SARAVI PONTES
Band 9

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(Audio-)Visual Arts and Trauma:

From the East to the West

Janett Reinstädler
Oleksandr Pronkevich
(eds.)

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Herausgegeben von Astrid M. Fellner, Roland Marti,
Christoph Vatter, Elisabeth Venohr

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"Trauma and Media in the Americas"

JANETT REINSTÄDLER AND OLEKSANDR PRONKEVICH

Introduction

With the beginning of the new millennium, Humanities scholars and students from two universities, Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University in Mykolaiv (Ukraine) and the Universität des Saarlandes (Germany), started an academic exchange with a regular coming and going of specialists, visiting scholars, students and teachers. From 2012 on, and sponsored by the East-Partnership Program furthered by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), we continued our cooperation in specific three-year research projects based on each other. Firstly, our scientific exchange was focused on the area of memory studies and cinematic art. The compilation *Film and Memory*, edited in 2015 by Oleksandr Pronkevich and Christoph Vatter,[1] presents the outcome of this prolific start, bringing together literary and culture studies, as well as philosophy and history. The present book is the result of the following three years of investigations, travels, meetings, lectures and discussions, now focused on the relations between *(Audio)visual Arts and Trauma*. The articles of this compilation document our interdisciplinary exchange which brings together History of Art, Film-, Cultural- and Gender Studies and the genres of Ukrainian and North-American Visual Arts, Russian, French, Spanish and Cuban Film, and, in parts, Anglophone and Hispanic (graphic) novels. So, our project embraces very different, multilingual and -ethnical cultures, starting from Eastern Europe and traveling over its centre to finally reach the far West of the Caribbean, Central and Northern America. The subjects of the analyzed objects of art include Stalinist repression, (Post) World War II losses, the Chernobyl nuclear catastrophe, the silenced crimes of Francoist dictatorship, or state terror in Cuba or Guatemala and, persecution, humiliation and criminalization of homosexuals in the US. Despite the differences with regard to geography, content and media, the entire corpus we studied, shares one common request: the struggle for finding an artistic expression for traumatic experiences.

Due to this setting, our exchange started from a theoretical reflection on trauma theory and scientific considerations on the (im)possibilities of medial representation of trauma in the arts. As a result, we take trauma as a highly disconcerting form, maybe the most disconcerting one of "not-knowing", that hides behind the non-rememberable, the invisible and unspeakable within a

[1] Christoph Vatter and Oleksandr Pronkevich (eds.): *Film and Memory*, Saarbrücken, universaar, 2015.

traumatic experience. As different definitions stress, trauma is caused by an immediate and profoundly violent event which destroys the individual's sense of stability.[2] The symptoms of trauma, defined since the beginning of the 1980s as the "post-traumatic stress disorder" (PTSD), consist of fear, extreme disorientation and helplessness of the individual, followed by conflicting feelings of revenge, guilt and shame. More than that, a person traumatized will react with often long lasting rejections of the experienced (in Freudian terms: "Verleugnung" and "Verdrängung"), which complicates treatment and almost always lasts for a considerable amount of time ("Latenz"). This incapability und unwillingness to remember the trauma, called by Mardi Jon Horowitz "intrusion" and "denial", contrasts with the paradoxical necessity to repeat the traumatising situation over and over again.[3]

As shown by recent investigations, the traumatic experience can go beyond the individual dimension; it can affect other persons present during the moment of the traumatic incident, or be transferred through narratives or medial images. Trauma can as well influence, even after decades, our relatives, as has been the case, for example, of the grandchildren of former Concentration Camp prisoners; this phenomenon is called "transgenerational trauma".[4] Besides the individual trauma, we can also find collective traumas, in which the self-image of invulnerability and sovereignty of a whole group, perhaps a nation, has been damaged (the most famous example of collective trauma, and transferred by mass media, have been the attacks on the Twin Towers in New York City).[5] As many studies showed, a collective traumatic past has to be treated to restore the integrity of the group. The dealing with conflictive memory is getting especially difficult, if the perpetrators and victims belong to one single group, as it can happen in a family, at work, in a city, a nation. In situations, in which

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2 The American psychoanalyst Arnold Cooper defines trauma as "any psychological event which abruptly overwhelms the ego's capacity to provide a minimal sense of safety and integrative intactness, resulting in overwhelming anxiety or helplessness, or the threat of it, and producing an enduring change in the psychic organization". Arnold Cooper: "Toward a limited definition of psychic trauma." In: Arnold Rothstein (ed.): *The reconstruction of trauma: Its significance in clinical work*, Madison, CT, International Universities Press, 1986, p. 44.

3 See Mardi Jon Horowitz: *Stress Response Syndromes*, New York, Basic Books, 1976.

4 See Gabriele Schwab: *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2010.

5 Collective traumas arise in situations of extreme violence, moments in which the connection, communication and solidarity of a group are interrupted or destroyed. According to researcher Angela Kühner, these collective traumas bear a special relevance for collective memory and identity. They usually have the same symptoms as the individual trauma, and thus must be treated to reconstruct the integrity of the group. See Angela Kühner: *Trauma und kollektives Gedächtnis*, Gießen, Psychosozial-Verlag, 2008.

culprits and victims of trauma live together in the same society, the collective memory is usually being split in two: on one hand, the winners control the official historical discourses and suppress the negative aspects of the past; while, on the other hand, the memories of the inferior group lack a public voice to articulate their historical experiences.[6] Cultural Studies scholars such as Cathy Caruth, Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman showed the importance of art in the articulation of the "unclaimed experience" of trauma, to "act it out" and "work it through", as Dominick LaCapra calls it.[7]

While there is a large list of academic publications on the link between memory and trauma in the genre of fictional literature, only few studies exist focusing the relationship between traumatic experience and artistic (audio)visual works. In order to throw some light on this wide spread genre, our German-Ukrainian research group asks if visual and audio-visual arts offer – in the East and the West – specific ways to confront the unspeakable of trauma. Which patterns do audio-visual works use to tackle the unspeakable? Are there great differences in the medial forms within the arts between the European East and West as well as North and Central America that propose to deal with the forbidden, the rejected experience of the past?

Despite differences in geographical, cultural and historical contexts embodied among numerous medial representations of various types of trauma, our work proves, that, (audio)visual arts often share common themes and forms. This can be attributed to a similar creation of highly symbolic artistic design, developed in order to articulate against censorship the suppressed or/and forbidden memory of a traumatic past (see the articles of Pronkevich, Exner and Schmidtgall, Reinstädler). In the East of Europe and the Central America, we find similar efforts to avoid artistically the institutional control of historiographic documentation and collective memory practice (see Ostapchuk and Christmann). And, although we discovered very different styles in the graphic

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6 There is a large amount of research literature concerning the relationship between memory and collective identity, embracing researchers as Ernest Renan, Maurice Halbwachs, Pierre Nora. One of the most innovational contributions in recent time come from Aleida Assmann. See: *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012, and *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit. Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik* [*The Long Shadow of the Past*. *Memory Culture and the Politics of History*], München, Beck, 2006.

7 See: Cathy Caruth: *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996; Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (eds.): *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*, New York, Routledge, 1992; Dominick LaCapra: "An Interview with Professor Dominick LaCapra [by Amos Goldberg]." In: *Shoah Resource Center: The International School for Holocaust Studies* 9, June 1988, pp. 1–8.

art in the middle of the last century and from the beginning of the new millennium, in Ukraine and the US, these are all still portraying the same expression of psychological problems associated with a denied identity (see Shestopalova and Graham). Other parallels exist in the repeated artistic mediations of individual and collective trauma caused by collapsing systems in France, Ukraine and Cuba (see Vatter, Ostapchuk and Reinstädler). Last but not least, it is very remarkable that very often historical trauma is represented by the perspective of children or teenagers (Pronkevich, Vatter, Exner and Schmidtgall, Reinstädler).

To structure these highly connected examples, we decided to present them in a movement from the East to the West. So, the first part of our book is dedicated to the representation of trauma in audio-visual arts in Ukraine and the former USSR. Tetiana Shestopalova's paper "Identity and Trauma: Visual Arts of Jacques Hnizdovsky" analyzes one of the most outstanding artists of Ukraine who gained wide recognition in Western Europe and the USA. Jacques Hnizdovsky came from a small village in the contemporary Western Ukraine and absorbed various modernist trends during his art studies in Lviv, Warsaw and Zagreb. After losing all his works in the bombing of Dresden on February 13–14, 1945, and spending several years at a camp for displaced persons in Germany, he immigrated to the USA. Shestopalova claims that his biography and works can serve as excellent illustrations of individual and collective traumas caused to Ukrainians by immigration and loss of their national and aesthetic ground. Hnizdovsky's paintings and woodcuts reflect a variety of forms of representing traumatic events of 20th-century history. His style combines tradition and cosmopolitan innovation, creating a universal visual discourse able to transcode individual and collective trauma experience.

In "Andrey Tarkovsky's *The Mirror* (1974) Through the Lens of Trauma Theory", Oleksandr Pronkevich shows how the famous Russian film-director reveals different types of traumas in his movies. Among them is personal trauma provoked by the divorce of his parents and collective trauma as a result of the damages to physical and moral health caused by the Soviet reality with its wars and repressive methods of educating the masses. The third variant of trauma presented by the director is a negative impact of exile and alienation on the personality. From Pronkevich's viewpoint, Andrey Tarkovsky's *The Mirror* which belongs to the category of Russian cinematographic tradition in the late 20th century, discovered the idiom to portray and work through trauma. Among the means of poetics used by Andrey Tarkovsky to solve this complicated task, the researcher distinguishes oneiric discourse, citations of world culture, and introductions of his father's poetry into the texture of the film.

The "Images of Chernobyl Explosion Liquidators in Audio Visual Art" are studied by Tetiana Ostapchuk. The researcher interprets the explosion of the atomic power station in Chernobyl on 26 April 1986 as a chosen trauma, which plays an exclusive part in the late Soviet and post-Soviet consciousness. In many senses, it was a predecessor of the collapse of the Soviet Union and one of the factors of the contemporary Ukrainian nation-building project. Ostapchuk focuses on representations of the traumas of the people who had to liquidate the consequences of the disaster. She distinguishes three approaches towards representation of the Chernobyl meltdown traumatic experience: (a) strategy to commemorate a liquidator as a chosen hero or victim; (b) communicative approach that shows a liquidator as a witness and an individual trapped in a tragic situation; (c) demonization that manifests liquidators as stalkers, scavengers, villains, monsters, mutants, etc. The researcher pays special attention to the diversity of cultural practices involved in representing the Chernobyl trauma, including propaganda posters, monuments, insignia production, museums, and popular films.

The second part of the book consists of two papers dedicated to the representation of trauma in film from Western Europe. Christoph Vatter's study "Trauma, Cultures of Memory and Childhood in French Postwar Cinema: the Example of René Clément's *Jeux Interdits* (1952)" starts with a brief survey of the historical context and strategies of dealing with post World War traumas in French cinema during the second half of the 20th century. Vatter underlines the outstanding contribution René Clément's film made to the elaboration of a French memory on the traumatic past around the country's defeat in June 1940. *Jeux Interdits* connects collective memory and the individual dimension of trauma materialized in the character of the protagonist girl, an orphan named Paulette. As a result, the film creates a complex multilayered image of France during the occupation period, which reflects internal struggles between Résistance and Vichy collaboration and reveals a powerful relationship between the individual's fate and France's collective (and cultural) memory.

Another filmic view on traumatic childhood in the context of war and dictatorship is analyzed in "Haunted by children. Spanish Trauma, Social Negotiaition and Ethics of Representation in Narciso Ibañez Serrador's Horror movie *¿Quién puede matar a un niño?*" written by Isabel Exner and Thomas Schmidtgall. After showing documentary material about children suffering from war and hunger, the film narrates the one-way trip of two tourists during their holiday on an island, as they unwillingly penetrate a world of violent children that will attack and kill them, as they kill every adult person approaching them. From the viewpoint of the ethical representation, Exner and Schmidtgall

ask the question, to what extent can documentary images of atrocities committed against children be shown to wide audiences? And, referring to the reality of the Spanish past, the authors argue that historical experience predetermined the director's choice of genre with horror as an efficient means of speaking about traumas produced by the Spanish Civil war and Franco's regime. Using theoretical observations concerning use of the horror genre as a method of working through collective and individual traumas, Exner and Schmidtgall prove that *¿Quién puede matar a un niño?* can be read as allegory of Spanish society, taken for 'adult' or mature by visiting foreigners, but, in fact, is still full of unresolved conflicts and traumas.

The third part of our book contains studies of representation of trauma in (audio-)visual arts of the Americas. The selection opens with Janett Reinstädler's research on "The Oniric and the Unspeakable. Cinematographic Representations of Dream and Trauma in *Madagascar* and *La vida es silbar* by the Cuban Director Fernando Pérez". The author of the paper provides an analytical reading of the well-known Cuban director's movies as a reflection of individual and collectives traumas, which are consequences of the Cuban revolution and of the social policies implemented in the country. Reinstädler shows how both films link dreams and dream-like themes to describe a deeply disturbing, traumatizing reality of children, teenagers and adults. By the visual and audio representation of an oppressive environment, dreams and oniric elements seem to be used to establish a special cinematic aesthetic, and, at the same time, to bypass censorship, as they refer only associatively to the individual and collective conflicts and traumas (not only) of the *período especial*.

Tim Christmann in his "Guatemala's National Police Archives as a Place of Traumatic Repression and Recurrence in Contemporary Documentary Cinema" provides a detailed analysis of a number of documentary films based on archival materials (*AHPN – Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional)* about mass tortures and extermination of the political opponents and of the indigenous Maya population in 1960–1996. The paper studies two films in the context of the 'Big Bang' for Guatemala's culture of memory, meant as an explosion in the national Police Archive that discovered more than 80 million documents containing proof of crimes spanning decades of state terrorism in the country. The documentary films became efficient tools to reveal the hidden truth and to initiate a healing process of traumas caused by state violence. The research focuses on a broad spectrum of traumatic reality in Guatemala: the Mayan genocide, the personal accounts of Guatemalans who have suffered from their experiences of torture and loss of family members, the many nameless murder victims, cases of social amnesia, and meta-cinematic reflection of the process of coming to terms with a traumatic past. Tim Christmann stresses that production

of numerous documentary films based on the discovered documents made a profound impact on Guatemala's culture of memory and developing an artistic idiom, which is used to speak about traumas.

In the concluding paper "Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home* as a Visual Representation of Trauma", Melanie Graham studies the ability of contemporary visual art to act as a source of healing from traumas caused by discrimination against gay and lesbian communities in the USA in the second half of the 20th century. Alison Bechdel's graphic novel *Fun Home* undertakes a provocative exploration of sexuality within a modern family. The exhibitionist style of narratives and visual panels lead to scandals and brought national and international popularity to the work. *Fun Home* contains an autobiography, telling about Alison's father and her own search for gender identity and freedom of sexual expression. The form of this graphic novel allows its author to find new ways of visually representing the queer body in a particular cultural milieu, mainly white, middle-class USA from the 1960s to the early 1980s, and addresses the compulsory heterosexuality and imposed heteronormativity as a traumatic repressive gender policy.

While this book was being printed, another book embodying our third project on popular cultures was published.[8] With three published volumes to date, Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University and Universität des Saarlandes continue to collaborate with a slight shift in focus toward our next three-year project. Again, our common work is developed from an observation done during our former research work. As the present volume will show, the very different film makers Andrej Tarkovsky, Narciso Ibáñez Serrador and Fernando Pérez, living and filming in completely different places, times and circumstances, all represent by using the aesthetic of *dreams* traumas that are officially denied and censored. The hypothesis of our new project will be centered on the importance of the dream as representation of trauma and as a factor of poetic and genre innovation. We plan to use the synergic effects of a cooperation with the Graduate research center *European Dream Studies* at Saarland University and, bringing together again researchers from East and West, we want to discover more about compensatory artistic visions caused by and dealing with trauma.

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8 Astrid M. Fellner, Tetiana Ostapchuk and Bärbel Schlimbach (eds.): *(Pop) Cultures on the Move: Transnational Identifications and Cultural Exchange Between East and West*, Saarbrücken, universaar, 2018.

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Section 1
“(Audio-)Visual Representations of Trauma in Eastern Europe”

TETIANA SHESTOPALOVA

Identity and Trauma: Visual Art of Jacques Hnizdovsky

Introduction

Jacques Hnizdovsky (1915–1985), a Ukrainian painter and graphic artist, belongs to a group of artists of Ukrainian origin, who won international recognition, along with Oleksa Gryschenko (1883–1977), Olexandr Arkhypenko (1887–1964), Halyna Mazepa (1910–1995), and William (Vasyl) Kurylyk (1927–1977).

The most famous Hnizdovsky's works were created by using a wood carving technique. They were presented in international group exhibitions many times, namely in the Boston Printmakers (1962), Aubudon Artists (1975), National Academy of Design (1963, 1973, 1976, 1977, 1980), Taipei Fine Arts Museum Taiwan (1983, 1985) among others.[1] During his first participation in an American exhibition in 1950 the artist won a prize for woodcut "Forest".[2] His pieces of art "Winter Landscape" (No. 59)[3] and "Sunflower" (No. 60) were exhibited in US President John F. Kennedy's study. The woodcut "Bush" (No. 6) was purchased by the US Library of Congress in Washington.[4]

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1 The full list of Hnizdovsky's collections, awards, individual and group exhibitions is available on the site https://hnizdovsky.gallery [01.05.2018].

2 This fact claims attention because Hnizdovsky came to the US from German camps for displaced persons (DP-camps) only in 1949. Ukrainian historian Marta Havryshko cites a reporter from *Minneapolis Star*: "The fact that the writer DP who just came to America receives awards for painting and graphics is rare and amazing in this country, where local masters are seeking for recognition for many years but largely this process is useless". http://gazeta.ua/articles/history-journal/_dvi-gravyuri-akova-gnizdovskogo-visili-v-kabineti-prezidenta-dzhona-kennedi/606477 [01.05.2018].

3 The numbers of Hnizdovsky's works reproductions are mentioned according to the catalogue: Abe M. Tahir Jr. (ed.): *Jacques Hnizdovsky. Woodcuts and Etchings*, Gretna, Pelican, 1987. http://en.uartlib.org/books/tahir-abe-m-jr-jacques-hnizdovsky-woodcuts-and-etchings/ [01.05.2018].

4 The consistent picture of the evolution of style and artistic heritage of Hnizdovsky in Western Arts Studies is presented in the catalogues Jaroslaw Leshko (ed.) *Jacques Hnizdovsky, 1915–1985. Retrospective Exhibition* [Iākiv Hnizdovskyiy, 1915–1985: retrospektyvna vystavka], New York, Ukrainian Museum, 1995, and Tahir: *Jacques Hnizdovsky*.

Dmytro Stepovyk, the author of the first well-grounded monograph about Hnizdovsky,[5] analyzes the artist's works in the context of the phenomenon of "cultural compensation", which appeared within the community of Ukrainian immigrants in Western countries.[6] By the term "cultural compensation" he means the ability to provide a complete picture of the Ukrainian culture abroad during the times when the Soviet system severely limited its manifestations, restricting its capacities and perspectives to the ideological tasks in Ukraine itself.

From this perspective, "cultural compensation" embraces creating a national culture because of Ukrainian emigration throughout the twenty years of the interwar period in Prague and Warsaw, as well as the systematic organization of the national reality in the Ukrainian DP-camps.[7] The process of establishing a network of Ukrainian scientific, literary, art, culturally educational institutions, and religious centers from the 1950s to the 1970s in North American countries should also be considered as an integral part of this "cultural compensation" strategy. They created the whole infrastructure of the cultural (creative, intellectual and spiritual) life of the Ukrainian Diaspora as if the Ukrainian national state existed at those times.[8]

The phenomenon of Hnizdovsky deserves more detailed study before it can be considered in the "cultural compensation" context. Born in a remote

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5 Dmytro Stepovyk: *Yakiv Hnizdovs'kyi: zhyttia i tvorchist*, Kiev, Vydavnytstvo Oleny Telihy, 2003. It is the most authoritative source of information about the artist, written on the basis of documentary evidence from the private archives of his family.

6 Stepovyk: *Yakiv Hnizdovs'kyi*, p. 7.

7 DP-camps are the camps for the Ukrainian exiles in Munich, Augsburg, Mittenwald, Regensburg, Aschaffenburg, Bayreuth, Salzburg, and Innsbruck during and after World War II. There the Ukrainians opened schools for children and youth, issued newspapers, had their own theater, literary and art organizations, held meetings and conferences, where they discussed the possible ways of overcoming crisis in the Ukrainian culture, caused by the Soviet totalitarianism. Such a diverse system of the social infrastructure of the DP camps is explained by the great number of Ukrainians (about 200 000), who had escaped from the Soviet authorities and settled down in the camps for immigrants. Among those who escaped were many qualified specialists in different professions, who were involved in a broad spectrum of social and cultural activities. In fact, it was a model of a national world outside their desired national land.
Some studies, memories, documents about this aspect of Ukrainian history are contained in the book: Omelian Kushnir (ed.): *Regensburg. Do istorii ukrainskoi emihracii v Nimechchyni pislia Druhoi Svitovoi Viiny*, New York et al., Naukove Tovarystvo imeni Shevchenka, Ukrainskyi Arkhiv, Vol. XL, 1985.

8 For example, the Shevchenko Scientific Society, USA, The Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in the USA, the Ukrainian Institute of America, Inc., the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, the publishing house "The Prologue", the writers' organization "The Word" and many others.

village of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, he experienced a significant influence of the European multicultural artistic environment of Lviv, Warsaw, and Zagreb. In his creative life, Hnizdovsky positioned himself as a free artist (but not an emigrant!), and a tourist who had the feeling of freedom and independence from a certain local ground or environment.[9] At the same time, he always emphasized the fact of being Ukrainian in public. Also he insisted to be buried in Lviv, though he was born in the Ternopil Region.

Stepovyk is fully right, when he states that the contradictions of the artist's nature (which were more numerous than it has been mentioned here) "do not harm the integral perception of Hnizdovsky as a great artist"[10] or as a Ukrainian patriot "till the end of his life"[11]. Hnizdovsky's pieces of art promote and disseminate the idea of Ukraine in the world,[12] because in his mature works the artist reached "the philosophic level of analyzing forms and structures"[13] of the Ukrainian world. At the same time, when we speak about the esthetic and philosophic approach to the national reality in the artist's works, it is not enough to merely recognize him as 'a great artist', one who carried out a 'cultural compensation'. Instead, it is important to reveal the impulses coming from his pieces of art to the contemporary spectator.

The main objective of this article is to interpret the visual images of Hnizdovsky within the concepts of trauma and identity, pivotal for understanding the life of Ukrainians after immigration as all the works known to us today that were created by the artist in exile.

Ukrainian Traumas

Ukrainians who emigrated during the period of the Second World War carried the traumatic experience of Soviet existence, whose main attribute was pain, caused by extensive repressions and destruction of their ties with their homeland. Jurij Lavrinenko, a Ukrainian emigrant writer, who suffered from Soviet repressions, repeatedly expressed his inner commotion and lingering sensation of pain, which had been a part of him at all times during his emigration.[14]

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9 Yakiv Hnizdovs'kyi: "Probudzhena tsarivna". http://uartlib.org/yakiv-gnizdovskiy-probudzhena-tsarivna/ [01.05.2018].

10 Stepovyk: *Yakiv Hnizdovs'kyi*, p. 8.

11 Ibid., p. 7.

12 Ibid., pp. 7–9.

13 Ibid., p. 8.

14 Jurij Lavrinenko is the author of the concept "Renaissance executed by shooting", which describes the powerful upturn in Ukrainian culture and national consciousness in the 1920s and its eradication by the Soviet regime in the 1930s. See: Jurij Lavrinenko (ed.):

This pain also provoked complex and controversial relations between the mainland Ukrainians and Ukrainian emigrants. Bohdan Rubchak, a PhD in Slavic Studies and a recognized expert in Ukrainian emigration, wrote that emigration will always be provisionally dependent on the recognition from mainland Ukraine, while Ukraine will always make critical comments and correct the achievements of emigrants according to its expectations and interests.[15] Some intellectuals find it frustrating that the importance of emigration is underestimated by modern Ukraine; though it sped up the independence of Ukraine, by actively creating its modern cultural landscape, and promoting it at the international level, when mainland Ukraine was unable to do so.

Jurij Shevelov, a linguist, a culture expert, and a professor of the University of Columbia, noted that mainland Ukrainians and emigrants have essential differences in their worldview and values. These differences are the result of temporal, cultural, and political discontinuity in the life space of Ukrainians and negatively affect the process of national integration.[16] The discontinuities, which define these essential differences between the two branches of society, characterize the large-scale collective trauma of the entire Ukrainian society.

At the same time, the trauma of eradication in itself not only intensified the emigrants' awareness of existential incompleteness, but also triggered their searching for successful attempts to integrate into the new space with the baggage of the previous experience and memories.

Edward Said provides a description of the replacing mechanism of an emigrant's and immigrant's adaptation to a new environment. The type of activities chosen by a person in exile play a significant role in this process. An emigrant is either sitting on the roadside complaining about fate, or is trying to gain something in an effort to develop a healthy (not misanthropy or arrogance towards people), specific life view. An emigrant forms a new order of thinking through connecting with others exiled like him, and those

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Rozstriliane vidrodzhennia: Antolohia 1917–1933: poezia – proza – drama – esei, Kiev, Smoloskyp, 2004.

15 Bohdan Rubchak: "Kamjani Baby chy Svitovyd." In: *Svito-vyd* 2, no. 23, 1996, pp. 89–100.

16 Jurij Shevelov wrote: "Their [of the mainland and emigrational Ukraine – T. Sh.] awareness of each other's existence, creation of the common spirituality, if at all virtually possible, the creation of that highest Ukrainian, written in capital letters WE – is an imaginary, problematic thing, and who knows if at all possible". Jurij Sherekh: "My i my. Zamist' Avtobiohrafiji." In: Valerij Shevchuk (ed.): *Poza knyzhkamy I z knyzhok Jurij Sherekh*, Kiev, 1998, pp. 24–25.

representatives from the dominating nation by adjusting to the material, spiritual and intentional objects of the new environment.[17]

This methodological framework serves as a basis for interpreting Jacques Hnizdovsky's visual art from the perspective of his identity representation, based on the complex combination of connections between the artist's Ukrainian roots and an immigration reality, where he developed his mature artistic identity. His visual images, in my opinion, bear the traces of trauma. According to Grisellda Pollock, there are "five defining features of trauma: perpetual presentness, permanent absence, irrepresentability, belatedness and transmissibility."[18] Hnizdovsky's works encapsulate these five features Pollock emphasizes through the characterization of their repeated motives (e.g. trees, faces, animals). The artist introduces artistic details into the pictures, which arose the feeling of pain and loss (the absence of leaves on the tress, prickles on the benches). The pain is encapsulated in memories and becomes the guarantee of identity. The inclination to replicate the images reveals numerous attempts to overcome the trauma, to channel it into a positive stream of memory and imagination. The image, having been technically reproduced dozens of times, becomes a part of existence. Thus the individual vision of an artist represents the collective national experience of existence, which was affected by the traumas.

Hnizdovsky's Early Years in Europe

Jacques Hnizdovsky was born in 1915 in the Ukrainian Galicia Region on the territory of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. After World War I this territory became part of Poland as the Ternopil Province. The Polish authorities totally controlled the promotion of Polish culture and language among the population, regardless of national belonging. To achieve their goal, the authorities held severe repressions against Ukrainians.[19]

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17 Edward W. Said: "Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals." In: *Grand Street* 47, 1993, pp. 112–124. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25007703. https://postcolonialseminar.files.wordpress.com/2013/05/article-said.pdf [01.05.2018].

18 Cited after Dumith Kulasekara: "Representation of Trauma in Contemporary Arts." In: *Athens Journal of Humanities and Arts* 4, no. 1, 2017, p. 36.

19 Historian and researcher of Ukrainian National memorial museum "Prison on Lockii street" (dedicated to victims of occupation regimes) Ihor Derevyanyi popularly highlights the nature and shape of repressive measures of Polish occupation against Ukrainians between 1918 and 1939. In particular, he mentions the elimination of the political autonomy of Galicia in 1918, the prohibition for Ukrainians, who did not accept Polish citizenship and did not serve in the Polish army, to study at universities in Lviv, limitation of the number of Ukrainians in local authorities, because of the introduction of new, more complicated

Hnizdovsky's family was known for their strong Ukrainian identity. As far as Jacques is concerned, he went to a Sunday school, then to a Ukrainian private high school in the town of Chortkiv. In 1933, Polish police arrested him for participating in a Ukrainian youth nationalist organization and turned him over to court. Hnizdovsky impressed the judge, the prosecutor and the spectators with his independent behavior and indifference to what was going on during the trial: he seemed to be completely concentrated on writing and drawing something in his notebook.[20] As a result, it became an additional proof to the fact that such a talented and self-organized young man was not involved in illegal activities and he was released from custody. Nevertheless, after the incident Jacques had to leave school and continued his studies at the Minor Ukrainian Clerical Seminary, then after completing the academic year he returned home.

Yet, the desire to have an artistic environment made Hnizdovsky travel to Lviv in 1936. Despite the aforementioned restrictions on the political and socio-cultural activities of Ukrainians under Polish authorities, Ukrainian artistic associations still quite clearly presented themselves against the background of the Polish.[21]

In Lviv, Hnizdovsky joined the Association of the Independent Ukrainian Artists (AIUA) (1931) and quickly became an important and helpful member

election procedures, as well as bans and limitations on activities, pogroms of Ukrainian cultural and sports organizations. Thus, the "Sich" fellowship was closed in 1924, "Plast" was banned in Volyn in 1928 and in Galicia in 1930. "Sokil" could only operate in Galicia, "Prosvita" has undergone pogroms and persecutions. See: Ihor Derevianyi: "Pol's'ka okupacija Zakhidnoi Ukrainy v 1918–1939 rokah. Iak ce bulo." In: *Istorychna Pravda* 04.02.2011. http://www.istpravda.com.ua/articles/2011/02/3/21714/ [01.05.2018].

20 Stepovyk cites Hnizdovsky's wife's memories about his drawing the court hall and the participants during the trial in 1933 (cf. Stepovyk: *Yakiv Hnizdovs'kyi*, p. 16).

21 For example, "Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Sztuk Pięknych" (in short TPSP), a group of Polish modernists "Nowa Generacja" (1935), and Lviv Professional Union of Plastic Artists ("Lwowski Związek Zawodowy Artystów Plastyków"), the members of which were both Polish and Ukrainian artists. Club of the Ukrainian Artists (CUA) included not only Galician painters, but also artists from other Ukrainian territories, who were kept in camps for interned people. Among them were Petro Holodnij and Pavlo Kovzhun, Vasyl Kryzhanivskyj, Robert Lisovskyj, Mykola Butovych, the disciples of Grigorij Narbut and Mykhailo Boychuk. Hnizdovsky also frequented meetings of the Group of Ukrainian Literature, Science and Art Lovers. Group members thought that visual arts were a driving force of the national culture development strategy. Metropolitan Andriy Sheptytsky played a colossal role in promoting Ukrainian art and Ukrainian artists in the modern-urban space. He provided financial, moral and spiritual support to many talented persons. Metropolitan Andrij Sheptytsky also granted scholarships for studying fine arts in the Western Europe countries to Mykola Fedak, Vasyl Dyadynuk, Svyatoslav Gordynsky, Petro Andrusiv and other young talented Ukrainian artists.

of the artistic community. AIUA organized some exhibitions of paintings by Pablo Picasso, André Derain, Raoul Dufi, Marc Chagall, Fernan Lezhe, Gino Severini, etc., and Ukrainian artists of Galicia and Soviet Ukraine, as well as those who worked in Warsaw, Krakow, Paris, Prague and Berlin. The Association invited many to Lviv, including Vasyl Masutin from Berlin, Maria Dolnytska from Vienna and maintained contacts with Olexandr Arkhypenko, who lived in the USA.

The Ukrainian culture was an important part of the culturally diverse Lviv (at that time a mostly Polish city).[22] Ukrainian periodicals,[23] independent artists and art organizations, not to mention Ukrainian educational, artistic, and cultural institutions[24] were not provincial at all. They were deeply integrated into the contemporary ideological, esthetic, social and economic life of modern Europe in general. The Ukrainian part of the Lviv culture was a bright modern phenomenon.

In Lviv, Jacques Hnizdovsky contributed to the dynamic Ukrainian art process by making painting products, multiplied on an industrial scale. His woodcuts allowed production of numerous copies, which, at the same time, were originals. Print was the key point of artistic technique; it was the brand of the craftsman's virtuosity.

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22 Roman Lozynsky cites the population census data in Lviv in 1931: "According to the census results in 1931 35,137 people, or 11,3 % of Lviv population have mentioned Ukrainian or Ruthenian as their native language, 198,212 (63,5 %) – Polish, 75,316 (24,1 %) – Yiddish or Hebrew, 2,448 (0,8 %) – German (chart 37). Apart from that, 462 people mentioned Russian to be their native language and 221 – Check. From those, who mentioned Ukrainian or Ruthenian as their native language, 97 % (34,077 people) were Greek-Catholics, 1,6 % (546 people) – Rome-Catholics and 1,2 % (382 people) – Orthodox. Ukrainian or Ruthenian was the native language for 68,5 % of the total Greek-Catholic number, Polish – 31,3 %". Roman Lozyns'kyi: *Etnichnyi sklad naselennia L'vova (u konteksti suspilnoho rozvytku Halychyny)*, L'viv, L'vivs'kyi natsional'nyi universytet, 2005, p. 178. http://chtyvo.org.ua/authors/Lozynskyi_Roman/Etnichnyi_sklad_naselennia_Lvova_u_konteksti_suspilnoho_rozvytku_Halychyny/ [01.05.2018].

23 *Mystetstvo/L'Art* (1932–1936) and newspaper *Nazustrich* (1934–1937). Both editions were voices of AIUA's understanding of art and contained the most recent materials about various arts and their philosophic background.

24 For example, High Art School started in the workshop of Olexa Novakivsky and existed there from 1923 until 1935. RomanYatsiv associated that school with good perspectives of the Ukrainian culture. Its best representatives were Sviatoslav Gordynsky and Volodymyr Lasovsky. The school created favorable environment for the exchange of the creative ideas. It also encouraged establishing new contacts between the Galician artists of the Ukrainian, Polish and Jewish origin. Lviv artists visited France, Italy, and Germany and discovered the newest artistic trends. See: Roman Iatsiv (ed.): *Idei, smysly, interpretatsii obrazotvorchoho mystetstva: ukrainska teoretychna dumka 20 stolittia: antolohiia*. Lviv, Lvivska natsionalna akademiia mystetstv, Instytut narodoznavstva NAN, 2012.

It was Edward Kozak[25] and graphic artist Leopold Levytsky who recommended Hnizdovsky and his works to Metropolitan Sheptytsky. At the beginning of 1938, Metropolitan gave a grant to the young man, which allowed him to enter the Warsaw Academy of the Fine Arts. There Hnizdovsky gained vast theoretical knowledge and improved his already numerous professional skills. Warsaw is geographically close to Lviv and produced a sense of Europe as a holistic space of the contemporary art in Hnizdovsky's awareness. The diversity of his personal contacts, acquaintances, his taking part in exhibitions and discussions only strengthened this sense. So, he had a burning desire to experiment with expressive means and forms, and he did his best to absorb the creative heritage of the different times and cultures.

Hnizdovsky had briefly visited Rome at the beginning of World War II. It was an attempt to escape from the war in order to continue serving art. Hnizdovsky created a romantic vision of Rome as the heart of European culture, when he was considering the option of moving to a peaceful place. However, he did not manage to stay in the city because he did not have money and could not find a method to earn it. The artist had to leave Rome "with a broken soul"[26].

Croatia, however, 'cured' his pain. The Croatian Academy of Arts and Art Crafts in Zagreb provided him with an opportunity to master his woodcarving technique. Stepovyk stresses that in Zagreb "the painter still speaks aloud in Hnizdovsky, but he is already interested in woodcut […]. He still follows the samples of academism in painting, but he is applying all his skills to a 'new unknown field'. He is approaching to an understanding of his major mission and is getting a proper training to perform it".[27]

The wood engravings of this period are affected by the strong artist's desire to achieve harmony between the material of the form and its imprint on the paper. The engravings "Head" (No. 1), "Misser" (No. 2) and "Prayer" (No. 7) (1944) draw attention by complex and apparently rough lines. They indicate wrinkles, grotesquely depict the curves of facial skin, and imitate scars on human faces. At the same time we cannot get rid of the sensation that we are looking at a person-myth, person-tree, or person-soil. Dry tree branches,

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[25] Edward Kozak (1902–1992) (EKo) – was a unique artist of comic and satiric trend, the author of grotesque sketches and caricatures, which were famous among the Western Ukrainian emigration and community. He was an editor and publisher of comic journals *Lys*, *Komar*, *Lys Mykyta*, the author of plot-driven pictures based on the songs about Ukrainian "Sichovi Striltsi" (a Ukrainian national military formation in Austria-Hungary during World War I).

