://www.angloboerwar.com/images/pdf/blackandwhite19000217.pdf (last accessed 20 June 2022), 22.

The suggested commensurability of the filmic apparatus and this long-range technology of war make visible an equivalence between the military and filmic operations which "produce" the visuality of the battle as a field of attention and action. But the truth is that very little "action" in the field was captured on film, except for the most banal operations of war, often re-staged or arranged for purposes of shooting.

The 4.7-inch gun was a powerful quick-fire naval cannon adapted in the field to fire from a travelling carriage as a field gun, manned by royal navy officers. This "improvised" apparatus took up to thirty-two oxen to move. The Biograph camera was also a cumbersome apparatus, and Dickson describes the modification of a Cape Cart to serve as both transportation and housing for the Biograph, with a tent to cover and protect it from rain and other elements. The camera and the cannon required a similar set of operations to enable their mobility across rivers and landscapes. This mobility, however, did not imply any kind of mobile framing, or camera movement beyond the rare panning shot during the Biograph's documentation of the war. Dickson explains that he attached his crew instead to the Naval Brigade, camping and travelling with them due to their being stationed closest to the firing line, where his Biograph would be best positioned to film scenes of battles.[41]

The analogies made by Dickson between these dual "operations" of mobility, firstly of the camera and its crew, and secondly of the field gun apparatus, are instructive for what I want to refer to as the twin operations of arrangement and inscription. Here the camera's registration or recording of the scene inscribes the battlefield onto a cellulose nitrate substrate, while arranged alongside the cannons such that the line of "sight" is also the line of fire. The adaptation of the cart to increase the camera's mobility is linked by Dickson to the firing of the cannons, which are never far from him as he narrates the movements of his crew and the military operations surrounding them. Dickson often expresses his excitement at being directly on the front line: "[n]ever shall I forget the sensation of being within the range of the Colenso guns while standing beside my naval friends, who are firing shell and lyddite in rapid succession into the fortification". Like the cannons, the camera is also arranged to "fire at a moment's notice".[42] The movements of the Biograph are thus entirely enmeshed within military operations, and Dickson's progress as operator is dependent on and entangled within the army's mobility. There are several accounts of films intercepted and destroyed en route to Durban or Cape Town and subject to the disordering of the train and communication lines

41 See Dickson: *The Biograph in Battle*, 50–53 & 71–72.

42 Ibid., 71.

due to Boer interference in Empire infrastructure. The Biograph's own movement is revealed here as but one aspect of concentric layers of visible and invisible "work" within a radial arrangement of military "operation"[43]:

> Wednesday 29th. We wake at dawn to the clash of shunting trains. Breakfast over, we toil at the unloading of our Cape cart and goods in order to take a view of the broken bridge, and the reconstruction of the same. Our Biograph is carried down to the stream facing the bridge, and I get a good view of the new foundation laid for the wooden trestles. The [Africans[44]] as help are simply invaluable, and they may be seen and heard everywhere as they cheerfully toil, chanting the while keeping time with their work. Every hand stopped work and gazed steadily at the camera while taking the first picture, thus depriving us of the necessary movement. After this we had of course to make another attempt.[45]

Dickson never names those constantly present members of his own crew on whom its daily operations depend. This is indeed the only instance in the text in which he describes the direct assistance by anonymous African labourers to move the adapted camera cart, employing a racist term to name them. As such, the camera as apparatus continually linguistically displaces its operators in the text with a series of labourless "operations", with Dickson occupying the sole narrator position. Dickson often remarks that it is movement that he intends to capture with the Biograph, and that non-movement or the pause, and notably above the direct gaze into the camera, constitute failed "pictures". Again, this proximity of camera and action is confirmed in Dickson's refusal to use his telephoto lens, so as not to remain at any distance from the action, "not being very

43 My use of the term "operations" draws on anthropologist Johannes Fabian's *Out of Our Minds. Reason and Madness in the Exploration of Central Africa*. Berkeley 2000. Fabian troubles the myth of the solitary scientific explorer by situating the movement of the traveller within a complex set of "operations" that involved teams of guides, interpreters, and labourers, organised along military lines. Thus, my application of the term "operations" to the film-making process intentionally has a military and colonial exploratory inflection.

44 Originally Dickson used a derogatory term for indigenous Africans, which I have excised. I think here with Fatimah Tobing Rony about what I interpret as a re-inscription of the colonial archive and Anne Laura Stoler's emphasis on the need to trace the persistence of imperial and racialised attitudes back to these archives, but always with the caution that colonial archives are themselves "full of disquiet and anxieties". My excision points to my own anxiety of repeating the archive's racist language, complicated by my own position as a queer white South African confronted with the biased class and gender positions evident throughout my sources and their authors as predominantly white, bourgeois, and masculine. See Anne Laura Stoler: *Along the Archival Grain. Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*. Princeton / Oxford 2009, 1; Fatimah Tobing Rony: *The Third Eye. Race, Cinema and Ethnographic Spectacle*. Durham / London 1996, Chapter 3.

45 Dickson: *The Biograph in Battle*, 49.

sure of this new lens, I preferred to use my 8-inch Bausch and Lomb, and get within 50 feet instead of 1,500 yards or 2,500 yards".[46]

The slippage between the autonomous operations of the apparatii of war, both Biograph and cannon, and the individual and collective labours of their operators is finally consolidated in a peculiar description in which Dickson narrates the camera's position in relation to the movements of war. This is the first time in the text that the camera is "seen":

> About 3pm three distant cannon-shots were heard. Instantly the bugles called to horse, and five hundred strong galloped away before we could intercept their path with our Biograph. The Boers had disappeared, our boys returned shortly before six by another road or track, a formidable lot. [...] Then spying the Biograph, "Here, Jimmy, come and see your face. Why here's a looking glass in this here machine wot you call movin' picters." His companions crowded around, making each in turn the most absurd remarks as they looked at their own unshaven and sunburnt faces in the mirror of our finder. "Just look at that, will yer!" "What would Sal think of me now?" and so on.[47]

Beginning with the missed opportunity of the shot of the soldier's departure on their horses at the suddenness of the cannon shots, this paragraph ends not with a picture of their return, but with a picture of the camera itself. This is the only moment in the entire book, of which the journey of this camera is largely the subject, where we in fact "see" the Biograph. There is no photograph of the camera or its wagon contraption or its crew in the entire three-hundred-page account, although Dickson's text is punctuated by photographs of scenes he biographs or wants to biograph. It is only in this description of the men seeing their image inside the mechanism of the camera, the viewfinder, not the lens itself, that we catch a "glimpse" of the unwieldly box-like structure in field. "This here machine wot you call movin' picters" is never pictured in photographs, drawings, or descriptions of which it is the subject. This unseen apparatus structures the narrative and so cannot be revealed except as the mirror reflection of those it does not film. The soldiers, like Dickson's crew, are equally never individually visible; they are always functions of a larger set of movements – operations that come into view.

The camera is not only absent from Dickson's *The Biograph in Battle* but also from the letters and diaries of British and Boer officers stationed on the war front. Notably, in Denys Reitz's war account as well as the letters of Captain Clive Percy (the subject of the concluding section of this chapter), there is no single reference to the possession or use of a photographic camera, whether

46 Ibid., 73–74.
47 Ibid., 58.

still or moving, despite the presence in many of their personal collections of photographs and photographic glass slides, and what seems to be an insatiable appetite for contemporary photographic publications of the war.

I place this description of the soldiers' direct gaze into the camera in Dickson's war account in relation to another look into the camera, this time within his film BATTLE OF SPION KOP. In what follows, I read these gazes as operations of "enunciation" via the work of Francesco Cassetti and Christian Metz: appearances of the cinematic apparatus within the "text", methodologically expanding filmic textuality to speak directly to Dickson's written account. Extending this textual and cinematic model of enunciation into the concluding sections, I relate the above moments of enunciation to the inscription of depth within stereographic photographs of the war and the emerging logics of spatial arrangement within the war actuality film genre. I then map this emphasis on depth and arrangement to the deictics of direct address, place, and time in the writing of Boer soldier Deneys Reitz, the letters of British officer Captain Clive Percy, and the Mafeking siege diary of Solomon T. Plaatje.

In the complex movements between cinema, war diary, and stereograph that follow, the semiotic usage of enunciation and deixis open my reading of film form onto the terrain of mapping not as cartographic representation, but as a practice of transmission, inscription, and communication. Hence the direction of the soldiers' gazes towards the camera (within Dickson's film and book respectively) echo the vector lines of motion within the war mapping of the battle of Spionkop, the operations of the balloon crossing in Rosenthal's film and the information flows and telegraphic transmissions with which this chapter opened. Each of the latter instances construct a field of positions and potentials, an entanglement of media forms and military journeys. The legibility of this field requires us to map the interchangeable positions of the reader/spectator/viewer within it, in order to show that it inscribes the latter as receivers of information within an order of legibility structured by a colonial logic.

The Look into the Camera and Cinematic Enunciation: Distance, Depth, False Deixis

Dickson's Biograph film of the retreat from Spionkop demonstrates a breathtaking depth of field (Fig. 6). A group of British soldiers, and possibly several Africans and Indians working in the medical corps, guide a horse-drawn hospital wagon across a makeshift pontoon bridge over the river at the centre of the frame, while a snaking line of soldiers recedes to the background, where a column of horse drawn wagons and a man on horseback are just barely legible,

Fig. 6: Still from THE BATTLE OF SPIONKOP / AMBULANCE CORPS CROSSING THE TUGELA RIVER (Dir. William K. L. Dickson, UK 1900).
Source: British Film Institute.

with the Spionkop mountains from which the retreating army has come marking the horizon line in the seemingly infinite depth of the frame. The camera is clearly positioned just behind the defensive trenches guarding the military's encampment. The film opens with a soldier to the far left and another to the far right of the frame facing in the direction of the camera. Both appear to turn away from the camera just after the film begins rolling, as if signalled by Dickson and his crew to look away.

The digitised version of the film is only thirty seconds long, and at about sixteen seconds into the film, the second soldier from the left turns his head in a deliberate way towards the camera, in what appears to be a direct gaze or perhaps glance in the direction of the place of the camera, which is also the imaginary place of the viewer. While it would be tempting to name this as a moment of "direct address" of the camera, hence the viewer, there are several facts of the text that complicate this reading. To show this, I navigate a detailed exposition of Casetti's and Metz's approaches as well as the limits of their application to the early actuality film.

Casetti's account of enunciation follows a "metalinguistic" reading of film as the "énoncé" (the statement, the enunciated) that refers to its own construction, "to tear apart the fabric of the fiction" and thus "reveal what is usually hidden (the camera and the work it accomplishes)".[48] Casetti echoes Christian Metz in his semiotic approach to cinematic enunciation; and while the two accounts diverge, there is common ground in their shared focus on what Casetti terms "the text's operations" which "assign the viewer a place" and "set [...] the viewer on a certain course".[49] Put simply, enunciation refers to a moment in the filmic text where the viewer is made aware that they are watching a film. Both Casetti and Metz draw on meta-filmic examples: frames within frames (mirrors, stages, windows) that index the act of looking and watching; films within films gesturing to the cinematic modality itself; and other devices such as voice over, point of view and reverse shots, direct address of the camera, and extra-diegetic sound.

Metz, however, departs from Casetti and several other theorists of cinematic enunciation in his critique of how they collapse the distinction between deixis and enunciation, or what he calls "false deixis". He cautions: "enunciation tends to take on a humanoid aspect", forcing the filmic text into a linguistic framework, as if there was an empirical sender and receiver of the film as message, or an addressor and addressee.[50] Metz argues against the anthropomorphism of this model, proposing the more neutral terms "source (foyer) of enunciation" and "enunciative destination". For him then, cinematic enunciation is "neither essentially deictic (and so anthropomorphic) nor personal (as in personal pronouns) nor too closely imitative of this or that linguistic configuration". Enunciation in fiction film is about cinema's "reflexive constructions", where or when a "film speaks to us about itself or about cinema or the position of the spectator, and it is here that we witness this kind of splitting into two of the utterance (énoncé)".[51]

Metz's approach to film is thus suggestive for my earlier discussion of imperial information society, and in fact Metz partly draws on the field of cybernetics as a model for impersonal enunciation. For Metz, film is to be treated in strictly semiotic terms as an enclosed text from or into which we construct the spectator and the author "on the basis of two information flows: the unfolding of the film,

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48 Francesco Casetti: *Inside the Gaze. The Fiction Film and its Spectator* [1990], trans. by Nell Andrew. Bloomington / Indianapolis 1998, 17.

49 Ibid., 10.

50 Christian Metz: *Impersonal Enunciation, or the Place of Film* [1991], trans. by Cormac Deane. New York 2016, 4.

51 Ibid., 10.

and the reactions of the individual (as well as real) spectator".[52] Metz resists the idea of the spectator as interlocutor because for him there is no possibility for the reversibility or the deictic shift from "you" to "I", or "I" to "you", as if the film is speaking and being spoken to. His account also shares with Casetti's, and indeed almost all studies of enunciation, an exclusive concern with fiction film, or cinema in the classical sense. Dickson's and Rosenthal's actualities fit by contrast into a register of non-fiction document, described in catalogues as "pictures", and displayed in theatres with a mixed programme of popular films, vaudeville, and lantern slide lectures. These films straddle the era of "cinema of attractions"[53] and an emerging realism that makes them distinct from the fake films of the war, as well as the incumbent newsreel form.

Metz's and Casetti's models thus don't initially appear to apply to the early cinematic actuality film. One possible exception emerges when they discuss the direct gaze into the camera. The taboo on direct address in fiction film is one of the first conventions of narrative cinema, distinct from off-screen looking, which creates the illusory spatial relations of cinematic diegisis. Both Casetti and Metz refer to THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY (Dir. Edwin S. Porter, US 1903), a film of the same period as the South African War films, and its famous medium close-up shot of an outlaw cocking and pointing his pistol directly at the viewer or the imaginary place of the viewer behind the camera, as a moment of cinematic enunciation. Tom Gunning notes that "the Edison catalogue for this film informed exhibitors that they could place this shot at the beginning or the end of the film".[54] This placement of the shot outside of the narrative implies it is unable to assimilate the direct gaze into the story. Casetti, Gunning, and Metz read this as a direct assault on the spectator, suggesting early film's ambiguous heritage of the tensions between spectacle and narrative.[55]

Thinking about this shot within Metz's enunciative framework proves instructive for reading the direct gaze at the camera by the three soldiers within Dickson's film and the look into the lens of the camera in his biographical account. The sense one gets of the first two soldiers' gazes being directed away from the camera by a signal from Dickson as he begins shooting attests to

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52 Ibid., 17.

53 Tom Gunning: Cinema of Attractions. In: Thomas Elsaesser / Adam Baker (eds.): *Early Cinema. Space, Frame, Narrative*. London 1990, 56–62.

54 Tom Gunning: An Unseen Energy Swallows the Space. The Space in Early Film and Its Relation to American Avant-Garde Film. In: John L. Fell (ed.): *Film Before Griffith*. Berkeley 1983, 355–366, here 360.

55 I draw equally across Gunning, Casstti, and Metz to formulate this point, but I intentionally steer clear of the term primitive cinema.

Dickson's awareness that their gaze threatens the realism of the scene by revealing the place of the camera, which mediates the view of the retreat. Gunning notes that the choice of placement of the GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY shot at the end or the beginning of the film demonstrates the power the exhibitor still held over the way films were seen, both as programmer and proxy-editor. In Dickson's film, the enunciative gesture of gazing at or directly confronting the audience with such spectacular force is similarly resonant with the nervous anxiety of the cinema of attractions; but it also makes evident a kind of commensurability of gun, camera, and projector, hence inscribing the viewer into this cinematic assemblage as target, subject, and receiver respectively. It is not only the gun that takes direct aim at the audience but also the projector, indexed by the projectionist's arrangement of the shot in relation to the film. Hence it is not only the camera, but the entire apparatus of production, distribution, and exhibition that becomes visible here.

Across the work of Metz and Casetti, another kind of enunciation is alluded to, one that is not exclusive to narrative cinema, and where the use of the terms arrangement and field or topography imply a framework within which to think about impersonal enunciation outside of fiction film, a place where false deixis in fact meets cinematic form and inscribes the spectator into this topography. Metz summarises impersonal enunciation as follows: "source and target are [...] orientations, vectors in a textual topography, instances that are more abstract than is generally admitted."[56] Metz's schema for these abstract orientations of the filmic text as a topography make legible the status of transmission as "split into two moments, recording and projection",[57] hence the site of production and registration are tied to the place of exhibition and projection in a model that echoes flows of information as much as cinematic form. Furthermore, Metz talks about the impersonal operation of arrangement: "[i]f there are images to be seen, then somebody has arranged them".[58] Metz via Laffay traces the outline of a "figure who orders images", which is not necessarily "a personified enunciative presence"; but a kind of fiction, such that "'at the heart of all films [...] one finds a virtual linguistic source (foyer)', an 'exhibitor of images'". Metz draws on Laffay's evocative vocabulary to describe this figure as "master of ceremonies", a "great artist", and a "structure without images".[59] Metz thus hints at a kind of exception to his critique of "false deixis", where the operations of arrangement and projection, or what

56 Metz: *Impersonal Enunciation*, 20.

57 Ibid., 12.

58 Ibid., 9.

59 Ibid., 4 & 9. Metz is quoting from Albert Laffay: *Logique du cinéma. Création et spectacle*. Paris 1964, 71 & 80–83.

he calls a "structure without images", become visible, making it possible to read enunciative moments within the actuality film form:

> [...] there is another exception; a kind of global, permanent (and, truth be told, very atypical) deictic, which is a kind of actualising "*Here is*" that is vaguely demonstrative, always unspoken and always present, and that moreover is an aspect of the image rather than of film. (The image of the object *presents* us with that object, as it has an indefinable amount of designative force).[60]

Metz echoes Laura Mulvey at this point on film's relation to the "index", which is encapsulated for Mulvey in the way that photographic form always haunts the moving image, in all its celluloid, video, and digital formats, so that the film still, or the stilling and pausing of the digital film, always contains a trace of the original moment of registration.[61] While Metz and Mulvey take very different approaches to the index, both echo Casetti on the "gaze":

> There is, in effect, always an aspect to the énoncé which refers to the enunciated and its subject, an aspect which the film never wholly excludes: it is the gaze which organises what is shown, the perspective which delineates and puts in order the visual field, the place from which we follow what comes into sight.[62]

It is here that a process of "mapping" as a performative arrangement of positionalities and the social and political forces that structure them is revealed within the model of impersonal cinematic enunciation.

Following this line of thought, the turning of the soldiers at the start of the Spionkop film away from and then towards the place of the camera can be seen to index the beginning of the thirty seconds of biographic registration during which the camera cuts into the depth of field. To understand the film's depth, one has to "travel" the eye across the planes of the frame, and it proves impossible to pay equal attention simultaneously to the hospital wagon in midground, the snaking line of returning soldiers and wagons in the background, and the men stationed in the trenches in the foreground. The stilling of the frame is the only way to take in the entire scene, invoking the photographic register. Stillness provides an uncanny ability to map this complex visual field, to arrange the planes in a kind of saccadic motion of the eye so that the entire depth becomes legible. As a viewer one cannot help identifying with the look of

60 Metz: *Impersonal Enunciation*, 12.

61 Laura Mulvey: *Death 24 x per Second. Stillness and the Moving Image*. London 2006. Mulvey returns to this point throughout the book, but the idea is most clearly introduced in Chapter 1: Passing Time.

62 Casetti: *Inside the Gaze*, 19.

the third soldier who turns towards the imaginary place of the viewer mid-way through the filming, drawing our gaze back into the field of the frame, creating an incidental point of view from which the scene unfolds.

In the written description of the soldiers seeing themselves in the viewfinder of "the machine wot you call movin' picters", Dickson's use of direct speech intentionally marks their class position through their clearly less educated spoken idiom of English. While they are out of place in the field of the image, this double displacement in terms of class and technical knowledge mirrors the out-of-placeness of the camera in the field of war: The men see themselves reflected in the viewfinder mirror, but the camera, which ceases the motion of film, does not see them, and Dickson's description places them outside of the register of film, highlighting class hierarchies and positioning them outside of a distribution of the sensible determined by a cinematic visual code they have limited access to. Like the soldiers who look at the camera in the film, these men disrupt the neutrality of the view as they make the camera visible, and they fail to understand the operation of the camera's gaze upon them. The author, Dickson, who stands behind the camera is the sole arranger of the distribution of the sensible in both these written and filmic texts.

While neither the filmic enunciation nor the textual instance of "spying the biograph" really show the camera (impossible except with a mirror or a photograph/illustration respectively), both make the operation(s) of "ordering" or "arranging" the visual field as a scene for transmission (entailing both recording and projection) from the source (camera, projector) to the imaginary place of a spectator/reader located on the opposite end of the axis as the enunciative destination. This constellation of looks towards and away from the camera is an acknowledgement of the *here* and *now* of the event, in turn placing the spectator at the receiving end of a topography of flows of information, or "enunciative arrangements" as Metz calls them,[63] and what Casetti describes as an ordering of the visual field. The enunciation says to the viewer: you are *here now* in the cinema or the theatre watching this *there then* where the camera has been placed; in as much as the film itself is produced by a series of operations taking place *here*, *now* for some future *there*, *then* outside of the film's text but folded into the temporality of the filmic present. To understand the political implications of the enunciative arrangements of source and destination as forces within a singular field that folds a colonial war into the cinematic assemblage, it's important to understand the idea of arrangement and field as a specific spatial and temporal distribution of the sensible after Rancière, who explains:

63 Metz: *Impersonal Enunciation*, 10.

> [t]his apportionment of parts and positions is based on a distribution of spaces, times, and forms of activity that determines the very manner in which something common lends itself to participation and in what way various individuals have a part in this distribution.[64]

Rancière's formulation here provides a means to articulate an aesthetic assemblage or form in relation to the political, as in the conditions of participation in constructing the common. As speech and voice are at the heart of Rancière's understanding of the political subject, the distribution of sensibility allows for a mapping of those who have a place, and thus a voice, and those who do not.[65] Thus, what emerges in this reading of the gaze at the camera in both Dickson's film and text is a connection between cinematic enunciation as a flow of information with a spatial and temporal arrangement that places the viewer within a *field of sensibilities* ordered by a colonial logic. To make this field legible, in my penultimate journey I turn to what Jonathan Crary argues to be the most popular photographic form of the second half of the nineteenth century: the stereograph and its apparatus of display, the stereoscope.

Stereographic Depth: Arrangement and Disarrangement

The stereograph was a popular visual device of Victorian culture consisting of two images shot with a specially adapted camera to photograph the same object or scene twice, with a slight shift in position, often done using a special bifocal stereographic camera. Invented by Charles Wheatstone for the purposes of scientific research into the binocular nature of human vision, it was popularised in the form of the Brewster Stereoscopic viewer designed to look at glass or paper card stereographs, where the double but mis-registered images are placed side by side on one plate or card. The stereoscope has two lenses so that when the image position is adjusted to the correct focal length from the viewer's eye, it brings the two images into focus so that points in the corresponding planes of each image converge, creating the optical illusion of depth or relief.

In his exhaustive account of nineteenth-century vision, *Techniques of the Observer*, Jonathan Crary explains that there is nothing photographic, nor painterly, in the stereographic visual experience. In fact, the best effect is achieved when subjects and objects in the frame are carefully arranged to create the optical effect of depth before the stereograph is taken. Crary argues that

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64 Rancière: *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 12.

65 Here I draw on the general argument of *The Politics of Aesthetics*, as well as Rancière's *Disagreement. Politics and Philosophy* [1995], trans. by Julie Rose. Minneapolis / London 1999.

there is some similarity between how the stereoscope and theatrical scenography make use of perspectival illusion.[66] This analogy between the theatrical scene and the stereoscopic "seen", although limited, is a productive one, as it foregrounds the positionality of a viewer as receiver and the photographer as the arranger of figures and objects as if on a stage. As such, the arrangement of the scene to create the depth relations required for a good stereographic image was common practice.

There is something curious about the depth of field of the Biographic framing discussed above that resonates with the stereoscopic arrangement of figures described by Crary. One has to watch the film several times to train the eye away from the figures in the foreground to follow the snaking line of troops and stretcher bearers. This travelling of the eye across the planes of the image echoes an instructive line from a Warwick company film catalogue about the imbrication of the stereoscopic form within the language of early cinema. The quote describes a film shot for the Warwick Trading Company in early 1900, entitled A SKIRMISH WITH THE BOERS NEAR KIMBERLY BY A TROOP OF CAVALRY SCOUTS (UK). This was a one of the only clearly staged war films shot on site in South Africa, notably presented as an actuality film in Warwick's catalogue:

> These scenes portray one of the many Brushes with the Boers by a contingent of General French's Army during his march to relieve Kimberley. Several "kopjes" in the background. (Photographed by Mr. J. Rosenthal, of our War Staff). These pictures produce a stereoscopic effect, and the clear atmosphere gives it a tremendous depth, enabling one to see the thousands of troops in the distance fighting at the base of a "kopje", while the dust arising from the galloping cavalry lends further realism to this splendid subject.[67]

This description, albeit of a fake film, is telling of a kind of hegemonic visuality in which stereoscopic viewing is the lens through which cinematic realism is read, not the other way around. The staging of the scene is evident in several stereographs from an Underwood and Underwood series. In "The Dying Bugler's Last Call – a battlefield incident, Gras Pan, S. Afrika" (Fig. 7), figures and gestures are very obviously staged to create a melodramatic enactment of what may have been an actual incident, complete with soldiers playing dead across the landscape. In another stereo-image, "Yorkshires signalling on New Zealand Hill (so bravely held after their Commanders had fallen) to Rensburg, SA" (Fig. 3), the scene is less staged than arranged to create stereographic depth, with a heliograph placed in the centre of the image, and a note taker and flag signaller in a perfectly diagonal line. Both stereographs create a heightened

66 See Crary: *Techniques of the Observer*, 125.
67 De Lange: *The Anglo-Boer War 1899–1902 on Film*, 86.

stereoscopic effect. In several other more documentary style images, the placement of the camera at a certain position in relation to converging sight lines implies an understanding of how the camera organises space in order to exploit the potential for depth.

Fig. 7: Underwood and Underwood collection: "The Dying Bugler's Last Call – a battlefield incident, Gras Pan, S. Afrika", 1900, shown here with a stereoscope viewer.
Source: Author's Collection.

Steven Bottomore has noted the common practice in war photography to

> "arrange" the scene, especially the aftermath of battle, to produce a more vivid or pleasing photograph, a practice emulated by the travelling camera crews in the field. Several camera operators from the South African War, such as Joseph Rosenthal, were later sent for instance to document the Philippine war (1899–1902). The films made there were mostly "arranged" events with US military units, in order to capture authentic-looking action for the screen.[68]

Bottomore draws an analogy between the arrangement of the photographic scene, the fake films of the war, and debates around the "relative value of

68 Bottomore: *Filming, Faking and Propaganda*, xxii.

actuality films versus re-enacted films of the war".[69] This association of authenticity with arrangement is striking for several reasons. Bottomore's study tracks a debate that took place during the war about the value of photographic versus filmic and illustrated depictions of the war. Publications and newspapers often complemented illustrations with photographic documents of the backdrop of war. However, over the course of the war, there was an acceptance of photographic realism, what Bottomore argues is an acceptance of photographic manipulation and arrangement.[70]

The same mixture of authenticity and deception applies to the film medium. Actualities and fakes coexisted, made by the same filmmakers and production companies, the latter often a restaging of actual scenes of conflict. Since this unpredictable war was incredibly difficult to document, filmmakers followed what Bottomore shows was an already established model of combining photographic realism with forms akin to illustration, "employing a combination or mixture of genuine and 'artificially arranged' images".[71] Bottomore's study is further helpful in identifying three genres of war actualities: films shot in the conflict zone (the rarest); "war-related films", which show people, places, or events connected with the war; and arranged films, which were shot in the conflict zone with genuine troops, but in which the action was set up to be filmed.[72] Rosenthal's War Balloon and Transport appears to fit neatly into the category of "war-related films". However, the difficulty of classifying Dickson's Battle of Spion Kop, which appears to fit all three, introduces a dissonance. The camera's placement behind the trenches to foreground the four soldiers who are positioned essentially outside of the scene, scanning and watching the retreat from a place just in front of the imaginary viewer, feels far too much like an intentionally set up meta-filmic device. As such, the turning from the camera of the soldiers on the far left and far right as if signalled to look away makes evident a potential arrangement of the scene, with Dickson being aware of how the soldiers' gaze onto the scene of the retreat would function as a cue to the imaginary spectator, so that the line of the trench is treated as analogous to the space between spectator and screen.