[26] Stepovyk: *Yakiv Hnizdovs'kyi*, p. 24.

[27] Stepovyk: *Yakiv Hnizdovs'kyi*, p. 28.

intervened roots show through the contours of the head, neck and hands. Also the images evoke associations with the tree bark and soil cracks after an earthquake. On the wood engravings "Forest" (No. 5) and "Bush" (No. 6) (1944) we can see the peculiar twists of branches and absence of leaves. "Bush" creates an illusion of the roots, which are unnaturally growing upwards. The feeling of loneliness and longing for self-revelation are important aspects of the semantics within this image. Later the motive of a tree-crown which resembles roots becomes independent and repeated, varying in the works of the following decade and resonating with the trauma of losing one's foothold and having to uproot.

In 1944, Hnizdovsky was awarded with a scholarship to improve his artistic skills in Dresden. He moved there at the beginning of 1945. Dresden had been the center of the political and cultural life of Saxony for many centuries. The artist brought along a lot of his student works and had a strong desire to study well. It is difficult to say how deeply he realized the danger of staying in this historic German city at the end of World War II. Probably, he did not think about it. Hnizdovsky was an artist with a melancholic character completely concentrated on the creative process and having spent his previous years in relatively calm Croatia, the War did not seem to bother him, unlike most of his contemporaries. In Zagreb, he studied at the Academy and lived in his own artistic world. This form of existence created the illusion of being beyond the world cataclysms. Dresden, with its world-famous art gallery, and unique civil and church architecture, for Hnizdovsky, was a part of the well-known cultural and art environment, just like Lviv, Warsaw, Zagreb. Hence, Hnizdovsky was unbothered by happenings in the outside world because he was content existing within his own artistic mind.

However, this illusion of harmony was broken by the total bombing of the city between February 13th and 14th of 1945. The house, where Hnizdovsky was staying, was destroyed. The works he had brought from Zagreb, lost forever. Based on the memories Hnizdovsky's wife, Stefania, and a collector, Anton Ivakhnuk, Stepovyk, is able to detail the stress that Hnizdovsky experienced, when he saw the ruins, which had buried all his creative achievements. Remembrance about this event and constantly returning to it during talks with his wife, allows us to speak about the deep cultural trauma experienced by Hnizdovsky. The destruction of Dresden and, in particular, the house with all Hnizdovsky's possessions, shook the existence of an integral modern cultural environment of Europe in the artist's mind. Thus, his personal artistic identity as a product of multicultural modernist European culture

lost its ground.[28] In other words, Hnizdovsky's melancholic and self-concentrated nature turned out to be favorable ground for intensive experiencing of cultural ruptures and traumas of the whole artistic generation, which was formed in a certain part of Europe in the 1920s–1930s.

"Native environment" had been taken away by the war; the ways of the artistic vision of the world had lost its ground. The fragmentary reality of a ruined Europe made people act according to the situation, forcing them to accept their identities as a temporary, relative, and incomplete constructions.[29] Thus, Hnizdovsky, who left Dresden at the end of February 1945, was not the Hnizdovsky, who had arrived there at the end of January.

Hnizdovsky in Postwar Germany

The next four years (from March 1945 till 1949) he spent on the outskirts of Munich as one of the Ukrainian "wanderers",[30] a dweller of a Ukrainian DP-camp close to Bad Wiessee settlement. Hnizdovsky began working together with other Ukrainian emigrants. He became absorbed with his work probably in order to overcome the disorientation caused by losing his basic senses and in an attempt to find a meaning in the life that was waiting for him after the Dresden trauma.

He made graphic illustrations for book covers, invitations, event programs, and brochures. He took an active part with the Ukrainians' and their organizations' activities. For example, for the "Art Ukrainian Movement"[31] he created the stamp "Golden Gate", which was used to mark the high artistic value of the books written by AUM's members. In 1947, Hnizdovsky created a memorial plaque for many thousands of Ukrainian victims of the concentration

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28 Jeffrey C. Alexander writes that cultural traumas are interconnected with the crisis phenomena in the collective identity. They appear as the result of fear to lose the fundamental senses, bearing this or that collective identity project. Jeffrey C. Alexander et al.: *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, Los Angeles, University of California, 2004, p. 93. https://books.google.com.ua/books/about/Cultural_Trauma_and_Collective_Identity.html?id=shkt8_4srhoC&redir_esc=y [01.05.2018].

29 Zygmunt Bauman: "From Pilgrim to Tourist – or a Short History of Identity." In: Stuart and Gay Hall (eds.): *Questions of Cultural Identity*, London, Sage, 2010, pp. 19–36. http://pages.mtu.edu/~jdslack/readings/CSReadings/Bauman_From_Pilgrim_to_Tourist.pdf [01.05.2018].

30 Hnizdovsky's picture with this symbolic name "Wanderers" ("Displaced persons", fig. 1) appeared in 1948.

31 *Artistic Ukrainian Movement* (in Ukrainian: *Mystetskyi Ukrainskyi Rukh* or *MUR*) (1945–1948) is a literary and art organization of the Ukrainians living in Austria and Germany because of World War II.

camp Flossenburg. It was placed among the memorial signs of the other nations in the "Valley of Death" in Flossenburg. He was also the creator of the Ukrainian memorial stained glass[32] in a window of the mausoleum chapel in the territory of the concentration camp.

Beginning in 1947, Hnizdovsky worked as an editor for the journal *Arka* (Munich, 1947–1948). It was the most successful publication during the first years after World War II. Jurij Schevelov, the editor-in-chief, wrote about the cooperation with Hnizdovsky: "he was not a graphic artist, who brings his project – and says good bye! We made each page together… His style was everywhere – laconic, moderate, without ornamentation… Spartan".[33]

Hnizdovsky defines his work in *Arka* as an "accidental job". He also thought also that those art critical articles, which he wrote for *Arka*, only "filled the space", assigned for the art topics.[34] He only recalls his numerous graphics of these and the following years in the context of the ordinary and does not distinguish them from the products by other book designers. This also

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[32] Art critic Natalia Sobkovych provides its description: "The stained glass is placed into an oblong arch window place subdivided into three parts. The top is almost center symmetric and displays Virgin Oranta – a conventionalized image of Sofia Kyivska with Kiev Cathedrals on the both sides. The bottom displays Orants on the both sides – conventionalized emblems, probably, of Kiev Region – with a golden angel on red background and Lviv Region – with yellow lion standing on the back legs on blue background. The central part is asymmetric, yet balanced, showing upholder of truth and fair Christian Saint Yurij Serpent-Killer riding a horse and with a spear, directed by the God's hand, kills the serpent – symbolic evil. This part of the composition includes the emblems of Nothern Bukovyna and Bessarabia – a yellow bull with a ring in its nostrils on red background and Carpathian Ukraine – a bear standing on the back legs opposite a plane with yellow and blue horizontal lines. The representation of the historic Ukrainian lands emblems together with the Christian Saints images symbolizes unity of the lands and people for spiritual achievements, development and prosperity. In the middle bottom there is a yellow trident on blue background – the symbolic emblem of free and independent Ukraine. On the both sides of the trident one can read a Latin text, translated by Bogdan Kachor: 'Ukraine – to its sons, who lost their lives for the sake of freedom'. Roman Ferentsevych provides another translation of the text, where the meaning and the emphasis are different: "Ukraine – to its sons who desired freedom stronger than life." Vasyl Vitenko (scientific ed.): *Yakiv Hnizdovs'kyj: "Zhyttia liudyny – til'ky nedoskonalyi vidblysk yii vlasnoi mrii": bibliohr. pokazhchyk*, Ternopil', Navchal'na knyha – Bohdan, 2015, pp. 19-20.

[33] Jurij Sherekh: "Zustrichi z Hnizdovs'kym." In: Jurij Sherekh: *Porohy i Zaporizhzhia. Literatura. Mystetstvo. Ideolohija*, Vol. 3, Kharkiv, Folio, 1996, pp. 149–161.

[34] "I was writing them not because I felt it to be a kind of a mission, or because I had a strong desire to express myself that way. No, I wrote them, because it was necessary to fill the space in the magazine, which I was accidentally connected to, with some art themes". Yakiv Hnizdovs'kyi: *Maliunky. Hrafika. Keramika, Statti*, New York, Prolog, 1967. http://uartlib.org/allbooks/yakiv-gnizdovskiy-malyunki-grafika-keramika-statti/ [01.05.2018].

reveals the deficiency of creative energy and the emptiness of existence caused by the Dresden trauma.

The Ukrainian reality in post-war Germany differed in a radical way from the Ukrainian reality in pre-war Lviv. The Ukrainian DPs were facing the challenges of tremendous losses of Ukrainians, caused by the Soviet authorities and Nazism. The high social organization of the "camp republics" founded in general on ideological and pragmatic tasks were aimed at preventing Ukrainians and Ukrainian identity from dissolving in post-war Europe. It was too hard to have independent artistic reality in those conditions.

Hnizdovsky, unlike the prevailing majority of the Ukrainian exiles, was not traumatized by the Soviet past. When the Soviet authorities came to Galicia in 1939, he was studying in Warsaw. Later, he continued his studies in Zagreb. He considered his own creative self-realization as the main expression of an artist's national and civil position. However, in Munich, which was one of the three largest emigration centers, he had to spend more efforts to support the life of the native community and had less time for constructing his artistic self.

Serving the community was a somewhat new type of activity for Hnizdovsky. It required a full revision of his "cultural identification project". Hence, Hnizdovsky took leave from pursuit of his own artistic identity as a free artist, and was in constant contact with his new community. D. Stepovyk summarized the character of Hnizdovsky's activities during the DP period: "[he] was realizing himself by doing both his own and others' work without hurry and with extremely high quality"[35].

Hnizdovsky's 'indifference' toward his own artistic identity, probably, is a sign of cultural trauma experienced in Dresden. Jurij Sherekh (Shevelov), who knew Hnizdovsky very well, stated that Hnizdovsky had an "undetermined, subconscious feeling of an abyss"[36] which spread out between him and his post-war art. Obviously, such an abyss also spread out between his Munich life and his life in pre-war Lviv, Warsaw, and Zagreb. Exactly this "second" abyss caused "bitter irresistible loneliness"[37]. He was suffering from "constant, real, incurable pain"[38]. Suddenly, Hnizdovsky's traumatic experiences (first, the loss of his works in Dresden; second, losing his own self due to a new focus on community), especially within such a short period of time, propelled Hnizdovsky into an empty abyss.

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35 Stepovyk: *Yakiv Hnizdovs'kyi*, p. 43.

36 Sherekh: *Zustrichi z Hnizdovs'kym*, p. 159.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

Wanderers

Suffering from the discontinuation and emptiness between 'himself' and 'his own' reality becomes the regular motive for Hnizdovsky's ideas. The picture "Wanderers" ("Displaced persons"), which was painted during this period, contains an allusion to this discontinuation.[39]

Fig. 1: Jacques Hnizdovsky: "Переміщені особи" [The wanderers]. (1948)[40]

Its geometrical space is divided initially into two vertical parts, where identical three-layer plank beds are situated. Every level of plank beds divides the picture horizontally. The pictures of people simultaneously contain household and symbolic semantics. The lower layer is occupied by an aged man, who apparently is soaking his sick feet in a bowl of hot water. This is the image of a life, which is ending in exile. Opposite to him, we can see a young mother with two children. Their life only begins despite all misery and a lack of confidence in the future.

The middle layer is occupied by two men. The picture hardly casts any light on their lives. This is indeed the middle, average cohort of wanderers without any special needs or desires.

A young girl, dreaming about boyfriends, is lying on the upper layer. A flirtatious broad-brimmed hat, underwear (a bra) which has absent-mindedly been left in a visible location, ironically emphasizes the nature of her personal

[39] Replication of the painting: https://zbruc.eu/node/32067 [01.05.2018].

[40] http://www.ukrainianmuseum.org/thumbs/06ex_hnizdovsky-0295displacedpersons400216.jpg [01.05.2018].

plans. The bed opposite her is occupied by an intellectual. He identified by his passion for reading, glasses and even his hat is a formal trait of belonging to intelligentsia. However, his bare feet, which peep out from under the blanket are as eloquent in ironic detail as his plank-bed mate's bra. In other words, there is a DP-camps "vertep"[41] in front of us with its peculiar correlation of the worlds.

The geometric order of the picture is violated by the shadowed space between the beds. There is a brush and some men's clothes there (trousers or perhaps a suit), which are hanging down from the upper beds. The leaning brush makes a dissonance with the horizontal and vertical lines, which dominate the picture. The shapeless clothes intensify the feeling of disorder, barrack-life, and confusion. The shadow concentrated in this location emphasizes emptiness and static. The clothes are worn by no one at the moment and the brush is not being used. At first sight the picture is dedicated to the DP people and their stories. Yet, the center of the picture is unattended and quite confined (narrow). Eventually, the view 'from the center' determines the conception of the picture. There is no human history here. The plot content is quite elusive. Alternatively, the beholder sees people confined by the circumstances of the DP. Their lives are now measured by the allocated plank-beds. Their world is cramped and at the same time existentially empty. The space between the plank-beds is a metaphor for the emptiness of existence which the artist is suffering from. Household chores (the brush) and social action (men's clothes) do not compensate the emptiness. Hnizdovsky's "emptiness" is similar to Zygmunt Bauman's image of the "desert". The desert, where a pilgrim walks, becomes a metaphor of Modernity.[42] Moving across a desert means accepting one's mission and creating one's identity in order to find the way amongst wandering through strange paths. Thus, "Wanderers" ("Displaced

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41 Vertep is a type of puppet theater performances in Ukraine. It was started in the 17th century. The action took place on two floors of a wooden house (two-story stage). Action on the top floor reproduced the Christmas drama and on the lower floor puppeteer played an entertaining home interlude. During the interludes puppetees ('vertepnyk') showed all their talent, intelligence, wit, ability to impromptu. Subsequently, the vertep turned into a street theater, in which not only dolls-actors played, but also real people. Vertep combined sacred and real sketches. Although they were combined mechanically, viewers were able to slightly change the understanding of the content and meaning of life on the background of "eternal" Biblical story.

42 See Zygmunt Bauman: "From Pilgrim to Tourist – or a Short History of Identity." In: Stuart and Gay Hall (eds.): *Questions of Cultural Identity*, London, Sage, 2010, pp. 19–36. http://pages.mtu.edu/~jdslack/readings/CSReadings/Bauman_From_Pilgrim_to_Tourist.pdf [01.05.2018].

persons") reveals the psychological and cultural trauma of the artist, caused by losing the immanent soil and artistic environment.

Hnizdovsky in the United States

The traumatic event of losing the foothold of a meaningful life and creativity is reflected in the works painted after Hnizdovsky's emigration to the USA (1949). He settled in the city of Saint-Paul, a place with a small Ukrainian intellectual and art community, which consisted of Professor Olexandr Hranovsky, and artists like Mykola Anastazijevsky, Olexandr Kanuka, Jevgen Nakonechny, Anton Pavlos, and Leonid Papara etc. With a reference from Hranovsky he got a good job at the publishing company Brown and Bigelow. In 1950, at the exhibition of the Institute of Art in Minneapolis, his woodcuts brought him success. After this he decided to move to New York, where he wanted to achieve greater success and real freedom for self-realization.

What was guided him during those times? Hnizdovsky followed an unconscious impulse, his intuitive aspiration to go to New York. [43] Actually, like Rome in the past, New York evoked his irresistible desire to find himself in the heart of the New World.

At those times, New York artists were actively experimenting with new forms and an "unusual combination of the materials."[44] They were trying to produce impressive effects, loud sensations in an effort to draw the attention of the audience. Hnizdovsky perceived the American mainstream art as something strange (even hostile),[45] because it demanded of the artist to prove his/her originality at any price. Instead, he wanted to create visual images, capable of leading a spectator into the depth of things, which were essential for understanding life. Jurij Shevelov wrote:

> emotion was excluded from Hnizdovsky's graphics once and forever. […] minimalism, nothing excessive, unessential, absence of unnecessary details, concentration on the most important […]. The artist demanded neither laughter nor tears from the audience, but he wanted understanding, an insight into the essence.[46]

Hnizdovsky's visual images possess impassive analytic nature. Amazing complexity of lines does not entertain. The realistic impulse of graphics

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43 Yakiv Hnizdovs'kyi: "Probudzhena tsarivna." http://uartlib.org/yakiv-gnizdovskiy-probudzhena-tsarivna/ [01.05.2018].

44 Sherekh: *Zustrichi z Hnizdovs'kym*, p. 158.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

transforms into the manifestation of something bigger, more significant than the thing, which caused that impulse.

The serious differences between his expectations and the real New York, between his understanding of art and the demands of the New York art market, between the individual 'uncertain will' and the danger of getting lost it in the city caused yet another identification rupture. The approach, appropriate in Europe, did not function here. At the end of the 1940s, Europe itself was not only lying in ruins under the feet of soldiers – it was far, on the other side of the ocean and almost inaccessible as a source of cultural identity and creative process.

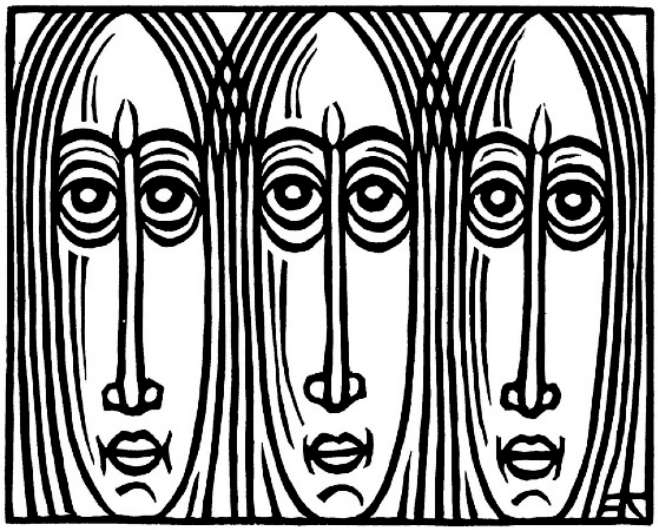

Fig. 2: Jacques Hnizdovsky: "Three faces". Linocut 6 x 7 3/8 (1951)[47]

That is why the first year of Hnizdovsky's New York life strengthened his suffering caused by world war and migration trauma. It aggravated his existential drama of loneliness and homelessness. Anonymity and, at the same time, diversity of the city are expressed in several woodcuts, in particular, in the linocuts "Three Faces" (No. 14) (1951), "Before the Mirror" (No. 18), "On the Boat" (No. 19), "The Kiss" (No. 21) and "The Kiss II" (No. 22) (all in 1952).[48]

47 All woodcuts in: Tahir: *Jacques Hnizdovsky*, s.p.

48 Stepovyk: *Yakiv Hnizdovs'kyi*, p. 50.

In the composition and artistic content of the “Three Faces” (fig. 2) there are traces of traditional Fayum mummy portrait and further byzantine traditions of icon-painting. Namely big eyes, asymmetric face, and circles-bows around them are not completely identical on every face. One can tell the difference by the lips contour and the upper line of the chin. One can have an impression that the artist captures the unnoticeable facial changes, embedding the spiritual dynamics of the image in the statics of the picture. The same function is performed by the lines on the left side of every face.

Fig 3: Jacques Hnizdovsky: “The Kiss”. Color linocut. $12^{1}/_{4}$ x $10^{3}/_{8}$ (1952)

The contour of the thin nose is always prolonged until it reaches the eyebrows and ends in a symmetric wrinkle. These are the central details of the face, the geometrical center of every picture, an allusion to the burning church candle, in front of which a person is praying, and a metaphor of enlightenment, for which the one suffering from a difficult (traumatic) condition is asking. The triple depiction emphasizes the strong need for spiritual support, balance, while at the same time creating the feeling of lament and uncertainty.

The name of the linocut "The Kiss" is quite metaphorical. It provokes the viewer, who expects to see the traditional kiss in the provisional content of the picture. Instead they find the motive of people fatally doomed for each other. The contours of their lips are marked with acute angles along the line where they touch each other. This artistic decision determines the allusions of pain. The embraces of the lovers are expressed with the elements of elliptical and spiral lines. From the view point of the composition they frame and close the central theme. From the standpoint of semantics they express the endless movement, roads, transformation, and transfiguration, which an emigrant constantly undergoes. "The kiss" is a statement of at least a short moment of constant existence, filled with an individual sense. The kiss is not love and not even an erotic adventure. This is a kind of protection from the outraged world. However, the kiss demands an openness with another one (the stranger). This can lead to confrontation, conflict, and traumas.

As he suffered from loneliness in the New World, the role of the Ukrainian community in New York became extremely important for Hnizdovsky. Separated from his native land and surrounded by strangers in the New World, Ukrainians preserved national collective memory, the Ukrainian "inherited resources"[49]. The national cultural monuments, artistic codes, attitudes and values did not only unite immigrants, but also represented them in a new diverse environment.

In DP-camps Ukrainians believed that the exile was a temporary situation produced by cataclysms of World War II, which they had to get through. Immigration to America was an irretrievable event for them. They had to restart their lives from nothing. The experience of their past lives in the native land had to be re-implanted in a totally new context. After losing their roots they needed self-identification, which had to be followed by the integration (rooting) into a new social body.

Hnizdovsky's graphics between the 1950s to the 1960s – woodcuts "Tree Trunk" (No. 26) (1958), "Trees" (No. 28) (1960), "Forest in Spring" (No. 31) (1960) and "Young Willow" (No. 32) (1961) – reflect his own outlook on the opportunity of the new rooting. They are the results of the numerous practical

[49] Neil Smelser formalizes cultural trauma in this way: "A memory accepted and publically given credence by a relevant membership group and evoking an event or situation which is a) laden with negative affect, b) represented as indelible, and c) regarded as threatening a society's existence or violating one or more of its fundamental cultural presuppositions". Quote for: Ron Eyerman: "Cultural Trauma: Emotion and Narration." In: Jeffrey C. Alexander et al. (eds.): *The Oxford Handbook of Cultural Sociology*, 2012. http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195377767.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780195377767. [01.05.2018].

exercises, but also of retranslation and visualization of the collective trauma, caused by loss of home. A mighty twisted tree trunk on a black background, with chopped-off twigs, absence of leaves like a sick person (No. 26). The concentric lines of the trunk and ramifications in the place, where twigs used to grow, create an allusion to mythological world trees, transplanted from the ground somewhere beyond the world.

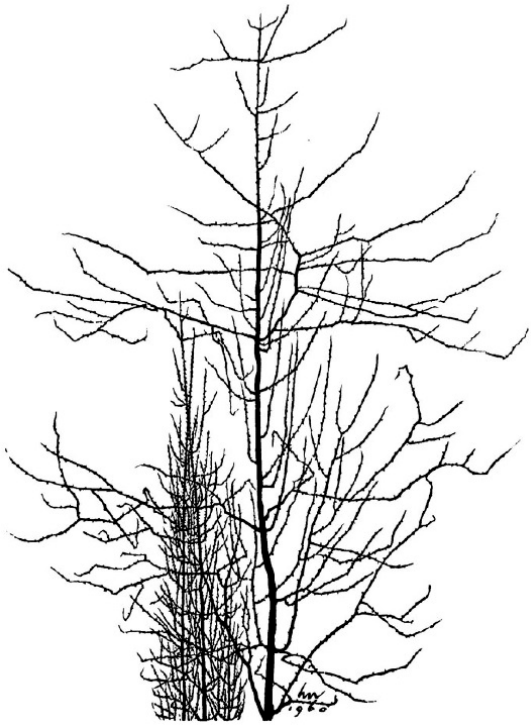

Fig. 5: Jacques Hnizdovsky: "Trees". Woodcut, $18^{1}/_{8}$ x 13 (1960)

Woodcut "Trees" (No. 28) uses a different concept of imagery, but visualizes the same trauma in its symbolic details. One can see thin branches with unnaturally sharp cracks; buds (or maybe thorns?) evoke association with barbed wire. Right or almost right angles, created by trunk and branches, recall the symbol of a cross. It produces an extremely broad spectrum of historic, national, ethic, philosophic, and personally existential associations with an immigrant's life.

During Hnizdovsky's mature period, when his most successful works were produced in the United States, he pays much attention to images of sheep and rams. The Ukrainian life-style, based on an agricultural economy, preserved the totemic and family attitude towards those animals. Classical works of Ukrainian literature, *Shadows of the Forgotten Ancestors* (1911) by Mykhajlo Kotsubynsky (1864–1913) and *The Owner* (1900) by Ivan Karpenko-Kary (1845–1907) illustrate this tradition. Sheep are symbols of Ukrainian kindness, prosperity, and sacrifice. At the same time, sheep personify naivety, passive obedience, senseless wandering, stupidity and even stubbornness. In the Ukrainian national proverbs sheep symbolize weak intellect and will or their total absence.[50] Printed on an empty white background, sheep and rams are controversial esthetic objects. Perceptions of those images balance between idyllic and ironic modes, as well as between the ethnic Ukrainian and universal meaning. The artist is replicating these images in various compositions. The utilitarian semantics reflects the acceptance of the New World as the soil for the new rooting and furnishing the new home. The images of masterfully crafted images of animals become the symbol of its integrity. The plant motive also undergoes certain changes. The image of a "Winged Tree" (No. 78) appears which has both a crown and roots. The haunting motive of the crown imitating the roots which are absent disappears (the motive of the tree uprooted from the soil). The theme of a plant within its entire life circle emerges: from the seed to blossom and back to the seed again ("Circle of Growth", No. 78).

Eventually, from the 1960s through the 1980s Hnizdovsky created a number of visual images, which correlate with the concepts of the main Ukrainian philosopher of the past Hryhoriy Skovoroda (1722–1794) and recall an allusion to the idea of Ukrainian "Cordocentricity"[51] ('Cordocentrysm' in Ukrainian).

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50 For example, "A silly sheep will confess even to a wolf", "A silly sheep will give more wool than a smart goat".

51 "Cordocentricity" is a concept that defines "The philosophy of the heart", the basis of which was laid by Hryhoriy Skovoroda. This thinker understood the heart as the emotional and volitional nature of the human spirit. Dmytro Chyzhevs'ky explained why the heart is the key concept of thinking of Skovoroda: "From the heart rises and grows up idea and aspiration and sensation. The main attention of the moral validity of man must be addressed to the "heart" of man as well. As a consequence, the requirement "recognize yourself", "look in yourself", and so on. As a consequence, the recognition of the equality of different human types and human individuals. As a consequence, the peculiar theory of "unequal equality" of people regarding their moral and religious life". Dmytro Chyzhevs'ky: "IV. Hryhorii Skovoroda (2. Providni dumky)". In: Dmytro Chyzhevs'ky: *Narysy z istorii filosofii na Ukraini*, Kiev, Vydavnyctvo Orii pry UKSP Kobza, 1992. http://litopys.org.ua/chyph/chyph05.htm [01.05.2018].

For example, "Open Nut" (No. 74), "Screw Shell" (No. 309), "Pheasant Shell" (No. 311), "Cuban Tree Snail" (No. 313) and "Josephine Moon Snail" (No. 314).[52] Hnizdovsky was quite familiar with the texts by Skovoroda. The artist studied his works when he was doing his research "Ukrainian Grotesque", published in the journal *Arka*[53]. These laconic images printed on a white background and, in some cases enclosed in a circle, resemble Skovoroda's emblematic literary images[54]. Except Hnizdovsky's woodcuts "Winged Tree" (No. 78) or "Circle of Growth" (No. 78), worth mentioning here his works "Albatross" (No. 73), "Old Tree" (No. 75), "Eve" (No. 76), and "Castle in the Sky" (No. 77).

The attraction of the artist to rounded images has been increasing since 1960. Woodcuts "Ram" (No. 33), "The Sheep" (No. 34), "Cabbage" (No. 44), "Apple Tree" (No. 49), "Sunflower" (No. 60), "Herd of Sheep with Black Ram" (No. 68), "Walnuts" (No. 89), "Sleeping Cat" (No. 92), "Duck" (No. 98), "Onion" (No. 99), and many others expressing the gradual overcoming of injury. From this angle, the emblematic "Old Tree" clearly indicates the localization of traumatic sensations, limiting their influence on the artist. The technique of depicting the "old tree" is very similar to the one which artists used in the 1940s. It is leafless and twisted, as if it is dead. But the artist encircles it. Thus, he separates himself from a painful past[55] and manifests an overcoming of eradication trauma.

Conclusion

Hnizdovsky's various images (trees, grass, animals, house-hold things, fruits and vegetables etc.) reflect extremely complicated reactions of an artistic

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52 One of the most famous Cordocentrism allegories can be found in Skovoroda's treatise "Alphabet or Primer of the World": "It's a shell, or a turtle, or an oyster. Try it, it speaks wisest things: 'search for yourself inside you'. All its goodness is stored inside its sculpt". Grigorii Skovoroda: *Razghovor, nazyvaemyi Alfavit, ili Bukvar mira*. http://shchedrovitskiy.ru/PDF/Skovoroda.pdf [01.05.2018].

53 Yakiv Hnizdovs'kyi: "Ukrainskyi hrotesk." In: *Arka* 6, 1947, pp. 6–9. http://diasporiana.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/books/17449/file.pdf [01.05.2018].

54 Skovoroda repeatedly uses a symbol of a circle (rings, wheels) when thinking about the world. Circle points to the unity of the end and the beginning, man and God, peace and movement. It denotes the unity of contradictions, beyond which there is no life. Dmytro Chizhevsky also wrote about this. Dmytro Chyzhevskyi: "IV. Hryhorii Skovoroda (2. Providni dumky)." http://litopys.org.ua/chyph/chyph05.htm [01.05.2018].

55 I will briefly mention that in the past Ukrainians believed that the circle protects against demonic forces. This belief was used by Mykola Hohol in the story "Viy" (1835). The story's main character Thomas Brutus hides from the witch at night in the church in the circle painted in chalk.

individual's psyche to traumatic events. Such events act as the deformation and destruction of the modern European cultural environment as a result of World War II, as well as establishing the Soviet regime in Western Ukraine. It deprived Hnizdovsky and tens of thousands of other Ukrainians of a chance to return home.

Hnizdovsky personally suffered from the trauma of eradication,[56] but, at the same time, transmits his pain to the world on behalf of all his fellow emigrants. The allusion of lacking roots is one of the most popular motifs throughout his works. The reflection of roots, which he did not have, is the leafless tree trunks in his woodcuts "Pinoak Trees" (No. 42), "Winter Tree" (No. 47), "Ginkgo" (No. 48) and "Winter Landscape" (No. 59). The woodcut "Constructor" (No. 70) is the visual interpretation of the root motive in the images, made of a dense concentration of lines, which cross and break on one another.

Hnizdovsky visualizes trauma therapy through images of traditional Ukrainian house-hold items. Woodcuts displaying apples, baskets of eggs and walnuts, some animals do not look trivial. The images produced by Hnizdovsky are reminiscent of the trauma of migration yet at the same work toward understanding and healing, while causing associations with the native environment and native imaginations about it. The images related to the Hryhoriy Skovoroda's ideas.[57] At the same time, technically perfect images, presented in a separate environment are intensively perceived by the esthetic consciousness of spectators. Sometimes images are encircled; more often they have the motive of a circle or a ball. The visual images of sheep and rams have an idyllic and ironic connotation, provoking the reliving native senses and senses of immigration.[58] Nonetheless, it does not diminish the constant

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56 In the essay "Awoken Princess" he writes: "Several times the circumstances of my life moved me onto another ground right at that very moment, when I had already grown into a certain environment." Yakiv Hnizdovs'kyi: "Probudzhena tsarivna". http://uartlib.org/yakiv-gnizdovskiy-probudzhena-tsarivna/ [01.05.2018].

57 Here you can see another echo with the views of Skovoroda. He proved to his students, that round shape, which is found in nature and the primitive world most often (wheel, apple, egg, plate, beans, sun, etc.), always bear the idea of real life, which serves at the same time both the basis and the purpose for itself. See: Dmytro Chyzhevsky: "IV. Hryhorii Skovoroda (2. Providni dumky)." http://litopys.org.ua/chyph/chyph05.htm [01.05.2018]. Hnizdovsky is looking for and finds an internal equilibrium, fills the post-traumatic emptiness, overcomes gaps through the circle and the sphere motives and mastering his life and his art. Metaphorically speaking, he 'wakes up his princess'.

58 An example of such reinterpretation was the art megaphone performance "Sheep. Freedom!" during Hnizdovsky's graphics exhibition in the Ukrainian National Art Museum (Kiev, July, 2015). Young artists together with volunteers created their art object after Hnizdovsky's

replication of ethnic images of domestic animals in non-Ukrainian environment.

Thus, the project of Hnizdovsky's cultural identity underwent certain traumatic "ruptures" caused by the destruction of the native artistic world and migration (in a wider meaning – eradication). Hnizdovsky's creative activities go beyond the frame of "cultural compensation" in its traditional meaning. People coming from different cultures feel the magnetism of his works. The artist's international recognition proves that he managed to create a universal visual discourse, where he successfully transcodes his personal experience and the experience of his compatriots, making it available for his contemporaries all over the world.

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sheep. The core message was that it was not accidental that Hnizdovsky pictured exactly the sheep, as he was sure that they are pacific and free creatures. He was looking for his freedom through their freedom. By having set the flock free we ourselves become free (see Maria Prokopenko: *Sheep call…to exhibition*. http://m.day.kyiv.ua/uk/article/cuspilstvo/vivci-klychut-na-vystavku [01.05.2018]).

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OLEKSANDR PRONKEVICH

Andrey Tarkovsky's *The Mirror* Through the Lens of Trauma Theory

Introduction

The Mirror is the most intimate and hermetic film made by Andrey Tarkovsky. Its artistic idiom proved to be completely revolutionary for Soviet times and influenced film directors all over the world. It is no wonder *The Mirror* has been very well studied and commented on by critics. However, in spite of the huge amount of literature dedicated to *The Mirror*, some important approaches towards interpreting the meanings of the film have not yet been applied. Among the understudied is trauma theory, an approach which has been gaining popularity over the last decades. In this article, I will try to fill this gap and to reinterpret the famous film as a reflection of latent and silenced injuries caused to the director and his spectators by personal lives and social reality.

Andrey Tarkovsky and Trauma Theory

It is important to emphasize that it is Andrey Tarkovsky who encourages researchers to look upon his films as representations of trauma. In his book, *Sculpting in Time*, he compares trauma to a work of art three times. The film director writes about the traumatic impact of a work of art in terms of Aristotle's theory of catharsis. He juxtaposes two ways of perceiving the world: the first one is scientific, it is based on a rational discipline and is used for understanding practical truths; the second one is artistic and it produces a great emotional impact, it is charged with such enormous spiritual energy that it can provoke pain and suffering while the work of art is being perceived – it acts like trauma.

> Art addresses everybody, in the hope of making an impression, above all of being felt, of being the cause of an emotional trauma and being accepted, of winning people not by incontrovertible rational argument but through the spiritual

> energy with which the artist has charged the work. And the preparatory discipline it demands is not a scientific education but a particular spiritual lesson.[1]

The emotional trauma becomes "purging". The beholder loses his/her self and gradually morphs into the voice through which the artist speaks to the world. The trauma, which the work of art provokes in an human being, becomes an impulse for "improving his/her soul", or, as it would be termed today, for reconstructing the system of values with which he/she identifies:

> Touched by a masterpiece, a person begins to hear in himself that same call of truth which prompted the artist to his creative act. When a link is established between the work and its beholder, the latter experiences a sublime, purging trauma. Within that aura which unites masterpieces and audience, the best sides of our souls are made known, and we long for them to be freed. In those moments we recognize and discover ourselves, the unfathomable depths of our own potential, and the furthest reaches of our emotions.[2]

According to Andrey Takovsky, the ability of art to traumatize the audience explains the use of such collective performative practices as theatre and cinema for influencing human behavior in a positive way:

> Art is by nature aristocratic, and naturally selective in its effect on the audience. For even in its 'collective' manifestations, like theatre or cinema, its effect is bound up with the intimate emotions of each person who comes into contact with a work. The more the individual is traumatized and gripped by those emotions, the more significant a place will the work have in his experience.[3]

The film director argues that the individual must be affected by the emotions, which are transmitted by the work of art as profoundly as possible.

Despite Andrey Tarkovksy not referring trauma very often, because when he was creating his films and essays about cinema, trauma theory was only being introduced into the research practices of the Humanities – the term "trauma" is a part of his artistic vocabulary. It also must be noted that trauma theory is still not as popular in post-Soviet countries as in the West. In my opinion, this is one of the reasons why trauma theory has been excluded from the repertoire of hermeneutic models of interpreting Andrey Tarkovsky's *The Mirror*.

An important observation should also be made concerning the meaning of the word "trauma" as it is used by Andrey Tarkovsky in the above-cited passages. My opponents can argue that the definition of "trauma" has changed

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1 Andrey Tarkovsky: *Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema*. *The Great Russian Filmmaker Discusses His Art*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1987, pp. 37–38.

2 Ibid., p. 43.

3 Ibid., p. 164.

overtime and the current usage, imposed by scholars of Psychoanalysis, Literary and Cultural Studies, contains multitudes that Andrey Tarkovsky was not aware of. I agree with that sentiment, to some extent, because for Andrey Tarkovsky "trauma" is a synonym for any kind of strong emotional impact of a work of art on the individual. However, I would like to add that the film director is much closer to the contemporary understanding of trauma than one would expect. Those who are familiar with his films (*The Mirror* is among them) know that they produce a shocking, traumatic effect (affect). After viewing Andrey Tarkovsky's films, spectators are overwhelmed with pain. The immediate result of his movies is a certain "disconnect" of the innate rational ability within a human being, at least for a while. This is produced not only by an explosion of spiritual energy but also by images of suffering, loss, and solitude which are all intensified by a combination of music, painting, and citations from world literature. In many cases, Andrey Tarkovsky's films were so shocking that many people are not able to speak and have a feeling of becoming bodies without memories. Of course, this state does not last as long as the real trauma does but Andrey Tarkovsky's cinematic images do provoke the effect of belatedness, which resembles trauma experiences. They come back from time to time to the human mind as obsessive dreams and, in the end, change the human selves.

Another consideration allows me to interpret *The Mirror* and other films by Andrey Tarkovsky through the lens of trauma theory. The film's poetics look like cinematographic transcriptions of traumatic experiences, the description of which one can find in numerous works of researchers as well. All of his characters are survivors of the events or processes, which happened in the past, and they refuse to speak about them and yet the memories "return to haunt (them) later on."[4] It can be the loss of parents and the cruelties of war (*Ivan's Childhood*), killing a person against will (*Andrey Rublev*), a sense of guilt (*Solaris*), alienation (*Stalker*), emigration and exile (*Nostalgia*), or a diagnosis of cancer (*Sacrifice*). While encountering these movies one can easily identify the techniques of "departure", "falling", "burning", or "awakening", which Cathy Caruth suggests using in order to decipher what "stubbornly persists in bearing witness to some forgotten wound."[5] Using Caruth's terms, Andrey Tarkovsky's films are narratives of a belated experience and its endless impact on a life. They are "crying wounds"[6] and "repetitions of his

4 Cathy Caruth: *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Baltimore and London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, p. 4.

5 Ibid, p. 5.

6 Ibid, p. 8.

own trauma as it shapes his life."[7] In his movies, the protagonists face the same problem – the inability to express themselves because the latent trauma interrupts their communication. The narrative structures of Andrey Tarkovsky can be compared to what Dominique LaCapra calls "acting-out – the tendency to repeat something compulsively"[8] and "working through", when "the person tries to gain critical distance on a problem, to be able to distinguish between past, present and future."[9] In brief, Andrey Tarkovsky's films are a primary means of visualizing trauma theory through the audiovisual arts, even despite the fact that he himself does not use the word "trauma" on a systematic basis and confuses it with other traditional concepts of Aristotelian aesthetics.

In this paper, I will focus my efforts on developing the definition of trauma provided by Geoffrey Hartman in his paper "Trauma Within the Limits of Literary Theory". Hartman argues that "Trauma study in the arts explores the relation between psychic wounds and signification."[10] By "trauma" he understands an extremely painful experience which changes the individual's conception of his or herself. Thus, trauma is the kind of injury which produces a profound belated effect on memory, disrupts communication of the disturbing experience and leads, according to Claire Stocks, to "the sense of self-division" or, in other words, to problems with "constructions of identity."[11] What is important to me in these definitions is that trauma should be taken not only as an event but also as a process or any kind of phenomenon, which damages radically, as Andrey Tarkovsky would put it, the human soul.

Hartman also stresses that researchers should keep in mind that "trauma theory within literary studies does shift attention, in any case, from aetiology to effects among which a literary sensibility is often found"[12]. Trauma can be a cause and an effect (an affect). This shift has "an intriguing and a more dubious consequence"[13]. Hence many kinds of experiences, which are not seen as traumas, are considered to be traumatic. Among them Hartman names unguarded phrases, deliberate insults, anything

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7 Ibid.

8 Dominick LaCapra: "'Acting-Out' And 'Working-Through' Trauma." http://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft Word - 3646.pdf, p. 2 [01.05.2018].

9 Ibid.

10 Geoffrey Hartman: "Trauma within the Limits of Literature." In: *European Journal of English Studies* 7, no. 3, 2003, p. 257.

11 Claire Stocks: "Trauma Theory and the Singular Self: Rethinking Extreme Experiences in the Light of Cross Cultural Identity." In: *Textual Practice* 21, no. 1, 2007, p. 71.

12 Hartman: "Trauma within the Limits of Literature", p. 260.

13 Ibid.

> that inflicts psychic damage. The questionable consequence of the shift to effect is that it establishes an equivalence between such disparate, although at times overlapping determinants: that is, given the existence of the phenomenon called trauma, the variability of human sensitiveness and the diversity of cultural contexts influencing what is traumatic, it has so far been easier to describe the symptoms and or general structure of trauma than to connect cause and effect in a predictable way.[14]

The above-cited words concern such phenomena as "cultural trauma", or "historical trauma", etc. because "what is perceived to be traumatic is or is strongly defined as such depends on the sensibility and norms of each society."[15] One should add the imaginative power of the individuals who suffer from the destructive events – essentially meaning that in many cases traumas can be invented but from the viewpoint of the affect they can have the consequences of "real traumas".

The ideas of the above-cited scholars provide a foundation of methodological approaches towards studying representation of traumas in Andrey Tarkovsky's *The Mirror*. First, I will focus on the events or processes, which Andrey Tarkovsky treats as traumas. When analyzing them I will consider both the person who is traumatized and other people who surround him/her and are traumatized by seeing this person suffering. Second, as the film is a product of imagination, I will concentrate on the use of artistic devices to represent or even to 'invent' and to work through trauma on the screen.

Personal Trauma

The Mirror is based on Andrey Tarkovsky's autobiography and reflects a personal layer of his experiences. Some of them he definitely acknowledges as traumatic.

Andrey Tarkovsky's trauma concerns his relationship with his parents and his reaction to their divorce. His father, Arseniy Tarkovsky, was a gifted Russian poet who fought in World War II. He was gravely wounded and his leg was amputated as a result. His poetical works were not published for many years and he had to earn his living by translating Oriental poets of Soviet Central Asia. In brief, Arseniy Tarkovsky was a Russian Soviet intellectual who wanted to protect his spiritual freedom and paid a very high price for this. In 1939, he left his first wife Maria Ivanovna Vishniakova, the mother of Andrey Tarkovsky and his sister Marina. This event proved extremely painful

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14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

to Andrey and it became one the central events in the film and is seen as a trauma by the protagonist and his mother.

Confirmation of the previous statement can be derived from the scenes portraying the protagonist's early childhood. The picture is a perfect representation of the unspeakable trauma of the woman who experiences divorce as the collapse of her world. The film starts with a segment showing a woman (actress Margarita Terekhova) sitting on a fence smoking. She is looking nervously at the countryside and is waiting for a miracle – for her husband who will never come back. The woman (her name is Maria) feels frustrated because she has separated from her husband some time before. The voice of Alexei, the protagonist and the son of the woman (actor Innokentiy Smoktunovsky), is heard as a voice over, talking about the family's life in the village of Ignatievo during the pre-war period. The shots depicting the protagonist's childhood express anxiety: the neighboring barn is on fire, the biblical wind blows and produces frightening sounds, the biblical rain pours the rooms, and the ceiling falls down. The lonely woman is secluded in her silent world: the world is broken into pieces because her husband has left her. The father reappears in Alexei's dreams as an obsessive image. The solemn and terrifying soundtrack creates the atmosphere of disaster.

The episodes of *The Mirror* dealing with the divorce of Alexei's parents prove the conclusions of Hartman who emphasized that understanding what sort of experience can be recognized as trauma, both as a cause and an effect, depends on many individual, psychological, and cultural factors. The divorce itself is not necessarily a trauma but in the film (and maybe, in Andrey Tarkovsky's life) it is a trauma. For Alexei it is a terrible, overwhelming pain, which has a belated affect. The protagonist cannot overcome it, although his mother learned how to live with her past. As a result, communication breakdowns and alienation are fatal leitmotifs of Alexei's life.

It is important to remember that imagination and art can convert any event into trauma. This is what happens in *The Mirror* when Andrey Tarkovsky finds the cinematographic poetics to present divorce as a "purging" trauma. Time is not experienced in a chronological (conventional) sense. The non-linear narrative is constructed as a number of episodes imitating the dreamlike logic of remembering:

> Non-linear way of remembering in the film – he deals with a childhood in the manner that we tend to remember it. We cannot recollect our lives in a linear manner from birth to the present, but instead our memories are of singular events, which often spring to the foreground of our minds without any conscious effort and for reasons we cannot readily fathom. […] This is how *The*

> *Mirror* operates, as a series of slightly surreal vignettes intended to be seen as memories, visions or dreams.[16]

With tragic music and soulful poetry, Andrey Tarkovsky creates a tense atmosphere of waiting and anxiety, which elevates the separation of a man and a woman to the level of an apocalyptic vision. The divorce is included in a broader discourse. It consists of numerous micro- and macro-events which are symptoms of latent traumas. These include communication breakdowns, the separation of characters, alienation, the loss of integrity, the destruction of personalities, a sense of guilt, etc.

The "Soviet Trauma"

The characters of *The Mirror* suffer not only personal but also collective trauma. I define this collective trauma as "Soviet". By this phenomenon, I mean the damage to the mental and physical health of a person or masses caused by the Soviet way of life. The great revolutionary change was designed as a bloody project to construct a new kind of man called Soviet. The main stages of this inhuman engineering process include the Civil War, the Purges of the 1930s and the 1940s, World War II and the reconstruction period afterwards, as well as Brezhnev's 'developed' (or it is better to say 'degenerate') socialism of the 1960s–1980s with its hypocrisy and punishments of dissidents. The results of this kind of 'improvement' on human nature are described in Svetlana Alexievych's *Second Hand Time. The Last of the Soviets*:

> People who've come out of socialism are both like and unlike the rest of humanity – we have our lexicon, our conception of good and evil, our heroes, our martyrs. We have a special relationship with death. The stories people tell me are full of jarring terms: 'shoot', 'execute', 'liquidate', 'eliminate', or typically Soviet varieties of disappearance such as 'arrest', 'ten years without the right of correspondence', and 'emigration'.[17]

In her PhD dissertation, *Memory, History, Testimony: The Representation of Trauma in Iurii Dombrovskii's and Vasilii Grossman's Writing*, Ekaterina Shulga states that some researchers suggest "trauma is a Western medical concept that is not applicable to the Russian/Soviet case."[18] The main reason

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16 Peter King: "Memory and Exile: Time and Place in Tarkovsky's *Mirror*." In: *Housing, Theory and Society* 25, no. 1, 2008, p. 68.

17 Svetlana Alexievych: *Second Hand Time. The Last of the Soviets*, New York, Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2017, p. 3.

18 Ekaterina Shulga: *Memory, History, Testimony. The Representation of Trauma in Iurii Dombrovskii's and Vasilii Grossman's Writing*, London, University College London, 2013, p. 26.

of this phenomenon is a specific worldview, which takes the atrocities described by Alexievych as something 'normal'. It is to be understood as a price paid for modernization of the country or building a great empire. However, I claim that in spite of all efforts of the Soviet totalitarian regime to produce a new type of human being, the Soviet trauma existed in the personal and collective spheres. There were so many people in the USSR with 'Western' or other kinds of sensitivities for whom the Soviet system was traumatizing in the medical, psychiatric, scientific and cultural meanings of the term. Those individuals existed in all periods of Soviet history but especially during "the late socialism," when "the gap between what people truly believed and how they acted"[19] became obvious, and their presence was not possible to deny. They looked for ways of telling about the Soviet trauma and told about it in different forms of artistic production.

In my opinion, the films of Andrey Tarkovsky, and *The Mirror*, in particular, are no less significant representations of the 'Soviet trauma' in arts than the literary works cited by Shulga. First, Andrey Tarkosvky produced all his movies during the late socialism period of the 1960s–1980s, when the Soviet Man (or the Red Man, as Alexievych says) began to reveal affinities with the Western Man in all spheres, and in his sensitivity to trauma as well. Second, Andrey Tarkovsky is always described as the most uncharacteristic Soviet film director because he, as a personality and as an artist, was the most westernized artist.

This aspect was clear from his experience with censorship. Andrey Tarkovsky was not anti-Soviet in the strict understanding of the term. The director did not criticize the USSR, but he nonetheless encountered extensive problems with the system. All his films were censored. *The Mirror* was a 'champion' in this sense because the director had to make 22 'improvements' before the film was allowed to be released to the audience. When that happened, it was assigned the third category for films of the time: the least convenient screenings and the worst movie-theatres. In 1982, he was forced to leave the USSR and died of cancer in exile in 1986. He is buried in France together with many Russian emigrants who were traumatized to death by the Bolshevik revolution. Thus, I believe that the use of the concept of "Soviet trauma" is relevant in Andrey Tarkovsky's case because his 'encounter' with Soviet reality was painful and destructive for his Self in many aspects.

The Mirror is an honest and accurate account of the traumas, which people of the former USSR had to endure: sufferings of families during the war, fear of Stalin's repressive machine, even alienation and a sense of lost integrity

[19] Ibid., p. 23.

in the 1960–1970s. The narration makes abrupt transitions in time and focuses on several epochs of USSR history: the life of the protagonist's family in an evacuation during World War II, post-war terror, and Brezhnev's stagnation. I will analyze the representation of the Soviet trauma in Andrey Tarkovsky's *The Mirror* in the order in which the events might have happened in real history but not as they appear in the film.

I will start with the war memories. As with many other directors of his generation, Andrey Tarkovsky does not show great battles or grandiose military scenes. He focuses on the traumatic consequences of the war on the minds of people, first of all, children, whose selves are damaged and even destroyed. One of the episodes shows a military training class in Yurievets where Alexei and his mother were evacuated to. In Alexei's class there was a boy whose family name is Asafiev, who proves to be a rebel. His parents died in the siege of Leningrad. The siege of Leningrad itself, also known as the Leningrad Blockade, is one of the greatest traumas in human history. It lasted for 2 years, 4 months, 2 weeks and 5 days and caused the deaths of 642,000 civilians who died of hunger, cold and bombardments. The survivors tell of terrible hardships and cases of cannibalism. 400,000 persons were evacuated. The parents of the boy from Andrey Tarkovsky's film were among those who perished in Leningrad. The trauma that Asafiev experienced provokes a disruption of communication with other schoolchildren and his teacher. The boy refuses to understand the teacher's command "about-face": the pupil makes a 360 degree but not a 180 degree turn. He does not want to do shooting exercises. The teacher (a wounded and traumatized soldier who has just returned from the war) is not pleased and threatens to invite his parents to school. He inadvertently hurts the boy's feelings by referring to his trauma – the loss of his parents. The teacher and classmates do not look upon this tragic event as traumatic because it was a 'norm': they might have lost their parents, and there were so many people who were being killed around them. However, to the boy it was a trauma, without any doubt.

His response to this trauma is an explosion of aggression: Asafiev takes a teaching hand-grenade out of his school bag and throws it in front of his military training instructor and his friends in order to revenge his losses and humiliation. Of course, the grenade does not explode but the spectators can see that the teacher and the schoolchildren are scared to death and feel embarrassed. Asafiev's aggressive behavior is blamed as inappropriate. "You cannot be a Leningrad sieger!"[20], says the teacher. This phrase means that a person

[20] *Zerkalo* [*The Mirror*]. Dir.: Andrey Tarkovsky. 108 min., Mosfilm, URSS, 1975, 0:56:30–0:58:13. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Yn9q25NWAw [01.05.2018].

who really survived the Siege of Leningrad would never treat his comrades in such a way. In the teacher's opinion, the boy, an example of Soviet heroism, should obey discipline and must not demonstrate his emotions caused by the trauma. The teacher refuses to understand that the ache caused by the trauma to the boy is so sharp that destruction and aggression are the only ways to act it out. Thus, I interpret this scene with the boy-sieger in Yurievets both as an instinctive protest against the unification imposed by the Soviet system and the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder of the Siege of Leningrad as well as World War II in general. This idea is expressed not only by the episode with the little outcast but through the sequence of documentary shots showing hardships of soldiers crossing water obstacles and spring marshes.

The next type of Soviet trauma is fear of the totalitarian regime. This particular trauma is represented in the episode set at the end of the 1940s to the beginning of the 1950s (before Stalin's death). The trauma is caused not only by deprivation and poverty (although people are poor) but by the direct threat to human life and freedom. The spectator can see Maria Nikolaevna, Alexei's mother, running to the printing-house under the rain because she wants to make sure that she has not missed a misprint in the book of *Goslit* edition she is preparing for publication. The work has already been printed. We do not know what sort of punishment could be applied to Maria but judging by the screams of a young colleague, it looks like it could cost Maria life or freedom. The woman and other workers of the printing house are so frightened that they are weeping or laughing hysterically or remaining silent with their faces disfigured by tragic grimaces. She realizes perfectly what she feels and asks a question to protect herself: "Do you think I am afraid?"[21] Alexei's mother is afraid. In reality, she did not make any mistake but in her dream, she imagined that she had not corrected the word, which was politically suspicious or perhaps had an indecent connotation. She does not even dare to pronounce it aloud and whispers it to the ear of Lisa, her colleague and friend. Maria's boss comes and brings alcohol to treat Maria's hysteria. The episode is an excellent illustration of rational versus emotional reactions to the constructed Soviet world and individual sufferings from trauma.

At this moment Lisa, the mother's friend and co-worker in the print house, compares Maria with Maria Lebiadkina, the female character from Dostoyesky's *The Devils*. Lisa blames Maria for "staging the misprint scene". She also says that Maria's husband did right when he had divorced her and predicts that she will make her own children unhappy. Accusing Maria of being a slave, she adds: "All your life is that: 'bring some water.' Just an

[21] *The Mirror*: 0:26:20–0:26:36.

appearance of independence." Maria answers: "Stop this idiocy!" and goes to take a shower.[22] The words are not fair and Lisa is aware of this fact. Lisa follows Maria to the doors of the shower-room and tries to reconcile with her friend but Maria does not want to talk. Unfortunately, she cannot warm her body or wash away the negative emotions because the water from the shower, as usual in the USSR, stops running. Maria tries to get water by turning the faucets on and off. Her movements are illustrated by anxious and alarming sounds. Maria's tears turn into hysterical laughter and an exclamation: "Oh my God!"[23] These words are followed by another apocalyptic image of a fire and a terrible noise, which she sees in her daydreams.

While Maria is trying to take a shower, Lisa presents another performance of God's fool: she dances a little hysterical macabre dance. She jumps up while going away to her working place and cites the lines from Dante's *Inferno*: "My earthly life traversed by a half I found myself lost in a twilight forest".[24] When pronouncing the words, she transforms the Russian translation. She uses another verb: instead of "очутилась" – "I found myself" she says "заблудилась" – "I found myself lost". Lisa also changes the gender of the speaker: "Я заблудил**ась** в сумрачном лесу" – I, woman, found myself lost in a twilight forest". Thus, she converts the famous trip of Dante to Hell into the story of the Soviet woman in the hellish world of the communist regime. Lisa's behavior is an attempt, by humiliating Maria and by dancing to the words of Dante, to act out her own hysteria caused by the Soviet trauma.

Andrey Tarkovsky in his *The Mirror* reflects how the traumatizing mechanisms of the Soviet regime worked and shows the consequences of the unrecognized trauma for individuals living in the USSR after Stalin's death. This is the precise situation of Alexei, the invisible protagonist, who lives in the 1970s. His worldview contradicts official Soviet propaganda, which presented the first country of socialism as a happy land, but in reality, the social and individual life of people was far from happy – it was full of painful, unpleasant, and disgusting aspects. The system did not try to heal post-traumatic symptoms of the Civil War, World War II and Stalin's repressions, and it did nothing to heal the negative experiences of the Soviet past, which continued to impact millions of Soviet citizens. In addition, despite the fact that the Soviet reality of the 1960s to 1970s became (at least visually) less carnivorous, it was in many senses no less traumatic.

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22 *The Mirror*: 0:29:20–0:32:39.
23 *The Mirror*: 0:34:08–0:34:32.
24 *The Mirror*: sequence 0:33:26–0:33:40

Support for this thesis can be found in the tense and tragic atmosphere of the film as a whole and in its scenes, which are set in the 1960–70s, in particular. In *The Mirror,* the Soviet man of late socialism demonstrates symptoms of anxiety (Daniel Sullivan). These symptoms are: loss of a sense of life, emptiness, guilt, and a lack of control over one's destiny. The existential anxiety makes searching for identities, both individual and collective, extremely complicated and traumatizing.[25] As a result, Natalia's and Alexei's memories are fragmented and dreamlike which, according to Metin Çolak, reflects the reaction to "'shock experience' after the collapse of 'Erfahrung' (integrated experience), as Benjamin puts it."[26] The protagonists live in internal exile – they feel "displaced from the treasured houses and faces of one's childhood. The film then is about loss and the attempt through memory to regain what is lost."[27] Maria, Alexei's mother does not recognize her grandson Ignat. Alexei confesses in the conversation with his mother: "Words are not able to transmit what a person feels!" He asks: "Why are we always quarrelling? Please, forgive me if I am guilty". The mother refuses to continue the talk with Alexei.

The key character for understanding how the late Soviet trauma affects the individual's self is Alexei. He acts as a double of the director himself who predicted his own death in this film. The spectator finds out that Alexei is seriously sick (maybe, he has developed cancer, like Andrey Tarkovsky himself and the protagonist of his last film, *Sacrifice*). The reason for the illness is belated trauma, which prevents him from expressing himself: conscience and repentance provoke his melancholic mood and destroy his nervous system and body. Some characters, like Lisa or Alexei's mother, prove to be able to work through their traumas, both personal and collective, in spite of all humiliations, violence and fear, to turn their traumatic events into an opportunity for displaying stoicism even acting it out in forms of God's fools dances or in other extravagant ways. Alexei, however, is not able to do this and dies of self-destruction. Thus, *The Mirror* reflects Soviet life itself as trauma. However, in my opinion, Andrey Tarkovsky goes further. His film is a testimony, but not in the traditional meaning of the term as it is used in literary studies of the GULAG. His intention, rather, is not only to tell the hidden truth about the crimes of the communist regime, which are silenced by official culture, but to show that living in the world in general is traumatic.

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25 Daniel Sullivan: "Tillich and Tarkovsky: An Existential Analysis of *Mirror*." In: *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 52, no. 4, 2012, p. 453.

26 Metin Çolak: "Modernity Crisis and Its Reflections in Tarkovsky's *Nostalghia* and *Mirror*." In: *İstanbul Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi Dergisi* 1, no. 44, 2013, p. 59.

27 Peter King: "Memory and Exile", p. 67.

Spanish Scene

I have studied representation of trauma in Andre Tarkovsky's *The Mirror* on personal and historical levels. Now I will address the so-called Spanish scene, which is the best demonstration of Andrey Tarkovsky's effort to define trauma more broadly. This scene is a result of the global situation in the world. The episode takes place in a Moscow apartment in the early 1970s where a group of Spanish emigrants, who came to the USSR after the Civil war in 1936–1939, have gathered. Natalia is talking to Alexei as she looks into the mirror. One of the Spaniards, whose name is Ernesto (actor Ángel Gutiérrez), is speaking about the situation in their country and recollecting his past. Alexei asks Natalia to do something to make him change the subject of the conversation lest it provoke a scandal, as has already happened many times. Juan José Herrera de la Muela, in his presentation titled "The Spanish citations in Andrey Tarkovsky's Films", states that this scene reflects the climate of meetings of the exiled Spaniards in the Spanish Center, ones which the film director visited together with Vysotsky, Makarov, Gorenstein and others.[28] The characters suffer from pain caused by their separation from relatives and their motherland. Hererra de Muela interprets the scene from two perspectives: "On the one hand, it is seen through the lens of the documentary shots showing separations of families during the evacuation of the children while they are getting on the boats […]."[29] The critic means documentary shots, which demonstrate bombings of Spanish cities by the German military aviation and evacuations of Spanish children from the port of Gijón. Hererra de Muela continues, "[…] on the other hand, – this episode with the imagined family of the Bosque tells about the situation of the Spanish emigrants in Moscow."[30]

The observation is developed by the critic Yulia Anokhina. She comments on the use of the song "Navegando me perdí" in the film:

> This musical citation is a sign of nostalgia not only about home but about the particular port from where their long separation with their motherland started. Thus, the Spanish fandango, together with documentary shots, expresses the desire to return to the home country, to cultural roots – and in the broader sense – to Mother.[31]

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28 Juan José Herrera de la Muela: "Ispanskie tsitaty v tvorchestve Andreya Tarkovskogo." In: *Kinozapiski* 01.03.2006. http://www.kinozapiski.ru/ru/article/sendvalues/857/ [01.05.2018].

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 Iulia Anohina: "Poetika muzykal'nykh tsitat v filmakh A. Tarkovskogo." 2008–2010. http://tarkovskiy.su/texty/analitika/Anohina.html [1.5.2018].

I agree with both critics but I would like to add that these two citations can be interpreted as proof that the Spaniards in Andrey Tarkovsky's film suffer from double trauma. They are separated from their families and culture, which happened when they were kids, and felt exiled from the country, which, was supposed to be their motherland, but turned out to be a trap. Both types of trauma are represented by the Spaniards' behavior. Ernesto (actor Ángel Gutiérrez, Andrey Tarkovsky's friend) imitates the famous *matador* Palomo Linares whose performance is being shown on television. Other Spaniards look at him in a suspicious way. "Stupid show", says one of them.[32] Then Ernesto sits down on the sofa and starts talking about the moment when he saw his father for the last time. His speech sounds as if it were a monologue, which erupted unexpectedly against his own will. He does not address anyone in particular and seems to be talking to himself about the separation with his father in his childhood. Other Spaniards (actors are the del Bosque family and Dionisio García) listen to Ernesto and feel almost irritated because they have witnessed this obsessive monologue before. While Ernesto is delivering his soliloquy, the spectator can see images of documentaries about the Spanish civil war. When Ernesto stops his confessions the flamenco song "Navegando me perdí" starts playing. It produces a traumatic shock to Teresa, Ernesto's daughter. She unexpectedly jumps up and dances flamenco perfectly. Ernesto gets furious and slaps the girl in the face saying: "Are you mocking at us or what? We taught you and taught and it was no use. And now it turns out you can!"[33] Luisa, the sad woman concludes in the Russian language with a Spanish accent: "You are a chatterbox! You went to Spain and didn't understand anything!"[34]

This scene can be read in terms of trauma theory in two aspects. First, Ernesto's monologue and his burst of aggression is an attempt to act out the belated injury caused by his separation from family and the motherland. It is obvious that in his mind he comes back to the event and cannot work it through. He repeats it over and over again. As Dominick LaCapra states, the concept of "acting out" involves one unconsciously being driven to repeat destructive behavior because of trauma. Ernesto's "acting out" arrives in the form of aggression and frustration that prevents him from living fully in the present. His daughter's flamenco dance is supposed to be his compensation of the loss but the fact that she was born and educated in another country prevents her from being an authentic flamenco dancer. Second, the scene is an

32 *The Mirror*: sequence 0:37:39–0:38:30.
33 *The Mirror*: sequence 0:38:30–0:39:44.
34 *The Mirror*: 0:39:45–0:39:52.

excellent illustration of what Andrey Tarkovsky writes about art as a "purging trauma". The pain caused by his father's words and the song 'disconnect' Teresa's Russian-Soviet identity and she becomes a Spanish girl who has flamenco rhythms encoded in her blood.

The scene reveals the other traumatic aspect of the "Soviet Spaniard" which results from being trapped in another culture. Natalia asks Luisa if she would like to come back to Spain. Frustrated by what she has seen and offended by the tactless question Luisa replies: "I can't go, I've got a Russian husband. And Russian children" and she leaves the apartment in tears. The song starts playing again.[35] This time the illustrations that accompany the song are images of the bombing of Madrid and weeping Spanish republican children in Gijón. When the song stops, spectators can hear the kids shouting and crying: the impact of these documentary shots becomes tremendous. It is another case of Andrey Tarkovsky's use of art as a purging trauma.

It is important to emphasize that Andrey Tarkovsky's approach towards the Spanish theme contradicts the stereotypical vision of the Spanish Civil War and Spanish political emigrants in the official Soviet culture. Robert Bird claims:

> The Spanish Civil War seemed to many Soviets an unusually noble and idealistic passage in their history, a return to the pure ideals of the revolution before Stalinism, and a rare case when the USSR was on the 'right' side in international conflicts.[36]

However, in Andrey Tarkovsky's film "the protagonist's encounter with the aging Spanish emigrants in Moscow is both an echo and a verification of the memories he was fed in childhood."[37] We already know that Alexei's childhood memories are full of traumatic experiences caused by his parent's divorce and sufferings during the war. His adult life is full of anxiety and dissatisfaction with himself, emotions, which eventually overwhelm and kill him. The Spaniards feel the same. As a result, in *The Mirror* the Spaniars are not heroes but prisoners of the situation. It happens because they cannot identify themselves with Spain, as they have spent their entire lives in the USSR. At the same time, many of them are completely disappointed in their new 'socialist' motherland as it proved to be a stepmother. The example of this change is the life of Ángel Gutiérrez (the actor who performs the part of Ernesto). He writes in his diaries: "Of being a Spaniard I only have my name and,

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35 *The Mirror*: sequence 0:39:50–0:40:21.

36 Robert Bird: *Andrei Tarkovsky. Elements of Cinema*, London, Reaktion Books, 2008, p. 137.

37 Ibid.

maybe, blood left. I do not know Spain. My only memory is my village in the mountains in Asturias. However, about Spain, its life, its traditions, its history I have a vague idea."[38] At the same time, the Soviet reality seemed to the Spanish actor too ugly. In 1972, Vladimir Vysotsky asks Ángel Gutiérrez the same "tactless" question, which Natalia asks Luisa in the film:

> Why don't you go back to Spain? There is no hope here, my dear friend. They do not allow you to make your film and will never let you make it. They will treat you badly but the time is flying. The most terrible thing is the time you lose. You will never get it back.[39]

Ángel Gutiérrez went back to Spain after Franco's death, long before the collapse of the USSR.

Emma Zofia Zachurski believes that the "Spanish scene" is a key episode for understanding the poetics of the film in general. The critic demonstrates, the whole scene is a result of a "chain of endless interruptions"[40] or interjections: the relationships of Alexei and Natalia and misunderstandings between Ernesto and Teresa are followed by a demonstration of footage of German aviation bombing Madrid and of the evacuation of children and then by Soviet stratosphere balloons being prepared for flight. The documentary shots of the Soviet triumph are shown to the sound of Pergolesi's string interpretation of a sacred Catholic hymn on the sorrows of Mother Mary, *Stabat Mater Dolorosa*. At the end of the scene, Ignat is looking at illustrations of the Renaissance paintings.

> In both their link to and contradiction from one another, these images open the screen to questioning as the gaps and the links between them entices the viewer to wonder about the associations, the connotations, the logic and the motives that guide the sequence.[41]

Futhermore, Zachurski concludes:

> Emerging from an inquisitive, if not suspicious, approach to historical documentary footage, the sequence may be considered as the illustration of a language that possesses no fixed referents or indexical terms. It is a dictionaryless language,

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38 O. R.Airapetov, Miroslav Iovanovich, M. A. Kolerov, Bruce Menning, and Paul Chaisty (eds.): *Russkiy Sbornik: issledovaniia po istorii Rossii*, Vol. XI, Moscow, Izdatel'skiy dom "Regnum", 2012, p. 364.

39 Ibid., p. 386.

40 Emma Zofia Zachurski: "The Affirmative Aphasia of Tarkovsky's *Mirror*." https://slavic.fas.harvard.edu/files/slavic/files/zachurski.pdf, pp. 9–11 [01.05.2018].

41 Ibid, p. 11.

> so to speak, that builds its own dictionary as it begins to re-assemble and re-contextualize terms, meanings and definitions.[42]

I agree with Zachurski's interpretation of the Spanish scene but the critic misses one important point. The whole episode with its "chain of endless interruptions" also produces in the audience a sense of belonging to the global world and, in a paradoxical way, it encourages the spectators to look for ways of working through their personal and collective, be it Soviet or any other traumas for that matter. The Spanish episode goes far beyond any certain historical context. Besides nostalgia about the motherland, the exiled Spaniards personify the psychological trauma caused by global alienation of individuals in the contemporary world. Slapping Teresa in the face is an example of generational conflicts and communication breakdowns, which can take place in all families. It is a universal problem, just as the traumas depicted in the film are not Soviet or Russian or personal but are typical of humanity in general. When looking at the Spaniards in Andrey Tarkovsky's film, the spectators realize that there are other people in the world suffering from traumas. It also means that there must be strategies for solving this problem.

In my opinion, the Spanish scene provides us with clues for interpreting Andrey Tarkovsky's approach towards healing trauma. His main principle consists in interpreting individual suffering in a global context, thereby recognizing that the experience of trauma is part of the universal experience of human beings. I claim that realizing the fact that someone's trauma is not unique, that to live means being traumatized, is the first step to working through traumas. When the traumatized person finds him/herself among many other traumatized individuals, he/she understands that there are other examples to follow which show how to cope with traumas, including, importantly, how to speak about them. It is 'the Mirror effect' which is the basic principle of the poetics of the film. It is present in all episodes and in the Spanish scene, in particular.

Stuttering Teenager

Andrey Tarkovsky's *The Mirror* does not only reveal trauma (both personal and Soviet) and its consequences but also it searches for the artistic idiom to work through. In this respect, a crucial role is given to the episode with a stuttering teenager, which opens the film. Ignat, the son of the protagonist-narrator and Natalia, is at home alone. He switches on a TV set and sees a program or a fragment of a documentary movie, which shows a psychotherapist treating a

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42 Ibid., p. 12.

stuttering teenager. The patient with a great difficulty utters a simple phrase: "I co-o-o-me from Kha-a-a-arkov"[43]. The physician encourages the teenager:

> Look at your hands, concentrate! […] […] On my count of three your hand will become immobile! […] One, two, three! Your hands don't move.[…] You are trying to move your hands but they're fixed.[…] Now I'm going to lift this transfixion, and you will be able to speak freely, easily and articulately. Now you will speak loudly and clearly. You will not be afraid of your voice and of your speech![44]

The psychotherapist uses hypnosis to make the patient stop fixing his attention on his fears and the teenager pronounces loudly: "I can speak!"[45]

Zachurski compares the scene with the "Spanish episode" and stresses its importance for understanding the principles of poetics of the film as a whole. The researcher claims:

> in dialogue together and as separate sequences dealing with language disruption, the stutterer and the Spaniards are at the core of *The Mirror's* language of loss. […] these sequences, both through spoken language and visual articulation, set up a structure for Tarkovsky's syntax of nonsense and enable a communicative function for non-communicative articulations. In providing a grammar for the film, they enable a 'mastery' of the language of loss that is confirmed in the film's final sequence as a young boy howls into an expansive, empty field of grass.[46]

According to the critic, the teenager suffers from aphasia, which provokes difficulties in communication. Zachurski further "proposes to re-read the aphasia of *The Mirror*'s opening in the affirmative way – to re-read 'words' in the 'noise made by man' and in the images created by Tarkovsky."[47] In my opinion, it is not possible to state that we deal with aphasia. The spectator does not have enough information to make this conclusion concerning the diagnosis of the teenager because nothing is said about the reasons behind his stuttering. I believe that there is no sense in trying to define the nature of Ignat's disorder in exact medical terms. In artistic creations, these kinds of details are not so important because the recipient interprets the symbolic layers of events and phenomena, which are represented by authors in their works. Moreover, I think that in the context of the approach applied to reading the film in this paper it is appropriate to suggest that the teenager's stuttering is connected with some traumatic experience in his past because his stuttering (like

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43 *The Mirror*: sequence 0:00:09–0:00:55.

44 *The Mirror*: 0:02:50–0:03:40.

45 *The Mirror*: 0:04:06–0:04:08.

46 Ibid., p. 5.

47 Ibid.

aphasia) can be a consequence of trauma and is traumatic itself: fears cause pains and sufferings which, in turn, can become a reason for the loss of speech. The teenager is an archetypal image for all other characters of *The Mirror* because they also try to overcome obstacles to narrate their traumas. In brief, I suggest interpreting the opening scene as an invitation to the spectators as a session of cinematographic hypnosis aimed at healing the individual and collective traumas.