It is impossible to determine if Dickson in fact directed the gazes of the soldiers in the trench. Nonetheless the look away from the camera of the two soldiers (whether cued or not) and the chance gaze of the third soldier mid-way towards the camera function as an enunciation with an exceptional deictic

69 Ibid., xx.
70 See ibid., Chapter 2, 1.
71 Ibid., Chapter 2, 3.
72 Ibid.

function, even if "false", that seems to gesture to the operations of arrangement behind the scene: "the structure without images". Returning to the framing of cinematic realism in the Warwick catalogue, the collapsing of the distinction between staged scene and actuality in this case seems consonant with Bottomore's typology of actualities. The arranging of the camera behind the trenches and the possible direction of the look away from the camera create a "tremendous depth", similar to that of the film described in the catalogue as having a "stereoscopic effect". Here it is not the stereograph, as in the registration or inscription onto the photographic surface whether paper or glass, that is invoked, but the "stereoscopic", as an organising force acting on the image.

To understand further the "tremendous" power of the illusion of depth in Dickson's film, it is necessary to move beyond Bottomore's writing on the arrangement, and to unpack the operation of the stereoscopic apparatus and its hold over the nineteenth-century visual imagination. For Crary, the common analogy between the stereoscope and the theatre is undone in the experience of the image, which he describes as "inherently *obscene*, in the most literal sense. It shattered the *scenic* relationship between viewer and object that was intrinsic to the fundamentally theatrical set up of the camera obscura."[73] Through a careful examination of the Wheatstone stereoscope as scientific instrument and its popularisation as optical toy in the Brewster version, Crary emphasises that the "relation of observer to image is no longer to an object quantified in relation to a position in space, but rather to two dissimilar images whose position simulates the anatomical structure of the observer's body".[74] The latter refers to the binocular nature of vision and the focal distance from the eye required to achieve the stereoscopic illusion of depth. Crary explains that this illusion is produced through a

> derangement of the conventional functioning of optical cues. Certain planes or surfaces, even though composed of indications of light or shade that normally designate volume, are perceived as flat; other planes normally read as two-dimensional [...] seem to occupy space aggressively. Thus stereoscopic relief or depth has no unifying logic or order.[75]

For Crary, the fascination with the stereoscope is due to this "vertiginous uncertainty about the distance separating forms".[76] Oliver Wendell Holmes, a nineteenth-century critic and writer on photography, calls the stereograph "the double-eyed or twin pictures", and his mid-century writing on the then newly

73 Crary: *Techniques of the Observer*, 127.
74 Ibid., 128.
75 Ibid., 125.
76 Ibid., 124–125.

popular form sees its development as one that is continuous with photography.[77] This differs from Crary's omission of the operation of the photographic camera in relation to stereographic images; in fact, Crary's account does not deal much with the stereographic cards themselves, their subjects, production, or distribution. His focus is solely on the optical experience of stereoscopic vision, through which he seeks to understand the construction of a new kind of "observer". Holmes however provides insight into the full process of making and reception. He focuses less on depth than on what he calls "solidity", calling the stereographs "sun sculptures", where the etymology of the word stereo can be traced to the Greek word for "solid":

> A stereoscope is an instrument which makes surfaces look solid. All pictures in which perspective and light and shade are properly managed, have more or less of the effect of solidity; but by this instrument that effect is so heightened as to produce an appearance of reality which cheats the source with its seeming truth.[78]

Holmes's article gives a sense of how stereographic sets were constructed as a journey, such that the viewer was transported as they went from card to card: "I pass, in a moment, from the banks of the Charles to the ford of the Jordan, and leave my outward frame in the arm chair at my table, while in spirit I am looking down upon Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives [...]."[79] This virtual journeying is connected to what Crary, reading the stereoscope within a Benjaminian and Foucauldian frame, calls "a mass form of ocular possession". Thus, the stereoscope is implicated in the increasing need "to take possession of the object" in the form of the reproducible image,[80] a technology that produces docile and disciplined consuming bodies. In this way, the status of the stereoscope as optical toy combines pleasure with disciplinary viewing techniques: "The content of the images is far less important than the inexhaustible routine of moving from one card to the next and producing the same effect, repeatedly, mechanically."[81]

In Holmes's writing, a different inflection is placed on this mechanical motion of viewing cards, one that brings into relief not only the objects in the image, but a sensibility trained to take in scene after scene, view after view, object after object in the form of a series. If Crary talks about an ob-scene disarrangement of planes, the observing subject is trained to be agile and mobile, to

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77 Oliver Wendell Holmes: The Stereoscope and the Stereograph. *The Atlantic* (June 1859). https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1859/06/the-stereoscope-and-the-stereograph/303361/ (last accessed 2 April 2022).

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid.

80 Crary: *Techniques of the Observer*, 127.

81 Ibid., 131.

keep "images in thine eye" as they move like Kipling's Kim through the vertigo of this abstract visual experience uprooted from a referent, "an appearance of reality which cheats the source with its seeming truth". What is most instructive in this phrase from Holmes marking the "truth" of the solid image, is how this hyper-realism inspires his call for a stereographic library or archive: "we must have special stereographic collections, just as we have professional and other special libraries. […] [T]here must be arranged a comprehensive system of exchanges, […] a universal currency […]."[82] This extends the possessive and disciplinary logics of the stereograph discussed by Crary to an economy of knowledge tied to the illusory solidity of the images, a condition not only of the illusion of depth, but a possessive order of knowledge and experience tied to the "solidity" of the stereographic image.

Michael Wedel traces another lineage of stereoscopic effects in cinema history, making a useful distinction between depth and relief that speaks to Holmes's emphasis on solidity. He notes an affinity of stereoscopic effects to the "'cinema of attractions' and its practices of immediate shock effects, direct address, acting towards the camera and persistent acknowledgement of the audience".[83] Following developments in film history and in a Modernist and art-historical repertoire (Blanchot, Riegl, Trotter) to understand the haptic quality of these "relief effects aimed at sensorial immediacy in order to establish contact at a distance",[84] Wedel proposes a counter-reading to Crary's assertion that the optical displaces the haptic in the stereoscopic visual regime, suggesting instead "the coexistence of two visual systems of the haptic and the optical", as well as "'the violence inherent in the stereoscopic foreground' as it forcefully penetrates the perceptual space of the beholder".[85]

Reading the stereoscopic through Wedel as a kind of rupturing of the surface of the image seems to echo another forceful enunciative arrangement: the pointing of the gun in the opening or closing shot of THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY, where a certain quality of the haptic meets a fictional or false deixis. Taking Crary's cue from Benjamin that here "technology has subjected the human sensorium to a complex kind of training",[86] we can see that the stereoscope trains the modern observer to practice a sensibility able to inhabit the dialectic of

82 Wendell Holmes: The Stereoscope and the Stereograph.
83 Michael Wedel: *Pictorial Affects, Senses of Rupture. On the Poetics and Culture of Popular German Cinema, 1910–1930*. Berlin / Boston 2019, 116.
84 Ibid., 116–117.
85 Ibid., 118. Here, Wedel quotes David Trotter: Stereoscopy. Modernism and the "Haptic". *Critical Quarterly* 4 (2004), 38–58, here 48.
86 Crary: *Techniques of the Observer*, 112.

arrangement and disarrangement that structures the new viewing experience, to mechanically replace card after card, to travel the eye between planes and views, to transform the twin images into a singular, mappable field. This is a viewer able to make the repetitive, mechanical journey through the Underwood and Underwood war series, despite the violence of its rupture. It is this sensibility that transfers to the optical regime of depth experienced by the early actuality film spectator, placing the *here now* of the cinematic experience and the *there then* of the event in a continuous topography.

In Dickson's film, depth assures the viewer an imaginary place behind the camera, inscribed by the three looks towards and away from the camera. In the stereoscopic viewing of the Underwood and Underwood collection of war stereographs, the adjustment of the distance of the card from the eye of the observer to find the right focal length for their own unique visual anatomy, produces the solidity that reassures them of their place as co-arranger of images in a singular visual field that collapses the time and space of the war into the parlours of the modern metropolitan subject. This observer is a figure whose race, gender, and class position has been largely omitted from the accounts of the history of vision to which I have referred, but who understands the somatic nature of their own sight to be conditioned for a specific kind of binocular optical experience. An observer whose attention has been trained for absorption so that the arranged and staged scenes of a colonial war are interchangeable with the ordered views of cities, landscapes, and the tableaux of Victorian living rooms.

Journey 4: War Diaries and Letters (Inscription)

This essay concludes by touching on three textual case studies where the colonial distribution of the sensible traced across stereographic and cinematographic forms becomes legible within three very different subject positions journeying in the field of war: the letter diaries of British officer Captain Clive Percy, the autobiographical war account of Boer soldier Deneys Reitz, and the siege diary of Solomon T. Plaatje. Here, analogues to enunciative arrangements are visible in hand-drawn maps, diagrammatic forms, and the language of description, which stage events as views of the present, intentionally undoing the opposition between the act of seeing, reading, and the spatial and temporal event of the "scene". Through these textual examples, I add the term inscription to the analytical constellation of arrangement and field. The term brings into view the recording surface and the diagrammatic line as the marking out of a territory. Inscription maps the field of attention as a field of potential action, making possible the movement of some subjectivities, and constraining the movement of

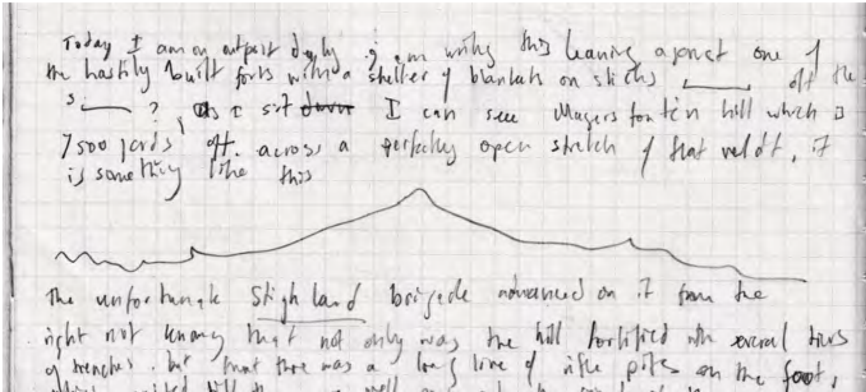
others, marking the ground with patterns of racial and gendered ownership and dispossession, imposing a colonial order on the landscapes and the bodies in the frame. The telegraph, the Biograph, and the stereograph become visible here as technologies of inscription as well as of information transmission. Films and stereographic cards both record the colonial war and travel back to the metropolitan centre, as do the telegraphic signals sent on a complex network of cables that would eventually contain the Boer guerilla forces as much as the block houses that punctuated British lines. The suffix "graph" situates these inscriptive technologies in relation to writing, to the mark, whether a registration with light on celluloid nitrate or silver gelatine, or an electromagnetic signal that generates a dot or a dash on the recieving end of a cable.

The handwritten letter diaries of Captain Clive Percy contain fascinating instances of hand-drawn maps. The map appears as something in excess of the letter, as if to supplement it, or substantiate and illustrate it; hence its role appears to be indexical, a trace of the landscape and geography of the battlefield. The place of the map in the body of the text is that of a mode of textuality that is in fact continuous with the spatial description and the narration of events that constitute the "presentness" of what the reader "views" as having happened, indeed as "happening". As such the texts are shot through with deictic markers and shifters in tense/temporality and position/space, so that the *there* and *then* become a *here* and *now* united in the place of the "map" as the seen or the possibility of seeing in the present tense, in a gesture by the text to the space and time of the event, witnessed in the present tense by the reader as a scene.

My own archival work makes visible this constitution of past and present as itself a form of re-inscription. Among my notes from the archival collection of Captain Clive Percy during his tour of the South African War is my transcription of a section of text and a sketch of the landscape (Fig. 8).[87] It is unusual that I am unable to find a corresponding photograph, as I am normally in the habit of visually documenting the hand-drawn maps and diagrams in the diaries. I wonder at the operation of my hand-drawing of Percy's drawing of the landscape instead of photographing it as a way to understand the gesture of drawing as continuous with writing. Percy writes: "I can see Magersfontein hill which is 1500 yards off across a perfectly open stretch of flat veldt, it is something like this …"

No punctuation follows the statement to preface the drawing, and the reader is placed in the field of view along with Percy by a type of false deixis. Hence, "I can see" becomes "you (the reader) can see" and "it looks" is articulated instead as "it is", while the qualification by analogy of the phrasing

87 Percy: Letter Book.



Today I am on outpost duty & am writing this leaning against one of
the hastily built forts with a shelter of blankets on sticks ___ off the
s___ ? as I sit ~~down~~ I can see Magersfontein hill which is
7500 yards off. across a perfectly open stretch of flat veldt, it
is something like this

The unfortunate Highland brigade advanced on it from the
right not knowing that not only was the hill fortified with several [illegible]
of trenches, but that there was a long line of rifle pits on the foot,
[illegible]

Fig. 8: Scan of author's archival notebook, 2017, transcribed from the letter diary of Capt. Clive Percy.

"something like" is treated as continuous with the line of the drawing itself. Thus, the line that traces the landscape emerges from the language without break, and the topographical trace is continuous with the words that situate the reader in the time and place of writing.

The act of writing often depends on pauses in the journey, and Percy encodes the place and time of writing as well as the circulation of the letter into the letter itself. "I have just been provided with this piece of paper in the middle of the veldt, so I will try to write you a letter on it by the post which goes tonight […]"; and in another instance: "Post just going. We have just got into camp at Doornfontein [illegible] – or some such place. Percy."[88] The inscription of the place of writing and Percy's own movement, and the completing and actual transmission of the letter are here included in the scene of writing: "the middle of the veldt", "or some such place". My impulse to draw rather than to photograph the line is indicative of an implicit recognition that certain processes of inscription are at play here which extend beyond a visual medium of reproduction such as photography, and are rather encoded in a continuity of diagrammatic forms and writing. It became intuitively more interesting to repeat the process of inscription in my own notebook, and hence to understand it as comparable to the operation of cinematic enunciation: "I", the writer, gestures to a "you" outside of the text, of the action of writing, which situates, even hails the addressee into relation with the scene of writing, once again inscribing the reader/viewer/writer in a singular field.

88 Ibid.

In a similar register, but without a map, Deneys Reitz's *Commando* contains a strikingly cinematic description:

> Two days after General Botha had ridden away, the storm broke upon us. As the sun rose, the sky-line from west to east was dotted with English horsemen riding in a line that stretched as far as the eye could see, and behind this screen every road was black with columns, guns and wagons, slowly moving forward on the first great drive of the war.[89]

Commando was written three years after the war and published several years later, in both English and Afrikaans. Reitz, son of the former president of the Free State Republic, an educated, well-travelled member of a Boer elite, was nineteen years old on entering the war. The "first great drive of the war" that he refers to is located in the period of Britain's "scorched earth" policy, and the columns witnessed by Reitz will begin the burning of farmhouses and the internment of the population of Boer women and children, as well as indigenous African and mixed-race populations caught between British and Afrikaaner conflict.

Reitz's description of the "screen" of mounted cavalry, a line that stretched from west to east, forms for the contemporary reader a picture of a total war, waged not only between enemy armies but on the entire population, such that the slow forward movement marks the landscape itself with the violence of fire. This is already an occupied space, marked by the violence of the Afrikaaners' own dispossession of the indigenous African tribes, nomadic and settled, who were moved off ancestral land or coerced from nomadic life to become labourers on white-owned farms.

The affective power of this image of the operations of war, the "columns, guns and wagons" that blacken the roads with the dust that precedes them (and the smoke of the fires that trail them) is one that fits easily into a cinematic register for a contemporary reader. I am not however arguing that Reitz's writing was influenced by film, even if he may have been exposed to the medium of film in the form of travelling cinematic exhibitions touring South Africa in the late 1890s. I am instead trying to place two registers of movement alongside one another, one belonging to the early actuality film, and the other to a more generalised shift in the visual imagination of the observing subject in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. What is cinematic about this image in which the operations of war are made visible is perhaps akin to a spatial, cartographic, or even geographic visuality, where the movements of troops, the position of the sun, the east-west axis of the cavalry function in an analogously diagrammatic form, easily translatable as a line drawing, or echoing the arrangement of planes in a stereographic image or Biographic film. A kind of

89 Reitz: *Commando*, 117.

arranged disarrangement is evident, in which the phrase "behind this screen" maps a series of spatial positionalities within an almost limitless field.

Solomon T. Plaatje, a writer and political activist from the Barolong people, worked as court translator for British-occupied Mafeking during the protracted and cruel six-month siege. The only black subject to write a full account of his experience of the South African war, albeit one edited and published long after his death, Plaatje left a diary that is astonishingly detailed and moving, marked by his descriptions of the pointless deaths of civilians in the town, and the starvation of men, dogs, and horses. Plaatje's experience, unlike that of Reitz, Percy, and Dickson who typify the mobile, white masculinities of the colonial period, is marked by stillness and immobility, by waiting and repetition. Each day, Plaatje is forced to walk the treacherous distance between the Barolong township where he lives to the neatly planned grid of the town where he works for the British, exposed at any moment to potential cannon fire from the Boer positions surrounding the area.

At one point, Plaatje describes how a young Barolong scout returns from behind Boer lines with information he then translates for the British soldiers into a kind of impermanent map: "He made an earthen plan of the big gun fort – with sand and pieces of wood showing the position of the tents, waggons, and horses in it, and also the action of the big gun – so clearly that the Colonel came to study it."[90] This crude mapping by the young indigenous scout resonates with the diagram discussed at the start of this essay, which maps out the potential transmission of a telegraphic signal between the three posts outside the Transvaal Republic capital. This field of potential signals can be folded into the field of potential action mapped out on the ground, where both inscribe relations of forces and positions into the ground itself, marking a territory that resonates across these textualities of movement, transmission, and journeying. Likewise, the cinematic enunciation of the Biographic film of the BATTLE OF SPIONKOP hails the viewer into an imaginary place behind the camera, marked by a distance from the errant gazes of the soldiers stationed on the trench line, as their proxies, who rebelliously turn away from the scene towards the camera. This distance to the seen/scene is again inscribed into the adjustment of the focal length of the stereoscope, so that the viewer's binocular vision transforms the twin image into the stereoscopic illusion: the exact depth needed to hold our attention.

This echoes Edith Tóth's discussion of Benjamin's concept of "Spielraum", where Benjamin makes the observation that the cinematic experience collapses the distinction between "image-space" and "body-space" into a

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90 Plaatje: *The Mafeking Diary of Solomon T. Plaatje*, 94.

singular field, the cinematic equivalent of the haptic rupture of the optical plane by the stereoscope.[91] In each of these case studies, the cinematic and cartographic technological assemblage invokes a recognisable distribution of the sensible, one that inscribes the metropolitan and modern spectator, reader, and viewer into a visual field of attention, a position of neutral, yet mobile observation and pleasurable consumption that they have been training their perception for. The legibility of this field is contingent on their assuming a place within a variable series of enunciative arrangements structured by a colonial order of information.

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91 See Edit Tóth: Capturing Modernity. Jazz, Film and Moholy-Nagy's *Light Prop for an Electric Stage*. *Modernism/Modernity* 22/1 (2015), 23–55, here 24; and Walter Benjamin: The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility [Second Version], trans. by Edmund Jephcott / Harry Zohn. In: Michael W. Jennings / Brigid Doherty / Thomas Y. Levin (eds.): *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings*. Cambridge, MA 2008, 19–55.

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A Saturn State of Mind: PATIENCE (AFTER SEBALD)

Eileen Rositzka

> Several times I was forced to retrace long stretches in that bewildering terrain [...]. In the end I was overcome by a feeling of panic. The low, leaden sky; the sickly violet hue of the heath clouding the eye; the silence, which rushed in the ears like the sound of the sea in a shell; the flies buzzing about me – all this became oppressive and unnerving. I cannot say how long I walked about in that state of mind, or how I found a way out. (W. G. Sebald)[1]

Sebald speaks to me. I find the idea of being in a "state of mind" somewhat unsettling. It makes the mind sound like an enclosure and every further thought like an encroachment – at least when "state" is understood in territorial terms. As a condition, a state seems to be more abstract and multifaceted, but still confining. A prison for thoughts and feelings. Reading *The Rings of Saturn*, I was certainly captivated, but by curiosity. I wanted to find out more: where was this going, how would it relate to something I had read twenty pages earlier, and how could my own thoughts and experiences fit into this picture? I kept asking these questions without necessarily expecting an answer; I seemed to find comfort in the convenience of tagging along with the narrator, being allowed to zone out every now and then. I was certain that I would find my way back in. I was making (up) my own (state of) mind.

Years before I got around to reading Sebald, I had watched an essay film about *The Rings of Saturn* – I had heard that Grant Gee's PATIENCE (AFTER SEBALD) (UK 2012) revolved around maps, and I was preparing a seminar on "Cartographic Cinema". Not knowing Sebald's book, I was intrigued by the film's sheer mobility, how it used the novel as an anchor to develop a sense of place around personal and collective memory. Revisiting the film later, I wanted to identify more direct connections between the book and its cinematic counterpart, eager to re-map my experience of the text onto the images I saw. But the film taught me otherwise, as did a quote in a filmed interview in PATIENCE from Robert Macfarlane, who describes his own re-enactment of the walk outlined in *The Rings of Saturn* as a refusal of this pilgrimage to conform to his idea of what the walk should have been: "I couldn't be there, it was a completely bad fit between 'footstepper' and 'footsteppee'."

1 W. G. Sebald: *The Rings of Saturn*, trans. by Michael Hulse. New York 2016, 172.

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Sebald's walk, the one that he undertook to write his book as well as the book's own walk, could not be reproduced. So I realised that any such endeavour could not just be about matching personal impressions with literary expressions. My act of mapping, this attempt to re-enact and revisit *The Rings of Saturn*, was instead about discovering discrepancies, incongruities, while finding new links and making associations through texts and audiovisual images. And if this was the key to unlocking the film, then that insight prompted me to think about the topological dimensions of cinematic experience, about cinema's own open forms, enclosed environments, and intertextual relations.

We will see in this essay how much both *The Rings of Saturn* and Gee's essayistic reflection on the novel's ramified imagery reveal about interlocking media cultures in general. To my mind, however, re-mapping Sebald through Patience can also serve as an analytical approach to mapping in general as cinematic thinking. Building on this assumption, the crucial question for this chapter would not only be how an essay film like Patience "re-thinks" its source text, Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn*, but also how this thinking process is made transparent to the spectator. And what is more: how is Sebald's own meandering thinking translated into the medium of film: a medium that he himself already "reinvents" through his writing?

Mapping Sebald

Perhaps like no other modern novelist, W. G. Sebald has been credited with a particular ability to trace cartographies of both subjective and collective memory in his writing. Many critical writings on Sebald's oeuvre are specifically concerned with his "poetics of travel",[2] whether this be his crafting of "traumatized spaces",[3] or the "spectral geographies"[4] and "pathographies"[5] that traverse works like *Austerlitz* (2001), *The Emigrants* (1992), and *Vertigo* (1990). Unsurprisingly then, "mapping" has become a key term used to describe the

2 See Markus Zisselsberger (ed.): *The Undiscover'd Country. W. G. Sebald and the Poetics of Travel*. Rochester, NY 2010.

3 See Judith Kasper: *Der Traumatisierte Raum. Insistenz, Inschrift, Montage bei Freud, Levi, Kertész, Sebald und Dante*. Berlin / Boston 2016.

4 See John Wylie: The Spectral Geographies of W. G. Sebald. *Cultural Geographies* 14/2 (2007), 171–188.

5 See Martin Klebes: Sebald's Pathographies. In: Scott Denham / Mark McCulloh (eds.): *W. G. Sebald. History, Memory, Trauma*. Berlin / Boston 2006, 65–75.

author's method of interweaving historical networks with often melancholic musings on restlessness, exile, (human) nature and its destruction.[6] And these features of Sebald's work have most centrally been discussed with regard to his *The Rings of Saturn*, a book about a narrator (Sebald's literal doppelgänger) who undertakes an extensive walk along the Southeastern Coast of England and across the Suffolk countryside, and lets his mind wander through seemingly unrelated fragments of the past that are interlinked by means of recurring motifs.

In this prose work from 1995, which Sebald originally published in German, he explores "the epistemological implications of the act of walking through and writing about landscapes, of collecting images and stories and writing them into a mappable topography".[7] The work expresses a pervasive unease about the connectedness of things and their inevitable disintegration, and about combustion as "the hidden principle behind every artefact we create".[8] This general tone and sentiment could be interpreted as simply testifying to the fundamental reflectiveness of human life through which "man's relation to things is crossed with borders, articulated within a matrix of representations that position him, qua subject, over against the world".[9] But Sebald's topographical impetus also highlights other significant aspects of mapping as both thinking and embodied experience. As associative as it is unresolved, his technique of assembling thoughts into a montage of images, words, and feelings (which many literary scholars have investigated under the conceptual banner of *bricolage*) circumvents the possibility of drawing unequivocal meanings from his stories. Fictional texts are generally open to interpretation; but the volatility of Sebald's narration becomes explicit through motifs that themselves express a profound sense of porosity and fragility. Silk for instance becomes in the work the connecting and separating thread linking Thomas Browne (the son of a silk merchant), interlocking histories of domestic silkworm cultivation in Imperial China, and Nazi Germany's special interest in sericulture. Dust and sand similarly figure as

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6 Examples include Jonathan White: Mental Travel and Memory Mapping in Sebald's Work. *CLCWeb – Comparative Literature and Culture* 14/5 (2012), 1–9. https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol14/iss5/18/ (last accessed 28 February 2021). See also Jessica Dubow / Richard Steadman-Jones: Mapping Babel. Language and Exile in W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*. *New German Critique* 39/1 (2012), 3–26.

7 David Darby: Landscape and Memory. Sebald's Redemption of History. In: Scott Denham / Mark McCulloh (eds.): *W. G. Sebald. History, Memory, Trauma*. Berlin / Boston 2006, 265–277, here 265.

8 Sebald: *The Rings of Saturn*, 220.

9 Eric L. Santner: *On Creaturely Life. Rilke, Benjamin, Sebald*. Chicago / London 2006, 1–2.

vectors that carry the reader from the beaches of Dunwich to the dunes of the Baltic coast, from Flaubert to Napoleon and the Battle of Waterloo.

According to the critic David Darby, "All of the patterns woven in the text are provisional. [...] [T]here is always the possibility that one may be holding the wrong thread, and there is always the possibility of a daily undoing of what has been woven the day before."[10] Sebald himself uses the metaphor of the rings of Saturn to evoke a narrational act of collecting the shattered remains of a moon that orbits Saturn like broken bits of European history. The fragments become dust particles that fly through Sebald's cosmos and are brought into the narrative constellation of an omnipresent apocalypse.[11] Sebald is fascinated by "particularities", that is, substances made of countless fragments on the one hand, and peculiar biographical vignettes on the other. In what Tanja Michalsky has termed Sebald's "memory fabrics", he probes the scale and construction principles of memory, demonstrating its intermediary position between personal recollection and historical experience, but also exposing the mediality and fictionality of remembrance.[12] Memory, notes Michalsky, needs signs, but it also requires subjects that perform the act of remembering – so the rhetorical figure of ekphrasis comes to define the core of Sebald's writing: a constructive process on the part of the narrator and reader which essentially calls for visual imagination.