"Working-Through" Trauma in the Film

Andrey Tarkovsky was one of the first film-directors to understand the advantages of an oneiric discourse to represent trauma on the screen. That is why the structure of the cinematographic text imitates dreams, dreams, which bring to the surface of consciousness fragmented images of the past and present. The narration is constructed as flashbacks and repetitions organized not in chronological order but as a stream of associations that evoke certain responses within the spectator. In this way, the director is referencing traumas without using words to describe them. The texture of the film, besides multilayered, complicated images, includes citations of visual arts, music and poetry. As a result, *The Mirror* produces a hypnotizing effect: the spectator is completely absorbed by the reality on the screen and undergoes a traumatic shock that purges him/her emotionally.

At the same time, in *The Mirror* and his other films the director invented an allegorical approach to speak about trauma. He produced fables or parables which tell about both the latent silenced injuries and basic values that enable individuals and society as a whole to find energy and courage to live, and, as I insist, to work through their traumas. Among those values the first priority is given to absolute faith. This word is not to be taken in the Christian meaning. In Andrey Tarkovsky's world it is rather the name of his unalterable belief that human beings have come into this world to create something beautiful and harmonious in spite of the hardships within their personal lives and the absurdity of history. In this context the numerous citations, (or intertextuality) which gained *The Mirror* the reputation of a hermetic movie, elevate the human spirit and help the director and his spectator cultivate a special kind of ethics, which makes them resistant to traumas.

To achieve this goal, Andrey Tarkovsky has developed a number of strategies. One of them persists in looking for "fulcra" in memories about childhood, which are presented in a nostalgic mood. The process of transcoding anxiety into nostalgia is shown in the episode that starts with the protagonist's

words, "With an amazing regularity I keep seeing one and the same dream"[48]. Alexei tells about his obsessive dream about coming back to the happy childhood in the house where he was born. He wants to enter it, but something (be it personal and Soviet traumas) prevents him from doing this. The image of a rooster breaking the window looks frightening. The biblical wind is blowing; it sweeps bread and a lamp off the table, which stands in the wild orchard. All of these details collectively working together are threatening to destroy the protagonist's small world. At last, the boy finds himself in front of the door and tries to open it. It is the door, which leads to the happiness of his childhood. When he gives up and wants to go away the door opens itself: his mother is sitting inside a dark barn, putting potatoes into the pot.[49]

This dream means that in spite of all, the child managed to enter the house of his grandfather, where he lived with his mother and sister as a boy. The biblical wind continues blowing: now it is bringing hope. The spectator can see a mirror and the reflection of little Alexei in it. He is drinking milk from a jar. Then, little Alexei is swimming in a pond. The house is full of peace and comfort. The mother is washing clothes. The culmination of the nostalgic vision of childhood is presented in the final scene of the film. The boy finds not only his mother but also his father and his grandmother (who looks like his mother Maria when Alexei is an adult). The past and the present come together and create the sensation of completeness of being. Alexei is on the way of working through his traumas to reconciling with himself and the world, at least for a short period. However, he falls ill and cancer is killing him.

The "fulcra" can also be defined as "small events" which are full of positive energy. These are worth keeping in memory because they mobilize the individual's will to look for eternity and beauty in life. Those "small events" are stylistically marked in the film by inclusions of Arseniy Tarkovky's reading his poetry. In her paper "Andrei Tarkovsky as Reader of Arseniy Tarkovsky's Poetry in the Film *The Mirror*"[50], Alexandra Smith studies this aspect of poetics within the film in terms of the interaction of the idioms of cinema and literature and by applying the concept of the Mirror stage of personal identification which was described by Lacan. However, I think that the recitation of poems by Arseniy Tarkovsky perform another function – they identify

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48 *The Mirror*: sequence 1:16:08–1:17:41.

49 See *The Mirror*: 1:17:53–1:20:31.

50 Alexandra Smith: "Andrei Tarkovsky as Reader of Arseniy Tarkovsky's Poetry in the Film *Mirror*." In: *Russian Studies in Literature* 40, no. 3, 2004, pp. 46–63.

the moments to be remembered. These moments are norms of being, which the protagonist and the director try to emulate.

I will illustrate how the "fulcrum" is constructed by analyzing the interaction of the video sequence and the poem "Life, life". The poem is written in an optimistic mood and it tells about victory of life over death. Arseniy Tarkovsky's voice starts reading the poem at the end of the episode with the boy who survived the siege of Leningrad. First, on the screen we see Red Army soldiers crossing the river. Then, the camera returns to the little rebel who goes away after he has thrown the grenade and has been reprimanded by his teacher. After that, a long documentary video sequence is projected. It shows Soviet soldiers walking in the marshes and shallow waters.[51] At this moment, Arseniy Tarkovsky begins reciting his poem. On the words "He prophesied me death, as if he were a monk"[52] the camera comes back to the boy, who is climbing the hill with a wonderful winter landscape as background. The final two lines coincide with the close-up of the character. He begins whistling and is looking in front of him. Smith comments on this episode:

> The ending of the poem is represented literally: the narrator becomes, in a sense, the little boy who has climbed up a hill, covered with snow, and looks directly at the audience. But the whole scene is framed by winter imagery that symbolizes the death of the speaking subject. The scene is followed by various other war scenes and historical footage that draws on the images of the masses and communist propaganda, representing conformity. The boy turns away from the images of Soviet soldiers that disappear behind him and looks into the future, with the hope that these memories will be left behind him.[53]

In general I agree with this interpretation but I would like to emphasize that the scene is the "fulcrum" as I have mentioned above. This effect is created due to citations of works of arts and idyllic nostalgic images, which are included in the shot. In my opinion, the winter landscape of Yurievets resembles "The Hunters in the Snow" by Pieter Brueguel the Elder. The boy is whistling a melody of classical music. The spectator can see the image of the red-haired girl with the cracked lip who he is in love with platonically. A bird is landing on his cap. He is the narrator from the poem who is able to get through the world "like a thread". The boy is aware of life's hardships and of the madness of history. They threaten him in the documentary shots, which are interpolated into his daydreaming: the celebration of Victory in 1945, the explosion of the atomic bomb, Mao's Red Guards with their notorious citation books, the episodes of the Sino-Soviet conflict of 1969. However,

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51 See *The Mirror*: 0:59:28–1:01:12.

52 *The Mirror*: sequence 1:02:41–1:03:12.

53 Smith: "Andrei Tarkovsky as Reader", pp. 58–59.

regardless of how tragic his future life could be, in the nostalgic visions of his childhood he has already discovered his "moment of truth", which provides his life with a sense of meaning and gives him the power to protect himself against the destructive consequences of traumas.

Andrey Tarkovsky suggests another strategy for dealing with the collective Soviet trauma. He, together with other Soviet intellectuals, developed a system of defense, which consisted in cultivating a culture of resistance. This culture is a result of the reaction of individuals to the traumatic intrusion of the political system into their lives. Violence and humiliation were deployed to destroy people's selves. This traumatic encounter of human beings with the repressive state was responded to through a specific life-style, based on the principles of non-conformity. The essential element of this strategy in *The Mirror* is a critical look at the social practices, which were used as fraudulent ways of acting out the Soviet trauma. They included mass ceremonies, which sublimated pain in order to channel it into glorification of the party, Stalin, and heroes of the totalitarian system. The director does not express his ideas directly but his skeptical attitudes towards these phenomena are obvious when he includes documentary shots, which present practices of the glorification of the Soviet achievements. They appear as strange, barbaric, inhuman rituals annihilating individuality and leading to formal unification.

Andrey Tarkovsky's citations of other artistic works to help work through the Soviet trauma serves a double function, as has been mentioned several times. This feature of poetics is cultivated by the director on a systematic basis. As I have already stated, the citations translate the painful experiences of the Soviet man into universal truths. As a result, the director, the characters and the spectators see the Soviet trauma as a reflection of the world order, which individuals have to learn to resist. The most illustrative example of this strategy is the scene when Ignat reads to a lady an extract from the letter sent by Pushkin to Chaadaev, who wrote *Philosophical letters*, the work which is considered to be the most critical text about Russian culture.[54] Chaadaev was even declared insane after it had been published. In his letter Pushkin agrees that the Russian reality is absurd but he refuses to exchange his Russian history for another, happier one.

At the same time, in the context of the film Pushkin's words serve as an identification sign, which shows that Andrey Tarkovsky also belongs to Russian culture. The citation expresses the idea that Russian and Soviet history as a whole has always been merciless, senseless and traumatic. In my opinion, the director maintains that this peculiarity of Russian fate must be taken as a

54 See *The Mirror*: 0:47:21–0:49:48.

fact by anyone who lives in Russia (or the former USSR). It means that individuals and society as a whole must learn to resist collective trauma, which is an inevitable 'price' of being born and of living in this country.

Conclusions

The Mirror in many senses resembles the stuttering of the teenager, which appears at the beginning of the film. His exclamation "I can speak!"[55] was only the first phrase, which was pronounced without fear, as the film was the first courageous recognition of the fact that life as a whole and the Soviet experience, in particular, are traumatic. However, Tarkovsky went further. He did not only point out the symptoms of trauma but also found the artistic idiom to work it through. His main principle consists in interpreting individual suffering in a global context, thereby recognizing that the experience of trauma is part of the universal experience of human beings. It is 'the Mirror effect', which is the basic principle of the poetics of the film.

Unfortunately, Andrey Tarkovsky's voice was not heard because his masterpiece was prohibited. If the film had gained access to wider audiences in the 1970s, when it was produced, the Soviet and the post-Soviet culture would have begun to learn the idiom of representing traumas by means of arts much earlier. However, the teenager (or societies which were created in the countries of the former USSR) has not become an adult yet. Consequently, the post-Soviet individual did not learn how to speak about trauma. As a result, the lives of individuals are treated as if they had no value, and the Soviet past had not yet been reevaluated critically. The situation is more serious now because the collapse of the USSR has not been recognized as trauma either. Silenced traumas of the previous and current epochs have overlapped and have created an explosive mixture of silenced pain. Under such circumstances, I invite scholars to join me in re-reading Andrey Tarkovsky's other films in terms of trauma theory. I am certain that we will discover much more about our traumatized selves in their mirrors and will start recovering.

Filmography

Zerkalo [*The Mirror*]. Dir.: Andrey Tarkovsky. 108 min., Mosfilm, URSS, 1975. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Yn9q25NWAw [01.05.2018].

[55] *The Mirror*: 0:04:06–0:04:08.

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TETIANA OSTAPCHUK

Images of Chernobyl Explosion Liquidators in Audio Visual Art

The explosion on the 4th reactor at Chernobyl Nuclear Plant happened on 26 April 1986. Since that time this theme has been and continues to be explored in literature, movies, music, computer games, and other audio-visual arts. Chernobyl has become the first association with Ukraine, its threatening metonym, and an inseparable part of Ukraine's portrayals for more than thirty years. Those who participated in the liquidation of the meltdown consequences became known as Chernobyl liquidators. Their experience of trauma and its outcomes has also been used as a motif in numerous art projects.

Introduction

There are two distinctive features of a traumatic experience. They are the following: a betrayal of trust and incomprehensibility. As is admitted by Jenny Edkins in *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*:

> But it seems that to be called traumatic – to produce what we see as symptoms of trauma – an event has to be more than just a situation of utter powerlessness. In an important sense, it has to entail something else. It has to involve a betrayal of trust as well. There is an extreme menace, but what is special is where the threat of violence comes from. What we call trauma takes place when the very powers that we are convinced will protect us and give us security become our tormentors: when the community of which we considered ourselves members turns against us.[1]

From this point of view the explosion at the Chernobyl plant was 100% a traumatic experience for thousands of people. It was traumatic and even lethal for workers of the station and members of their families as well as for liquidators involved in the cleanup of the contaminated Zone just after the meltdown. Moreover, those who survived and hundreds of people from around the plant were evacuated from their homes. Literally, thousands of people were separated from their siblings; families were ruined; and all those people lost connection with their 'small motherland' and everything that is associated with it – childhood memories, native landscapes, and graves of dead ancestors.

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[1] Jenny Edkins: *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 4.

The reason why the evacuation had happened was absolutely unclear for evacuees. In the 1980s trust in the Soviet government was deteriorating in comparison to previous decades, but nevertheless it was still very high. The country that had proclaimed itself a nuclear powerful state was seen by its population as strong and safe. So, when there was no official information about the level of risk and of radiation, people were lulled to believe in minor faults. Even when the evacuation was announced they left their houses with a hope to be back in a couple of days. When they were leaving, they left their belongings behind, including food in refrigerators that would never be eaten. As we see, from the first hours following the explosion this event involved a betrayal of trust on behalf of the government as well as for the first victims that died because of state's ignorance and torpor. Fires caused by the explosion were stopped by firefighters and soldiers without proper safety measures. Later Soviet propaganda inspired volunteers to come to Chernobyl but officials silenced the scale of the disaster and real threats toward human lives.

The second feature of a trauma as it is presented in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* by Cathy Caruth is the following:

> The accident, that is, as it emerges in Freud and is passed on through other trauma narratives, does not simply represent the violence of a collision but also conveys the impact of its very incomprehensibility. What returns to haunt the victim, these stories tell us, is not only the reality of the violent event but also the reality of the way that its violence has not yet been fully known.[2]

In case of Chernobyl, radiation was a completely unknown enemy whose nature was drastically incomprehensible. People simply could not believe in danger if it was invisible and if it came from nowhere. Many people still doubt that something like a mortal radiation exists. The main reasons for such doubt are those *babushkas* who still live in the so called Dead Zone.[3] The general statistics say that there were 41 people whose deaths were directly attributable to the Chernobyl disaster. Of these, two died at the scene, four died in a single helicopter accident, 32 died within a few months of Acute Radiation Syndrome and three died later of medical complications probably caused by the accident. No members of the general public were hospitalized

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2 Cathy Caruth: *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* [1996], Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016, p. 6.

3 Self-settlers are those who illegally came back to the Zone of Alienation after the explosion. As it was reported by a Ukrainian minister of social policy there were from 200 to 2,000 self-settlers there in 2013 (https://ukranews.com/news/191261-korolevskaya-v-chernobyl skoy-zone-otchuzhdenyya-prozhyvayut-do-2000-samoselov [01.05.2018]). Their images became recognizable and world-known after the premier of a documentary *The Babushkas of Chernobyl* in 2015 (see https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3299704/ [01.05.2018)].

in the month following the accident. A United Nations study estimates the final total of premature deaths associated with the disaster will be around 4,000, mostly from an estimated 3% increase in cancers which are already common causes of death in the region. The Chernobyl Forum also acknowledges an increase in psychological problems amongst those exposed to radiation, which may be attributed in part to poor communication of radiation effects and disruption to their way of life, but is also likely affected by other events surrounding the breakup of the Soviet Union.[4]

Having mapped the event in its historical perspective it is obvious that the Chernobyl explosion has been a tremendously traumatic experience not only for those who personally witnessed it but for all people of the time, as it greatly influenced development of the era on different levels. On a physical level the Chernobyl explosion caused deaths, illnesses, unborn children, and an abandoned zone of exclusion. On a socio-political level it is often treated as a catalyst for the fall of the Soviet Empire, a birth of independent states, and a new geopolitical order in the world. A Ukrainian scholar, Tamara Hundorova, states that Chernobyl has propelled post-Apocalyptic thinking, and active intrusion of virtual reality in everyday life.[5] In other words, after Chernobyl humanity has lived in a new era – an era of nuclear culture.

This article deals with the representation of the Chernobyl meltdown liquidators traumatic experience in different audio-visual projects. Three main approaches may be distinguished:

- Commemorative approach that represents a liquidator as a chosen hero/ chosen victim;
- Communicative approach that shows a liquidator as a witness and a normal human being trapped by a specific historical situation;
- Demonization that manifests liquidators as stalkers, scavengers, villains, monsters, mutants, etc.

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4 See "Deaths Due to the Chernobyl Disaster." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deaths_due_to_the_Chernobyl_disaster [01.05.2018].

5 See Tamara Hundorova: *Pisliachoronobyl's'ka biblioteka. Ukrains'kyi literaturny postmodern*, Kiev, Krytyka, 2005; Tamara Hundorova: "PostChornobyl': katastrofichnyi syndrom." In: Tamara Hundorova: *Tranzytna kul'tura. Symptomy postcolonial'noyi travmy*, Kiev, Grani-T, 2013, pp. 383–457.

Portrayals of Liquidators as Heroes and Sacrifices

Chernobyl Explosion as Chosen Trauma and Chosen Glory of Soviet People: Strategies of We-ness Re-creation

It is a well-known fact that during the first days after the meltdown, the Soviet government tried to keep the Chernobyl events a secret both inside and outside the country. Though firefighters, the army and medical personnel were all mobilized to deal with the aftermath, they were not aware of the real risk. The scale of the tragedy was not revealed. But as soon as the information started to leak out, and foreign media started covering the Chernobyl station explosion, Soviet authorities had to justify the first deaths of the people in a way that would attract attention to their heroism and at the same time distract attention from the government's standstill, ignorance, and lie. As a matter of fact, Soviet propaganda started to form an image of a liquidator in tune with a standard pattern: liquidators were portrayed as heroes and patriots in fields of a new war. Those who died were named martyrs who had sacrificed their lives for the sake of the peace and well-being of their Soviet motherland. Many liquidators were awarded with medals for heroism, courage and valor not only in the first years after the tragedy but many years after. Such a strategy was rather successful and it even motivated people to participate the liquidation of Chernobyl explosion voluntarily. Many of the liquidators were given privileges from the state and republican governments. Even organizations of Chernobyl veterans were created in Ukraine, Russia and many other former Soviet republics.

The situation may be clarified with the theory proposed by Vamik D. Volkan who differentiates such mental representations as "chosen trauma" and "chosen glory" which have become large-group cultural amplifiers.[6] He states: "When a large group is under stress and the large-group identity is injured or threatened, the people who belong to it become keenly aware of their 'we-ness' and quickly and definitively separate their large-group identity from the identity of the 'other', the 'enemy' large group."[7] Being precise, in terms of Chernobyl, masses were under stress and the *We-ness* of Soviet people was seriously threatened though there was no enemy group. The solution was to appeal to the repository of the past "chosen glories" of Soviet people among which the victory over fascism had one of the strongest appeals:

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6 See Vamık D. Volkan: "Transgenerational Transmissions and 'Chosen Traumas': An Element of Large-Group Identity." 01.03.2001. http://www.vamikvolkan.com/Transgenerational-Transmissions-and-Chosen-Traumas.php [01.05.2018].

7 Ibid.

> Past victories in battle and great accomplishments of a religious or political ideological nature frequently appear as chosen glories. In stressful situations political leaders reactivate the mental representation of chosen glories and heroes associated with them to bolster their large-group identity. A leader's reference to chosen glories excites his followers simply by stimulating an already existing shared large-group amplifier.[8]

But the concept of "chosen glories" is dialectically connected with the idea of chosen traumas, that is presented by Vamik D. Volkan as more complex:

> It is for this reason that a chosen trauma is a much stronger large-group amplifier than a chosen glory. A chosen trauma is the shared mental representation of an event in a large group's history in which the group suffered a catastrophic loss, humiliation, and helplessness at the hands of its enemies.[9]

This approach explains why Chernobyl was called a new war, why the liquidators became soldiers in the fields of that new war, and why the anti-Nazi rhetoric was reactivated.

In 1986 and later Soviet propaganda used that rhetoric widely. Several meanings of the word "soldier" were actualized: the first direct meaning is a person who fights when there is a war; the second contextual meaning is a rescuer or a crusader who tries to stop a tragedy and save the whole humanity. This strategy illustrates a vivid connection to the previous chosen trauma of all Soviet people – the Great Patriotic War (1941–1945). In the Kiev Chernobyl Museum there is a handwritten combat flyer exhibit (fig. 1) that illustrates how the motivation of soldiers was boosted.

The title of the poster *Combat Flyer* is written at the top in capital red letters and framed between two medals. It was issued on 5 October 1986 by liquidators sent to Chernobyl from Odessa. The first fourth of the space is a pencil drawing of a firefighter carrying a girl. The image is easily decoded in the following way: a brave male soldier is saving the life of the girl who symbolically depicts a young generation or life in general. Blossoms on her dress may metonymically represent nature and peace endangered by the explosion. The traditional gender representation and proportions of both figures reference archetypical images of a victim and its protector. The picture also alludes to monuments of Soviet soldiers with children, the most well-known of which was erected in Treptower Park, Berlin.

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8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

Fig. 1: Combat Flyer. Collection of the Ukrainian National Chernobyl Museum[10]

Below the picture there is an amateur poem *In Memory of Firefighters of Chernobyl*. It begins with the description of a silent and peaceful night in Chernobyl which was ruined by the explosion. The firefighters were the first who arrived and they stopped the fire though they had to pay a very high price. They became the people's heroes and everyone had to align their deeds with the bravery of new patriots. The closing line, "We will honestly perform our duty to our Motherland", unifies all Soviet people as potential soldiers who are ready to protect their Motherland as it already once happened in

[10] Photo is provided by Anna Korolevska, Science Director, Ukrainian National Chernobyl Museum 1, Khoriva bystreet, 04071 Kiev, Ukraine. www.chornobylmuseum.kiev.ua [01.05.2018].

1941–1945. And while the fight with the Chernobyl catastrophe is presented in a glorious way, the *We-ness* of the Soviet people is re-created and maintained. Having read the lines of the poem, we can also come to the conclusion that the image above is not an illustration in a proper sense. From a logical point of view, the firefighters did not save children at the nuclear station at night. Instead the drawing is a subconscious generalization of portrayals of a liquidator as a soldier/savior/protector/hero/patriot which is based on well-known patterns widely used by Soviet authorities before.

Other parallels to the Great War were actively implemented into the post-Chernobyl discourse as well. First, the date of 30 November 1986 was named the Chernobyl Victory Day. Then the first temporary shelter, *Sarcophagus*, over the 4th reactor was finished and put into operation by the Soviet governmental commission. The liquidators left their signatures on the walls of *Sarcophagus* in tune with a ritual initiated by Soviet soldiers who had signed the walls of Reichstag in 1945.

The strong connection between the Chernobyl trauma and re-activated commemoration technics may also be illustrated with the text written in years after the tragedy. Here is a commemoration written to mark the 25th anniversary of the Chernobyl meltdown on the website of Gelenzik's (a town in Russia) organization of Chernobyl liquidators:

> There is no need to speak on a mass heroism and selflessness that thousands of people demonstrated when they came to rescue victims of Chernobyl. We may only state that there were a considerable number of true heroes of Chernobyl. While celebrating acts of bravery of those who earned the medals, we also should pay tribute to those soldiers of Chernobyl who were not forgotten but ignored by the officials and to those who did not receive medals. The whole country was involved into the liquidation of catastrophe. In fact a general mobilization was announced. […] Hundreds of people demonstrated the miracles of heroism from the first hours of the fire liquidation at the fourth reactor. But only several of them were awarded a title of Hero of the Soviet Union.[11]

The message of the extract is very pathetic. Its aim is to underline the great role of the liquidators, their heroism and bravery. But at the same time there is a tone of regret because many real heroes were not recognized on an official level. Somehow the text proves that there ought to be a direct connection between a heroic deed of a soldier and its correspondent commemoration in a form of a medal. Having a medal also meant an easy way to obtain additional financial benefits from the Soviet government and later from the newly formed governments of new-born independent states. Within the times, Soviet

[11] Gelenzik – Chernobyliu: Pamiatny den' 30 noyabria 2011. http://chornobyl.in.ua/gelenzik-chernobil.html [01.05.2018].

medals/crosses/insignia/honors with Soviet symbols such as Lenin profile, red stars, and a hammer and a sickle (fig. 2) were substituted with Ukrainian signs of honor with a Ukrainian trident, blue and yellow stripes (fig. 3). There are also universal symbols on the medals such as an atom structure, a bell of sorrow, a drop of blood, and an image of a station itself.

Fig. 2: Emblem: "For the participation in Chernobyl explosion consequences liquidation". Collection of the Ukrainian National Chernobyl Museum[12]

Fig. 3: Medal: "The hero of Chernobyl". Collection of the Ukrainian National Chernobyl Museum[13]

Over the course of more than thirty years the attitude of liquidators and the public to different honors has been undergoing permanent changes: from a sign of governmental distinction that could guarantee additional privileges to an honor turned into a simple sign of memory, a souvenir, even a memorabilia. Nowadays with just a couple of clicks anyone can order medals, crosses or badges with Chernobyl symbols crafted by numerous souvenir enterprises.

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12 The photo is provided by Anna Korolevska, Science Director, Ukrainian National Chernobyl Museum, 1, Khoriva bystreet, 04071 Kiev, Ukraine. www.chornobylmuseum.kiev.ua [01.05.2018].

13 The photo is provided by Anna Korolevska, Ukrainian National Chernobyl Museum.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian intellectuals started to re-read and re-write the Chernobyl tragedy as one of the crimes of the Soviet regime against its people and particularly as a crime against the people of Ukraine. The Chernobyl meltdown was automatically included into a canon of Ukrainian nation's sufferings during colonial times alongside the Holodomor of 1932–1933 and World War 2. So, in postcolonial discourse Chernobyl is predominantly re-read as a chosen trauma of Ukrainian nation.

Memorials to Chernobyl Liquidators: Commemoration of Heroes – Trauma Representation – Kitsch

Analysis of Chernobyl monuments as *sites of memory* leads to very mixed results. The Chernobyl monument *To Those Who Saved the World* (fig. 4) was erected ten years after the disaster. It was a non-governmental project sponsored by firefighters and families of liquidators. The monument was created on the spot from fittings, foam plastic, concrete, and other waste products available in Chernobyl.

In the center of the monument there are pipes of the Chernobyl nuclear station encircled by flares of fire. There is also a symbolical planet stacked to two central pipes, and a simple cross at the top between two pipes. So, the fire is hanging over the station and over the world. The vertical line is balanced by the horizontal one where a viewer sees figures of firefighters on both sides of the composition. Four of them on the left are pulling a fire hose. On the right, one of the firefighters is opening a hydrant, one is measuring the level of radiation, one is getting down on one of his knees, and the last is bringing a first-aid kit to help his companion. The monument creates the atmosphere of dynamism. Moreover, due to the specific arrangement of the human bodies around the source of danger – an impression of full control over the situation is produced. A viewer feels protected and secured. Also the cross above adds reliance to the whole scene. The liquidators appear to be blessed and supported by God. This monument is one of the best examples to illustrate the representation of liquidators as fearless heroes who, in spite of death threats, are able to regulate the aftermath of the meltdown and save the world from radiation imminence. In the words of Pierre Nora, the author of the concept of sites of memory, this Chernobyl monument "by dint of human will" and "the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage" of the Ukrainian, post-Soviet and world communities.[14]

[14] Pierre Nora and Lawrence D. Kritzman (eds.): *Realms of Memory: Conflicts and Divisions*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1996.

For now, more monuments concentrate a viewer's attention on the traumatic experience of liquidators while showing them as victims of the disaster. One of such famous memorials was opened in Moscow in 1997 at the Mitino Cemetery where 28 firefighters had been buried.[15]

Fig. 4: Monument: "To Those Who Saved the World" (Ukraine, Chernobyl, 1996). Photo by Vasyl Piasetsky. Collection of the Ukrainian National Chernobyl Museum[16]

15 See https://sfate.deviantart.com/art/Chernobyl-victims-memorial-on-cemetery-298519193 [01.05.2018].

16 Vasyl Piasetsky: "The Monument *To Those Who Saved the World*." The Photo is provided by Anna Korolevska, Ukrainian National Chernobyl Museum.

In contrast to the monument in Chernobyl this one shows a gigantic nuclear mushroom hanging over a figure of a human. While the mushroom cloud is white and solid, the man is black and raw-boned. He is tottering down, his arms are stretching out to both sides, his chest is bare, but his legs are swaddled together. A viewer has the feeling that this man is trapped by the cloud as if he has already used all his strength to oppose its influence. He cannot take a step, and only his arms are trying to push a cloud fringe off. If a viewer looks at the monument from the front, the figure of the man reminds onlookers of a crucifix. So, the deaths of Chernobyl liquidators, and their monuments, allude to Christ suffering on the cross and the Lord's life sacrifice for all human beings. Thus, this shrine is a pure representation of trauma, sufferings, and deaths of new era martyrs.

In the years since 1986, hundreds of memorials, shrives, monuments, obelisks, and honorary plagues have been installed all over the former Soviet Union. Unfortunately, their quantity does not always equal their quality. The sculptors often overuse the same symbols and mix them in a message which senses acknowledge as rather simple or even primitive, aimed to be read and understood by masses. A few monuments have never been finished because of financial shortages or inappropriate usages of funds. Several monuments have been vandalized because of a current tendency for stealing and selling precious metals. For instance, in 2008 the Chair of the Dnipropetrovsk public organization Chernobyl Union of Ukraine announced, that a bell from a memorial to victims of Chernobyl had been stolen, was later found and now needed a restoration. That memorial had not been finalized, and at that time there was also a fear to add a missing detail – a bronze bird with a broken wing – to the composition because that might provoke new acts of vandalism.[17] In a strict sense, such monuments failed to become *sites of memory* as they are completely artificial and fabricated.

All in all, with the fall of the Soviet Union, the Chernobyl disaster has been deemed as the chosen trauma and glory of all Soviet people and still acts as one of the new era myths whose aims were to consolidate as the Soviet nation started to evaporate. Similarly to the ideas of Franz Fanon on reciprocal bases of national culture, in case with the official strategies of Chernobyl trauma commemoration "it becomes a set of automatic habits", in which

[17] See Press-conference "Commemoration of Chernobyl Disaster Victims in Dnepropetrovsk at the Press-Center IA *Novy Most.*" http://most-dnepr.info/press-centre/archives/4720.htm [01.05.2018].

"there is no real creativity and no overflowing life."[18] In such a way we may conclude that the memory of Chernobyl trauma has become a subject to mass reproduction, kitschification, and obviously to 'cultural industry' as it was successfully appropriated by the entertainment business, and in particular by movie productions.

Kitschification of Chernobyl Trauma in Popular Films

The events in Chernobyl in 1986 have attracted the attention of many film directors. In speaking about the strategy of kitschification as it was defined by Daniel Harris after the tragedy of 9/11, "Through kitsch, we avert our eyes from tragedy, transforming the unspeakable ugliness of diseases, accidents and wars into something poetic and noble, into pat stories whose happy endings offer enduring lessons in courage and resilience"[19], a TV mini-series *Moths/Inseparable/Motylki* (Ukraine, 2013) would be a good example.

Moths is classified as a drama and romance that tells us a story of two sisters from Kiev, Alevtina and Maryna. At night on 25 April 1986 they are driving to their aunt in Pripyat. On the way they witness the explosion and later become trapped by the events. Being a doctor, Maryna starts to help at a hospital and is taken to Moscow with the injured firefighters, where she suffers from the symptoms of acute radiation syndrome. Whilst Alevtina falls in love with the young soldier Pavel who is one of the first liquidators having worked on the roof of the fourth reactor. Illegally, Alevtina and Pavel spend time in an abandoned city of Prypiat till Pavel faints. Later he is also transported to the same clinic in Moscow where he dies and is buried in Mitino Cemetery. Alevtina becomes pregnant and she is made to abort the child because of the high risk of danger for its life but she escapes the place and in the end gives birth to a daughter.

The movie does not raise questions about the responsibility for the disaster. Rather it concentrates on the issues of bravery, stoicism, love and loss at the moment of extreme danger. The characters are also shown as unified, determined and ready to give up their lives if there is a call from the Motherland. One of these characters is the sisters' father who has just arrived from Afghanistan. Though he has not visited his house, his father or his daughters yet, he volunteers to fly to the exploded reactor for making measurements

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[18] Frantz Fanon: "Reciprocal Bases of National Culture and the Fight for Freedom." In: Vincent B. Leitch (ed.): *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, New York and London, W.W. Norton & Company, 2001, p. 1588.

[19] Daniel Harris: "The Kitschification of Sept. 11." 26 January 2002. http://www.salon.com/2002/01/26/kitsch_2/ [01.05.2018].

where his helicopter crashes. The dialogue between him and the general before the flight is a prime example of how the appeal to chosen trauma and chosen glory works in this movie, "Boris, we are officers, aren't we? We aren't at war. The war is where the danger is."[20] The character of the sisters' grandfather is another direct link to the past. When Ihor, a young doctor and Maryna's boyfriend, comes in the early morning just after the meltdown to their Kiev flat, the old man understands that Ihor has escaped Prypiat because of fear and lack of experience. The grandfather does not shame the young guy but he puts on his uniform with rows of medals to demonstrate how a real patriot has to behave in the face of danger. The grandfather dies in his flat on the eve of the Victory Day (9 May 1986) and his death is treated with deep sorrow. It is commemorated by his brothers-veterans and a whole community. All of the characters are clearly divided into two separate groups: real Soviet heroes and parasites. The last are not numerous and they are always punished by disrespect and even shameful deaths, for example, a group of marauders. Other deaths are heroic and valuable without any questions or doubts.

Concluding, in the TV mini-serial *Moths* a viewer witnesses not only a rhetoric of trauma, gloom, alienation, and exile, but also self-devotion, fidelity, love, and romance. The melodramatic line is hugely intensified here to lull and please the taste of the public in tune with the law of the genre. In this sense the above analyzed movie about Chernobyl liquidators is a vivid example of the strategy of trauma kitschification.

Portrayals of Liquidators as Eyewitnesses and Speakers

The communicative approach to the portrayals of liquidators is based on the *concept of testimony* offered by Shoshanna Felman who also underlines the role of a listener/viewer:

> The emergence of the narrative which is being listened to – and heard – is, therefore, the process and the place wherein the cognizance, the 'knowing' of the event, is given birth to. The listener, therefore, is a party to the creation of knowledge *de novo*. The testimony to the trauma thus includes its hearer, who is, so to speak, the blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed for the first time.[21]

The testimony may be realized through so called 'silent' forms of art as, for example, photography. It gives survivors a chance to share their experience

[20] TV-series *Moths*, Episode 2: 0:04:51–0:04:53.

[21] Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub: *Testimony. Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* [1992], London, Routledge, 2013, p. 57.

through visual images allowing viewers to create stories about the past trauma on their own. It also broadens the audience because the number of viewers is not restricted as photography uses a universal language understood by millions of people.

The Ukrainian photographer Viktor Maruschenko is one of the well-known artists who has worked with the Chernobyl theme. His photo exhibitions *Ukraine after Chernobyl* (Glückstadt 1992), *Life with Chernobyl* (*Seidlvilla*, Munich 1996), and *Chernobyl* (*Zeit Zone*, Berlin, 2002) were displayed in Germany.[22] One of the projects created by his photo school is exactly the right piece to be discussed in the frame of our theme here. The project was demonstrated in the Kiev city art gallery *Lavra* from 19–26 of April in 2011. It consisted of two parts: a photo installation *1986: Two Views* and an audiovisual installation *Chernobyl: Direct Speech*. The photo installation included 25 portraits of Chernobyl liquidators and 25 portraits of young people who were born in 1986. Every portrait was followed by a short text in which the participants shared their knowledge about Chernobyl. In a press release the photo installation was characterized in the following manner:

> *1986. Two Views* stands apart from speculations of journalists who create them one by one. The Viktor Maruschenko's Photo School project is profound and well-prepared. It is intentionally estranged, even formal and without any authors' interpretations. Only people in photos are given a chance to testimony. The project contrasts personal stories and attracts attention to deleting of Chernobyl theme in collective memory.[23]

The thought expressed by liquidators is that Chernobyl has taken away everything those people had before. Of course, the main loss is their health. But the common place in most of the testimonies is the lack of respect to the liquidators' deeds and loss of memory about Chernobyl tragedy in a modern society:

> Chernobyl has taken my health and ruined my life. Recently nobody hires me and I can earn for living only from time to time. (Anatoliy Kifa)
> Chernobyl has changed my life abruptly. And first of all it took my health. I am an invalid of the second level. (Vladimir Musiets)
> I permanently need medical treatments. There is no help from the state. (Michail Revchuk)
> Today I am congratulated only on the New Year and on 23 February by the Union of Veterans. This is the respect I get. Of course, people must not be treated like that. (Igor Kekuh)

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22 Information is presented on the official website of Viktor Maruschenko http://marushchenko.com/about-viktor-marushhenko [01.05.2018].

23 See http://photoshkol.com.ua/?q=content/«1986-два-взгляда»-«чернобыль-прямая-речь»-апрель-2011-г [01.05.2018].

> Today I am in debts. My colleagues and children help me. Chernobyl has taken everything I had. (Viktor Pechenny)[24]

These testimonies prove that an attempt to present Chernobyl as chosen trauma to build the *We-ness* of the Soviets and/or Ukrainians was not totally successful. Soon, the liquidators were left with their problems without support from the state, and commemoration of their feat was merely transformed into media reports from Chernobyl Zone every April.

Such situation is proved in the texts written by younger respondents. The main message is that they were/are not aware of the disaster and its causes. Only two of them wrote that they are interested in the event: one of them wants to visit the sight, and one has learnt a lot about the tragedy from photos and films. Several of the young people highlight the influence of the Chernobyl station explosion in terms of their own lives, but mainly this influence is connected with the need to change their place of living. Most of them do not characterize the period after the explosion as traumatic. In numerous texts, the idea that in spite of what had happened we have to continue our life is openly admitted. In this sense the most typical message was expressed by Kirill Pokutny: "My opinion is that it is really very sad. But then I understood that it is something we have to live on with. And cope with. Many liquidators who worked during the first months after the disaster live in my house. They are still alive and I think they are heroes."[25] The word 'heroes' in this context combines two meanings: people who could save the world and people who can survive in spite of society's ignorance toward them. The texts by the young interviewees show that the transgenerational transmission of memory about Chernobyl is not complete. The analyzed photo installation is one of a few modern projects that really provide an opportunity for a dialogue between generations. The liquidators are allowed to speak and to be listened to.

The second part of the project, the audiovisual installation *Chernobyl: Direct Speech*, shows the liquidators who are listening to their own stories.[26] There is no additional information, no comments, no statistics, and no well-known symbols connected in mass consciousness with Chernobyl. The installation is made in black and white colors that attract maximum attention to the mimic of the respondents. A viewer can concentrate on the emotions of people while they are listening to their own testimonies. The director of the installation Yuriy Rechinskiy says:

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24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 IstPravda "Chornobyl: Priama mova". Video installation, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uD7Tmwtz1ws [01.05.2018].

> The way how the victims of the Chernobyl nuclear plant explosion are shown does not often correspond to who they are in reality. Each of them has lost something: health, a job, a house, or relatives. But they speak not only about death, they speak about life. They are interesting, alive people. Their experience of the tragedy is universal and it teaches us how to survive the difficulties, how not to become an alcoholic, how not to stay alone, and how to live on.[27]

Making the conclusion, we may state that Viktor Maruschenko's Photo School project on Chernobyl represents the liquidators as ordinary people who were trapped by historical events and whose lives were changed against their will. It makes their experience universal and easily understood for any people who have ever found themselves in a situation of loss and mourn. Both parts of the project have an unrestricted communicative nature. Every viewer may build a dialogue with the witnesses of the meltdown on the basis of their own knowledge and experience. The project also provokes to find and validate the truth about the disaster while doubting the official trend of presenting Chernobyl exclusively as chosen trauma and/or chosen glory.

The multidimensional approach to Chernobyl disaster and liquidators of its consequences is implemented into the strategic mission of National Chernobyl Museum in Kiev:

> The mission of the Museum is to help the mankind understand the scope of the disaster through the destinies of thousands of those people who were liquidators, witnesses and victims. The aim is to make people realize a necessary reconciliation of a human being with science and technology that have endangered the existence of the whole human civilization and the planet of Earth; to conceive the lessons of the tragedy in all the spheres of life and not let the world forget the lessons of Chernobyl. The Museum is a warning for the new millennia generations.[28]

The Museum was founded in 1992. Since then it has initiated hundreds of cross-disciplinarian conferences, symposiums, public events and exhibitions on a vast variety of topics. In 1997 the Museum initiated the creation of the Book of Remembrance in which a visitor may find photos and brief structured information about liquidators of the Chernobyl aftermath. At the moment there are more than 5,000 entries in the Book. The database is also available online.[29]

The Chernobyl Museum and its official website also provide a place for liquidators to speak about their experience. In 2016–2017 the virtual exhibition

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27 See http://photoshkol.com.ua/?q=content/«1986-два-взгляда»-«чернобыль-прямая-речь»-апрель-2011-г) [01.05.2018].

28 About us. http://chornobylmuseum.kiev.ua/en/about-us/ [01.05.2018].

29 Book of Remembrance, http://memory.chornobylmuseum.kiev.ua/# [01.05.2018].

"Our Spirit is Unbreakable" by a former liquidator George Shanayev has been presented (the curator of the exhibition is Anna Korolevska; the designer and creator of the slideshow is Alex Kurmaz).[30] After participation in the liquidation of the consequences of the catastrophe, George Shanayev became a Chernobyl invalid and spent most of the times in hospitals where he started to create graphic paintings. The main theme in his graphic works is the interpretation of life during Chernobyl meltdown and years after it. The key symbol in his works is a sign of radiation threat that stands for many different items, for example, it is used as the Sun, apples on the trees, water in buckets, people's eyes, a fetus in a woman's womb and in bird's eggs, seeds in a sunflower, snowballs of a snowman, and others. Many works present everyday life with radiation (an old lady who is carrying radiated water in buckets; a child who is making a radioactive snowman; a family is sitting at the table covered with a radioactive cloth; etc.). Alongside, several of images underline the courage and bravery of liquidators interweaving the theme of their struggle into universal patterns. Thus, the work dated the year of 2005 shows a typical folklore plot of a young knight fighting a snake (fig. 5). The well-known story is updated as the knight has a trident, a Ukrainian coat-of-arms, on his armor and a sign of nuclear energy on his shield while the snake is circling around the symbol of radiation. Another work "The Labor of Sisyphus" (2003) depicts a naked man pushing a stone of radiation up (fig. 6).

In such a way in his art works George Shanayev rereads the traumatic Chernobyl past in the frame of world patterns that helps to relocate trauma from a personal/local to universal level. Such a strategy unifies the liquidators with sufferings and losses of other people throughout the world and times and makes their experience of trauma recovery rather valuable. In this context art as a form of speaking becomes a form of a very promising treatment.

[30] See http://chornobylmuseum.kiev.ua/shanaev [01.05.2018].

Fig. 5: George Shanayev: “A graphic work”. Paper, black ink (2005). Collection of the Ukrainian National Chernobyl Museum[31]

[31] See http://chornobylmuseum.kiev.ua/shanaev/#/54/ [01.05.2018].

Fig. 6: George Shanayev: "The labor of Sisyphus". Paper, black ink (2003).
Collection of the Ukrainian National Chernobyl Museum[32]

Liquidators as Black Demons

In popular audio-visual forms of art, liquidators are often presented as villains, mutants, monsters, stalkers, scavengers, etc. The roots of such representation are connected to the idea of Apocalypse, an idea which the Chernobyl meltdown has been associated with; sci-fi tradition of dealing with the post-apocalyptic society; long lists of music tracks, video games, and movies

[32] See http://chornobylmuseum.kiev.ua/shanaev/#/48/ [01.05.2018].

that have attempted to describe/predict the world after a massive nuclear war, nuclear holocaust or any other crash of civilization.

After the explosion and evacuation of inhabitants from the Dead Zone, several of them preferred to come back to their native houses and settled there against the law regulations. In spite of the deadly level of radiation those people continued to grow plants and farm animals. They became 'invisible' for officials and their lives in the Zone are an endless source of rumors about mutations among people and animals. Others, so called scavengers, tried to come back to grab some stuff from the abandoned city of Pripyat and near villages, and later sell it for making profit. A number of former inhabitants of Chernobyl Zone, as well as representatives of a new generation, feel a sort of obsession to visit the Zone illegally with an aim to wander around the ruins, take photos, and/or live on the outskirts of the society at least for a short period of time. These people were named stalkers, and they also are guides to the Zone for 'black' illegal tourists. Scavengers and stalkers may be the same people but not always because often stalkers visit the Zone without any settled aim. All these new post-Chernobyl characters were appropriated by modern culture.

Though Arkady and Boris Strugatsky's science fiction novella *Roadside Picnic* (1971) and its screen adaptation in Andrei Tarkowsky's movie *Stalker* (USSR, 1979) were the first in which the word "stalker" (a traditional meaning: a person who is illegally follows and watches someone, especially a woman) was used in reference to a person who has an ability and desire to cross the border into a dangerous and forbidden place, the Zone, it did not come into common usage until 2007 when a survival horror video game *S.T.A.L.K.E.R.: Shadow of Chernobyl* was released. The game is set in an alternative reality after the second meltdown of Chernobyl that caused changes in flora, fauna, humans, and laws of physics. The Zone was used by the Soviet government to perform experiments on people and to create a hive mind known as the C-Consciousness. The main character of the game is Stalker/Strelok whose mind was also used in one of the seven capsules of the C-Consciousness. A gamer has to lead Stalker and help him to open his identity while fighting with numerous zombies, mutants, and different threats of the Zone. After a tremendous success of the game a prequel *S.T.A.L.K.E.R.: Clear Sky* and a sequel *S.T.A.L.K.E.R.: Call of Pripyat* were released worldwide in 2008 and 2010.[33]

Later the images of stalkers became a common place in so-called demotivators, black-and-white posters which aim to demotivate. But often they

[33] See official website http://www.stalker-game.com/en [01.05.2018].

influence the consciousness vice versa and become motivators in disguise. There are a series of demotivators devoted to Chernobyl, its connection to Tarkowsky's movie, the video-game, and real life of the Zone of Exclusion. They often insist on the illusory character of the game, absurdity and ugliness of the reality, and heroism of true liquidators.[34]

In a western audio-visual culture the first references to Chernobyl's monsters are met in the second season episode "The Host" of *The X-Files* in 1994 (USA, 1994). Two main protagonists, Fox Mulder and Dana Scully, investigate the deaths of the people who were bitten and injected with death-causing flukes by an abnormal creature, a tapeworm-like humanoid named "Flukeman". His life story has been fully disclosed in a series of sequels: in Les Martin's young-adult series novel entitled *The Host* (1997), and in a 2013 comic continuation of *The X-Files* called *Season 10*. In a chronological order the Flukeman's life story is the following. He was a Soviet ex-liquidator named Gregory who had mutated into the Flukeman after the meltdown in a radioactive sewage from the 4th reactor. Later he was brought to New Jersey by a Russian freighter that was salvaged from Chernobyl. Agent Mulder tried to kill the Flukeman by slicing it in half, but he could regenerate, survive and escaped to one of the islands in the south-east of Massachusetts. There he began to multiply but he and his off-springs were killed by a local sheriff, Michael Simmons, who revealed his true identity to the agents as an ex-liquidator Mikhail Simonov. It is a remarkable coincidence in tune with the laws of the genre that the Flukeman and his killer were both ex-liquidators from Chernobyl. This motif reflects an old pattern of a bad guy and a good guy in which a good guy is given a reward for his bravery which in this case is a peaceful life in the US.

Such portrayals of a liquidator need to be decoded in a more general context too. The geopolitical background of such a representation is quite helpful. The plot reflects post-Soviet relations between the US, Russia and Ukraine. In the 1990s Ukraine was a very young and nearly invisible Eastern-European independent state on the international arena. The country was still closely associated with its Soviet past to the extent that it had not until recently been differentiated from Russia at all. So, that was not a coincidence that the Flukeman was brought to the US by a Russian ship. The 1990s was also a period when the hetero-image of Ukraine as a warlike, hostile and dangerous territory was created in western popular culture, and the Chernobyl meltdown was one of the important reasons for that. On the one hand, the character of the Flukeman ironically reflects exaggerating anxieties not only about the

[34] See http://pirojok.net/photos/9459-demotivatory-pro-stalker.html [01.05.2018].

nuclear holocaust but also fears in face of a new world order. On the other hand, physical and mental traumas are visualized in this character in a way that they can be seen and understood by anyone: from adults to a young audience. The extreme mutations of the body caused the unpredictable changes of the character's mind and his behavior to the extent that he could barely be referred to as a human being. So, the Flukeman may be perceived as an artistic illustration for a traumatized person who is left without help and support, who is isolated from the society later on, and whose death is a logical final.

Another movie that follows the strategy of demonization of liquidators is *Chernobyl Diaries* (USA, 2012). Practically, three different types are shown in it. First of all, it is an image of a guide, Yuriy, who takes a group of the American tourists to the Zone. He is a former liquidator who knows all of the paths, legal and illegal, to the Zone. Visually, his image is created in tune with the traditional portrayals of Ukrainians in popular movies: he is a bulky man in sportswear, speaking with a typical accent, and wearing a gun. Secondly, the mutants in the Zone are former liquidators, citizens of Prypiat and near villages that were not evacuated but put into a clinic for testing experiments on. They are typical monstrous "others" who kill American tourists. Finally, there are state guards who secure the territory. When they find two last Americans they brutally shoot the guy and throw his girlfriend into a cell with mutants. Concluding, it is clear that the Chernobyl spot was used in this movie only as a topos to intensify genre characteristics of the horror thriller. The plot has nothing in common with the post-Chernobyl reality or problems. But nevertheless it propels predominately negative reception of Chernobyl liquidators in the collective memory.

Land of Oblivion (France, Ukraine, Poland, Germany, 2012) is a drama about survivors of the Chernobyl zone, their traumatic experience, and post-Chernobyl life in the Zone and in the city of Slavutych. Obviously, the historical truth is amended in order to please the taste of the public and to follow the laws of the genre. The central character is Anya whose wedding day was on 25 April 1986. During the celebration her husband, Piotr, received an order to fight a forest fire. Later in the hospital, she tried to meet with her husband, but she was told that he was not a human anymore but a radioactive station. So, Piotr was one of those firefighters who died from radiation during the first days of the disaster. Anya never saw him again after her wedding day. The main female character could never recover after her loss. As one of the critics writes:

> The way the first section is shot, the elaborate mise-en-scène, well conveys both a vast event and the innocence and confusion of the inhabitants. Anya has had a sense of doom. The trauma of being essentially abandoned at her moment of

> happiness numbs her emotionally for the duration. And she cannot really ever leave. She stays attached to Pripyat by being a French-speaking leader of Chernobyl bus tours.[35]

Years after the meltdown the station workers are shown as a doomed crowd of people who cannot leave the territory because of some invisible links to the land. Anya has relations with one of the workers, Dima, who loves her but he is not ready to leave the place and offers her to live in one of the abandoned houses in a village. When that house is occupied by an armed family of refugees from Uzbekistan, Anya tries to explain to them that the Zone belongs to her and other natives.

Another character who is also one of the liquidators is the engineer Alexei. He was the first who realized the scale of the tragedy, and because of it he could pack his family off. But he himself stayed in the Zone to warn and protect people. His deeds look very naïve: at the market he warns people not to eat meat; he buys all of the umbrellas and gives them to different people in the city to protect them from radioactive rain. We see that he leaves Pripyat on foot. In years after the tragedy his wife and his adult son, Valeriy, arrive in Chernobyl to mourn Alexei, though the son is sure that his father is not dead. The boy stays in the Zone, wanders around, and visits the school and their old flat. Then he is caught by security officers and made to leave. In parallel shots we see Alexei who is travelling by different trains and writes down people's names into a copy-book. So, he is represented as a wanderer who has lost his memory but who wants to save memory about other ordinary people.

However, in a more realistic manner *Land of Oblivion* represents liquidators in a very negative way as soldiers controlled by the state. In the first part of the movie there is a mise-en-scène in a village. Unexpectedly a liquidators' helicopter lands near far away houses with scared inhabitants who try to question what is going on. But the liquidators, wearing white protective overalls and gas masks, start to sanitize and scorch the houses without any explanations. They behave themselves like robots. Another brutal moment is when the liquidators shoot off the animals. The scenes of evacuation also show liquidators in Soviet army uniforms and demonstrate their disrespect to senior citizens and lack of compassion to people in need. A viewer may conclude that the whole responsibility for the tragedy is on the Soviet system while the liquidators are depicted as an inseparable part of that system.

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[35] Chris Knipp: "Michale Boganim. Land of Oblivion, 2011." July 2002. http://www.filmleaf.net/showthread.php?3257-San-Francisco-International-Film-Festival-2012/page2#post27771 [01.05.2018].

Conclusion

The Chernobyl meltdown is one of the most tragic and traumatic experiences throughout humanity. However, collective memories of the event have been transformed in different historical, political and geographical contexts. This study provided evidence that there are several major approaches to portrayals of Chernobyl liquidators' trauma in modern popular art, such as: glorification/victimization, kitschefication, demonization and representation of liquidators as eyewitnesses. The last approach seems to have a chance to create an adequate understanding of liquidators' trauma whilst the others are more typical for mass culture with its passion for generalizations and exaggerations. Additional comparative research needs to be conducted to determine whether and how the similar experience was represented in other post-nuclear audio-visual arts, for example, after the Three Mile Island accident (USA, 1979) and Fukushima meltdown (Japan, 2011).

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Section 2
“Film and Trauma in Western Europe”

CHRISTOPH VATTER

Trauma, Cultures of Memory and Childhood in French Postwar Cinema: The Example of René Clément's *Jeux interdits* (1952)

The way France deals with its past related to occupation, resistance and collaboration during World War II might be an exemplary case for studying the link between trauma, cultures of memory and the nation on the one hand and its mediation through the audio-visual arts, especially cinema, on the other. After the vain attempt to repel the Nazi invasion army in May and June of 1940, the occupation period was marked by a profound division of France's territory and the population's minds. Whereas the Northern part of France, including the capital Paris, was occupied and completely controlled by the German Reich's military forces, the "free" south of the country was governed by the so-called Régime de Vichy under Philippe Pétain and its Prime Minister, Pierre Laval. Under the slogan "Travail, patrie, famille" ("Work, fatherland, family") Pétain's *Révolution nationale* willingly adopted the Nazi's conservative ideology and pursued official politics of *collaboration* as the French Maréchal announced in his famous radio speech from October 30, 1940 after having met with Hitler in Montoire (October 24, 1940). Opposed to that strategy of accommodation and collaboration with the German occupant, Charles de Gaulle represents the emblematic leader of the *Résistance* since his famous Appeal of 18 June from London. After France's liberation in 1944, the conflicts between *Résistance* and *collaboration* and the ideological struggles that derived from them were quickly silenced and 'forgotten': the powerful myth of "résistancialisme" (Henry Rousso) claiming France as a nation united in resistance and reducing the extent of collaboration to an insignificant exception of a few felons, was established from the very beginning and was most actively promoted under de Gaulle who was the leader of the Provisional Government (1944–1946) and returned to power from 1958 until 1969. The comforting and apparently very appealing idea of a whole nation unanimously united in resistance against Hitler and Nazi Germany brought along the repression of diverging memories and silenced the internal conflicts between resisters and collaborators, but also the indifference and passiveness of the bystanders, probably the largest group of people not having chosen a clear camp and mainly struggling with their own advancements in harsh times. The dominance of the *Résistance* myth was only weakened after the

change of generation following May 1968 and the first socialist government with the election of François Mitterrand in 1981. But it was not before 1995 that a French President officially recognized this difficult past: in his speech during the commemoration ceremony of the Vél' d'Hiv Roundup, *la rafle du Vél' d'Hiv*, the raid and arrest of 13,152 Jews in Paris on July 16, 1942, Jacques Chirac admitted the responsibility of the French and the *Etat français* as Vichy France is officially called, in the prosecution of Jews.

The historian Henry Rousso used psychological terms to analyze the evolution of France's cultures of memory on the Vichy years.[1] The phases he outlines for the complex process of France's coming to terms with its past, are close to the steps in the evolution of a psychological trauma:[2] after a first period of "unfinished mourning" during the first decade after the end of the war that was characterized by the short and violent *épuration* and broad amnesties for most collaborators, Rousso observes a long period of "repressions" (1954-1971) of deviant memories from the resistance paradigm. Covering the long years of de Gaulle's presidency, in this period the myth of a nation in resistance, embodied by the General himself, was widely consolidated. The following period, "the broken mirror" (1971–1974), is marked by the reopening of the wounds and a profound change in the vision of the past after de Gaulle's death in 1970. Triggered by Marcel Ophuls' documentary film *The Sorrow and the Pity* (*Le chagrin et la pitié*, 1969/1971) and Historians' re-examination of the period,[3] the new generation was not willing to accept the national consensus and claimed change in the memory of the *années noires*. This challenge of the established culture of memory lead to a long period of 'obsessions' with the so far silenced crimes of the occupation years. From

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1 Henry Rousso: *The Vichy Syndrome. History and Memory in France Since 1944*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1991.

2 Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was only included in the American Psychiatric Association's DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) in May 1980 and much less present in public discourse than today. That may be an explanation why Rousso's focus is on memory, a concept that was in the processes of becoming a main paradigm of cultural studies during the preparation of his study in the mid-1980s. When his book was published first in France in 1987, Pierre Nora had just finished the publication of the first two volumes of his influential *Lieux de mémoire* (1984–1992).

3 Especially Robert Paxton's *Vichy France. Old guard and new order 1940-1944* (New York, W.W. Norton, 1972) whose French translation came out in France in 1973, but also Eberhard Jäckel's *La France dans l'Europe de Hitler* (Paris, Fayard, 1968) initiated a great number of new studies on the period. Cf. François Bédarida: "L'Histoire de la Résistance. Lectures d'hier, chantiers de demain." In: *Vingtième siècle* 7–9, no. 11, 1986, pp. 75–89; Pierre Azéma and François Bédarida (eds.): *Le Régime de Vichy et les Français*, Paris, Fayard, 1992 (especially Part one: "L'Historiographie de Vichy d'hier à aujourd'hui", pp. 23–74).

1974 on, it opened the way for the 'Jewish Memory' making France's implication in the prosecution and assassination of the European Jews a major topic and fostered political discussions on the way the nation related to its history. Major trials against war criminals such as Klaus Barbie (1987), Paul Touvier (1994) or Maurice Papon (1998) for crimes against humanity illustrate the central role of dealing with the Vichy past in the 1980s and 1990s. Since then, public debates and a large number of books and films, as well as a prolific scientific production, illustrate the constant interest in this part of French History.

Cinema has always played a key role in the evolution of France's memory of the occupation period as the following examples illustrate. As a privileged media for dealing with the painful past and conflicting versions of history, filmmakers have often proposed narratives in line with the dominant discourse; but they have also tentatively explored different ways of remembering, often by directly addressing the open wounds of memory. France's very first postwar feature film, *The Battle of the Rail* (*Bataille du Rail*, 1946) by René Clément, already participated actively in the transformation of the (still present) past into memory. Director René Clément, for whom the Occupation period became the central topic of his long career,[4] portrayed the railroad workers' valiant fight by sabotage and erected with *Bataille du Rail* a monument for the *Résistance* that is – clearly inspired by the communist perspective – shown as a collective effort for the nation.[5] As a central "vector of memory" (Henry Rousso), cinema sets – in Clément's movie – the tone for the dominant vision of the period 1940–1944 as the people united in resistance – and for the repression of alternative perspectives. The cinematographic climax of 'résistancialisme' in de Gaulle's France was marked by two films from 1966: René Clément's Franco-American epic war film, *Is Paris burning* (*Paris brûle-t-il?*, 1966) on the liberation of Paris in 1944; and Gérard Oury's popular *La grande vadrouille*[6] (1966), a burlesque comedy that showed popular comedians Louis de Funès and Bourvil as gawky, accidental

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4 Many of his films deal with the occupation period and are important milestones in the filmography of Vichy and its memory, e.g. *Bataille du Rail* (1946), *Le père tranquille* (1946), *Les maudits* (1946), *Jeux interdits* (1952), *Le jour et l'heure* (1963), *Paris brûle-t-il?* (1966).

5 Christoph Vatter: *Gedächtnismedium Film. Holocaust und Kollaboration in deutschen und französischen Spielfilmen seit 1945*, Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann, 2009, pp. 82ff.; Susanne Dürr: *Strategien nationaler Vergangenheitsbewältigung. Die Zeit der Occupation im französischen Film*, Tübingen, Stauffenburg, 2001, pp. 22ff.

6 *The Great Stroll*, also distributed under the titles *Don't Look Now… We're Being Shot At!* and *La grande vadrouille* on the English speaking market.

resistance heroes duping again and again even more incapable Nazis.[7] Whereas *Paris brûle-t-il?* with its impressive reconstruction of the fights in the streets of Paris celebrated the idea of the *Libération* as a joint effort of *Résistance* and military operations, one of the core elements of the Gaullist *Résistance* myth – the long-lasting immense success of *La grande vadrouille*, established over a long period as France's most watched movie, along with its frequent transmission on television, reflects the deep roots of the myth of resistance in French popular culture.

But it was also a movie that vigorously broke the mirror of the illusion of a nation in resistance: Marcel Ophuls' documentary *Le chagrin et la pitié* (*The Sorrow and the Pity*, 1969/1971) portrayed the city of Clermont-Ferrand during the Vichy years. It shows the period 1940–1944 not as a conflict between two countries, France and Germany, but rather as an ideological struggle within France. Preferring interviews and testimony over archival images, Ophuls disassembles the image of an organized, united resistance movement; instead, he shows indifference, 'wait and see' attitude and anticipatory obedience as well as traces of a deeply rooted antisemitism in rural France. The film that was forbidden for broadcast on TV for more than ten years,[8] still found a large public despite of its limited distribution in small movie theaters. Ophuls' film expresses the questions of the post-war generation and therefore documents the collision between different visions of the past. Longtime repressed memories were challenged and brought into the light during the following years, not only on screen.

These few examples of emblematic cinematographic contributions to the process of dealing with a controversial past illustrate how movies participate in the discussion of memory. Beyond its capacity of perpetuating and consolidating dominant visions of the past, film has also a subversive potential to explore different ways of remembering. In this article, René Clément's *Jeux interdits* (1952) will serve as an example to analyze the complex relationship between the representation of trauma and cultural memory in France. After some theoretical reflections on cinema, horror and trauma, we will examine how Clément's movie uses the representation of individual loss and trauma to address the collective level. The specificity of his approach will be underlined through a comparison with François Boyer's novel that is at the origin of the

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7 A similar approach was already used in *La traversée de Paris* (Claude Autant-Lara, 1956), starring Bourvil and de Funès together with Jean Gabin in the leading parts.

8 *Le chagrin et la pitié* was only broadcast in October 1981, after the electoral victory of the Socialists under François Mitterrand. It reached an audience of approximately 15 million and was followed by an intense studio-debate.

screenplay developed by the famous screenwriter duo Jean Aurenche and Pierre Bost in collaboration with Boyer and Clément.

Trauma, Horror, and Memory in Film

The functions of filmic representations of trauma and horror are often discussed in the narrow context of the genre of horror movies, but they can also be examined in a broader sense of traumatic experiences or taboo in the cinema such as for example the holocaust, the Vietnam war or the Spanish civil war.[9] Elm, Kabalek and Köhne (2014) start their reflections on *The Horror of Trauma in Cinema: Violence Void Visualization* recalling Siegfried Kracauer's analogy between the filmic screen and the story of Perseus and Medusa in Greek mythology.[10] The hero uses his polished shield as a screen reflecting the horror induced by Medusa's petrifying gaze to turn her deadly weapon against herself. The mediated horror is not harmful anymore and, thanks to Perseus' smart ruse, he can cut Medusa's head off and turn it into a weapon for his protection by putting it on his shield. As in the tale of Perseus,

> [c]inema serves as a shield/screen offering pathways to insight into dreadful scenes of actual horror, cruelty and violence without petrifying our bodies. As such, film is a powerful and liberating media because it allows us to 'incorporate' unsighted horrific scenes in our memory, to 'behead' or distort the horror in mirrors, and to influence the discourse about violent events in real life.[11]

The cinematographic representation as a way for addressing repressed memories and horror may thus become a means of coping with the past and finding relief through the reflection of traumatic experiences on a screen. Filmic representations of trauma and traumatic experiences may therefore be a 'safe' way to deal with horrors of the past. However, besides this cathartic function, movies bear also the potential to act directly on the viewer's memory. As the

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9 See e.g. Thomas Elsaesser: *Terror und Trauma: Zur Gewalt des Vergangenen in der BRD*, Berlin, Kadmos, 2006; Adam Lowenstein: *Shocking Representation. Historical Trauma, National Cinema, and the Modern Horror Film*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2005; Mark Heberle (ed.): *Thirty Years After: New Essays on Vietnam War Literature, Film, and Art*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Pub, 2009; Claudia Jünke: *Erinnerung – Mythos – Medialität. Der Spanische Bürgerkrieg im aktuellen Roman und Spielfilm in Spanien*, Berlin, Erich Schmidt, 2012.

10 Siegfried Kracauer: "Das Haupt der Medusa." In: Siegfried Kracauer: *Theorie des Films. Die Errettung der äußeren Wirklichkeit*, 3rd ed., Frankfurt/M., Suhrkamp, 2005, pp. 467–469.

11 Michael Elm, Kobi Kabalek and Julia B. Köhne: "Introduction." In: Michael Elm, Kobi Kabalek and Julia B. Köhne (eds.): *The Horrors of Trauma in Cinema: Violence Void Visualization*, Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014, p. 2.

German sociologist and social psychologist Harald Welzer has shown in his research on the echo of war movies in German family memories,[12] movies can influence the ways we remember and reconstruct our individual and collective past. In addition to that, as a public media, cinema is also part of discourses in a society and has the power to influence them. The examples of the French movies mentioned above illustrate the major impact film can have in cultures of memory.

Angela Kühner has analyzed the concept of collective trauma that can be defined as a traumatic event stored into collective memory.[13] She underlines that the notion which is based on an analogy transferring individual psychic processes on a collective level,[14] can describe a traumatic event that cannot be processed with the usual procedures of collective remembering and that therefore cannot be integrated in a contingent narrative on the past. It bears, however, the potential to challenge or change the usual practices and routines of collective remembering. Referring to Jan Assmann's well known distinction between communicative and cultural memory,[15] Kühner suggests the term "communicatively mediated trauma"[16] to describe a trauma that is part of the communicative memory, transmitted by witnesses' accounts, as is the case in Clément's film that came out in 1952, at a time when the events it refers to, had taken place only twelve years before. Following Jeffrey C. Alexander's reasoning, Angela Kühner further points out that a cultural trauma can become a "master narrative"[17] for a group, but it can also go beyond because of its explosive and destructive force.

Cinema participates in the construction and deconstruction of traumatic (master) narratives as shown in the case of France discussed above. But, as Thomas Weber points out, the representation of trauma in filmic narrations focuses on the individual trauma to address the collective level: "The memory

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12 Harald Welzer, Sabine Moller and Karoline Tschuggnall: *"Opa war kein Nazi": Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust im Familiengedächtnis*, Frankfurt, Fischer, 2002.

13 Angela Kühner: *Trauma und kollektives Gedächtnis*, Gießen, Psychosozial-Verlag, 2008, pp. 250ff.

14 For a critical reflection on the transfer of the trauma concept from the individual psychological level to the sphere of cultural media, especially film, see also Thomas Elsaesser: *German Cinema – Terror and Trauma: Cultural Memory since 1945*, New York/London, Routledge, 2014.

15 See Jan Assmann: "Kollektives Gedächtnis und kulturelle Identität." In: Jan Assmann and Tonio Hölscher (eds.): *Kultur und Gedächtnis*, Frankfurt a. M., Suhrkamp, 1988, pp. 9–19.

16 See Kühner: *Trauma und kollektives Gedächtnis*, p. 24.

17 Jeffrey C. Alexander: "Towards a Theory of Cultural Trauma." In: Jeffrey C. Alexander et al.: *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, Berkeley et al., University of California Press, 2004, here p. 13.

of a historical collective trauma can only be represented as a personalized form of an individual injury and in every historical era new forms of artistic expression have to be developed."[18]

Trauma, Children and Memory in René Clément's *Jeux interdits* (*Forbidden Games*, 1952)

With *Jeux interdits* René Clément made an outstanding contribution to the evolution of France's memory on the traumatic past surrounding the country's defeat in June 1940 and the internal struggles between *Résistance* and *collaboration*. Putting into the focus of his work a young girl traumatized by the loss of her parents, he created a powerful relationship between this individual fate and France's complex culture of memory marked by the "shared metaphor" of a nation in resistance and the "common silence"[19] on all deviant visions of the *années noires*.

Jeux interdits begins like a fairy tale: a child's hand turns the pages of a book with some idyllic drawings, the film's credits are written on the pages. But the story to come is more one of horror and despair than one of elves and fairies…[20] The narration stretches only over four days: from June 17 to June 20, 1940,[21] the crucial time of *la débâcle*, Germany's quick overrunning and occupation of France. In a documentary-like style, the film's first scenes show a long trek of people fleeing the Nazi invasion, especially from Paris,

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18 "Gerade die Erinnerung an historische, kollektive traumatische Erfahrungen kann […] nur als eine dramaturgisch verdichtete, personalisierte Form der Verletzung des Individuums inszeniert werden, für die in jeder Epoche neue künstlerische Ausdrucksformen entwickelt werden." Thomas Weber: "Kollektive Traumata. Die filmische Inkorporation von traumatischen Erfahrungen im Frühwerk von Alain Resnais." In: *Augenblicke. Konstanzer Hefte zur Medienwissenschaft* 56/57, 2013, p. 114 [my translation].

19 Ed Benson: "The Screen of History in Clément's *Forbidden Games*." In: *Literature/Film Quarterly* 33, no. 3, 2005, p. 207.

20 There was an alternative beginning and end produced that put forward the fairy tale aspect in a grotesquely exaggerated way: Michel and Paulette, the two young protagonists, sit on a trunk at an idyllic river and Michel tells the following story to his younger protégée. The ending takes the viewer back to this scene – and its tragic last scene is alleviated by Michel telling Paulette an alternative, happy ending for the two of them… (see ibid., p. 212).

21 The lapse of time covered by *Jeux interdits* can be deduced from two written documents integrated in the narration: the first day, the Dollé's newspaper *La Montagne* shows the headline "Le Cabinet Paul Reynaud démissionne. Un Ministère Pétain lui succède", an event that took place on 16 June 1940 – the newspaper must thus be from June 17. The end can be dated through Paulette's Red Cross name tag dated 20 June (see Esther Rashkin: "Psychoanalysis, Cinema, History: Personal and National Loss in René Clément's *Forbidden Games*." In: *Projections: the journal for movies and mind* 3, no. 1, 2009, p. 17).

through a beautiful rural scenery. In an air attack of the refugee trek, five year-old Paulette loses her parents and, also her puppy is hit by German machine gun fire. All by herself in the continuous line of wagons and pedestrians, the girl runs away following her dead dog's body that has been thrown into a river by a woman. She meets Michel Dollé, a peasant's son running after a lost cow, who takes her home to his family. Paulette and the ten year-old Michel develop a tender friendship in the world of a harsh peasants' village. Observing the village's life, marked by a family quarrel between the Dollé and the Gouard family, the loss and funeral of Michel's brother who dies after an accident with a horse, and the secret love between Michel's sister Berthe and Francis, a Gouard sibling who has just deserted the defeated army, the children still manage to build a world of their own trying to heal the wounds of Paulette's loss. Starting with the dead dog, they create an animal cemetery in the basement of an abandoned mill mimicking the adults' funeral rituals (fig. 1–4). As Paulette does not want her dog to be alone, they bury other animals – a mole, insects, chicks and others more they find dead or that are occasionally killed by Michel to please the girl. On the tombs, they erect crosses, partly stolen from the church and the cemetery. The theft of crosses from the family tombs foments the conflict between the Dollé and the Gouard families, but finally Michel is identified as the culprit. As an orphan, Paulette cannot stay with the Dollé and is handed over to competent authorities. Distressed, Michel furiously destroys their cemetery throwing the crosses into the river. The last scene shows Paulette in a Red Cross refugee center where she adopts the name of Michel's family, Dollé. In deep despair, she cries "Michel" and runs off into the crowd where she has heard the name of (another) Michel.

Fig. 1: Paulette burying her dog (*Jeux interdits*: 0:31:01)

Fig. 2: The dog's grave (*Jeux interdits*: 0:32:39)

Fig. 3: Michel and Paulette preparing the ‚tombstones' (*Jeux interdits*: 0:58:16)

Fig. 4: The animal cemetery (*Jeux interdits*: 1:07:42)

Trauma is evidently a major topic in Clément's film. Robert J. Cardullo actually claims polemically that little Paulette who cannot even name the loss of her parents and makes use of the animals as a form of second hand mourning represents "a model trauma victim"[22]. However, *Jeux interdits* goes beyond the effect of horror and cruelty evoked by the children's morbid games; it rather emphasizes the collective dimension of trauma that is reflected in Paulette's and the villagers' fate. The film therefore has always qualified for analysis from the psychological perspective of individual trauma[23] as well as for readings as a political commentary on France in the early 1950s[24].

From the beginning, the esthetics of Clément's cinematography creates a strong link to the contemporary public's memory of the German invasion. Filmed in a raw documentary-like style, the representation of people fleeing the invasion army and the fatal air attack by the *Luftwaffe* allow identification through potentially similar experiences witnessed just twelve years before. Bowles underlines this efficiency of René Clément's documentary approach, one that he has already magnificently shown in *Bataille du rail* (*The Battle of the Rail*, 1946),[25] to reconnect with the collective level.[26]

But far from unconditionally supporting the Resistance myth as in *Bataille du rail* and without overtly contradicting it, Clément adopts in *Jeux interdits* the intermediate position of a subversive strategy offering elements for identification and a universal, allegoric reading of the traumatic horrors of war time on one hand, and a more hidden analysis of France's struggle to cope with the memory of the Vichy years, on the other.