The specific intermediality of Sebald's writing – his numerous references to other cultural figures and texts, the use of photographs which always spawn diverse associations but never serve as illustrations – has inspired several scholarly pieces on his affinity for the visual arts. While Michalsky is concerned with the mnemonic spaces that open up between Sebald's images, Elizabeth Chaplin elaborates how his texts resist the convention of captioning, thereby "releasing" the photographic images Sebald embeds into them.[13] Amir Eshel characterises the reader's relation to Sebald's narrative as a mode of spectatorship in which the placement of an image suspends the reading process and

10 Darby: Landscape and Memory, 273.

11 This is how Dominik Finkelde describes Sebald's poetics of (re)collection. The original text is in German, translation mine. See Dominik Finkelde: Wunderkammer und Apokalypse. Zu W. G. Sebalds Poetik des Sammelns zwischen Barock und Moderne. *German Life and Letters* 60/4 (2007), 554–568, here 555.

12 Tanja Michalsky: Zwischen den Bildern. W. G. Sebalds Gewebe der Erinnerung. In: Peter Geimer / Michael Hagner (eds.): *Nachleben und Rekonstruktion. Vergangenheit im Bild*. Paderborn / Munich 2012, 251–275, here 251.

13 See Elizabeth Chaplin: The Convention of Captioning. W. G. Sebald and the Release of the Captive Image. *Visual Studies* 21/1 (2006), 42–53.

entails a change in perceptual and temporal registers. With regard to *Austerlitz*, Eshel writes:

> The placement of the visual image [...] defers any immediate progression in the text: The attentive reader will stop, try to decode the image, to connect it to what was just told, to detect its details and relate it to other images in the book. [...] Sebald's images relate the spectator to temporality – they make one aware of both the *now* that is frozen in the image and the *now* of spectatorship, of the reading process. [...] Once the book has caught the reader in paragraph-long sentences, in the narrative's tendency to dissolve in detours and distractions, in the mysteries of the never to be fully depicted or understood past, the time of reading itself becomes an element of the narrative's temporal fabric.[14]

The "*now* of spectatorship", the "temporal fabric" that Eshel describes renders Sebald's style "cinematic" in that it qualifies as a form of montage, or, more precisely, as a "rhythmic editing" which subverts the "realistic" ontology of photographic images and destabilises genre boundaries.[15] In a similar vein, Thomas Elsaesser argues that the meandering narratives of *The Rings of Saturn* and *Austerlitz* "are neither novels nor travelogues, neither memoirs nor scholarly treatises on obscure topics, and yet they are also all of the above". Elsaesser reads Sebald's "many acts of camouflage and disguise" as testifying

> to the difficult task of finding a silent presence and a floating tense for his first-person narrators that transforms them into listeners: qualified to speak authentically about the 'pain of others' and to do so in images, which have the power to make the reader also into a viewer [...].[16]

Thus, while other scholars have mainly analysed Sebald's occasional references to film and cinematic experience in terms of their narrative function – as simply playing into the author's memory work[17] – Elsaesser sees Sebald as a writer who "profoundly reflects the cinematic imaginary, in part because he remained so resolutely outside the cinema in his life".[18]

The impossibility of assigning clearly defined genre labels to a work like *The Rings of Saturn* or *Austerlitz* makes Elsaesser opt for another cinematic link.

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14 Amir Eshel: Against the Power of Time. The Poetics of Suspension in W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*. *New German Critique* 88 (2003), 71–96, here 94.

15 Mattias Frey: Theorizing Cinema in Sebald and Sebald with Cinema. In: Lise Patt / Christel Dillbohner (eds.): *Searching for Sebald. Photography After W. G. Sebald*. Los Angeles 2007, 226–241, here 236–237.

16 Thomas Elsaesser: The Essay Film. From Film Festival Favorite to Flexible Commodity Form? In: Nora M. Alter / Timothy Corrigan (eds.): *Essays on the Essay Film*. New York 2017, 240–258, here 248.

17 See for instance Klaus Bonn: W. G. Sebalds laufende Bilder. Der Film und die Worte. *Arcadia* 42/1 (2007), 166–184.

18 Elsaesser: The Essay Film, 248.

Noting how Sebald uses photographs and postcards to connect with his novels' readership, Elsaesser suggests: "Neither illustrating the text, nor separating themselves entirely from it, they invite the chance encounters and sudden discoveries between text and image that are also the hallmark of so many essay films."[19] There is indeed a conspicuous affinity between Sebalds text-image compositions and forms of expression whose stylistic essence is their constitutive reflectiveness and subjectivity. Sebald's way of picking up threads and historical fragments corresponds to what Georg Lukács once ascribed to the written essay as a form of critique and art: it always speaks of things that have already been formed, that have been "alive before", and puts them into a new order.[20]

However, according to Lukács, the essay form does not inquire into things themselves, but only their relations.[21] Theodor W. Adorno objected to the essay's status as an art form; but he also insisted on the essay's anachronistic referentiality – one that by means of language would generate something which could not be translated back into its former state, an intellectual experience driving the essay "beyond itself":

> Not less but more than a definitional procedure, the essay presses for the reciprocal interaction of its concepts in the process of intellectual experience. In such experience, concepts do not form a continuum of operations. Thought does not progress in a single direction; instead, the moments are interwoven as in a carpet. The fruitfulness of the thoughts depends on the density of the texture. The thinker does not actually think but rather makes himself into an arena for intellectual experience, without unraveling it.[22]

Seen in this light, the essay's cardinal method would be to articulate the author's own thinking as an open and unmethodical process, inviting the reader to then join their arena of subjective (intellectual) experience – an arena in which the process of reflecting and judging would be more significant than any judgment.[23] In order to follow this principle, a cinematic essay or essay film would have to foreground the presence of an enunciating subject that inhabits the text, for instance a reflective and structuring "I" embodied in a narrator. This "I" however implicates a "you" that is not a generic audience. As Laura Rascaroli argues in respect of the essay film, the "you" that is called upon to

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19 Ibid.

20 Georg Lukács: Über Wesen und Form des Essays [1910]. In: *Deutsche Essays. Prosa aus zwei Jahrhunderten. Vol. 1: Essays avant la lettre*. Munich 1972, 27–47, here 38.

21 See ibid., 32.

22 Theodor W. Adorno: The Essay as Form [Der Essay als Form, 1958]. In: Nora M. Alter / Timothy Corrigan (eds.): *Essays on the Essay Film*. New York 2017, 60–82, here 70.

23 See Lukács: Über Wesen und Form des Essays, 47.

participate and share the enunciator's reflections is also an *embodied* spectator that engages individually with the film, one that is not being guided through emotional and intellectual responses, but intrigued and interrogated by the essay's rhetoric of opening up problems.[24]

The essay film is certainly the most explicit vehicle for cinematic thinking: With a particular emphasis on the performativity of language, it actually "thinks out loud" when verbalising an enunciating subject's process of thinking in and through audiovisual images. But even if the film seems to set a definite course for its central argument, it facilitates discrepancies and frictions between what is being simultaneously said and shown, opening up contradictory perceptions and interpretations on the part of the spectator. In the process, it fabricates specific expressive patterns and staging strategies that (in and of themselves and in their succession) follow a calculation to affect the spectator – something we might call "affect dramaturgy".[25] Seen in this way, the essay film represents a multimodal (and multiperspectival) force field of experimentation and idiosyncrasy that makes use of all the means that the cinema affords, all its registers and all its expedients.[26]

Essayistic Filmmaking and/as Cinematic Thinking

Essay films are often associated with directors like Alain Resnais, Chris Marker, Harun Farocki, or Agnès Varda: auteurs who blur the lines between documentary and experimental filmmaking and are inspired by (or adopt a playful approach to) the history of literature, philosophy, and art, thereby raising questions about "the relationship of the subject to the world and the aesthetic possibilities of cinema".[27] From a historical perspective, the close affiliation between essay and film stems not only from the film medium's own critical interest in the interdependencies of various art forms, but from the (debatable) understanding of film

24 See Laura Rascaroli: The Essay Film. Problems, Definitions, Textual Commitments. In: Nora M. Alter / Timothy Corrigan (eds.): *Essays on the Essay Film*. New York 2017, 183–196, here 185.

25 Hermann Kappelhoff: *The Politics and Poetics of Cinematic Realism*. New York 2015, 17.

26 Here, Laura Rascaroli also refers to Edgar Morin, who reads the essay film as testifying to someone's attempt to debate a problem. See Rascaroli: The Essay Film, 190; Morin quoted in Giovanni Maderna: Film saggio. Intervista a Edgar Morin. In: Silvano Cavatorta / Luca Mosso (eds.): *Filmmaker 5 doc*. Milan 1996, 4.

27 Elizabeth A. Papazian / Caroline Eades: Introduction. Dialogue, Politics, Utopia. In: id. (eds.): *The Essay Film. Dialogue, Politics, Utopia*. London / New York 2016, 1–11, here 1.

as text propagated in the 1970s by such film scholars as Raymond Bellour. Bellour refers to film as a material object; but he also ascribes other meanings to film as "text", speaking on a second level of film as language, and on a third, as a methodological field, or, as Cristina Álvarez López and Adrian Martin elaborate, a "a weave of signifying processes, a cultural miasma of potentiality [...] above and beyond any single, empirical text-object".[28]

For my own purposes, this latter dimension is the most interesting. Considering film as a cultural practice of intermediality and intertextual referentiality enables – especially in light of the increasing (albeit immaterial) accessibility of audiovisual images via digital distribution platforms – concrete reflections on cinematic discursivity, i. e., on critical and analytical approaches to moving images through the medium of film itself. Here one might think of video art and audiovisual essays, which translate the process of thinking about cinematic images into new audiovisual composites. In this regard, Bellour's idea of film as text(s) is still relevant insofar as it inquires into the "attainability" of cinematic images, their mutual appropriations and ramifications as well as their significance to the cinephile viewer and analytic. But the term "text" is undoubtedly also misleading in that it seems to render films as documents to be read, stored, and interpreted. After all, not even essayistic form makes a film a piece of literature. Rather, what is textual about audiovisual images (apart from their occasional use of written words) is their overall *texture*, their fabric of moving images and sounds woven together to evoke or defy meaning. Bellour himself indeed, in a recent revision of his mid-70s essay on cinephilia, puts the word "text" in quotation marks. He writes:

> [I]t is quite simple, in approaching a literary text, to draw fragments of the studied work into the thread of one's own commentary, easily incorporated into the new text elaborated on the basis of the source text, in an endless accumulation. By contrast, we cannot cite, in the same way, this composite of images, music, sounds, and speech which is a film. Only, literally, its dialogues, intertitles, or voice-over commentaries. But the amazing thing is that, of all the arts, cinema is the only one to push this paradox of quotability and unquotability to such an extreme.[29]

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28 Cristina Álvarez López / Adrian Martin: To Attain the Text. But Which Text? In: Julia Vassilieva / Deane Williams (eds.): *Beyond the Essay Film. Subjectivity, Textuality and Technology*. Amsterdam 2020, 49–74, here 51.

29 Raymond Bellour: 35 Years On. Is the "Text", Once Again, Unattainable? In: Julia Vassilieva / Deane Williams (eds.): *Beyond the Essay Film. Subjectivity, Textuality, and Technology*. Amsterdam 2020, 33–48, here 33–34.

Bellour here emphasises that while the material of a film is forever fixed on some kind of carrier medium, its space-time form remains impossible to capture. This not only describes one of film's constitutive paradoxes but also explains its affinity for the essayistic. Film stimulates a play on and with elusiveness and ultimate incompleteness. And essay films in particular, in their simultaneously reciprocal and antagonistic relationships with textual forms such as written essays, prose, or poetry, rely on the one hand on these texts' possible ambiguities and poetic pathways in order to work as an instrument of experimental thinking. At the same time, "the cinematic mode of expression reshapes and purifies the very textual forms that provided a grid for the essay film in the first place"[30].

Mapping Out Cinematic Relations

In order to better grasp the transposition manoeuvres that the essay film effects, we need to take a step back and get a theoretical idea of cinematic thinking. Amongst the many film philosophers who have defined cinematic perception and sense-making in terms of "thinking images" one might include Soviet montage theorists such as Sergei Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov, poststructuralist thinkers like Gilles Deleuze, or representatives of neo-phenomenological film theory, for example Vivian Sobchack. In some cases, the connection made by such writers between film and thinking reads as an almost coincidental rhetorical aside, for instance when Antonin Artaud, reflecting on one of his film scenarios, argues that it does not set out to tell a story, but develop "a sequence of states of mind deduced the one from the other, as thought is deduced from thought without this thought reproducing the reasonable sequence of facts".[31] What Artaud came to discuss as cinema's rootedness in abstract thought has more recently been further developed into ways of thinking cinema *through* cinema and its predecessors. Deleuze's writings on cinema have been the most influential in this regard. Deleuze not only defines different types of cinematic images according to their sensory-motor qualities (and their specific significance for film history); he also expands the media-theoretical realm by approaching film as a philosophical practice standing in a line of tradition with approaches to "thinking" itself.

In his book on Deleuze's work on film, D. N. Rodowick elucidates how for Deleuze there is no thinking other than thinking through images, signs, and

30 Julia Vassilieva / Deane Williams: Introduction. In: id. (eds.): *Beyond the Essay Film. Subjectivity, Textuality, and Technology*. Amsterdam 2020, 11–32, here 23.

31 Antonin Artaud: *Collected Works. Vol. 3*, trans. by Alastair Hamilton. London 1972, 61.

concepts.[32] This implies that the process of thinking is no self-determining automatism but needs to be set and held in motion by a movement that "'forces' us to think". Such movement, according to Deleuze, "is the essence of cinema as defined by the time-image" –[33] which in turn implies a shift in perspective when it comes to film's spatiotemporal referentiality and relationality. In *Cinema 2*, Deleuze writes:

> This is what happens when the image becomes time-image. The world has become memory, brain [...]. The screen itself is the cerebral membrane where immediate and direct confrontations take place between the past and the future, the inside and the outside, at a distance impossible to determine, independent of any fixed point [...]. The image no longer has space and movement as its primary characteristics but topology and time.[34]

Based on this claim, Rodowick proposes a possible Deleuzian definition of cinematic thinking as a differential, discontinuous, and nonchronological process, or in short: as difference in time. This conception calls on works of both art and philosophy to "construct cartographies of time and memory, to map out the multiple and discontinuous relations between regions of the past and the passing present from a point of view on, rather than in, their division".[35] Rodowick's choice of language is telling. Referencing a dominant semantic field in Deleuze's philosophical work, he translates the relation of (cinematic) thinking with time into topological and topographical metaphors. But rather than aiming at an unshiftable perspectivisation of time and space, these metaphors describe a dynamic mapping process which works against the representation of fixed objects and materialities, encompassing instead a multiplicity of possible relations whose meaning emerges from ever new connections and interactions. This condition applies to the ontological dimension of film, its "inner world" of material relations and expressivities, as much as it points to the spectator's position, and to the situatedness of cinematic experience within the context and structural set-up of a specific media environment. This *mediascape*, an optical-environmental arrangement or *assemblage* that elicits a sensorial intensity through spatial deprivation, provides – once established – a persistent framework within which the spectator can negotiate reality.[36]

32 See D. N. Rodowick: *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine*. Durham 1997, 6.
33 Ibid., 189.
34 Gilles Deleuze: *Cinema 2. The Time-Image* [1985], trans. by Hugh Tomlinson / Robert Galeta. Minneapolis 1989, 125.
35 Rodowick: *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine*, 231.
36 See Francesco Casetti: Primal Screens. In: Craig Buckley / Rüdiger Campe / Francesco Casetti (eds.): *Screen Genealogies. From Optical Device to Environmental Medium*. Amsterdam 2019, 27–50, here 32.

Such a space of mediation, which Francesco Casetti considers an essential condition for cinema's "projection/protection complex",[37] implies a temporary suspension of immediate interaction with the world, and its re-activation through other means. Understood as an assemblage, that is, as a coalescence and interplay of components, the cinematic dispositif is therefore one of "becoming": its constituents can be re-drawn and re-defined, always ready to yield room to another assemblage.[38] This openness to change is what Lorenz Engell emphasises when he speaks of so-called "modern films" as self-reflexive and continuously transforming arrangements of signs that make all subjects and objects dissolve into pure relations.[39] These signs allow for the development of mental processes by linking materialities within a pro-filmic reality to specifically cinematic materialities.[40] Seen in this way, mental processes become forms of thinking and thought that are "immanent to the image".[41]

This raises the further question as to whether cinema here is conceived as a self-operating *thinking machine*, or whether we as spectators think *with* and *through* cinema. The answer, of course, is: both. Cinematic images are both products of thinking and prompts to spectators to think. Just as much as "to think is to create",[42] as Deleuze notes, the meaning of audiovisual movement-images resides in their relation to other images and concepts, as well as in the creation of subjectivities and sensibilities brought about by the spectator's cognitive and affective engagement.[43] Reception turns in this account into a form of production aiming at the appropriation of audiovisual images and creating

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37 Taken from an online talk given by Francesco Casetti: The Projection/Protection Complex. Screens, Enclosures, Bubbles. Centre for Advanced Studies in Cognitive Neuroscience & the Humanities, Università di Parma (19 February 2021). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VMweZjNiqQ4 (last accessed 21 February 2021).

38 Casetti: Primal Screens, 35.

39 Lorenz Engell: *Bilder des Wandels*. Weimar 2003, 10–11.

40 See ibid., 12.

41 Deleuze: *Cinema 2*, 173.

42 Gilles Deleuze: *Difference and Repetition* [1968], trans. by Paul Patton. London / New York 2001, 147.

43 For Vivian Sobchack, this is mainly about perspective as "an implication of vision with the body in its material relation to the world". Vivian Sobchack: *The Address of the Eye. A Phenomenology of Film Experience*. Princeton, NJ 1992, 95. Drawing on Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Sobchack regards film as a medium of human communication that makes itself sensuously and sensibly manifest as "the expression of experience by experience", as "an act of seeing that makes itself seen, an act of hearing that makes itself heard, an act of physical and reflective movement that makes itself reflexively felt and understood". Ibid., 3–4.

"subjectivity effects", in what can be called a *poiesis* of film-viewing:[44] Rather than being about repeatedly decoding and reproducing a film's (narrative) structure of meaning, film reception becomes a "making" in which sense is generated in the very process of media consumption. Spectators filter into the movement of audiovisual images, allowing their innermost thoughts and feelings to emerge from this entanglement: that is, they create an aesthetic space of their own sensibility.[45]

This account resonates with Sobchack's approach to embodied film-viewing when she writes that "human vision can reflexively turn in on itself": it is a reflexive intentional movement that *makes* the world visible, an act of reflection that *makes* the subjective body aware of itself as the *body-subject who sees*.[46] As Hermann Kappelhoff further elaborates, this *poiesis* also facilitates a discourse of filmic images as a socially, culturally, and historically situated mode of cinematic thinking.[47] From this perspective, the history of cinematic images can be conceived as a permanent reconfiguration of the spatiotemporal coordinates to which we orient our perception of the world.[48] And if cinema is a zero-point from which to discover the world anew,[49] this implies a re-mapping and re-thinking of our relations with time, memory, texts, and (audiovisual) images.

Precisely such a dynamic array of connections and loose threads is laid out already in Sebald's writing. This is why his books not only themselves exhibit cinematic qualities; more than this, Sebald adaptations (as "weaves of signifying processes") tend to operate on another meta-reflexive level: one could even say that through their essayistic form and mode of address, they perform a remapping of cinematic thinking.

Thinking Through PATIENCE

Sebald's writing has influenced the making of several documentary films, among them Stan Neumann's AUSTERLITZ (F 2015), featuring French actor Denis Lavant, which adapts the narrative and meta-fictional techniques of Sebald's

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44 Hermann Kappelhoff: *Kognition und Reflexion. Zur Theorie filmischen Denkens*. Berlin / Boston 2018, 12.
45 Ibid.
46 Sobchack: *The Adress of the Eye*, 97–98.
47 See Kappelhoff: *Kognition und Reflexion*, 14.
48 See ibid., 17.
49 A phrase Casetti used in his talk: The Projection/Protection Complex.

homonymous book in order to portray its sense of (memory) loss and desolation. Another film, AUSTERLITZ (D 2016) by director Sergei Loznitsa, shows concentration camps being exposed to an empty touristic gaze and comments in so doing on modern society's loss of historical consciousness. While Neumann's AUSTERLITZ foregrounds Lavant's presence and performance as a Sebaldian flaneur and narrator who addresses his audience by permanently breaking the fourth wall, Loznitsa relies on relatively static image tableaus that reveal the act of seeing as one of looking away.

In the rest of this chapter, however, I will be focusing on an earlier essay film: one centring on *The Rings of Saturn* (although its title again refers to *Austerlitz*[50]). Grant Gee's PATIENCE (AFTER SEBALD) seems to present itself much more than other film essays as an explicit homage to Sebald. Several of Sebald's contemporaries, as well as experts on and admirers of his work, add their voices to a film that Elsaesser calls "a peripatetic re-enactment"[51] of the book. Upon closer viewing, however, and bearing in mind that Sebald's writing itself is already profoundly peripatetic, the film can be seen to do something more than pay homage to Sebald. Though certainly a guide to Sebald's methods, as well as a geographical picture of the narrator's Suffolk walk,[52] PATIENCE can also be considered a "deep map" of cinematic exploration[53] itself. The film resembles a topological and relational network, a multimedia ensemble of places, impressions, and stories embedded into quotidian rhythms and historical rifts – always hovering between matter

50 "Austerlitz told me that he sometimes sat here for hours, laying out these photographs or others from his collection the wrong way up, as if playing a game of patience, and that then one by one, he turned them over, always with a new sense of surprise at what he saw, pushing the pictures back and forth and over each other, arranging them in an order depending on their family resemblances, or withdrawing them from the game until either there was nothing left but the grey tabletop, or he felt exhausted from the constant effort of thinking and remembering and had to rest on the ottoman." Mark Fisher: PATIENCE (AFTER SEBALD): under the Sign of Saturn. *Sight and Sound* (April 2011). https://www2.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/features/patience-after-sebald-under-sign-saturn (last accessed 28 February 2021).
51 Lucia Dove: Film History as Media Archaeology. An Interview with Thomas Elsaesser and Vladimir Lukin. *Amsterdam University Press, Articles* (7 August 2018). https://www.aup.nl/en/articles/film-history-as-media-archaeology-an-interview-with-thomas-elsaesser-and (last accessed 28 February 2021).
52 See A. O. Scott: Movie Review. A Writer Who Defied Categorization. *The New York Times* (8 May 2012). https://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/09/movies/patience-after-sebald-a-documentary.html (last accessed 28 February 2021).
53 Taien Ng-Chan: Mapping out *Patience*. Cartography, Cinema and W. G. Sebald. *Humanities* 4 (2015), 554–568, here 555.

and meaning.[54] Similarly, we could speak of Gee's film as creating "thick time" in its capacity to put multiple temporalities and scales within a single frame, to "thicken" the present of viewing with an awareness of other times and places.[55]

The film begins with a Google Earth map of the world, before moving quickly to focus on Western Europe. We see numerous lines stretching from England to points on and beyond the visible section of the map that form a complex net of not yet assignable threads. As it later turns out, this image is – quite literally, and at the same time ironically – an abstract bird's eye view of Suffolk, as is intimated by the chirping birds we hear on the soundtrack. However, there is no matching photographic image, no landscape to which we might relate as the scale of the map gradually changes and we zoom in on the city of Norwich. There is an occasional swishing sound of passing (yet invisible) cars and the familiar rumbling noise we know from busy station platforms, where trains are welcomed or sent on their way by reverberant announcements and whistles. But instead of restless passengers or conductors, we now see the first pages of Sebald's *Rings of Saturn*, read out in sombre tones by actor Jonathan Pryce in voiceover, with train sounds still audible in the background:

> In August 1992, when the dog days were drawing to an end, I set off to walk the county of Suffolk, in the hope of dispelling the emptiness that takes hold of me whenever I have

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54 "A deep map is a finely detailed, multimedia depiction of a place and the people, animals, and objects that exist within it and are thus inseparable from the contours and rhythms of everyday life. Deep maps […] are, in short, positioned between matter and meaning. They are also topological and relational, revealing the ties that places have with each other and tracing their embeddedness in networks that span scales and range from the local to the global." From: David J. Bodenhammer / John Corrigan / Trevor M. Harris: Introduction. Deep Maps and the Spatial Humanities. In: id. (eds.): *Deep Maps and Spatial Narratives*. Bloomington / Indianapolis 2015, 1–6, here 3.

55 The term "thick time" was originally coined by Astrida Neimanis and Rachel Loewen Walker to describe the relationship between human bodies and climate change as a "transcorporeal stretching between present, future, and past", and with a "nonchronological durationality" (Astrida Neimanis / Rachel Loewen Walker: "Weathering". Climate Change and the "Thick Time" of Transcorporeality. *Hypatia* 29/3 (2014), 558–575, here 561). David Farrier later applied the concept to his study on Anthropocene Poetics: "Thick time refers to the lyric's capacity to put multiple temporalities and scales within a single frame" (David Farrier: *Anthropocene Poetics. Deep Time, Sacrifice Zones, and Extinction*. Minneapolis 2019, 9). Although neither Sebald's writing nor Gee's film could unquestioningly be filed under the category of ecological fiction or poetry, *The Rings of Saturn* does contain obvious connections between natural and human history, bound together by their own prospect of annihilation. More generally, both "deep time" and "thick time" suggest a historical depth, an accumulation of temporal layers that might help to conceptualise Sebald's poetics as filtered through PATIENCE.

> completed a long stint of work. And in fact my hope was realized, up to a point; for I have seldom felt so carefree as I did then, walking for hours in the day through the thinly populated countryside, which stretches inland from the coast. I wonder now, however, whether there might be something in the old superstition that certain ailments of the spirit and of the body are particularly likely to beset us under the sign of the Dog Star.

Upon Pryce's "I wonder now", a train finally does come into view, but it is filmed from a coach on the opposite platform, another train which is about to leave Norwich station. A few moments later, the text gets displaced by a musing piano (slightly muffled, as if played from an old record), and the film's title appears: PATIENCE (AFTER SEBALD) – a phrase then elucidated when the film is declared as "a walk through *The Rings of Saturn*".

While Gee's film might not appear overly sophisticated in terms of craft and style, it is worth noting how this brief exposition already simultaneously guides and misleads the spectator by means of (mis)matching perceptual coordinates. The Google map at the beginning seems to block our view of a landscape that is present on the level of sound and imagination but will never become part of the image; the train station, although partially perceptible on an aural and visual level, is pushed aside by the text presented to us in written form and transmitted through Pryce's voice. The appearance of (and voiceover reading from) the book's first page also marks the only moment in approximately two minutes when we actually get to see what we hear. In this first segment of PATIENCE, and just like the narrator's journey in the novel, the "walk" through *The Rings of Saturn* starts off as a train ride that toys with the idea of converging disparate "tracks" – cartographic trajectories, sound bites, and actual railroad tracks – into an image "beset" by thoughts, voices, and associations born out of the viewer's urge to make sense of each of these tracks. Where however is this taking us, and why are we following?