As the story takes place before the establishment of the occupation system and Philippe Pétain's *État français*, Clément can show the village's inhabitants as fairly unconcerned by the war without a trace of collaboration or

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22 Robert J. Cardullo: "Death Wish, Child's Whim, Auteurist Will: Boyer and Clément's *Forbidden Games* Replayed." In: *Literature/Film Quarterly* 39, no. 3, 2011, p. 195.

23 See for example Rashkin: "Psychoanalysis, Cinema, History" or Arlaud who firmly suggested a psychoanalytical reading in 1952 (Rudolphe-Maurice Arlaud: "Tribune libre autour de *Jeux interdits*." In: *Revue internationale du cinéma* 14, 1952, pp. 65–69).

24 See for example Benson: "The Screen of History" whose interpretation of the film as a direct reflection of the profound changes of the French society in the 1950s and 1960s seems sometimes a bit far stretched.

25 Brett Bowles: "Documentary Realism and Collective Memory in Post-War France, 1945–1955." In: *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 27, no. 2, 2007, p. 251.

26 In the opening sequence, René Clément quotes an iconic image of Sergej Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), the close-up shot of a woman crying in horror. Besides the reference to the great classic, the quote may also refer to Eisenstein's use of montage for the opposition between the individual and the mass as a cinematographic means to convey his political message.

opposing political views. But the coarse family struggle between the Dollé and the Gouard culminating in a fight between the fathers during the Dollé son's funeral, can also be read as a mirror of the ideological conflicts in occupied France, the "guerres franco-françaises"[27] silenced by the dominant discourse after the war. In *Jeux interdits*, the conflict is symbolically 'buried' in the families' fight at the cemetery: both brawlers fall in the pit of the tomb and, symbolically rising from the grave, they unite to find the real culprit.[28] Both camps are pursuing Michel to elucidate the stealing of the crosses. This perspective of reconciliation through a common 'enemy' is even reinforced by the perspective of generational change: Berthe Dollé and the deserter Francis Gouard whose first name tellingly echoes France, plead for a far more moderate attitude towards the other family and, after the fight in the graveyard, their marriage seems to be quite probable.

Fig. 5: Paulette at the Red Cross refugee center (*Jeux interdits*: 01:22:02)

The individual dimension of trauma is expressed through Paulette. The girl is neither able to speak about the loss of her parents nor to tell her family name – thus unable to name her identity. The creation of the animal cemetery can be read as an expression of Paulette's need to bury her parents. Mimicking the observed behaviors from the adult world, she invents obsessively repeated rituals of prayers (0:30:44–0:31:45) and constantly demands for new burials and new crosses on the graves: Having overheard one of the Dollé sons claiming that there would not be enough coffins to bury the victims of the *Luftwaffe* attack, "– Tu vois, c'est pas le temps de mourir, tu n'auras même

[27] For a critical analysis of the concept see Jean-Pierre Azéma, Jean-Pierre Rioux and Henry Rousso: "Les guerres franco-françaises." In: *Vingtième Siècle, revue d'histoire*, no. 5, 1985, pp. 3–6.

[28] See Rashkin: "Psychoanalysis, Cinema, History", p. 67.

pas de boîte. – Mais qu'est-ce qu'on en fait des morts? – On creuse un trou, et hop! Comme des chiens." (0:18:46–0:18:53), Paulette is wondering about her dead parents' destiny and develops the idea of burying her dog instead – just in the way it was suggested for her parents. The other dead animals are thought of as a consoling company.

Paulette's character has often been interpreted as representing an alluded Jewish identity[29] – even though there is no direct mention of it in the film. In fact, most cues could also hint to an atheist urban family background as well as to the girl's young age. However, her ignorance of prayers, burial rituals or of the meaning of the cross can be read as hints for her being Jewish. The ending of the film could be interpreted in that sense as well: Being picked up by two gendarmes, she is lead to the Red Cross refugee center where she gets a name tag – she claims to be called Dollé and therefore adopts a false "French" identity – and a number indicating the train she will be put on. The scene evokes associations with deportations – at least for today's viewers who might be reminded, by the images of the last scene, of the emblematic girl in the red coat disappearing in the crowd of deported Jews in Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1994). As the deportation and assassination of the European Jews only became a main focus of the cultural memory on the Nazi time in the 1970s, it is less probable that this was a striking interpretation for the contemporary public in the 1950s. It remains, however, that Paulette is depicted as profoundly different from the other villagers and represents a fundamental otherness which is a factor of explanation for Michel's fascination with the girl. On a visual level, this otherness is emphasized by Paulette's perfectly white dress and her angelic appearance with blond hair and an innocent, almost naïve expression. But these traits also support a more empathic identification with her as an innocent victim of traumatization.[30]

In *Jeux interdits* Clément connects collective memory and the individual dimension of trauma materialized in the Paulette character as a complex interwoven fabric and invites the viewer to reflect on how to deal with the past of the occupation. Clément (fortunately) abstained from the alternative frame narrative mentioned above (see footnote 19) that would have offered an

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29 See, for example, Rashkin: "Psychoanalysis, Cinema, History" who indicates the phonetic proximity between "jeux" and "je" and suggests an interpretation of the film's title *Jeux interdits* as "je interdit" referring to Paulettes inability to assume her identity. Rashkin further evokes the association of *Jeux interdits* with "Juifs interdits" ("forbidden for Jews") – an inscription found on interdiction signs for Jews during the occupation years.

30 With the choice of Brigitte Fossey for the role of Paulette, René Clément deliberately opted for a younger girl than in François Boyer's novel that has been the model for the script, and reinforces even more the impression of the girl's innocent appearance.

unambiguous relief. Instead, the filmmaker opted for the disturbing combination of a fairy tale like opening and the harsh ending: Paulette's piercing, almost unbearable cries for Michel and her mother as well as the uncertainty of her future as she disappears in the crowd shape the "devastating abruptness of the ending as it stands, which annihilates everything in a stroke, leaving an open wound of pure loss."[31]

François Boyer: *Jeux interdits* (1942) – Writing Trauma after "la débâcle" of Summer 1940

René Clément's film is based on the novel of the same name by François Boyer published five years earlier in 1947. The structure of the book and the film are almost identical, but Boyer's writing is far more oriented towards the collective dimension of trauma and memory. By its laconic and undifferentiated style, Boyer creates a distance very different from the emotional intensity of the cinematographic image, especially transported by Cléments preference for close-ups examining in long shots the faces of his young protagonists. Without the cinematographic exploration of Paulette's trauma on a visual and – through Narciso Yepes' ingenious guitar interpretation of the "Romance anonyme" – auditory level, Boyer's novel rather invites for an allegoric reading, especially fostered by the very different ending.

Eager for more and more crosses with a greater ornamentation, Paulette pushes Michel to climb the church's steeple. In the attempt to take the cross on its top, Michel accidentally falls down and dies. Paulette buries his body alongside the animals in their cemetery and disappears without a trace. The village is left behind without an answer to the loss of the boy. Besides the perspective of reconciliation between the rivalling parties through a marriage between Berthe Dollé and Francis Ganard (Gouard in the movie) who have found the lost crosses,[32] the village's idyll seems to be profoundly destroyed by the unexplained loss of the child, Michel.

In the novel, Paulette is thus rather depicted as an allegory for war and suffering and not so much as a traumatized innocent child. The girl appears to be an avenging angel whose devastating passage can be interpreted as a symbol for the village's traumatic fate as a closer look on the last scene reveals: After having taken back their crosses from the animal cemetery, the villagers

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31 Cardullo: "Death Wish", p. 196.

32 "[E]t il fut finalement décidé qu'on irait tous ensemble, après la sieste, Ganards et Dollés, chercher les croix. On invita Francis à déjeuner [chez les Dollé], ça serait bientôt la noce." (François Boyer: *Jeux interdits* [1947], Paris, folio, 2014, p. 148).

leave the site of the children's forbidden games. Only the largest cross taken down from the church's steeple in Michel's fatal fall is left marking the boy's grave. But Paulette is the only one knowing about it. Unaware of the fact that their missing son Michel is buried underneath, the Dollé and Ganard families leave it behind and walk away. And the book ends with the following lines:

> Paulette, assise au bord de l'eau, vit passer des cartons épars [avec l'inscription des noms des animaux enterrés], qui s'en allaient à la dérive, et elle eut encore quelques larmes.
> Jusqu'au soir tombant, elle resta immobile, puis elle se leva et s'éloigna à travers champs, vers la grande route. Et comme un lièvre passait en zigzagzuant, elle s'élança à sa poursuite…[33]

Following an unpredictable path and unclear intentions, Paulette may be on her way to spread the false-illusion of unity in the next village traumatized by the disappearance of a child, symbol of hope and future… Michel's death and Paulette's disappearance coincide with the passage of the first two German soldiers through the village[34] – another deviation from the film, where two French *gendarmes* come to take Paulette. The newly achieved reconciliation between the rival families is a necessary condition to stand united against the German invaders. In this sense, Boyer's novel could be read as a warning of the open wounds of the Vichy years, the trauma hidden behind the surface of a nation of resisters having too hastily closed the chapter of occupation and war. The unity of the community – and by extension of the French nation –, comes along with a prize: the trauma of a missing child. They are united in the experience of a trauma that bears, in Angela Kühner's words, the potential of an explosive and destructive force going "beyond the master narrative".

Both, René Clément's film and François Boyer's novel found great international attention. Of course, the contemporary reception of the film did encounter some resistance. The association of childhood with horror was shocking and the film did not enter in any traditional narrative scheme about childhood.[35] The representation of rural life as well as its anti-religious tendencies and critique of bigotry may have added to the skepticism of part of the public and to the decision to refuse it in the 1952 Cannes festival's competition. The specific perspective on the French defeat and the occupation

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33 "Paulette, sitting at the creek's bank, saw loose pieces of cardboard passing [that had been used to label the animal's tombs], drifting away, and she had still some tears. Until dusk, she stayed there, immobile, then she got up and departed over the fields, towards the large road. And as a hare passed by, zigzagging, she hurried in its pursuit." Boyer: *Jeux interdits*, p. 150 [my translation].

34 Ibid., p. 147.

35 Denitza Bantcheva: *René Clément*, Paris, Éditions du Revif, 2008, here p. 72.

may also be part of the reasoning behind this decision that reminds the case of Alain Resnais' *Nuit et brouillard* (*Night and Fog*, 1956) a few years later.[36] Besides those critical voices, it was a huge success and awarded with multiple prizes and distinctions: Best Foreign Language Film in the 1953 Academy Awards, the Golden Lion in Venice 1952, The New York Film Critics Circle Award as best foreign movie… The film's emphasis on a young girl's trauma and the masterly use of cinematographic means to evoke empathy for Paulette have certainly facilitated its universal dimension and therefore contributed to this broad international reception and critical appraisal rewarding Boyer's and Clément's work.

As for the novel published in 1947, it was "virtually ignored in France, but […] enjoyed a major, if freakish, commercial success in America"[37]. Translated into 17 languages the book was an international success before making its way back to the French readers. The initially reluctant reception of Boyer's work – *Jeux interdits* was originally a screenplay, recycled as a novel after its rejection – may be explained by a public that, just two years after the end of occupation, was not ready yet for its subversive message. On the international level, the historical context that is much more present in the book than in Clément's adaption, may have raised supplementary interest.

But both, film and book, could certainly also benefit from the attraction between fascination and repulsion specific to the horror genre: "At its subversive heart, *Forbidden Games* whispers the less palatable truth that children are a race of deviants and monsters."[38]

Filmography

Bataille du Rail. Dir.: René Clément. 82 min. France, 1946.

Le chagrin et la pitié. Dir.: Marcel Ophüls. 251 min. France, Germany, Switzerland, 1969/1971.

La grande vadrouille. Dir.: Gérard Oury. 132 min. France, 1966.

Jeux interdits. Dir.: René Clément. 116 min. France, 1952.

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[36] The film could only be screened at Cannes after the removal of a shot showing a French gendarme in a deportation scene and therefore evoking France's involvement. The German Embassy also intervened and achieved that *Nuit et brouillard* was only screened out-of-competition.

[37] Cardullo: "Death Wish", p. 190.

[38] Ibid., p. 196. See also the contribution of Isabel Exner and Thomas Schmidtgall to this volume.

Nuit et brouillard. Dir.: Alain Resnais. 32 min. France, 1956.

Paris brûle-t-il? Dir.: René Clément. 175 min. France, USA, 1966.

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ISABEL EXNER AND THOMAS SCHMIDTGALL

Haunted by Children. Spanish Trauma, Social Negotiation and the Ethics of Representation in Narciso Ibañez Serrador's Horror Movie *¿Quien puede matar a un niño?*

Introduction

Movies "traditionally […] have served as reflections, representations and metaphors of a social system which produces them and consumes them."[1] Film scholar María Gil Poisa argues that especially horror movies "often function as a parable of the collective angst inside the system in which they are created."[2] As fictional media products, they blend in with artistic works in general that often play a cultural key role in representing and reflecting collective experiences considered to be traumatic for society as a whole.[3]

This also seems to be the case of Narciso Ibáñez Serrador's *¿Quién puede matar a un niño?* (1976), one of the most famous Spanish horror movies, produced in the early period of the Spanish transition from the Francoist dictatorship to democracy. This movie tells the story of a young English couple, biologist Tom and his pregnant wife Evelyn, who visit the fictitious Spanish island of Almanzora where an hitherto unimaginable horror – children attacking and killing adults – awaits them. According to Samuel Steinberg, the horror movie "opens a series of frightening connections." He summarizes these connections in the context of Franco's death in 1975 and the increasing political, social and especially cultural freedom during the transition to democracy as a "climate of political and social uncertainty."[4]

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1 María Gil Poisa: "¿Qué es un fantasma? Trauma pasado y fantasía en el cine contemporáneo sobre la Guerra Civil española: El cine de Guillermo del Toro." In: *Hispania* 99 no. 1, 2016, p. 128 [translation Thomas Schmidtgall].

2 Ibid. [translation Thomas Schmidtgall].

3 See Thomas Schmidtgall: *Traumatische Erfahrung im Mediengedächtnis. Zur Struktur und interkulturellen Rezeption fiktionaler Darstellungen des 11. September 2011 in Deutschland, Frankreich und Spanien*, Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann, 2014, p. 110; Gottfried Fischer: "Psychoanalyse und Psychotraumatologie." In: Wolfram Mauster and Carl Pietzcker (eds.): *Trauma. Freiburger literaturpsychologische Gespräche* 19, Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann, 2000, p. 15.

4 Samuel Steinberg: "Franco's Kids: Geopolitics and Postdictatorship in *¿Quién puede matar a un niño?*" In: *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 7, no. 1, 2006, p. 23.

Following Steinberg's analysis, in this contribution, we will take a closer look at the challenges and possibilities of filmic representation of Spanish history in general and of the horror genre in particular. We will discuss Ibáñez Serrador's specific filmic proposal drawing on the differences between fictional and documental representation and we will address topics of ethical, cultural and social negotiation within Spanish society with regard to the question of how to deal with a traumatic past.

Trauma, Collective Memory and the Arts

The Civil War in the 1930s "[w]ithout any doubt [...] meant a traumatic break for Spanish Society"[5] as did the crimes of the Franco dictatorship in the postwar period. 100,000 to 300,000 people were killed during the war, and many of them were victims of political or juridical murder. In fact, brutal atrocities were committed on both sides of the conflict. After the end of the war in 1939, another 150,000 to 200,000 people died due to the persecution by the Franco-regime, in executions or in prison and labor camps. Among the many disappeared were also numerous children, kidnapped from their parents and adopted by Francoist families. About 500,000 refugees left the country to live in exile. The dictatorship, thus, was a time of ongoing political violence and fear, and a time which was characterized by the impossibility of mourning.[6] After Franco's death in 1975, the period of transition to democracy further displayed "the tensions between Francoist melancholia and the impossible work of mourning"[7], as Steinberg puts it. Apart from the lack of an adequate social and political memory discourse, the 'impossibility of mourning' especially implied a lack of representation of traumatic experience in Spain's public cultural artifacts. To a large part, this was the result of the so called *pacto del olvido*, "an unspoken pact of forgetting"[8], as Sarah Leggott and Ross Woods define it. This pact institutionally was sealed by the law of general amnesty in 1977, which precluded the possibilities of a juridical

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5 Walther L. Bernecker et. al.: *Spanien-Lexikon. Wirtschaft, Politik, Kultur, Gesellschaft*, München, C.H. Beck, 1990, p. 210 [translation Thomas Schmidtgall].

6 See ibid.; Walther L. Bernecker and Sören Brinkmann: *Kampf der Erinnerungen. Der Spanische Bürgerkrieg in Politik und Gesellschaft 1936–2006*, Nettersheim, Graswurzelrevolution, 2006.

7 Steinberg: "Franco's Kids", p. 23.

8 Sarah Leggot and Ross Woods: "Introduction." In: Sarah Leggot and Ross Woods (eds.): *Memory and Trauma in the Postwar Spanish Novel. Revisiting the Past*, Lanham, Bucknell University Press, 2014, p. 1; see also Eli Evans and Haley O'Neil: "A Bloody Transition: Child Killers in Narciso Ibáñez Serrador's *¿Quién puede matar a un niño?* (1976)." In: *Romances Notes* 53, no. 3, 2013, p. 329.

processing and rehabilitation of the crimes committed during the Civil war and the dictatorship, and it largely also discarded artistic representation as a means of mourning. In her analysis of film and literature after Franco, Ursula Vossen assesses that media during the late 1970s and 1980s hardly touched the historical injuries occurred during the decades before.[9]

At first glance, *¿Quién puede matar a un niño?* fits this observation, as there are no concrete references to the Spanish Civil War or the dictatorship in the movie.[10] The specific interest of *¿Quién puede matar a un niño?*, though, lies in its very particular form of subsurface/indirect filmic involvement with the collective memory of historical violence, throughout the early period of the Spanish transition. Although an adequate representation (if such exists) seemed to be impossible at the point of the movie release, we argue that the movie not only underlines the need for cultural and artistic involvement with collective traumatic experience, but also – in and as a particular artistic representation itself – Ibáñez Serrador's movie offers a meta-reflection on the possibilities, difficulties and challenges within the representation of Spain's period of transition in the 1970s and 1980s.

Taking a closer look at the conditions and characteristics of the representation of historical and traumatic events, as well as experiences in fictional depiction in general, it becomes clear that the challenge and difficulty of any representation of traumatic experience lies in the nature of trauma itself. Scholars agree on individual traumata to be "not fully grasped as they occur."[11] They are characterized by a "caesura in the coherence of memory."[12] This is why they are often described as 'unimaginable' or 'unutterable'. Traumata can be considered in opposition to the human basic need of storytelling[13] and by definition refuse any conventional narrative structure.[14] At the same time, narration seems to represent a way of integrating a trauma into

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9 See Ursula Vossen: *Schatten der Erinnerung. Film und Literatur in Spanien nach Franco*, St. Augustin, Gardez!, 2002, p. 375.

10 It is important to keep in mind that governmental censorship in Spain was abolished only in 1977 and that there have been problems in releasing movies until 1988 (see Vossen: *Schatten der Erinnerung*, p. 23).

11 Cathy Caruth: *Unclaimed Experience. Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, p. 91.

12 Christina Rickli: "Trauer- oder Traumageschichten? Amerikanische Romane nach 9/11." In: Sandra Poppe et al. (ed.): *9/11 als kulturelle Zäsur. Repräsentationen des 11. September 2001 in kulturellen Diskursen, Literatur und visuellen Medien*, Bielefeld, transcript, 2009, p. 104.

13 See Schmidtgall: *Traumatische Erfahrung im Mediengedächtnis*, p. 111.

14 See Martina Kopf: *Trauma und Literatur. Das Nicht-Erzählbare erzählen – Assia Djebar und Yvonne Vera*, Frankfurt a.M., Brandes & Apsel, 2005, pp. 44–45.

one's own personal context: the trauma has to be told to be handled. It needs an emotional and semiotic frame of reference. This is why, on an individual scale, for example, psychotherapists try to help a traumatized person by making her or him narrate the trauma. Here, the basic idea is to make the patient relive his or her traumatic experience to finally be able to integrate it into his or her own personal frame of reference. However, the frame of reference in general is not an 'objective' historical one. In matters of trauma, the subjective truth of the traumatized individual is more important as it allows the traumatized person to integrate the events into her or his own 'life story'. This is why fiction can offer privileged access to traumatic reality as it allows the relation of traumatic experiences in a different (fictional) way that is not bound to stick to historical facts.[15] In this context, it is crucial to emphasize that film, as an audiovisual medium, using various medial codes, has its own specific approach, generally following the distinction of the two main modes of filmic representation, documentary and fiction, both of which provide different access to (traumatic) reality.[16]

Speaking of the atrocities of the Spanish Civil War and the Francoist dictatorship which followed, it must be underlined that the analogical transfer of the psychological and clinical term of trauma to the experience of a whole society is controversial. This idea of a traumatized group sharing a trauma which not all members of the group suffered directly or in the same way, is considered "highly problematic"[17] by some scholars. However, recently, there have been scholars, such as Angela Kühner, who instead of using terms like 'cultural trauma' or 'collective trauma' try to give a more precise and accurate

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15 Several scholars agree on the difference between History and the narration of one's own traumatic 'history' which is discussed for example in Literary Studies by Shoshana Felman using the example of Albert Camus' *La Peste* as an allegory of the Shoah or from a psychoanalytic point of view by Dori Laub. Both underline the function of subjective testimony and emotional narration with the aim of dealing with trauma in an adequate way. See Shoshana Felman: "Camus' *The Plague*, or a Monument to Witnessing." In: Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (eds.): *Testimony. Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, New York, Routledge, 1992, pp. 93–119; Dori Laub: "Bearing Witness, or the Vicissitudes of Listening." In: Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (eds.): *Testimony*, pp. 57–74; Schmidtgall: *Traumatische Erfahrung im Mediengedächtnis*, pp. 113–117.

16 Scholars in film and media studies widely agree on the distinction between documentation and fiction (aside from animated film) by means of their representational mode. The decisive criteria is their reference point: The reference point of a documentation is the reality that existed or exists outside the movie. The fictional movie only exits as a movie. See Knut Hickethier: *Film- und Fernsehanalyse*, 3rd ed., Stuttgart, Metzler, 2001, pp. 190–193.

17 Leggot and Woods: "Introduction", p. 6; on the same page the authors summarize the arguments of scholars such as Ruth Leys who has especially criticized Cathy Caruth's argumentation.

definition of traumatizing collective experience such as violent events or wars. In German, Kühner uses the term "kollektiv symbolvermitteltes Trauma"[18] in order to describe a collective trauma whose effect on society is based on representation through symbols and by identification with the victims, both of which are exposed through art mediums, like movies or narration, among others. With this definition she tries to grasp the effect of violent experiences on the collective and cultural imagination, and capture the discourse of a group of people. Following Kühner's analysis, cultural representations dealing with historically significant yet disturbing events in literature, television, film or other fictional media products, can be considered part of this cultural discourse, relating the traumatic experience to the collective memory of society as a whole. However, identification with said traumatic experience can have different outcomes, helping to overcome or in some instances perpetuating the effects of painful experiences and their entailing conflicts. Any cultural articulation that touches upon "a violence that is dispensed necessarily and constitutively within the social"[19] thus contributes to the shaping of the kind of connection to the past that will characterize a particular historical place and time.

Trauma, Historical Footage and the Ethics of Representation

As we noted above, artistic representations dealing with extremely painful and unbearable events, in general face the challenge of an adequate representation of traumatic experience. This challenge, however, is not only about medial difficulties and unspeakability, but also about the respect and sensibility vis-a-vis the victims of traumatic experiences. Cultural critique and artists have therefore, especially since World War II and the Shoah, been exceptionally delicate about the possibilities, legitimacy, and adequate framing of the display of historical archive material of such injuries. A well-known debate in this context concerns the skepticism towards visual and audiovisual media as genuinely apt for documentation, and towards their pretense to portray history as faithfully as possible. The unproblematized and too simple trust in the media's power of testimony and subsequent interpellation of viewers is not only considered a delusion which cannot do justice to the intolerable truth of

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[18] Angela Kühner: *Kollektive Traumata. Eine Bestandsaufnahme. Annahmen, Argumente, Konzepte nach dem 11. September*, Berghof Report No. 9, Berlin, Berghof Forschungszentrum für konstruktive Konfliktbearbeitung, 2002; see also Schmidtgall: *Traumatische Erfahrung im Mediengedächtnis*, pp. 77–82.

[19] Steinberg: "Franco's Kids", pp. 23–24.

the victims, but rather causes the real subjective suffering to remain mute.[20] Moreover, inconsiderate broadcasting of audiovisual recordings of injuries, pain and death, pretending to make them apprehensible by the evidence of an indexical representation, can even be seen as a form of continued violence against the victims and the unthinkability of the atrocities they have suffered. Director Claude Lanzmann points to this in round terms in his famous comment about his important documentary of the Shoah [1985]:

> There is not a second of archive material in *Shoah*, because this is not the way that I think and work, and, by the way, there is no such material. [...] If I had found a film – a secret film, because filming was forbidden – shot by the SS, where there was shown how 3000 jews – men, women, children – die together, suffocating in the gas chamber of the crematory 2 in Auschwitz, I would not only not have shown it, I would even have destroyed it. I cannot say why, it happens.[21]

The deeply felt insufficiency of any conventional, 'realist' or direct way of representation in the face of events and experiences that transgress any common way of perception or feeling has led artists to look for sophisticated and careful ways of 'circumtelling', when dealing with trauma. More than for any other experience, traumatic experiences apply what Raphael Alvarenga formulates following Adorno's Aesthetic Theory and its critique of mimetism: "the kernel of our most significant experiences – personal as well as social – cannot be apprehended except as the very inadequacy" between the means of expression and "that which it intends to designate or describe."[22]

Against the backdrop of this sort of implicit demands for a kind of ethics of representation, the opening sequence of *¿Quién puede matar a un niño?* is a slap in the face. In the very beginning of the screening, when the viewer is still reflecting on the rhetorical question raised in the movie's title, Ibañez Serrador uses historical footage, both filmic and photographic, that haphazardly shows the worst atrocities committed against children that he could

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20 See for example Susan Sontag: *Regarding the Pain of Others*, New York, Picador et al., 2003.

21 Claude Lanzmann in *Le Monde*, 3 march 1994 [translation Isabel Exner]. For a different position, and the debates about adequacy, see Georges Didi-Huberman: *Images malgré tout*, Paris, Minuit, 2003, and the polemics that the book arouse.

22 Raphael F. Alvarenga: "Deception Theory." In: *soft ketchup. Blogspot*. http://softketchup.blogspot.de/2017/09/deception-theory.html [01.05.2018]. Adorno famously even questioned the legitimacy of artistic production as such, in the face of the historical cruelties of the Nazis. See his well-known verdict about the impossibility of poetry after Auschwitz, in Theodor W. Adorno: "Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft [1951]." In: Theodor W. Adorno: *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft I. Prismen. Ohne Leitbild. Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 10.1, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, Frankfurt a.M., Suhrkamp, 1977, p. 30.

find, as directly as possible. Arranged in a seven-minute-long black-and-white collage, the footage starts with archive material about Auschwitz filmed by the SS, followed by images of suffering and of dead children from the Indo-Pakistani war, and then the wars in Korea, Vietnam and Nigeria as well. The footage contains brief commentary voiced by a male announcing the number of children that have died in each conflict. These sequences are intermitted with the opening credits and an audio sequence that plays the laughter and humming of children.

Fig. 1–3 (*¿Quién puede matar a un niño?*: 0:07:13; 0:07:16; 0:07:31)

The arrangement causes a polyphony of strong uneasiness, guilt and shock. As Bénédicte Brémard argues, the images not only address the viewer, but seem to accuse the audience without so much as a connection to the immediately following fiction.[23] The transition from this documental prologue to the actual fictional plot is brutal: After the documentary images of children suffering from various military conflicts, the movement of the images stops and the frozen image of an obviously suffering, malnourished child is cross-faded to a sweet healthy child playing happily at the beach. Simultaneously, the movie becomes colored and thereby marks the beginning of the actual narration (fig. 1–3). And although the story that is going to be told from this point forward will be scary, brutal and bloody, there is hardly going to be any more explicit reference to actual historical or political violence as shown in the prologue, or to their social circumstances. The violence displayed in the movie after the prologue is such that, according to Jan Philipp Reemtsma, would have to be called "autotelic" violence:[24] the children-killer's hunger for blood mostly seems to be devoid of motive, cause, conflict, interest, or any other explanation or justification. Additionally, it is actually striking that the opening sequence chooses all its atrocities from contexts other than Spain. The historical injuries of Spanish society in the Civil War and during the dictatorship

[23] See Bénédicte Brémard: "Un inconnu dans la maison: l'enfant dans *¿Quién puede matar a un niño?* (Narciso Ibáñez, 1974)." In: Marie-Soledad Rodríguez (ed.): *Le fantastique dans le cinéma espagnol contemporain*, Paris, Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2011, pp. 51–61.

[24] See Jan Philipp Reemtsma: *Vertrauen und Gewalt. Versuch über eine besondere Konstellation der Moderne*, Hamburg, Hamburger Edition, 2008.

are left out of the picture – however this absence is an implicit, unsettling subtext for the movie.

The Horrors of the Horror Genre

Yet, from minute 8 onwards, the habitual watcher of Horror movies can feel 'at home' again. The English Tourist-protagonists, Tom and Evelyn, start their holidays in a lively and picturesque Spanish costal village, where they immediately experience some allusions to some peculiarities in the idyllic scene. They still take a small, lonely boat for the passage to their holiday island. Once arriving at the island, the already anguished viewer accompanies them on their first encounter with a strange atmosphere devoid of people, then slowly discovering that the island is populated by children only – children that have murdered all adults, and that, after a couple of scary and frightful, genre-typical embroilments, will finally kill Evelyn and Tom as well.

Fig. 4 (*¿Quién puede matar a un niño?*: 0:25:04)

This story, as horrible as it may be, disburdens the viewer. After all (and in the best Hitchcock tradition), the story of Tom and Evelyn heading to Almanzora (fig. 4) where death is waiting for them, meets the basic human needs associated with storytelling: The viewer is taken along on the classical "hero's journey" that Joseph Campbell analyzed in his famous book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces.*[25] According to Campbell, the characters of all myths and fictional stories – irrespective of whether they figure in literature, film or

[25] See Joseph Campbell: *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, London, Paladin, 1988.

other fictional narrations – have to pass through three different phases.[26] Campbell describes these phases as a narrative cycle, in which the hero leaves familiar surroundings and hits the road to an unknown world, is then confronted with a specific challenge to finally return to familiar surroundings, or die.[27] This recurrent narrative structure also describes *¿Quién puede matar a un niño?*: Tom and Evelyn leave the picturesque scenery of Benavís, a small Spanish port city, for the small island of Almanzora. Once arrived, they have to face a challenge of hitherto unseen dimension that they only escape from by means of death.

Therefore, even with all the horror on screen that follows the documentary archive images placed at the beginning of the movie, the viewer is inclined to be relieved when confronted with this familiar narrative pattern. As bloody and horrible as it may be, Tom and Evelyn's 'journey' finally offers a closed story and seizes a well-known structure with familiar elements, such as the topos of the 'evil child' reminiscent of classics such as *The Birds*, *The Bad Seed*, *The Village of the Damned*, and *Children of the Corn* among others.[28] Therefore, the viewers can lean back again and abandon themselves to the "angstlust"[29] which they have been familiar with since the beginnings of the horror genre.

Horror as a genre in this sense has often been believed to have an affirmative political effect: in a predictable way, horror films display and manipulate images that cause fear, disgust and fright, unsettling the rational order that sustains our usual comprehension of the world. Thus, by serving the spectators ambivalent feelings towards the ruling symbolic order, providing a fictional thrill-room for the pleasures of transgression, destruction, rage,

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[26] Campbell calls them the "standard path of the mythological adventure" and "the nuclear unit of the monomyth" consisting of 1) *separation*, 2) *initiation* and 3) *return*. Campbell describes this basic adventure or journey as follows: "A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man" (ibid., p. 30).

[27] In her analysis of recurrent patterns and structures in Hollywood movies, Michaela Krützens refers to Joseph Campbell and adapts his model to the narrative structure of film. See Michaela Krützen: *Dramaturgie des Films. Wie Hollywood erzählt*, 2nd ed., Frankfurt a.M., Fischer, 2006.

[28] See Steinberg, "Franco's Kids", p. 25.

[29] In German, the term 'Angstlust' describes a mixture of 'fear' and 'lust'. In English, the term 'thrill' is more common. However, Stefania Voigt argues that 'thrill' rather describes the result (what happens while watching a horror film) of a predisposition, viz. the "Angstlust"; Stefania Voigt: *"Blut ist süßer als Honig". Angstlust im Horrorfilm im Kontext von Medientheorie und Medienpädagogik*, Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann, 2017, p. 31.

violence, and other affects banned by the social community/law, horror films usually finally domesticate these uncanny excitements by closing and eliminating the represented threat of uncertainty, and that of the spectator's sensations towards it, into a coherent narration, mostly finishing with a pacifying re-establishment of the social order (or, as in our case, a pacification into death). The viewer is successfully released out of the titillating fictional universe into the more monotone and more appeasing real-world-quotidianity. If a horror movie makes room for the intensity of sensations that have been banned in the everyday life, and thus subsequently allows for a better toleration of the latter after leaving the darkness of the cinema, where revolting feelings and energies have been absorbed, then 'entertainment's mission' is completed. Bound to the rather fixed conventions of a genre, the 'horror' of a 'horror-movie' would be a 'delightful' one that does not touch actual historical injuries, and does not hurt, but rather works predictably towards the absorption of scariness and insecurities.[30] Jürgen Joachimsthaler in this sense, speaks of "Horror as a million-fold spread entertainment product. [...] Normally, the consumer pays for not being hit too deeply. The consumption of horror possibly protects against horror."[31]

Against the backdrop of this 'entertainment'-model of the genre as a dominant frame of reference and expectation for the viewer (already effectual in the late 1970s), Ibañez Serrador's introductory use of non-fictional images of real-world-atrocities for the aesthetic thrills of a horror movie can appear almost obscene (if not "perverse and amoral"[32], as Steinberg states). The inadequacy here not only comes as an impotence of images of real suffering vis-a-vis Trauma, rather it could seem as a sensationalist medial 'abuse' of random historical images, drawing on their mere 'realness' in order to make them consumable for the purpose of entertainment.[33] Especially given the fact that the movie is devoid of any further references to the political or historical

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30 The more subtle needs required for the reworking of traumatic experiences have thus been usually touched in artistic articulations other than those of 'Horror', in a conventional understanding of the genre.

31 Jürgen Joachimsthaler: "Was ist Horror? Ein Sammelband von Armen Avanessian und Björn Quiring lotet die Abgründe des Genres aus." In: *literaturkritik.de* 2016. http://www.literaturkritik.de/public/rezension.php?rez_id=21725 [01.05.2018] [translation Isabel Exner].

32 Steinberg: "Franco's Kids", p. 25.

33 The ban of the movie in Germany for 40 years, thus, cannot simply be seen as a kind of denial in the form of censorship. It must rather be seen in the context of guilt and the subsequently increased obligation for sensibility and protection of the victims of trauma. The movie here was indexed and was accessible only in versions that had cut the opening sequence. Only in 2009 it was released on DVD in its original version.

contexts of the disasters shown in the introduction, its use of this footage might be considered as a lewd amplifier, responding to the genre's intermedial demand for 'outdoing' the thrills of preceding movies, by exceeding the spectators expectations, schooled by the genre. (In this sense, the disturbing amplifier would come only poorly and vulgarly packaged as a B-movie-rationalization for the following plot, suggesting the latter's interpretation as a revenge for historical violence against children.) Ibañez Serrador's movie is full of this kind of genre-specific allusions, competition and out-doings. Inspired in its use of music and montage by Hitchcock, for example, Ibañez Serrador sought the challenge to shoot a horror movie in color and in complete daylight, foregoing the common nightmarish Hitchcock-motives of dark and shadows.

The impact and implications of Ibañez Serrador's movie, though, have more complex layers, and it is contextualization that provides some clues about what is at stake here.

The Contexts of Horror and Trauma

Considering that the movie was shot and shown during the last days of the Francoist dictatorship, with Francoist rule and censorship still in power, the showing of 'real' images inserts itself in a specific frame of negotiation. As a start, the disclosure of violent and disturbing facts might be considered as bearing some provocative political potential in the not-yet-post-fascist context of the seventies in Spain, operating against the grain of the ruling ideology's peace of the graveyard-directive, and given the circumstance that the latter had also impeded connections with the efforts to come to terms with fascist heritage in other European countries in the past decades, and their entailing debates about aesthetics. In the first place, however, for a contemporary public, the intrusion of the dreadful reality displayed on screen in the first sequence of *¿Quién puede matar a un niño?* "draws upon […] the NO-DO"[34], the *Noticiarios y Documentales Cinematográficos*, Franco's propaganda instrument *par excellence.*[35] Theatres in Spain were obligated to show the documentary-like newscast called NO-DO until 1976[36] and its images "preceded the screening of films from 1941 until 1981."[37] With the help of documental images and the artificially created impression of authenticity this most

[34] Steinberg: "Franco's Kids", p. 23.