Although the relation of some frames in the film to Sebald's book becomes apparent through captions that label locations as places mentioned on a specific page, the voiceover also ventures out in the course of Gee's film to other corners of someone else's mind. As the train passes a factory in Cantley,[56] Robert Macfarlane, also a writer of walking narratives whose work concerns the inherent histories of places and landscapes, continues with a few biographical

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56 Following Sebald's original description in *The Rings of Saturn*, what we see here is Cantley's sugar beet factory. He writes: "Through Brundall, Buckenham and Cantley, where, at the end of a straight roadway, a sugar-beet refinery with a belching smokestack sits in a green field like a steamer at a wharf, the line follows the River Yare, till at Reedham it crosses the water and, in a wide curve, enters the vast flatland that stretches southeast down to the sea." Sebald: *The Rings of Saturn*, 39.

notes on Sebald. The transition from Norwich to Cantley is smoothed over by the camera's focus on similar industrial environments, while the contrast between Macfarlane's mentioning of Sebald's birthplace, an Alpine region in Bavaria, and these East Anglian sand heaps, silos, and warehouses could not be greater. Strangely, though, these structures still connect, allusively at least, to Macfarlane's commentary. His emphasis on transition and translation when he talks about Sebald's relocation from Germany to England articulates an idea of work and processuality that resonates with the general manufacturing mechanisms of a factory. Even the briefly glimpsed "self-storage" warehouse right outside Norwich station seems to foreshadow what Sebald's publisher, Christopher MacLehose, will say only a few moments later, namely that "Max" did not want to be put in a box, but rather, to be "in all the boxes" when categories were selected for the books he would subsequently write.

Gee now uses a split-screen technique to insert a small image square into the frame. Still aware of the black-and-white landscape in the background, we focus simultaneously on a coloured box into which our train from the previous sequence seems magically to have migrated. An unknown man leaves the carriage, walking towards Somerleyton, Sebald's first destination in *The Rings of Saturn*, while filming his own steps with a handheld camera. For a few seconds, a seemingly vertical movement is superimposed onto the horizontal movement of a camera that continues to pan across a landscape still figured in the superimposed frame. Only four minutes into the film, we are already lost, although (or perhaps precisely because) Gee has provided us with countless spatial cues. The overall temporal setting, too, remains unclear – indeed it will stay that way throughout the film.

From the outset, then, the film seems to fit quite neatly into a definition of the essayistic mode proposed by Paul Arthur. Comparing essay films with literary essays, Arthur claims that both tend to fracture epistemological unities of time and place as they segue between distinct styles, tones, or modes of address. Arthur adds that in general, "essays tend to blend several clashing time frames that layer what we think of as literary 'tenses'".[57] His use of quotation marks around "tenses" is as puzzling as it is accurate. Essays feed from subjective musings: thoughts on past, present, and future that range from personal memories to projective suggestions. Each different temporal frame calls for an adequate grammatical form to orient the reader within the essay's argumentative structure. Yet, "tenses" are more than just formal distinctions between

57 Paul Arthur: Essay Questions. From Alain Resnais to Michael Moore. *Film Comment* 39/1 (2003), 58–62, here 59.

verbs: they are aspectual; they also articulate distinct perspectives on that which is perceived. In film, tenses thus find their form in image types that either support or undo a certain temporal continuity. Those types might seem to lend themselves to classificatory systems relating to time and movement: for instance Deleuze's classification of the movement-image into three varieties (perception-image, action-image, and affection-image).

With regard to PATIENCE, however, there seems little value in such an approach. Is it even possible to talk of types and modes in this case, or should we rather turn our attention to the film's modulations and modifications of mediated perception, processed images, and image operations, that is, its various screen captures, scans, and navigations? Here, PATIENCE taps into what would today be declared the realm of videographic essays in that it also reflects on forms and practices of analytical thinking, presenting, dissecting, and rearranging its audiovisual images and the ways these images are used and consumed in different media environments. What could potentially have developed into a clearly distinguishable "grammatical" structure or chronology is thus thwarted by the film's ever accruing and dissolving relations. Its various media fragments, voiceover musings, walking vignettes, and landscape impressions find their sole anchoring in almost coincidental resonances of sense, and page numbers from *The Rings of Saturn* that frequently appear, apparently as a means of allowing the cinematic walk we take to "know its place" by referencing each image back to its literary source.

If we consider each layer of Gee's image composites a different tense, each one a different point of view or an expression of experience, all of them together do not necessarily serve the purpose of coherent representation; they do not make sense as one, as a simple accumulation of knowledge that has undergone a linear progression from beginning to end. Rather, each layer calls for the viewer's discrete attention and reflection, without granting any of these layers a privileged standpoint.[58] This presumed equality is accentuated by

58 Although one could assume that there is a privileged standpoint (the present, the self, etc.) from which the aspectual character of reality may be discerned, the lack thereof is neither a realist nor an anti-realist statement. In his extensive philosophical discussion of tense and reality, Kit Fine argues for taking the contents of all times to be equally real: "[P]resentness, in so far as it is a genuine feature of reality, applies equally to all times. Presentness is not frozen on a particular moment of time and the light it sheds is spread equitably throughout all time." (27) Fine also opts for a fragmentalist view, according to which "[c]ertain of the facts constituting reality will 'cohere' and some will not", and "reality will divide up into a number of different but possibly overlapping fragments" (20–21). Kit Fine: *Modality and Tense. Philosophical Papers*. Oxford / New York 2005.

various gestures, motifs, and movement qualities: image composites that render PATIENCE a multileveled thought construct in perpetual motion, so that some of the interviewees' statements seem to hang in mid-air as musings that push each other in and out of context, while alternating uneasily with uncommented archival footage (which may or may not be directly related to Sebald's text), or black-and-white images of landscapes and book pages. And there are maps and roads navigated by invisible travellers who never reach a final destination. Even when the film arrives at its concluding episode about the car accident that cost Sebald his life, which follows a mention of Ditchingham churchyard – the author's last stop on his Suffolk walk –, Sebald's presence simply "evaporates" into eternity. The cloud of smoke on a photograph that slowly blends into a picture of his face instigates one last fall-back into Google maps imagery. Mirroring the film's opening sequence, Gee now zooms out of the landscape while leaving us with street and bird noises on the soundtrack – satellite images of Suffolk change from one scale to another, digital lines and place markers reappear, and as they multiply and stretch across the continents, Jonathan Pryce reads out the final passage from *The Rings of Saturn*:

> [...] Sir Thomas Browne [...] remarks in a passage of the *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* that I can no longer find that in the Holland of his time it was customary, in a home where there had been a death, to drape black mourning ribbons over all the mirrors and all canvasses depicting landscapes or people or the fruits of the field, so that the soul, as it left the body, would not be distracted on its final journey, either by a reflection of itself or by a last glimpse of the land now being lost forever.[59]

While the film's closing sequence is obviously meant to associate the author's quote with his own final journey, assuming the point of view of Sebald's soul leaving the body, it also recapitulates the reader's and spectator's tour through Sebald's stories and topographies. Thus, in accordance with Sebald, Gee stages his "walk" through *The Rings of Saturn* as a process of thinking and reminiscing: a journey[60] in which reflexive spaces are opened up through movement. Without a doubt, the most determining of these movements is the act of walking, as it

59 Sebald: *The Rings of Saturn*, 380.
60 Referencing certain accounts of modern subjectivity (Michel Foucault, Jonathan Crary), Dimitris Eleftheriotis points out that already the nineteenth century is defined "by the configuration of a knowing, perceiving mobile subject observing the peculiar movements of life in its multifaceted scientific, social and cultural dimensions". And he adds with special regard to Charles Darwin's scientific travelogue that "not only travelling enables knowledge but also the process of knowledge itself is perceived as a journey, as a gradual progression of a subject towards ever increasing knowledge". Dimitris Eleftheriotis: *Cinematic Journeys. Film and Movement*. Edinburgh 2010, 11–12.

structures plot and narration in *The Rings of Saturn* and forms a visual motif in PATIENCE. This motif, however, does not actually illustrate matching passages from Sebald's book; rather, it alludes to the conception of walking as thinking, as a mode of physically establishing relations between the world and the mind.

In *Wanderlust*, a comprehensive account of walking as political, aesthetic, and social activity, Rebecca Solnit writes:

> The rhythm of walking generates a kind of rhythm of thinking, and the passage through a landscape echoes or stimulates the passage through a series of thoughts. This creates an odd consonance between internal and external passage, one that suggests that the mind is also a landscape of sorts and that walking is one way to traverse it.[61]

According to Solnit, moving on foot also seems to make it easier to move in time, as the mind wanders from plans to recollections to observations,[62] which is where two interpretations of walking come together: walking as *re*covery on the one hand, and as *dis*covery on the other. In PATIENCE, this distinction is first made to describe the competitive relationship between British and American poetic traditions, but it also underlines the profound tension between walking, thinking, and "the world" as a history of human experience that demands our engagement with it. Walking as thinking also implies looking inside oneself as it invites the walker to go beyond the self, to leave the position of the myopic traveller, and to go off the beaten tracks. It means following and then redefining lines of history that might have been drawn violently, or against better knowledge – for "one train may be hiding another", as Thomas Elsaesser famously put it.[63]

In fact, trains and tracks appear again and again in both Sebald's book and Gee's film, for instance in a later episode where British novelist and mythographer Marina Warner talks about the last days of Imperial China and how the Tai Ping rebellion was violently put down. Sebald writes about a little train that would take tourists to Southwold, and how underneath the paint was a Golden Dragon revealing that it was actually intended for the Chinese Emperor. In Warner's words, Sebald "is using something else to refract his main preoccupation – that the genocidal wars of the twentieth century were foreshadowed by

61 Rebecca Solnit: *Wanderlust. A History of Walking*. New York / London 2001, 5–6.

62 See ibid., 5.

63 Thomas Elsaesser: One Train May Be Hiding Another. Private History, Memory and National Identity. *Screening the Past* (16 April 1999). http://www.screeningthepast.com/issue-6-ahr-forum/one-train-may-be-hiding-another-private-history-memory-and-national-identity/ (last accessed 28 February 2021).

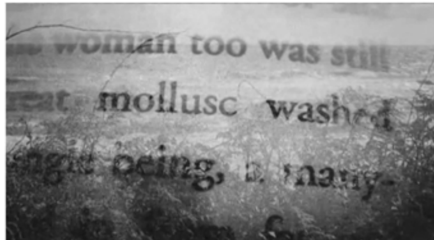
these Victorian Imperial Wars". Indeed, Sebald's work is often labelled as an example of trauma literature in its allusions to mass murders and slavery. He himself also openly accuses German post-war authors of having failed to process the Holocaust. *The Rings of Saturn* however is far from being an open accusation. Sebald at some point tells the story of fishermen, moves on to the herring as "an emblem of the indestructibility of nature" and recounts how "wagons take in this restless wanderer of the seas and transport it to those places where its fate on this earth will at last be fulfilled". He then walks through a dying woodland near Southwold, and moves on to the death of Major George Wyndham Le Strange, who served in the regiment that liberated the concentration camp at Bergen Belsen. It comes as a shock when the following two pages show a large photo of corpses strewn across a forest (no caption added). In Gee's film, the reader's bewilderment is enacted by the visual artist Lise Patt, who keeps turning pages back and forth to find some connection between this image and the herring mentioned before. But the connection is established "between the lines", between the semantic intersections of destruction, transport, death, and Bergen Belsen. And suddenly, the trains and tracks of both book and film also invoke the horrors of the Holocaust, affirming Bracha Ettinger's idea of art as "the transport-station of trauma", by which she means that art can open up spaces of transformation for conscious, half- and unconscious memories of trauma that originate in the artist's own psyche – but also spaces for traumatic memories of others.[64]

On the one hand, this transformation attests to the vulnerability of the lived body as much as it exhibits the precarious nature of memory itself; on the other, Sebald also stresses in his work that one's own self-discovery might start from a yearning for reconciliation, only to then turn into a walk on the edge of self-abandonment and destruction. It is perhaps for this reason that both Sebald and Gee seem to dwell on coastlines as recurring visual and material motifs in *The Rings of Saturn* and Patience – peripheries naturally affected by the tides, and eroding edges of memory that evoke strange feelings of melancholy and desire. Following up on the herring metaphor, Gee now presents us with images that could have been taken from the minds of Luis Buñuel, Maya Deren, or even Michelangelo Antonioni: washed-up branches sticking out of the bank, sand rippling off a cliff like powder in an hourglass, a rodent's dead body swallowed up by the beach, a starfish-like couple making love by the rocks. In this montage sequence, thinking along Sebald's edges and threads and by way of

64 Astrid Schmetterling / Lynn Turner: *Visual Cultures as Recollection*. Berlin 2013, 75.

particular substances, Gee eventually makes a detour to the unthinkable: the shoreline is portrayed as a time zone of simultaneous life and death, a place of extreme intensities out of which historical trauma emerges as a forever unresolved experience. As Sebald's voice now once more affirms:

> The main scenes of horror are never directly addressed. [...] We've all seen images, but these images militate against our capacity for discursive thinking, for reflecting upon these things, and also paralyze our moral capacity. The only way in which to approach these things in my view is obliquely, tangentially, by reference rather than by direct confrontation.



Connecting the Dots

The conceptual and thematic resonances between *The Rings of Saturn* and PATIENCE suggest a shared approach to collective trauma as an embodied and mediated experience of memory. Sebald's narrative networks reverberate with

Gee's emphasis on intermediality and his ostensive use of Google maps imagery. It would in fact not be too farfetched to think through Patience not in terms of "collective", but of "connective memory".[65] Certainly, in reframing *The Rings of Saturn* through the voices of historical thinkers and letting their thoughts travel along the roads of Suffolk, the film renders Sebald's approach to history as a mapping of recurring patterns from the peripheries of individual experience. Like different streams of consciousness, Gee's cinematic memory images and sounds striate and cross each other, leaving occasional echoes, contradictions, and ellipses along the way. This "walk" through *The Rings of Saturn* both conforms to and withdraws from the idea of walking as a somatic experience, as knowing the world through the body.[66] Patience does not present us with images of embodied perception in this sense, but with coalescing trajectories of thoughts and perceptual tenses and *situations*[67], occupied by different subjectivities in different spatiotemporal contexts, and conjoined only by means of Sebald's textual cues. It is this simultaneity that makes us spectators feel "there" and removed at the same time.