[35] Rafael R. Tranche and Vicente Sánchez-Biosca: *NO-DO. El tiempo y la memoria*, Madrid, Cátedra, 2002, p. 15.

[36] See Vossen: *Schatten der Erinnerung*, p. 27.

[37] Steinberg: "Franco's Kids", p. 27.

famous *memorial del franquismo*[38] pretended to broadcast facts about Spain and the world with the purpose to make the viewer believe the dictatorship's propaganda. 'In fact', however, NO-DO functioned without any doubt as an instrument to spread the dictatorship's ideas[39] and actually represented a deformation of reality. Thus, with the help of the inter-medial allusions to NO-DO, Ibañez Serrador creates a kind of documental intersection, implicitly suggesting a meta-reflection on reality in (documentary) film, and invites the viewers to interrogate their own ideas of reality. Confronting this with the fictional plot about a supernatural trauma – children systematically killing adults –, Ibañez Serrador's movie thus questions the adequate mode of medial articulation towards trauma by highlighting the tension between documentary and fiction from the very beginning. With the help of the prefatory sequences which are based on historical reality, the movie 'pierces' the viewers' main assumptions about the world, in order to forthwith offer him to "test a certain state of consciousness which in real life would be dangerous or impossible"[40], and thus confronting and interplaying realism (or documentation) with the possibility to engage with the atrocity of real world history and the depiction of contemporary Spanish society through a fantastic genre. It is against the backdrop of this medial meta-reflection that the movie can be read in its relation to its historical context and against the "rather evident allegorical potentials"[41] it opens up.

During the time *¿Quién puede matar a un niño?* was shot, the conditions for what later influenced the transition to democracy in Spain had already started to develop. Tourism was a main factor in the preparation of the possibilities for an unresisting and peaceful connection of a formerly fascist Spain to the European democracies very shortly after, and also a sociopolitical phenomenon that helped to spread the notions and desires for a 'normality' in Spanish society after the end of the dictatorship. – A 'normality' that would catch up as fast as possible with the consumerist and globalizing notions of every-day-life in other European countries, without holding oneself back with the troubles of coping with the past. The superficial gaze of the tourist, which Ibañez Serrador deliberately chooses as the point of identification in his movie – and which will eventually fall victim to the cruel revolt of the children – thus ingeniously and almost prophetically replicates Spanish society's own superficial dealing with its historical past. The desire for a harmless, picturesque

38 Tranche and Sánchez-Bisoca: *NO-DO*, p. 11.

39 See ibid., p. 18.

40 Florian Leitner: *Medienhorror. Mediale Angst im Film*, Paderborn, Wilhelm Fink, 2017, p. 37.

41 Steinberg: "Franco's Kids", p. 23.

normality, by which Evelyn and Tom are excited upon their arrival in Spain, is a drive that will allow Spain's peaceful transition to democracy. But its consequence is also a denial, one that by means of rejection of memory and traumata, perpetuates sources of pain. The movie's unsettling outbursts of violence intertwined with the most pacified sceneries of children playing in daylight, ultimately, can and certainly have been linked by the contemporary public to the traumatic denials of the Spanish society at the time, in relation to the Civil War and dictatorship.


Fig. 5 and 6 (*¿Quién puede matar a un niño?*: 0:50:11; 0:50:30)

As James Monaco puts it, "film can mediate reality for us. It can both 'corroborate' and 'debunk' our impressions of reality."[42] Especially in horror movies, the usual supernatural plot "not only makes 'normality' seem to be a frail and fragile construct which triggers fear, but also questions our perception of 'reality' and its reliability."[43] In *¿Quién puede matar a un niño?*, it is not primarily by moving the viewer away from what is rationally conceivable and towards supernatural occurrences that the movie 'debunks' reality. On the contrary, *¿Quién puede matar a un niño?* points to the increasing awareness of every day's illusory reality and the dread that waits for example behind the *Piñata*. This well-known Spanish children's play can be read as the apparent innocence of the world when we see children playing it at the beginning of the movie in Benavís, where Tom and Evelyn start their journey to Almanzora. Especially, in the context of the introductory scenes containing already augural elements which refer to the following events on Almanzora,[44] the *Piñata* still seems to be a kind of modern symbolic and cinematographic *locus amoenus* of children's safety and happiness. Later on, however, when

42 James Monaco: *How to Read a Film. Movies, Media and Beyond*, 4th ed., New York, Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 448.

43 Voigt: *Blut ist süßer als Honig*, p. 34 [translation Thomas Schmidtgall].

44 E.g. the television images in the shop or Tom, in a conversation with Evelyn bringing up an abortion.

the children use a human body instead of a sweets-container and a scythe instead of a stick, the same children's play turns into a *locus terribilis* expressing death and horror, and the violent children become a trope for suppressed violence (fig. 5 and 6).

Ibañez Serrador masterfully translates the burdensome and explosive atmosphere of repression in late Francoist Spain into powerful images of a distanced, estranged and unsettling society. In one scene, when a dead woman is undressed and felt up by the children, and this murder and sacrilege are moreover happening inside of a church, the movie stages with urge the concrete profanation of the illusory calmness and safety that characterized the Catholic-Francoist self-perception and propaganda. Most of the time, though, the allusions to the source of cruelty and conflict remain vague, and here Ibañez Serrador uses the language of the genre in its genuine affinity with Trauma discourse. As Joachimsthaler puts it,

> the language of the genre defines itself as a detour. [...] Horror at the latest since Lovecraft contains an unfulfilled promise, the asymptotic reference to something unattainable [...] which every new text tries to grasp in every new attempt.[45]

The absence of Spain's own historical injuries in the introduction is thus one that replicates the denial of official discourse and institutions. In the fictional part of the movie, on the other hand, the spectator is shown that it is especially the seemingly harmless and peaceful surfaces that are home to suppressed cruelties and injuries.

The movie in this sense translates the impossibility to directly deal with trauma and socially contained violence into an uncanny filmic alert to the consequences of denial, and to the necessity of reworking the Spanish past. A necessity that has come into a broader public awareness in Spain only a long time after, with the so called 'Boom of memory' around the millennium. It is a particular achievement of *¿Quién puede matar a un niño?* to relate to the haunted Spanish collective memory during "the aesthetic and historical interstice between dictatorship and *destape*"[46] by unsettling the notions of 'normality' and 'reality' in the mode of a fantastic Horror tale. In fact, bringing up the Spanish trauma of Civil War and the Francoist dictatorship in a rather implicit way can be considered as a recurrent pattern in Ibáñez Serrador's

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45 Joachimsthaler: "Was ist Horror?", s.p. [translation Isabel Exner].

46 Steinberg: "Franco's Kids", p. 25.

work.[47] Already in some episodes of his famous television series *Historias para no dormir* (1966–1982) he offered allegorical tales about Spain's dictatorship.[48] In doing so, he also foreshadowed the artistic and particularly filmic possibilities of approaching the implicit presence of a past violence in society through the mode of the fantastic, as a particular way of unveiling detour. The specific move and impact of *¿Quién puede matar a un niño?*, though, is to provide an implicit account of the historically situated traumatic configuration of Spain's society in the 1970s in combination with a decontextualized and de-situated collage of extreme explicitness. In fact, after the 7 minutes of cruel and random documental images, the ensuing fictional plot comes in handy and allows an escape from reality's brutality, releasing the viewer from the violation of "the implicit contract between the viewer and the horror movie, which promises a simulation of horror without reference to the real."[49] With this decisive rupture/montage, Ibáñez Serrador's movie ingeniously draws the viewer's attention to and unsettles the difference between documentary and fictional film, questioning and unsettling both with regard to their pretense to approach the 'unrepresentable', and to the habitual reception habits they bring about.[50] Confronting and intersecting the trivializing tendencies of fantastic horror with the insufficiency and impotence of 'unfiltered' documental images, the movie evidences the inevitable shortcoming of both modes vis-à-vis historical violence, potentates each of them into perception, and thus, paradoxically, allows for the apprehension of inadequacy. Discomfortingly and underhand, by this kind of unsatisfactory and unsettling apprehension, the movie succeeds to seize the specific traumatic configuration of Spanish society in the 1970s.

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47 And as a repercussion of the strategies of circumvention of censorship that were widespread in Spanish arts during the dictatorship. See Hans-Jörg Neuschäfer: *Macht und Ohnmacht der Zensur. Literatur, Theater und Film in Spanien (1933–1976)*, Stuttgart, Metzler, 1991.

48 See Bénédicte Brémard: "Un inconnu dans la maison: l'enfant dans *¿Quién puede matar a un niño?* (Narciso Ibáñez, 1974)." In: Marie-Solelad Rodriguez (ed.): *Le fantastique dans le cinéma espagnol contemporain*, Paris, Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2011, p. 51–61. http://books.openedition.org/psn/1933 [01.05.2018].

49 Evans and O'Neil: "A bloody transition", p. 333.

50 The reduced versions that were available in Germany, thus with the 'prologue' also cut off this crucial oscillation of the movie.

The Eldritch Beyond Reality

> Hell is here and now and it takes shelter in our houses or at least in the stories presented by Chicho [Narciso Ibañez Serrador] on the big screen or at home on television.[51]

When the movie is over and the lights of the theatre turn on, the viewers might feel uneasy again. This time, the origin of their uneasiness results from a question to the viewers' own reality. Viewers are forced to integrate the representation on screen into their own world outlook. In fact, the end of the fictional plot which is supposed to represent the end of the horror is only a putative one: the combination of 'true' documental images and an 'imagined' fictional plot the viewer was just confronted with, makes it impossible to draw the line between reality and imagination, but also – with regard to the children – between what is reasonable and what is unreasonable.

Besides of functioning as a trope for violent Spanish history proper, or the forgetfulness thereof, the violent relation between children and adults as the central point of horror is also continuously referenced in the movie as a more universal interpellation to the viewer. Starting with the title, the movie prompts the viewer to a position of judgment. By referring to Tom and Evelyn's dilemma in the movie, Steinberg describes this inner conflict created in the movie with the following words:

> Should he [the tourist] kill the child, as would be his civilizational duty? Or, knowing that this child is in some sense his child, not only part of his world but a product of its violent history, should he let civilization itself end?[52]

In this context it is remarkable, that in the beginning of their book *Horror. Geschichte und Mythologie des Horrorfilms* – an extensive introduction to the genre of the horror movie – Georg Seeßlen and Fernand Jung refer to Francisco de Goya's famous picture "El sueño de la razón produce monstruos" (The Sleep of Reason produces Monsters). In this picture which shows a sleeping person who is haunted by monsters, Goya represents the "dualism of reason and imagination."[53] One possible reading here results from the double meaning of the word "sueño" which in Spanish not only means 'sleep' but also 'dream'. Thus, one might ask whether it is the lack of reason that is responsible for all the evil of mankind or whether sticking to the rational is only a kind of unrealistic dream that has nothing to do with the 'reality' of human

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51 Brémard: "Un inconnu dans la maison" [translation Thomas Schmidtgall].

52 Steinberg: "Franco's Kids", p. 23.

53 Jochen Mecke: "Von der Repräsentation zur Imagination: Die Ästhetik der Repräsentation und des Imaginären bei Goya und Saura." In: Ursula Henningfeld (ed.): *Goya im Dialog der Medien, Kulturen und Disziplinen*, Freiburg, Rombach, 2013, p. 83.

existence. Or worse, rationality, one might argue, is at the origin of the worst monstrosities human beings do to each other. In an analogy to Goya's masterpiece and alluding to the fictional and frightening plot of many horror movies Seeßlen and Jung ask:

> But, are the monsters really unreasonable? […] All the appearances of the fantastic that menace us in our dreams and that in daylight look for their lost images, have their origins at the same time in individual sensations and in a cultural-historical development.[54]

Originally, Goya's masterpiece and his *Caprichos* as a whole – a set of 80 prints showing "visions which arose out of the absence of reason"[55] – intended to criticize contemporary Spanish society. Actually, Goya ascribed a lack of reason to the contemporary world he lived in. Transferring Goya's artistic reflection on *¿Quién puede matar a un niño?* – especially on Spanish society during the 1970s –, the question of what is reasonable becomes equally important: The movie then raises the question of whether the children are really unreasonable, when their actions seem to be the logical consequence of the unreasonable and brutal behavior of adults. From a retrospective point of view, the opening images suggest such an assessment. By the montage of images showing real atrocities against children, the following plot can be read as the revenge of the oppressed.

Bénédicte Brémard identifies a second allegorical analogy by interpreting the scene in which Evelyn is finally killed from within by her unborn child as an "inverted allusion"[56] to Goya's *Saturno devorando a su hijo* (Saturn devouring his son), symbolizing an act of revenge. The movie itself seems to confirm this interpretation in a specific moment of the narration when Tom speculates about the reason of the children's behavior:[57]

> *Tom*: It is impossible that all of them have gone mad. And I don't understand why they are attacking. It's as if they thought we adults were their enemy. Perhaps the children of this island by instinct or by natural selection have started to… *Evelyn*: To what?[58]

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54 Georg Seeßlen and Fernand Jung: *Horror. Geschichte und Mythologie des Horrorfilms*, Marburg, Schüren, 2006, p. 13 [translation Thomas Schmidtgall].

55 Ibid., p. 96 [translation Thomas Schmidtgall].

56 Brémard: "Un inconnu dans la maison" [translation Thomas Schmidtgall].

57 Brémard also quotes Evelyn's attempt to explain the children's behavior. However, she refers to it in a different context as she analyzes it as a sign of science fiction as Evelyn's speculations allude to a supernatural element. See Brémard: "Un inconnu dans la maison".

58 Narciso Ibáñez Serrador: *¿Quién puede matar a un niño?* (1976, 1:19:12–1:19:35). ["*Tom*: Es imposible que todos se hayan vuelto locos. [...] Es como si nosotros fuésemos sus enemigos. Tal vez algunos niños de esta isla por instinto, o por selección natural hayan empezado a…*Evelyn*: ¿A qué?"]

However, Eli Evans and Haley O'Neil argue against this "seemingly obvious analysis."[59] They see the cruelty against children depicted in the introductory images neutralized by the cruelty of the children themselves as they commit crimes against the adults and become "guilty, and therefore as killable as anyone else."[60] According to them, the mass tourism in Benavís displayed in the first sequences of the fictional plot refers to Franco's dictatorship with its campaign: *Spain is different!*—aiming at attracting international tourists[61] and therefore can be seen as a reference to the continuity of the Franco era.[62] The brutality of the children, thus, would be allegorically readable rather as a symptom of a violent and reprobate society and moment as such. Yet, Steinberg offers a kind of reconciliation of both positions by taking into account the "interpretive complexities" of the movie and its "indecisive relationship to its own rather evident allegorical potentials"[63] which allows the reading of children taking revenge, as well as the interpretation of the movie as an expression of social uncertainty and tourism as an element of intrusion[64] or, as Steinberg terms it, "the response to the desire and nostalgia that stylize the tourist's gaze."[65]

Yet, Goya's *Caprichos* never intended to offer an accurate representation of history, but rather their objective was to make visible the horror and the fear of its day, and to question the possibilities and limits of representation.[66] Although in a different time, in a different medium and on a different level, Ibañez Serrador's movie can be seen in the same tradition. The same as Goya who was "an artist and a contemporary witness whose work consistently makes us take a closer look"[67], the Spanish film-maker also forces the viewer to reflect on the contemporary state of Spain – a Spain emerging slowly from the oppression and dictatorship of the Francoist period torn between the trauma of the past and the challenges of the future[68] – and on the questions and ethics of representation vis-à-vis trauma.

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59 Evans and O'Neil: "A bloody transition", p. 331.

60 Ibid., p. 332.

61 See ibid., p. 332.

62 See ibid.

63 Steinberg: "Franco's Kids", p. 23.

64 See ibid., pp. 27; 29.

65 Ibid., p. 32.

66 See Jürgen Kaumkötter and Peter Theißen: "Francisco de Goya. Visionen von Schrecken und Hoffnung." In: Museum Voswinckelshof Dinslaken (ed.): *Francisco de Goya. Visionen von Schrecken und Hoffnung*, Merzig, Gollenstein, 2010, p. 13.

67 Ibid., p. 13.

68 See Steinberg's analysis of the movie as an allegory of the intrusion of global capital and postcolonialism in Post-Franco Spain in Steinberg: "Franco's Kids".

Negotiations

The movie and its uneasy decision of a combination of historical footage with a fictional plot, is a severe and uncomfortable, but ultimately sensitive reaction to its specific social and political context. As a horror movie, it transcends the 'entertainment model' of the genre, as its negotiations of ambivalent sensations allow for no easy pacification or absorption, but rather leave the viewers with unanswered questions.

Borrowing from psychoanalytic insights, the pleasures sought out in horror movies stem from the fact that "people in culture have traded some chances of happiness for some chances of safety."[69] The lust for the temporary loss of safety, and the norms that guarantee it, served by horror movies, is related to the transgressive lust for revolt against a normality or social order which is felt to be oppressive. This is why horror movies always have an affinity to the political, they are readable as managements of social uncertainty on the one hand, and of impulses to break free from or to destroy societal constraints on the other. The disputed and difficult political negotiation between 'safety' and 'freedom' is made perceptible in the form of images here[70] – and of course it is exactly that kind of negotiation, which is significant in Spain after Franco's death during the time of the so-called transition, a time of an uncertain passage from one form of social order to something new. What will the children of the future Spanish society do with new powers and new dangers; this seems to be the underlying question of the movie. How is society going to be mediating with the conflicts left by war and dictatorship, and how is it going to relate to new globalizing constellations? The movie's fantasy of children on their own on an island, without any form of leadership, can also be read as allegory of the Spanish society, taken for 'adult' by the visiting tourists, but as a matter of fact full of unresolved collective conflicts and traumata not yet overcome. The future as well as the bursting of that which had been repressed during dictatorship are referred to here with a lot of anguish, all contrary to the hedonistic, erotic and rather memoryless 'destape' (debunking) which actually followed in Spanish society with the *movida*, shortly after this movie. The option for mere 'safety', though, this is what Ibañez Serrador's movie also clearly articulates, is a delusionary one.

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69 Sigmund Freud: *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur und andere kulturtheoretische Schriften* [1930], Frankfurt a.M., Fischer, 2003, p. 79.

70 See Drehli Robnik: *Kontrollhorrorkino – Gegenwartsfilme zum prekären Regieren*, Wien/Berlin, Turia + Kant, 2015.

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Section 3
“Trauma and Media in the Americas”

JANETT REINSTÄDLER

The Oniric and the Unspeakable. Cinematographic Representations of Dream and Trauma in *Madagascar* and *La vida es silbar* by the Cuban Director Fernando Pérez

Introduction

Sleepwalkers on the roofs of Havana; men and women who faint when they hear words like "sex", "double standard", or "truth"; *santería* altars fanned by the tropical wind in hermetically sealed bedrooms; the dead who speak, and mutes who tell their tales underwater: the films *Madagascar* (1994) and *La vida es silbar* (1998) by the Cuban director Fernando Pérez are filled with magical, dream-like images. This analysis explores these oniric elements in the context of their conflicted relationship with the equally prominent, realistic presentation of a deeply unsettling Cuban past and present and its effects on the human psyche. The following will first focus on the specific cinematic style in which Pérez deals with dreams and dream-like themes: how can the oniric elements be described from the perspective of film studies, particularly with regards to dream studies? What media techniques does Pérez use in his films to bring alternate worlds to life? Secondly, this study will examine the multiple levels of meaning opened by the oniric sequences. What do these dreams reveal, and what do they conceal? Do they represent an expression of desires, or rather that which is repressed? Do they tell stories from the past, or rather look to the future? With respect to censorship and trauma research, are these films about things that cannot be said in the cinematic reality and/or in the context of reception? This analysis will explore the degree to which dreams, hallucinations, and oniric atmospheres in *Madagascar* and *La vida es silbar* refer to a realm of unsayable things that are intertwined with individual and collective experiences that can be described as traumatic.[1]

[1] In the narrow, psychological sense, a trauma is "any psychological event which abruptly overwhelms the ego's capacity to provide a minimal sense of safety and integrative intactness, resulting in overwhelming anxiety or helplessness, or the threat of it, and producing an enduring change in the psychic organization." Arnold Cooper: "Toward a limited definition of psychic *trauma*." In: Arnold Rothstein (ed.): *The Reconstruction of Trauma. Its Significance in Clinical Work*, Madison, International University Press, 1986, p. 44. Collective trauma on the other hand can be caused by a common experience of threats and violence

Dreams and Trauma in Cinema

From the beginning on, films make use of the motif of dreamers, dreams, and the contents of dreams. Artists (Lukács, Breton, Buñuel, Artaud) and theorists (Barthes, Balázs, Bazin, Kracauer) have conceptualised the cinematic medium itself as a dream analogy, particularly in its specific situation of reception.[2] If we wish to approach film analysis in a way that examines the dream aesthetic from the perspective of cultural studies, and specifically the articulation of (repressed) socio-historical experience, then some recent approaches to film studies might be helpful. These build upon earlier analytical approaches concerning the structure and function of dreams, and expand upon them from a narrative perspective. Matthias Brütsch describes the central characteristics of film dreams in cinematic narratives as the "characterisation of figures", "uncertainty", "anticipation and prophecy", "slipping into another world", "evocation and atmosphere", and "parody and self-reflection". Concerning the articulation of dream experience in its problematic representation, two other dream functions come into play, namely the "creation of suspense and revelation", as well as the "symbolic portrayal of conflict"[3]. This article will further elaborate on these at a later point.

In her 2014 study *Dream and Narrating in Literature, Film and Art*, Stefanie Kreuzer builds upon the work of her colleague Matthias Brütsch by expanding his categories into a "typology and interpretation of the dream narrative"[4]. Kreuzer likewise deals with the particular proximity of cinematic mediality to the vivid, ephemeral, and film-like qualities of our nightly dreams. She demonstrates how, on the formal level of the narrative itself, dreams can introduce discontinuity and incoherence, present multiple perspectives, or prove unreliable, while in the realm of content, they can

(war, persecution, military repression, fleeing, exile, etc.); such threats and violence can destroy or threaten to destroy the identity and solidarity of communities. See Vamik Volkan: *Das Versagen der Diplomatie. Zur Psychoanalyse nationaler, ethnischer und religiöser Konflikte*, Gießen, Psychosozial-Verlag, 1999. For an overview of definitions and theories concerning trauma research in the context of individual and collective experience, see Angela Kühner: *Trauma und kollektives Gedächtnis*, Gießen, Psychosozial-Verlag, 2008.

2 See Matthias Brütsch: *Traumbühne Kino. Der Traum als filmtheoretische Metapher und narratives Motiv*, Marburg, Schüren, 2011, pp. 21–128.

3 All citations in Brütsch: *Traumbühne Kino*, p. 301 (here and henceforth my translation of texts in German or Spanish).

4 Kreuzer classifies depictions of trauma in (not only) film media as a) marked, b) not-clearly delineated c) unmarked, so-called "autonomous dream sequences" ["autonome Traumsequenzen"]. Stefanie Kreuzer: *Traum und Erzählen in Literatur, Film und Kunst*, Paderborn, Wilhelm Fink, 2014, pp. 685–698, here p. 687.

deviate from the narrated/portrayed identities, spaces, time, logic, and natural laws, and thus hinder the reception of the work.[5] Here, too, the parallels between the structure of the oniric (cinematic) aesthetic and the symptoms that evoke traumatic experience are quite apparent; like the disparate, often hard-to-remember contents of dreams, the existential threat of a traumatic experience fades from conscious memory. The victims of trauma cannot remember, or cannot defend themselves against the "pathogenic agent", the "inner devil",[6] and its unmediated intrusions into the conscious mind;[7] the experience reported by trauma victims is often fragmented, non-linear, illogical, and even unbelievable.[8] However, the experience of trauma is closely associated with images; "to be traumatised is to be possessed by an image"[9], It is such images that continually recur in dreams (nightmares).[10]

The proximity of dream and trauma has been a recurring theme in art since the 20th century. Dreams offer formal-aesthetic possibilities as an field of experimentation for creative processes, and can at the same time "believably" represent the disruptive structure of "unclaimed experience" (Caruth); they lend themselves to the dramatising focalisation of mental processes, they facilitate the articulation of alternate models of the (narrated) world, and create spaces for metanarrative reflection. Roland Spiller has convincingly demonstrated that in the realm of Latin American literature, dreams are used for the believable staging of situations featuring extreme emotion and an individual and/or historical experience of being pushed to one's own limits. Dreams can thus represent a flight from a traumatic reality, and at the same time make the inexpressible aspects of trauma expressible. If nothing else, they allow an empathy-building potential for identification to unfold at the level of reception.[11]

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5 See Kreuzer: *Traum und Erzählen*, pp. 178–211.

6 Sandler et al.: *Psychisches Trauma* (1987), cit. in Kühner: *Trauma und kollektives Gedächtnis*, p. 36.

7 "The experience of a trauma repeats itself, exactly and unremittingly, through the unknowing acts of the survivor and against his very will". Cathy Caruth: *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, p. 2.

8 In her excellent synthesis of trauma and memory theory, the German psychologist Angela Kühner highlights the fact that "the fragmented narrative, which often causes trauma survivors to not be believed, represents a sort of compromise; one tells the story without actually telling it." Kühner: *Trauma und kollektives Gedächtnis*, p. 41.

9 Caruth: *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 4.

10 See Deirdre Barrett (ed.): *Trauma and Dreams*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2001.

11 See Roland Spiller: "'Solo en sueños [...] nos asomamos a veces a lo que fuimos antes de ser esto que vaya a saber si somos.' Julio Cortázar y Adolfo Bioy Casares en comparación

In the following, the previously introduced models will make it possible to formally categorise the dream scenes in the films being analysed here. At the same time, they will focus on the function of dreams in film and their ability to destabilise cinematic reality and generate alternate realities. For the purposes of this analysis, it is necessary to determine exactly what concrete conceptions of reality are destabilised by evocation, introducing uncertainty, and entering another world in the portrayal of dreams or the trauma aesthetic, and whether it might be possible to interpret these factors as indicators of denied, (still) inexpressible trauma.

Madagascar (1993)

Fernando Pérez Valdés, born in 1944 in Havana, is one of the generations of Cubans who grew up under the repressive conditions of the Machado dictatorship and experienced the Cuban Revolution as a teenager, celebrating it as the defeat of corruption and mafia structures, extreme economic inequality and exploitation, massive political and military repression, and sorely lacking education and health care systems. Pérez himself began working on film productions in 1962 for the ICAIC, the *Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematográficos*, which was established after the revolution, and also participated in debates on film criticism. His rise in the world of Cuban film led from assisting star directors like Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Daniel Díaz Torres to his own subsequent documentary films and his first feature film *Clandestinos* (1987). Later he worked as a professor of film studies at the University of Havana and the Escuela Internacional de Cine y Televisión en San Antonio de Los Baños, Cuba, as well as at institutions in Germany and Switzerland. Today, Pérez has completed a total of nine feature films; at the time of writing, he is just finishing his latest project, *Insumisa*. Today Pérez is his country's most famous living film director. As a regular guest at international film festivals, Pérez has won numerous national and international awards for his carefully crafted, aesthetically impressive works.[12]

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onírica." In: Roland Spiller (ed.): *Julio Cortázar y Adolfo Bioy Casares. Relecturas entre cruzadas*, Berlin, Erich Schmidt, 2016, p. 11–38.

[12] Cf. concerning the information in the previous paragraph http://www.cubacine.cult.cu/sitios/realizad/fernandp.html [01.05.2018]. There are to date few detailed studies dealing with dreams. In *Sueños de realidad: Fernando Pérez: Tres décadas de cine* (Alcalá, Universidad de Alcalá 2005), Jorge Ruffinelli examines the specific dream-related aesthetic in Fernando Pérez's films, convincingly demonstrating that in the case of *Madagascar*, the illusion-breaking effects of the dissociation of sound and image, as well as existential-philosophical implications of the images of Cuban reality generated from an inside perspective. However, Jan Mennell interprets the film from a postcolonial perspective and examines the

The films directed by Fernando Pérez maintain an almost constant focus on the real historical problems of Cuban reality, which he approaches with an almost historical distance. *Clandestinos* (1987) and *Hello Hemmingway* (1990) are set in the mid-twentieth century and tell stories of love and the life dreams of young people who, after being confronted with the violent events of the dictatorship in the pre-revolutionary 1950s, became political, and subsequently participated in the Cuban Revolution.[13] The storyline of *Madagascar* (1994) can be placed in the late 1980s based upon references to Chernobyl and Perestroika. In the film, Pérez jumps from the political crisis at the end of the Machado regime portrayed in the previous film to the political crisis at the end of the Soviet Union. The specific life situations of the main characters and their problems connect the narrative directly to the early 1990s. Even the relatively short length of 50 minutes reminds one that *Madagascar* came into being in the so-called "período especial en tiempos de paz", i.e. during the economic and political crisis that gripped Cuba in the wake of the disintegration of the Soviet Union. At that time, the collapse of trade with the Eastern Bloc countries led to a dramatic supply crisis, which was exacerbated by the U.S. embargo in place since the 1960s, resulting in daily power outages, water rationing, fuel rationing, and food shortages, all of which had a tremendous impact on daily life in Cuba. Cuban society experienced a rapid increase in crime, especially relating to the black market, prostitution, and currency smuggling.[14] These economic difficulties coincided with the end of the great ideological metanarrative of global communism; what future awaited the Cuban Revolution?

The film institution ICAIC was hit hard by both crises. Firstly, the general shortage of materials led to a radical reduction of film production, ultimately reaching a historic low. Even *Madagascar* was "created with an impressive degree of thrift"[15]. Likewise, in 1991, the censorship scandal over

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film's aesthetic constructions in terms of their utopian conceptions of space and nation in "Dreaming the Cuban Nation. Fernando Pérez's *Madagascar*." In: *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 33, no. 66, 2008, pp. 89–107. Neither study deals explicitly with dreams in the narrower sense. There is still no study that analyses the film, by bringing together narratological film studies, dream studies, and trauma research theory.

13 An overview of the existing research with commentary can be found in Joel del Río: *La edad de las ilusiones: el cine de Fernando Pérez*, La Habana, ICAIC, 2016.

14 On the *período especial*, cf. Hans-Jürgen Burchhardt: "Kubas langer Marsch durch die Neunziger – eine Übersicht in Etappen." In: Ottmar Ette and Martin Franzbach (eds.): *Kuba heute. Politik, Wirtschaft, Kultur*, Vervuert, Frankfurt a.M., 2001, pp. 313–335.

15 Luis Álvarez Álvarez and Armando Pérez Padrón: *Fernando Pérez. Cine, ciudades e intertextos*, Havana, Letras cubanas, 2014, p. 82. ["*Madagascar* [es un] medio-metraje realizado con una impresionante economía de recursos."].

the Daniel Díaz Torres's (1948–2013) film *Alicia en el pueblo de Maravillas* hampered film production. Due to its acerbic satire of the deficiencies of the aging revolutionary society, *Alicia en el pueblo de Maravillas* was pulled from cinemas after only three days, and the ICAIC narrowly avoided being subsumed into the state information ministry. In connection to this scandal, the script writer Jesús Díaz (1941–2002) was expatriated in 1992 for criticising the revolution (while abroad), and he was unable to return to Cuba before his death. Daniel Díaz Torres, on the other hand, as director and epicentre of the debate, will not speak openly about the effects of this act of censorship on his work.[16]

Fernando Pérez's *Madagascar* came into being under the multiple pressures of a political legitimation crisis, precarious economic conditions, and ideological pressure. The film nonetheless shows a dark, critical image of Cuba in the 1980s and finally even of the beginning 1990s with a combination of "intensive poetic force as well as a biting sense of criticism"[17]. Low-key lit images of dark, sparsely furnished interiors, portrayals of dilapidated palaces in the city of Havana or run-down industrial areas, unembellished pictures of gruelling working life, stuck in a rut of meaningless repetition, large format images of people hungrily eating, emaciated people – these are certainly not the images of the 'better' 1980s in Cuba, but rather allusions to a revolution that was about to eat its own children at the beginning of the

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16 It is well-known that Cuban cinema operates under the restrictive mantra "within the Revolution, everything; against the Revolution, nothing" – "dentro de la revolución todo, contra la revolución nada", as proclaimed in 1961 by Fidel Castro in his "words to intellectuals", "Palabras a los intelectuales." In: *Revolución y Cultura*, Suplemento 2, 2, 1961, p. 52. Some films were subjected to censorship. Examples include *P.M.* by Sabá Cabrera Infante, 1961, the above mentioned *Alicia en el pueblo de Maravillas* by Daniel Díaz Torres, 1991, and more recently, *Santa y Andrés* by Carlos Lechuga, 2017. *Alicia en el pueblo de Maravillas* tells the story of a young social worker who takes a job at a psychiatric sanatorium where patients who have committed ideological crimes against the revolutionary ideals are treated with massages, fango, and art therapy. The censorship of this likewise oniric satire is certainly due in a large part to the fact that the 'máximo director' of the clinic, who resembles Fidel Castro in his clothing and mannerisms, is killed by Alicia at the end of the film. Hence the film does not rule out tyrannicide as a possible escape from the societal dilemma. See Janett Reinstädler: "Memory, desmemory and three Cuban films everybody remembers." In: Christoph Vatter and Oleksandr Pronkevich (eds.): *Film and Memory*, Saarbrücken, Saravi Pontes, 2015, pp. 51–64. In a later work, Daniel Díaz Torres also dealt with taboo themes such as the Cuba Crisis at the beginning of the 1960s in *Lisanka*, 2010, and "jineterismo", prostitution, in the 1990s in *La Película de Ana*, 2012, though from a more topical, humorous and completely non-sarcastic perspective.

17 Álvarez Álvarez and Pérez Padrón: *Fernando Pérez*, p. 82. ["con una fuerza poética tan intensa, y a la vez con un sentido crítico tan aguzado"]

1990s. But how can it be explained that this film, in which many characters dream of another life far away from Cuba, was not subjected to censorship, but instead received numerous awards and was praised by critics as an excellent contemporary historical document, and one of the three best Cuban films of the decade?[18]

The main reason for this may lie in the fact that instead of the offbeat, aggressively satirical style of *Alicia en el pueblo de Maravillas, Madagascar* establishes a melancholy and unreal style, and societal criticism is replaced by the problems of an individual character. The film uses these ontologically suspended images from the very beginning to approach the protagonist Laura's (Zaida Castellanos) existential crisis. The story begins with underexposed slow motion recordings showing cyclists and a swaying crowd moving almost in unison between large and completely changing shots. Like in a trance, the workers move in a coordinated rhythm on the way to work in the early morning night. A parallel montage jumps into a doctor's office where Laura, a middle-aged woman, confesses her problem to a psychiatrist, every night she dreams exactly the same happenings that she lived during the day: "El problema es que duermo, doctor. Duermo y sueño. Pero sueño con la realidad exacta de todos los días. [...] Quisiera soñar con algo distinto. Con cualquier cosa… Pero no… siempre lo mismo."[19]


Fig. 1 and 2 (*Madagascar*: 0:07:43; 0:09:32)

From the very beginning, the images and language establish a tension between real, every-day activities such as going to work or visiting the doctor and a 'different' world. This is defined both visually through the portrayal of ordinary occurrences in slow-motion and in an auditory/linguistic sense by the talk with the doctor at the beginning of the dream. The fact that Laura not

[18] Cf. Álvarez Álvarez and Pérez Padrón: *Fernando Pérez*, p. 81–82.

[19] *Madagascar*. Dir. Fernando Pérez. 50 min. ICAIC, Cuba, 1994, 0:03:00–0:03:24.

only sleeps and dreams excessively, but also that her dreams resemble an exact copy of reality, is crucial here in that it causes the viewer to question from the very first scenes whether the storyline depicts (film) reality or the content of Laura's dreams. Thus it is impossible to know if the film depicts Laura 'really' talking to a psychiatrist, or if it is merely a dream about such a visit that occurred at an earlier time.