Andrew Hoskins speaks in this context of connective memory as an effect of media technologies linked mainly to online environments and the digital archive. For Hoskins, the "hyper-immediacy of having the mediatised world at our fingertips"[68] tests the parameters of human imagination, enabling an

65 See for instance Andrew Hoskins: 7/7 and Connective Memory. Interactional Trajectories of Remembering in Post-Scarcity Culture. *Memory Studies* 4/3 (2011), 269–280.

66 Here I am again referring to Solnit, who argues that the "engagement of the body and the mind with the world" is what walking shares with making and working – as a way of "knowing the world through the body and the body through the world" (*Wanderlust*, 64). Elsewhere she writes: "[T]he motions of the mind cannot be traced, but those of the feet can. Walking can also be imagined as a visual activity, every walk a tour leisurely enough both to see and to think over the sights, to assimilate the new into the known" (ibid., 23).

67 John Dewey defines a situation as follows: "What is designated by the word 'situation' is not a single object or event or set of objects and events. For we never experience nor form judgments about objects and events in isolation, but only in connection with a contextual whole" (John Dewey: Logic. The Theory of Enquiry [1938]. In: id.: *The Later Works of John Dewey. Vol. 12: 1938*, ed. by Jo Ann Boydston. Carbondale 1991, 72–73). Although Dewey never breaks down this "whole" into its defining components, it can be assumed that his "context" is neither to be understood as a mere sum of its parts, nor as a universal principle, but implies an experiencing subject's embeddedness in time and space – a situation as "an environing experienced world" would quite literally mean our "situatedness" in the world, in a cultural framework, and therefore in history. It is this inseparability of and from spatiotemporal factors that also informs my conception of mapping and/as thinking.

68 Andrew Hoskins: Media, Memory, Metaphor. Remembering and the Connective Turn. *Parallax* 17/4 (2011), 19–31, here 26.

experience of more complex temporalities of self and others: that is, the digital realm simultaneously connects us with both present and the past, and affords a more visceral sense of the self as a node *in* media.[69] Hoskins uses the concept of connective memory as "a sensitizing tool to highlight the moment of connection as the moment of memory",[70] which needs to be seen in relation to how external, media- or archival-based trajectories "intersect, collide with, and potentially transform individual human memories that have trajectories of their own".[71]

While such an understanding of electronic media is scarcely relevant for Sebald (as *The Rings of Saturn*, published in 1995, is not at all engaged with online communication), the traceability of sites and places by means of digital appliances is an essential concern of PATIENCE: not as an inquiry into the general potential of media technologies but a visualisation of geo-tracking as a referential, sense-making activity. Gee repeatedly returns to other mapping projects, among them Rick Moody's poster map of connected motifs in *The Rings of Saturn*, and Barbara Hui's Litmap project, a literary mapping platform that visualises space and place in texts including Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn*. Gee could have chosen to simply insert these maps in the form of static images or diagrams; instead, often superimposed onto archival images or landscapes, they jerkily move across the frame, as if being browsed through on a computer monitor.

In other examples of the genre, even if no physical trace of a human operator is seen, the operating gesture can still be detected in the visible movement of a cursor or page scroll. Yet in the case of PATIENCE, the cursor as a both explorative and deictic symbol is missing. The maps simply unfold and change positions, leaving the spectator with a roaming (digital) gaze that resembles a gestural movement dissociated from its navigating subject – an autonomous gesture of thinking and tracing connections. The numerous lines and arrows dominating Gee's maps thus become a symbolic equivalent for what Hoskins describes as a consequence of the so-called connective turn, namely the countless intersections of memorial trajectories through their mediatisation. The origin or vantage point of the line almost always lies beyond the frame, refusing any fixed point of view the spectator could adopt. Highlighted rather is the pure connectivity of thoughts, the possibility of conjoining nodal points in which thoughts collide. And since also, according to Hoskins, "the moment of connection is the moment of memory", those points do not testify to any singular meaning or historical fact, but designate the very

69 See ibid., 25.
70 Hoskins: 7/7 and Connective Memory, 272.
71 Ibid., 276.

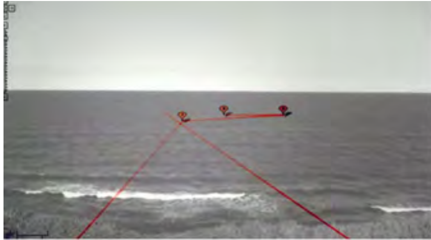
places where one thought branches out to another. No one thought, feeling, or perceptual experience is simply substituted by the next. Instead, in the process of thinking, associating, and being reminded of something else, a previous thought or image overlaps with or is appropriated by its successor, such that the process of memory is constituted not so much by each component, but by their interrelation.

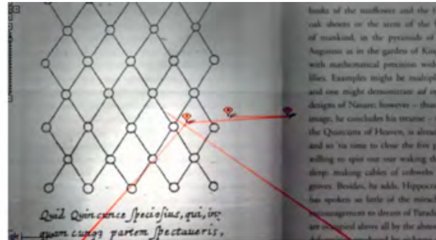
Yet to say that Gee's references to digital mapping have no equivalent in Sebald's book would be misleading. Gee's emphasis on lines and topographical markers as symbols of (inter)connectedness is not least a nod to a central motif in *The Rings of Saturn*: the quincunx. This pattern, which seventeenth-century British philosopher Thomas Browne had begun to see across animate and inanimate matter, describes a repetitive structure of equal rhombs with a specific accent on their connecting corners. Interestingly, while Browne used his conceptual drawing to make an argument for the recurring geometrical designs of nature, he also opts for nature's "endless mutations", which, as Sebald writes accordingly, "go far beyond any rational limit".[72] That is, in their presumed equability the constitutive laws of natural phenomena allow for resemblances and peculiarities alike; they allow us to identify both continuities in a world of appearances and "the chimaeras produced by our own minds".[73]

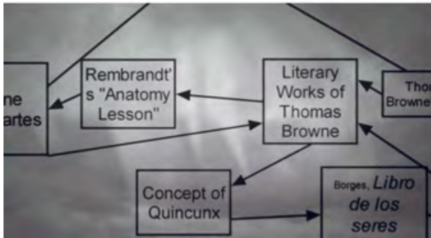
For Browne, there existed an infinity of forms, an endless variety of thoughts and experiences which, even when they "leave" our individual minds, can be openly shared and made into a relatable experience for others.[74] Both Sebald and Gee seem to insist similarly on an entanglement of subjective and collective experiences. Both constantly position the thinker's (or walker's) body at the crossroads between embodiment and abstraction. Sebald, for instance, links his elaborations on Browne to *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Nicolaes Tulp*, a famous Rembrandt painting in which the hand of a dead thief, shown being dissected in front of a paying audience, is misrepresented and out of proportion given the painter's overall sense of detail. "Though the body is open to contemplation", reads one sentence in *The Rings of Saturn*, "it is, in a sense, excluded."[75] Tulp's colleagues do not look at the thief's corpse, but focus instead "on the open anatomical atlas in which the appalling physical facts are reduced to a diagram, a schematic plan of the human being".[76] This is one of many examples in the book that seem to locate Sebald's preoccupation with historical figures as part of an argument for attention to embodied historical experience (a reproduction of Rembrandt's painting is prominently featured in *The Rings of Saturn*). Yet Sebald's

72 Sebald: *The Rings of Saturn*, 31.
73 Ibid.
74 What comes to mind here is, once again, Antonin Artaud's hypothesis about cinema's relationship to abstraction: "The first step in cinematographic thought seems to me to be the utilisation of existing objects and forms which can be made to mean everything, because nature is profoundly, infinitely versatile." Artaud: *Collected Works*, 61.
75 Sebald: *The Rings of Saturn*, 21.
76 Ibid.

intricate mapping of facts and anecdotes – the fabrication itself with all its motifs, fragments, and places – also suppresses the bodies involved in the stories he tells, making their existence, fictional or not, depend instead centrally on the movement of words and thoughts.







It is also never quite clear whether Sebald's narrator "walks his subjects back into life, or if he walks forward after them into death" – as Robert Macfarlane aptly puts it in PATIENCE. Similarly, for Gee, the body is repeatedly obscured, as he time and again withholds images of people referenced by his interviewees, focusing instead on audiovisual instantiations of absence and emerging contradictions. In one sequence (following Sebald's musings on how to approach scenes of horror without images), author Dan Gretton comments on Sebald's (or rather his narrator's) encounter with a newspaper story about war crimes committed by the Croatian Ustacha. A clock chimes, we see an empty table and chair in what looks like a café or restaurant. Now Gretton's voice: "He's in Southwold, he's in the Crown Hotel, and he's reading a copy of *The Independent on Sunday*, and he then sees this image … " A reader is nowhere to be seen, yet the corresponding photograph, a grainy picture of hanged Serbs, Jews, and Bosnians, eventually comes into view, and while Gretton goes into more detail about the historical background of the scene depicted, the camera zooms in on the photo, letting the bodies' contours blur and fill the image

beyond recognition. “Their methods of killing”, Gretton states accordingly, “were pretty unimaginable.” Recalling his own moment of recognition (“‘Hang on’, I thought, ‘I’ve heard that word before … ’”), Gretton’s talking head is superimposed over the picture, which keeps on magnifying, turning into an amorphous texture, and finally dissolving into a visualisation of Saturn’s orbit.

The rhetorical build-up and audiovisual layering in this sequence serves as a pathway towards the scandalous fact that Kurt Waldheim, of all people, a man alleged to have been involved in WWII atrocities, was once chosen to “represent humanity” in his capacity as Secretary General of the United Nations. Waldheim recorded peaceful greetings to extraterrestrials for the 1977 Voyager space mission; his words echo through an interstellar image space reconstructed by Gee, relating the unimaginable expanse of the universe to the unspoken and unthinkable horrors of human history, and transposing Sebald’s captivation with particularities and their large-scale ramifications to a cinematic expression of thinking through documents, memories, and (moving) images. Meanwhile Gretton’s narrational mode in this short episode, his repeated use of the connective “and then” to link his sentences, not only articulates a certain order of thoughts or historical events, but reveals more centrally the wrong turns of communication that depend on what is covered up or uncovered and on what voices are being heard or silenced.

Conclusion?

In PATIENCE, Sebald himself becomes a projection site of personal admiration, critical reflection, and cultural theory. He is the film's centre of gravity, attracting fragments of memory, cultural and audiovisual history, and embodied experience. Yet, the closer we get to a (cinematic) idea of his (literary) persona, the more it disintegrates into fragments. Bit by bit, the map unfolds and expands in our interaction with the film, making us move through and between images, establishing ever-new ties with the(ir) world.

As Marina Warner rightly observes in her interview for PATIENCE, Sebald's walks meander, his mind meanders, the patterns of the structure of the book meander; and so too does Gee's film. Numerous voiceovers take us constantly to yet another corner of someone else's mind. Never do we "identify" with a single point of view; instead, we map – we try to make sense of how each speaker tries to grasp Sebald's literary thinking. When Lise Patt is seen playing with cut-up words from a Sebald interview, we too are invited to make "sudden discoveries between text and image" (to quote Elsaesser again). "I was convinced", Patt says, "that if I did this in the right frame of mind, he would talk to me." But is there such a thing as the right frame of mind for chance encounters? Is the engagement with aesthetic configurations not an experience that drives both these works and their consumers "beyond themselves"? And what does this mean for cinema and its interaction with different forms of cultural expression?

Instead of closing this case by reiterating my definition of mapping as cinematic thinking, a kind of *quod erat demonstrandum* based on my analytical findings, I would like to propose an open ending that allows me to keep thinking essayistically, moving toward a process-oriented exploration "in which neither an exact route nor final destination are completely spelled out".[77] What PATIENCE elucidates as a walk through *The Rings of Saturn* is perhaps the following: as an art form, dispositif, industry, and experience, cinema can be considered a superordinate concept for the circulation and distribution of images within audiovisual cultures. The way cinematic images appropriate various traits from other media and art forms (painting, literature, music, art installations, video games, etc.) is essentially a form of mapping cartographies of different expressivities and viewpoints that in turn facilitate a *new view* onto the world and the creation of *new worlds* after all. It is this poetic quality that leads to new trajectories along which cinema can circulate and continue to live.

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77 Arthur: Essay Questions, 60.

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About the Authors

Erica Carter is Professor of German and Film at King's College London, and co-founder of the UK German Screen Studies Network. She has published widely on German-language cinema and film theory, including the co-edited BFI *German Cinema Book* (2021), *Béla Balázs. Early Film Theory* (2010), and *Dietrich's Ghosts. The Sublime and the Beautiful in Third Reich Film* (2004). Her research on questions of decolonisation and the postcolonial archive has been published in *L'Atalante. Revista de estudios cinematográficos* (2022), and in the edited collection *Accidental Archivism* (2023).

Bettina Malcomess is a writer and artist based in Johannesburg, where she lectures in Fine Arts at the Wits School of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand. She is completing a PhD in Film Studies at Kings College London, a media archaeology of the role of film and communication technologies in Empire. Working under the name Anne Historical, she produces work with analogue film and sound media that inhabits the entanglement of memory, technology, and history. Malcomess has published a number of essays and co-edited several books. She is the co-author of *Not No Place. Johannesburg, Fragments of Spaces and Times* (2013) and visual editor of *Routes and Rites to the City. Mobility Diversity and Religious Space in Johannesburg* (2017). Malcomess runs a platform for artistic collaboration called the *joining room*.

Eileen Rositzka (*1988 †2021) was a lecturer in Film Studies with a special focus on genre history and film aesthetics. Between 2011 and 2013, she was a member of the research team in the project *Staging Images of War as a Mediated Experience of Community*. Having completed her PhD at the University of St Andrews, Scotland (2013–2017), she returned to the Freie Universität Berlin for a research post at the *Cinepoetics Center for Advanced Film Studies*. During her time at the University of St Andrews, she co-edited the *Frames Cinema Journal*. She also authored numerous articles, translations, and reviews, alongside completing her monograph, *The Cinematic Corpography of War. Re-Mapping the War Film through the Body* (2018), and co-editing *Im Verwandeln der Zeit. Reflexionen über filmische Bilder* (2019). Between 2018 and 2021, her research focused on theoretical and analytical approaches to mapping as cinematic thinking.

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