Madagascar maintains this masterfully staged tension between two possible worlds, i.e. 'factual' reality and the 'dreamt' Cuban reality, through a number of hard cuts, logical breaks, unmediated repetitions and associative image sequences (fig. 1 and 2), as well as lighting changes which for example contrast low-light and stark backlighting with high-key lighting. The recurring melancholy, threatening sound design contributes to the atmosphere of unreality with its muted, barely audible sound fragments of spherical synthesiser sounds, sighs, overly-loud chewing sounds, muffled street sounds, etc., opening a "sonorous envelope"[20] of disturbing, intrusive, and association-laden sound that also includes stretches of pure silence. The possibility for film sound to "glide smoothly from sense to nonsense"[21] is also used in conjunction with disembodied narrators who deliver off-stage explanations. If indeed Laura's voice is recognisable as she comments on her life, the relationship between what is shown and what is said often remains unclear. Do the images describe what Laura sees in her own reality? But what is happening in cases where there are images that cannot possibly be from her perspective, such as when Laura herself is visible, or when the camera pans at the street level dissolve into shots that seem to climb up the walls and look over the roofs of houses? Is the protagonist narrating the dream that she sees, or is this an 'external' perspective that refers metafictionally to the camera work dominant here? As mentioned above with reference to Brütsch, the "evocation of [unreal] atmosphere" goes hand in hand with the "disturbance [of the reception]". Likewise, it is evident from the beginning how oniric themes are used to build mystery and suspense in Madagascar; both the dream fiction and the camera work obscure the subject and the location depicted (Laura – camera – director), as well as whether the images depict reality or something else (dreams – dreamt reality – cinematic representations of reality – the real, historical Cuba).[22]

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20 For more on film as a framing element, see Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener: *Filmtheorie zur Einführung*, Hamburg, Junius, 2007, pp. 163–188, especially p. 180. Cf. as well Mirjam Schaub, who stresses the importance of hearing for emotional reception in *Bilder aus dem Off. Zum philosophischen Stand der Kinotheorie*, Weimar, VDG, 2005, p. 76.

21 Elsaesser and Hagener: *Filmtheorie*, p. 181.

22 Also see Ruffinelli: *Sueños de realidad*.

In Madagascar, Pérez uses the example of three generations of women to highlight the need to break out of the routines of an aging revolutionary society. The protagonist Laura is a woman in her late thirties who was socialised in the Batista dictatorship and actively participated in the 1959 revolution. Her present daily life can only be described as nightmarish; as a physicist, she works alongside de-motivated colleagues on a meaningless university project that is lacking back equipment and space, and repeats the same material year after year in her teaching. Already twice divorced, Laura is the sole caretaker of her wayward teenage daughter Laurita (Laura de la Uz) and her elderly mother, the "abuela" (grandmother, Elena Bolaños).


Fig. 3 and 4 (*Madagascar*: 0:11:39; 0:40:17)

The film begins with dark, dismal images of Laura's life as a senseless race in a hamster wheel that rotates between a career paralysis, an overburdened private life, and precarious economic circumstances. Her profound identity crisis also has a political aspect, symbolized by a scene in which Laura uses a magnifying glass to look for herself in a photo of a mass rally on Revolution Square in the 1960s (fig. 3): "Where am I? Where am I, my God?"[23] This has been described as "one of the most disturbing scenes in modern Cuban cinema"[24].

Even at the end of the film, Laura is unable to ascertain her own place in the past, present, and future – on the Malecón and at the beach, already standing in the water and looking towards the USA (fig. 4), she says: "Now I do not know whether I dreamt or actually experienced certain things. Sometimes I have to go through my pockets just to find some little clue. Some kind of

[23] *Madagascar*: 0:11:33–0:11:38. ["¿Dónde estoy yo? ¿Dónde estoy yo, Dios mío?"]

[24] Juan Antonio García Borrero: "MADAGASCAR (1994), de Fernando Pérez" Internet blog: *Cine cubano, la pupila insomne*, 19 January 2010. https://cinecubanolapupilainsomne.wordpress.com/2010/01/19/madagascar-1994-de-fernando-perez/ [01.05.2018]. ["[Esta es] una de las secuencias más inquietantes del último cine cubano."]

proof. Something that tells me if this or that happened or not. I don't know any more. I have lost my compass, my lantern, my rudder, and there is no land in sight."[25]

Fig. 5 (*Madagascar*: 0:42:12)

Through the dream, the storyline, and the off-stage commentary, *Madagascar* uses a personal perspective to focus on an individual problem – the mid-life crisis of a woman who is no longer able to fulfil the requirements of her external reality. Laura refers to herself as a "violín desafinada", an out-of-tune violin, that disturbs the euphony of the orchestra.[26] Laura's triple nightmare of losing her memory of the past, disorientation in the present, and a lack of prospects for the future, contrasts with the dreams of the two other women in her family. The protagonist's mother, born in the glorious Havana of the 1920s, imagines herself in an endless game of Monopoly, in a world of economic prosperity (fig. 5): "Massachusetts Avenue, I'll buy it." "I'm rich, riiiiich!"[27]

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25 *Madagascar*: 0:34:26–0:35:02. ["Ahora resulta que hay cosas que no sé si soñé o si viví realmente. A veces tengo que registrarme los bolsillos para buscar algún detalle. Una prueba. Algo que me indique si esto o aquello pasó o no. Ya no sé nada. Perdí la brújula, la vela, los remos, y no aparece tierra a la vista."]

26 *Madagascar*: 0:42:50–0:42:59. ["Soy yo ese violín que no atrapa la melodía. Ese violín que de pronto se ha vuelto desobediente."]

27 *Madagascar*: 0:42:20–0:42:28; 0:31:26–31:28. ["Avenida Massachusetts. ¡La compro!" "¡Soy rica, rrrriiica!"] It is quite ironic that the grandmother buys with Massachusetts Avenue

Her granddaughter Laurita's dreams are quite different. She openly confronts the 'heroine of labour' award-winning Laura, skips school, ignores her mother when she offers advice or appeals to her "conciencia", and transgresses numerous boundaries with her adolescent protest, endangering herself and others in the process.[28] Laura can hardly feed her own little family on the rations she receives, and thus has to send the ten dark-skinned children of poor people, who Laurita accommodates in her room, back to the streets. Laurita dances on the roofs of houses on the brink of the abyss, and then immerses herself in religious rites. The young woman seems to feel closest to her pet hamster; the hamster eats from Laurita's plate, and reproduces in an irrational way in the course of the film. Most importantly, however, Laurita, superbly played by Laura de la Uz, retreats into a (day) dream world that revolves around the island of Madagascar.

Fig. 6 and 7 (*Madagascar*: 0:37:30; 0:37:44)

It is a mysterious, phantasmic dream which she appears to share with many others. One of the most impressive and enigmatic scenes in the film consists of a single take, almost a minute long, looking out over the rooflines of Havana; this scene shows people standing with their arms stretched out in a way that evokes images of crucifixion (by a system, their time), standing like a selfless sacrifice while an off-stage voice whispers "Madagascar" (fig. 6 and 7).

This Madagascar, which provides the title of the film, remains without any further explanation. It is thus to be interpreted as an imaginary location of

one of the cheapest place to buy in Monopoly, and not one of the most expensive ones, as Florida Avenue in Miami.

[28] Youth resistance against the system that surrounds them is a recurring theme in the films of Fernando Pérez. Lauritas rather passive non-compliance contrasts with Yusislady, a teenager in *Últimos días de La Habana* (2016), who seeks direct confrontation with the system, casting blame on a policewoman as the representative of a completely corrupt system.

collective longing, a glimpse of a phantasmic world beyond the disenchanted reality of a former paradise that once was Cuba. In this sense, the signifier Madagascar can also be understood as a cinematic dream that exemplifies what Brütsch called "slipping into another world", or in Spiller's words, a "dream of escape": the dream serves as a complex projection surface that can function both as an unreal location of utopia and as a geographically locatable heterotopia[29] for an alternative life model. With Madagascar, another tropical island that lies in another ocean behind Africa, Pérez establishes a vision of a long desired new beginning on the/an island, entirely open and unburdened by history, without expressing any explicit criticism of conditions in Cuba. Despite the director's assurance that he did not intend to depict the desire to emigrate, Madagascar serves as a code for *another* kind of thoughts of emigration.[30] The film is filled with images of opening up, change, movement, and travel; passing trains, ships, or constantly changing and increasingly expansive views from Laura's windows in always new apartments (fig. 8 and 9).[31]

Among the peculiarities of the film is that it anticipates concrete, real-world movements of people. Completed in 1993, *Madagascar* features a dominant travel motif that anticipates a future that had already become a reality by the time the film premiered at the Havana Film Festival in late 1994. In summer of 1994, demonstrations, repeated hijackings of ships, and finally a mass exodus of around 35,000 people across the sea to the USA in the so-called "crisis de los balseros" ("crisis of the boat people"), which led to one of the most precarious situations in the history of the Cuban Revolution.

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29 Michel Foucault: "Des espaces autres (1967)." In: Michel Foucault: *Dits et écrits*, Vol. 4, Paris, Gallimard, 1984, pp. 752–763.

30 Fernando Pérez said in an interview: "Para mí, Madagascar es la representacion del viaje no geográfico, del viaje al interior. Es también la ilusion y la posibilidad de empezar siempre otra vez" (cited in Ruffinelli 2005, p. 113).

31 Cf. the excellent analysis of cinematic representations of space in Mennell: "Dreaming the Cuban Nation", pp. 100–105. The recurring framing shots, accomplished through windows, furthermore strengthen the meta-reflexive level of the film (concerning "windows and framing" and "cinematic metafiction", see Elsaesser and Hagener: *Filmtheorie*, p. 23–48). Additional recurring motifs of self-reflection in the cinematic visual process in *Madagascar* include mirrors, magnifying glasses, eyeglasses, and TV screens. For more on this and the psychoanalytical interpretation of trains as symbols of breaking, ending, and death, see Álvarez Álvarez and Pérez Padrón: *Fernando Pérez*, p. 85–89.


Fig. 8 and 9 (*Madagascar*: 0:05:23; 0:40:02)

Viewers who attended the film screening in Havana in late 1994 shared the common knowledge of the many accounts of this collective exodus, which led to a still unknown number of deaths and the separation of families, friends, and colleagues.[32] Fernando Pérez's cinematic Madagascar dream is conciliatory in that it makes migration beyond competing ideological systems imaginable, a form of emigration that leads neither to American capitalism nor to the 'old world' of Europe, and does not turn its back on Cuba. Interpreted this way, the film appears to offer a 'healing' audio-visual language for the articulation of the collective, not-openly-communicable, historical and present traumas of migration.[33]

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32 Parallel to the premier of *Madagascar*, an official migration deal between Bill Clinton and Fidel Castro made legal emigration to the USA possible; by 2004, around 230,000 Cubans had availed of this opportunity.

33 Historically, people fleeing from Cuba were judged politically and often commented upon with malice. Such refugees were famously referred to as "gusanos" ("worms") or "scoria" ("scabs"). I personally remember a former military man in the late 1990s who, looking at a stretch of coast east of Havana where the balseros – many with home-made rafts made from car tyres – started out on the journey, commented : "eran miles, ¡cómo me reía yo!" – "there were thousands, how I laughed!" Anna Marie Stock has pointed to the motif of migration in the dominant theme of moving between apartments and trains, though she did not connect it to dreams or trauma: "[In *Madagascar*, Fernando Pérez] challenges notions of identity as fixed, of cultures as authentic or inauthentic, and underlines instead the post-national state of migrancy" (Anna Marie Stock: "Migrancy and the Latin American cinemascape: towards a post-national critical praxis." In: *Revista Canadiense de estudios Hispánicos* 20, no. 1, 1995, p. 24). The same is true of Raúl Rubio, who deals with the semantic field of migration in the specific context of the Cuban (post)Revolution and the end of the nation: "I propose that Pérez's film postulates a post-national effort, yet it is one innately connected to the extra-territorial parts of Cuba, the diaspora." Raúl Rubio: "Political Aesthetics in Contemporary Cuban Filmmaking: Fernando Pérez's *Madagascar* and *La vida es silbar*." http://www.lehman.cuny.edu/ciberletras/v13/rubio.htm [01.05.2018].

While film critics praised the film for its complexity,[34] the Cuban public was less enthusiastic about the dark, symbolically-laden, yet gritty view of the present.[35] The positive note at the end did not change this. In its final minutes, the film returns to the beginning and Laura's treatment at the doctor, who removes his dark glasses from his face and thus ends the treatment. This is followed by a hard cut and a jump to a scene that repeats the sequence at the beginning, people going to work in the morning. Laura and Laurita are now to be seen among the hundreds of people travelling together through the tunnel of Havana. The transition from bluish light (fig. 10) to brighter colours (fig. 11) seems to indicate a transition from a dream to the waking world, and at the same time symbolises a suffocating present that, when viewed without the dark glasses, also reveals brighter and colourful sides.[36]


Fig. 10 and 11 (*Madagascar*: 0:02:54; 0:43:11)

[34] "Madagascar is a profound X-Ray image of Cuban society during its most serious crisis of the 90s, a vision that takes aim, in a most disturbing way, at the ethical and psycho-social aspects that accompanied this deep shock to the island. It is one of the greatest Cuban films of all time." "Madagascar [...] es una radiografía profunda de la sociedad cubana durante su gravísima crisis de los noventa, en una visión que [...] se centra de manera a tormentada en los componentes éticos y psicosociales que acompañaron el hondo estremecimiento de la isla. [... R]esulta uno de los grandes filmes cubanos de todos los tiempos." Álvarez Álvarez and Pérez Padrón: *Fernando Pérez*, p. 119.

[35] "Madagascar was not received by the audience with much enthusiasm. It described a hard reality that was too biting for viewers who were themselves too afflicted by circumstances to repeat Laura's nightmare; to go to the cinema to dream and instead meet every-day reality." "Madagascar fue recibida con escaso entusiasmo por el público cubano. Describía una realidad dura, demasiado lacerante para un espectador bastante atribulado por las circunstancias como par repetir la pesadilla de Laura: ir a cine al soñar y encontrarse con la misma realidad de todos los días." Río: *Ilusiones*, p. 103

[36] On the theme of the tunnel in *Madagascar*, see Álvarez Álvarez and Pérez Padrón: *Fernando Pérez*, p. 85 and p. 117–118.

This brightening also reflects the relationship between mother and daughter, who, in the final scene, have reached a mutual understanding. They now discuss the challenges of their daily lives in a very different way – Laurita talks about her success in school, and at night she dreams exactly what she experienced during the day. The older Laura, on the other hand, wants to take some time off and skip work, and invites her daughter to travel with her to Madagascar. It appears to be an idealistic ending that fulfils Cuban society's hopes for a revolutionary youth, as well as the dream of prosperity, freedom of travel, and new experiences. However, the kitsch of this surprising happy ending is not unbroken. Not only do the dark tunnel walls that frame the scene seem to extend the oppressive 'no exit' mood of the whole film, but once again the question of the ontological status of the images is raised. Is Laura really awake, or is she dreaming again – or is this the beginning of a new dream (nightmare) sequence in the same old reality, now passed on to the younger generation? The circular structure created by the repetition of the opening scene at the end of the film confirms this; instead of change, exhausting repetition is in store for the future, and the new brightness is overshadowed by a dark every-day reality. Finally, Laurita's sudden affirmation of revolutionary values could in much the same way prove illusory, just like the luxury trip Laura suggests. Thus the dream of travel and migration, a major theme in the film and a symbol of prospects for possible change, is clearly rejected in the end. The final scene depicts a very slow-moving train (with which one can definitely not leave Cuba), and the bolero "Quiéreme mucho" by Gonzalo Roig can be heard in the background. The last stanza of this song reads: "If one loves as truly, as I love you, it is impossible, my darling, to live so far apart […] to live so far apart"[37]. Thus the only possible journey has to take place on the island, but this does not allow for any dreams other than dismal reality.

Borrero interprets the film's dream metaphor as a portrayal of a contemporary 'dream-like' reality: "In Cuba, the grand dreams (metanarratives, according to Lyotard) were impaired by unexpected changes in the macro-social sphere, and it is evident that changes of this order of magnitude lead to losses of reality, to disorientation with regards to true goals, so as a consequence a sort of social trance develops, resembling that which we know from dreams, and especially from nightmares"[38]. One of the central questions that *Madagascar*

[37] *Madagascar*: 0:45:09–0:46:10. ["Cuando se quiere de verdad / Como te quiero yo a ti / Es imposible, mi cielo / Tan separados vivir […] / tan separados vivir."]

[38] "[...] en Cuba los grandes sueños (los metarrelatos, según Lyotard) se vieron afecta dos por imprevistos cambios en lo macrosocial, y está comprobado que mutaciones de estas magnitudes suelen provocar pérdidas del sentido de la realidad, desorientación en cuanto

poses is what is (still) real in real socialism. Laura's dreams depict a world that resembles reality, while in the end reality shows dreams (of the revolutionary commitment of the youth, of luxury trips) that do not (and will not) reflect reality. At the same time, however, the wave of protest and emigration in 1994 indicates that retreating into a dream world was not the Cubans' prevailing reaction to the epistemic break with the world.

La vida es silbar

In *La vida es silbar* (*Life is to Whistle*, 1997), too, Fernando Pérez works with oniric and traumatic elements. However, the stress placed upon these elements is different in this case. The explicitly oniric portrayal is counterbalanced by images that are visionary, magical, and for the most part not explicitly marked as dreams, while at the same time, the theme of existentially threatening crises, past and present, which is merely hinted at in *Madagascar*, takes centre stage in this film. Despite all of the tragic elements, *La vida es silbar* features more lightness and a pinch of humour.

Fig. 12 (*La vida es silbar:* 0:05:56)

From the beginning on, the film is presented as a fictional story told by Bebé, a nixe-like female being that lives in the sea near Havana (fig. 12). It is the story of three main figures, Julia, Elpidio, and Mariana, all living in Havana in the late 1990s, who struggle to come to terms with the darker chapters of their own

a la ubicación de las verdaderas metas, y consecuente con ello, una suerte de sopor social muy parecido a lo que experimentamos en los sueños y, aún más, en las pesadillas." García Borrero: "MADAGASCAR", s.p.

past and to find happiness in the present. The film scholar Fernández-Britto highlights the "conceptual wealth" of the film, which "manifests itself in the various perspectives from which each questions the concepts of identity, patriotism, religious syncretism, machismo, freedom, and individual ethics from the perspective of another"[39].

One can add another aspect to this list: *La vida es silbar* deals with the theme of trauma, presents characters who suffer from traumatic experiences and trauma symptoms, and explicitly interweaves an acknowledgement of trauma through the character of a doctor.

In the film, we discover that the somewhat mysterious, aquatic Bebé shares the experience of having grown up in an hostil, factory-like orphanage[40] with Elpidio and Mariana. Delivered to the nightmarish orphanage as a newborn, Bebé refused to learn the Spanish language, and communicates entirely by whistling.



Fig. 13, 14 and 15 (*La vida es silbar*: 0:04:34; 0:05:18; 0:04:40)

Given her resistance to the indoctrination of her institutional upbringing, which focused entirely on the correct repetition of a given set of terms, Bebé is ultimately removed from the home by the overbearing caretaker in a nightmarish scene (fig. 13–15).[41]

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39 Gustavo Arcos Fernández-Britto, cit. in: Marta Díaz and Joel del Río: *Los cien caminos del cine cubano*, La Habana, Cuba, ICAIC, 2010: 365. ["[El cine de Pérez tiene una] riqueza conceptual, que puede deconstruirse desde diferentes perspectivas y cada una de ellas cuestionará los conceptos de identidad, patriotismo, sincretismo religioso, machismo, libertad y ética individual."]

40 Raúl Rubio interprets the depiction of the orphanage as a criticism of the Cuban education system: "It is reminiscent of a prison ward and more in line with an experimental lab, possibly alluding to the indoctrination of children under the Revolution." Rubio: "Political Aesthetics", s.p.

41 Bebé, stiffened into a motionless doll, takes the elevator into the deep in the arms of an ice cold caretaker. "The depth of this scene observed through a dramatic descent is indicative of the general withdrawal or even elimination of non-acclimated citizens. Viewers later deduce that the omnipresent narrator which comments upon the storyline of all three main characters is *Bebé*. Her voice speaks from a position of exile, symbolic of the traumas associated

What subsequently happened and led to the situation in which the adult Bebé is able to speak yet has to surface as the storyteller away from the island and underwater remains unexplained; this can be counted among the magical-realistic elements in the film.

Elpidio (Luis Alberto García) grew up in the same home as Bebé, the fatherless son of the single mother Cuba, a warm-hearted, cheerful Afro-Cuban, who is neither able to protect Bebé from punishment nor form her son into an upstanding "hombre nuevo" or "new man". In the present, the loveable *pícaro* Elpidio does not fulfil the hopes his mother put into his name[42] and his upbringing, but rather drifts through life as a pickpocket, gambler, and idler, which is why Cuba leaves him (and presumably also the island), and he never hears from her again. Elpidio struggles in prayer for the love of his mother and gets a tattoo of a heart with the phrase "there is no love like a mother's love"[43].


Fig. 16, 17 and 18 (*La vida es silbar*: 0:24:42; 1:14:59; 1:31:58)

When he meets and falls in love with the foreign Greenpeace activist Chrissie (Isabel Santos), he finally confesses that he has lost/never experienced maternal love. Near the end of the film, he has the sign of motherly love burned from his skin with a hot spoon, but it fails to extinguish his memories or his yearning. Close-up shots repeatedly show his badly scarred skin as an ever-present

with voices of counter discourse within Revolutionary Cuba." Rubio: "Political Aesthetics", s.p.

42 Elpidio Valdés is a hero of the 19th century Cuban War of Independence. The figure is especially well known in Cuba thanks to the animated film of the same name by Juan Padrón. For parallels and differences between the three figures, see Álvarez Álvarez and Pérez Padrón: *Fernando Pérez*, p. 126–127: "Elpidio Valdés represents [in *La vida es silbar*] the drift, the incipient decline of values, and in particular the renunciation, at least in part, of improving life." ["Elpidio Valdés [en *La vida es silbar*] representa la deriva, la incipiente quiebra de valores, y en particular la renuncia, al menos parcial, a mejorar de vida."] At the same time, however, the film stands behind Elpidio, who is plagued by a remorse that haunts him with dream-like images of the past – these break into the storyline in the form of documentary black and white recordings of the singer Benny Moré, to whose music Elpidio and the other children danced long ago, and which appears to act as his moral conscience.

43 *Madagascar*: 0:24:42. ["no hay amor como el de madre"; see fig. 16]

reminder of the (lost) love of his mother Cuba on his body (fig. 16–18). With this extreme reduction of distance from the figure, the camera view becomes almost haptic, focusing on the skin as the bearer of (traumatic) memory.[44] The scar brings Elpidio's lost attachment to "Cuba" into focus, particularly in his quarrels with Chrissie and his prayers in front of the Santería altar in his bedroom.

This altar is one of the magical-dreamlike elements in the film. It consists of a life-sized statue portraying the syncretic saint Changó from Santería and Saint Barbara from Catholicism, and Elpidio also calls it Cuba, i.e. his mother/his country. Surrounded by fast growing plants that shake in the wind,[45] Bebé can be seen behind the mask of Changó/Saint Barbara at the end of the film. She remains expressionless as Elpidio implores her: "let me be and think like I want, [...] just like you taught us"[46]. With tears in his eyes, Elpidio admits that emigration is not an alternative for his life with the stern mother Cuba.[47] He will not go with Chrissie to her home country.

The other stories in the film also revolve around people with a troubled past and emotional problems in the present. The sensual, promiscuous dancer Mariana (Claudia Rojas), who imagines she sees every man she meets naked, grew up with Elpidio in Cuba's orphanage. In order to get a chance to dance the Giselle in the national ballet in the present, she takes a religious vow of chastity and subsequently falls madly in love with her dance partner, experience recurring emotional breakdowns along the way.[48]

The geriatric nurse Julia (Coralia Veloz), a middle aged woman, experiences uncontrollable attacks of yawning, dizziness, falling sleep, and fainting when she hears the word "sex" ("sexo"). Doctor Fernando (Rolando Brito),

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44 Cf. to the metaphor of skin in cinema in Laura Marks *The Skin of Film. Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment and the Senses*, Durham, New York and London, Duke University Press, 2000.

45 The hybrid figure of Changó/Santa Bárbara is one of the most important saints in Afro-European syncretism in Cuba and a symbol of Cuban identity since slavery, in connection to which he was honoured as a symbol of strength and resistance. In *La vida es silbar*, Changó, who according to legend is searching for his unknown father, is intertwined with the life stories of the many fatherless characters. Santa Barbara is also a symbol of steadfast belief and resistance to ideological compulsion. On Cuban Santería, see Nelson Aboy Domingo: *Orígenes de la santería cubana: transculturación e identidad cultural*, La Habana, Ciencias Sociales, 2016.

46 *La vida es silbar*: 0:01:31:22–1:31:28. ["déjame ser y pensar como yo quiera, […] tú nos lo enseñaste"]

47 *La vida es silbar*: 1:31:37–1:31:40 ["Pero tampoco puedo vivir sin ti, Cuba, no puedo."]

48 Concerning criticism based on poor acting and unconvincing narratives, see Álvarez Álvarez and Pérez Padrón: *Fernando Pérez*, p. 130–131.

her psychiatrist, tells Julia that she needs to confront her past to find the key to her problem.[49] With a nod to parody, the film shows this mad therapist, who shares the director's name, as he chases his terrified patient into the city with his confrontation therapy.


Fig. 19 and 20 (*La vida es silbar*: 1:13:34; 1:14:14)

As the doctor calls out trigger words such as "double standards", "opportunism", "fear of truth",[50] dozens of passers-by faint. Accompanied by dramatic music and camera movements, this short scene plays out in front of the Capitolio of Havana and invites the viewer to imagine not only Julia's individual traumatisation, but also a collective trauma (fig. 19 and 20). As pointed out by Cathy Caruth, the falling bodies (here right in front of the symbolic (power) centre of Cuba) invoke the question of referentiality.[51] Like marionettes with their strings suddenly cut, fainting bodies allude to a disturbing emptiness, an inaccessible, impossible-to-remember, and likewise unbearable force that is powerful enough to render an individual completely helpless. The explicitness with which the trigger words refer to emotional damage is quite surprising, given the fact that it could trigger threats of censorship or political persecution in such an ideologically-driven control society.[52]

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49 The criticism of the deficiencies in Rolando Brito's acting in Álvarez Álvarez and Pérez Padrón is understandable. However, in writing off the trauma motif as the "pedantries of an outmoded Freudianism" ["pedanterías de freudiano trasnochado"], they missed an opportunity for additional interpretation. Cf. Álvarez Álvarez and Pérez Padrón: *Fernando Pérez*, p. 132.

50 *La vida es silbar*: 1:13:34; 1:14:16; 1:14:20. ["doblemoral", "oportunismo", "miedo a la verdad"]

51 On the relationship between "the falling body and the impact of reference", see Caruth: *Unclaimed experience*, pp. 73–89.

52 Almost completely excluded from the official discourse of historical memory are the traumas caused by the revolution's own politics. These can be found in the violence of the revolutionary war, the thousands of people executed, the absence of freedom of speech, the defamation and persecution of the 'enemies of the revolution', the reclusion of homosexuals in forced labour camps (so-called UMAP); the constant and at times massive emigration of

At the same time, the film is characterised by an atmosphere of the dream-like and unreal, intensified by contrasting lighting, abrupt changes from sun-bathed Caribbean outdoor scenes to dark interior spaces, as well as the insertion of hallucinatory images and magical events. It is in this way that *La vida es silbar* constantly slips into the oniric-irrational sphere. Plants grow in time-lapse, statues come to life, and every taxi has the same driver. If the dream in *Madagascar* can be understood as a clearly marked dream sequence, as Kreuzer would suggest, the ontological level in *La vida es silbar* switches between so-called "autonomous dream sequences" (Kreuzer), which are unmarked and not clearly delineated. This is a dream world which, as the title suggests, alludes to Calderón de la Barca's epochal drama *La vida es sueño* (1636), which artfully blends reality with real and merely imagined portrayals of dreams.

Fig. 21, 22 and 23 (*La vida es silbar*: 1:04:40; 1:05:10; 1:05:26)

Julia is finally able to access her trauma through a 'real' dream (fig. 21), which is also shown in the film; Julia dreams about her own experience as that of a friend who brings an unwanted child into the world and, having been abandoned by the father and her family, leaves the child in a train station (fig. 22 and 23). In connecting dreams to traumatic experiences, *La vida es silbar*

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the population connected with the forced separation of families and friends (more than 2 million Cubans of a total population of 13 million live abroad.; cf. Michael Zeuske: *Insel der Extreme: Kuba im 20. Jahrhundert*, 2nd edition, Zürich, Rotpunkt, 2004). Most of these highly traumatic aspects of Cuban revolutionary politics are officially denied until today. Significantly, the few studies focusing on Fernando Pérez that deal with trauma do not make this clear. On the interpretation of fainting, see for example Raúl Rubio: "This is representative of the collective psychological trauma which Pérez indirectly connects to life under current day Cuba. Pérez plays with the population's collective unconscious culpability. The traumatic words that create this affliction include *libertad*, *doble moral*, *oportunismo*, and *verdad*. It is interesting to consider that Pérez's film uses the doctor's outward burst of radicalism pertinent to his counter-discourse toward the 'official' Revolution discourse as one that may cost him the suspension of his license to practice medicine given his openness of personal opinion." Raúl Rubio: "Political Aesthetics in Contemporary Cuban Filmmaking: Fernando Pérez's *Madagascar* and *La vida es silbar*." http://www.lehman.cuny.edu/ciberletras/v13/rubio.htm [01.05.2018].

conveys knowledge of this and other traumas in many ways. In the example of the whistling Bebé, the film shows the inability of traumatised people to find language for their existentially threatening experiences; Julia's story, which has haunted her with symptoms of fear, disorientation, helplessness, and spontaneous fainting for more than 20 years, making a normal life impossible, illustrates the latency with which trauma symptoms can appear.[53] All of the main characters in the films are portrayed in a way that features manifold signification and the strategy of revealing a truth through its concealment and vice versa. Insofar as, for the characters themselves, the mental realm becomes physical, and the individual is limited by the collective, *La vida es silbar* suggests that the whole of Cuban society in the 1990s was crippled by past trauma. In this sense Pérez takes up the thesis from *Alicia en el pueblo de Maravillas*, which is that Cuba is at its core a country of mentally ill people. *La vida es silbar* even points out the location of trauma in the historical-political dimension,[54] and the state's official refusal to engage with collective experiences of trauma; Dr. Fernando has to cease his therapy practice when he is suspended for causing public outrage.

Unlike Daniel Díaz Torres, however, Pérez's film was not banned in Cuba; on the contrary, his film received the highest awards at the *Festival Internacional del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano de la Habana*. This positive reception might be attributed to the overall affirmative mood of the film, as *La vida es silbar* offers an (almost) reconciliatory ending; the strange aquatic being Bebé, who is identifiable as the child abandoned by Julia, tries to heal the effects of past trauma on the present by using magical interventions into the actions of Julia, Elpidio, and Mariana to bring them all together at the Plaza de la Revolución on the 4th of December, the feast day of the Catholic Santa Bárbara and the Santería god Changó, at 4:44pm, the exact time when Julia abandoned Bebé.[55] The meeting of Julia, Elpidio, and Mariana by the statue of José Martí at the Plaza can be interpreted as a conventional, kitschy theme of a happy reunion, a comforting, healing anagnorisis. However, the image of this happy ending is anything but complete. Firstly, the film does not fault the persuasiveness of the revolution's values, as the location of the meeting might

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53 In inability to remember trauma contrasts with the paradoxical compulsion to repeat the traumatic situation again and again (cf. Kühner 2008).

54 See Aleida Assmann: *Shadows of Trauma. Memory and Politics of Postwar Identity*, New York, Fordham, 2016.

55 Concerning the symbolic use of numbers in his fourth film, Fernando Pérez, born in 1944, says it is rather a private affair. See Álvarez Álvarez and Pérez Padrón: *Fernando Pérez*, p. 134.

suggest, but rather attributes this scene to the metaphysical magic of the nixe Bebé and her underwater activities beyond the country's borders.

Furthermore, the meeting does not represent the fulfilled wishes of any of the three; "Elpidio does not get Cuba back, [...] Mariana does not get her beloved back, and [...] Julia does not find her daughter, but rather just her crucifix. All of the hopes of these three, which ought to have been fulfilled, are frustrated in the end."[56]

Fig. 24 (*La vida es silbar*: 1:33:05)

Finally, Fernando Pérez gives his film a second ending. Right before the ending credits, Bebé looks into the future to the year 2020. It is a happy future, and she believes, a future in which Cubans stroll along the Malecón on roller skates, and only communicate by whistling, as their life is now just 'a whistle'. It may be that this lightness and certainty of a positive future represents a realistic prospect. But perhaps the ending is also a warning that the continued control of the freedom of speech under 'Madre Cuba' will cause everyone to follow Bebé's example and avoid intelligible speech. Because of the carefree whistling and dynamic confusion, images of equalisation and control are set aside: pairs of twins in sombre striped clothing, bringing to mind uniformity and prison (fig. 24). Beneath the carefree feeling on the surface lies a dark warning; without open communication, with the people unable to address everything or work through the trauma-laden past, there is a

[56] Álvarez Álvarez and Pérez Padrón: *Fernando Pérez*, p. 135. ["Elpidio no recupera a Cuba, [...] Mariana no recupera a su amado y [...] Julia no halla a su hija, sino solo el crucifijo de esta. Todas las esperanzas que debían realizarse en esa citatriple en la Plaza de la Revolución, resultan defraudadas."]

threat that the future will bring an increasing unreality in which human communication will become lost in the constant exchange of significance for significates, in mere sounds without any referentiality and thus collapse into meaninglessness and unintelligibility.

Summary

"The presence-absence is a marked example for the characteristic ambivalence of the cinematographic work of this director", wrote Álvarez Álvarez and Pérez Padrón.[57] As demonstrated in this analysis, this "presence-absence" is created through differing combinations and evaluations of two structurally similar phenomena, dreams and trauma. While *Madagascar* almost exclusively features well-delineated dream sequences, *La vida es silbar* alternates between an explicitly fictional (magical-realistic) film narration and sometimes marked, sometimes unmarked visual dream sequences. The treatment of the unreal, though created in different ways in each film, is used to express the mental upset of the figures through an oppressive, occasionally existentially threatening environment. Dreams and dream-like elements are here understood less in the function of "oniric sublimation" with which Pérez confronts the "deep tragedy" of the *período especial*, as formulated by Borrero.[58] Rather, the oniric can be used to bypass censorship; in the context of the state's reactions to *Alicia en el pueblo de Maravillas* and Jesús Díaz, dreams and dream-like narratives in the films of Fernando Pérez focus on symbolically coded messages that refer associatively to highly conflicted individuals and collectives, and the emotional and political relations of the *período especial*. *La vida es silbar* also alludes to the practices of biopower, which generate traumatic experiences, although it is not explicit of anything else but the individual dimension of a personal trauma.

The linking of dream-like themes and a reality that is portrayed as both deeply disturbing and a threat to mental integrity also highlights the role of trauma. In this way, *Madagascar* (too) can be read as an expression of conditions that cause mental illness in a society forced to fight for survival both economically and ideologically. While dream content is not marked purely as mysteriousness or escapism, but rather as a representation of reality in a dream, the film successfully conveys (in times of elevated ideological sensitivity) a particularly critical, reflected view of a society which, on account of

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57 Álvarez Álvarez and Pérez Padrón: *Fernando Pérez*, p. 83. ["La presencia-ausencia es un señalado ejemplo de la *ambivalencia* característica del cine de este autor."]

58 García Borrero: "MADAGASCAR", s.p.

massive geo-political upheavals, has become somehow frozen, and the development of (necessary) alternatives for action in many areas has been left to the individual.[59] The suggested solution here is ambivalent, and vacillates between fatalism, calls for perseverance, and an invitation to evasion. In *La vida es silbar*, reference to the theme of trauma and knowledge of trauma is explicit. It appears here that traumatic experiences in a past leading back to the beginnings of the revolution are to blame for the disturbing, dream-like absences, symptoms of paralysis, disorientation, and muteness that afflict numerous figures. Unlike the "back-story wounds" present in commercial Hollywood cinema,[60] the tragedies of the figures in Pérez's films remain largely unresolved. The idea that the past has to be confronted both individually and collectively because it causes trauma, the symptoms of which stretch into the present, is unmistakably present in both films, and this idea is expressed formally through visual and audio aesthetics as well as through the characters. This strategy makes it possible to covertly present a conflict-laden reality, which is often traumatic for the figures themselves, using the alternative forms of expression offered by dream sequences, and this is characteristic of the work of the director Fernando Pérez up to the present. In *La pared de las palabras* (2014) and *Últimos días en La Habana* (2016), biopower not only corrodes the mind, but also the body itself.

Filmography

Alicia en el pueblo de Maravillas. Dir.: Daniel Díaz Torres. 90 min., ICAIC, Cuba, 1991.

Clandestinos. Dir. Fernando Pérez. 103 min., ICAIC, Cuba, 1987.

Hello Hemingway. Dir.: Fernando Pérez. 90 min., ICAIC, Cuba, 1990.

Lisanka. Dir.: Daniel Díaz Torres. 114 min., Ibermedia, ICAIC, Mosfilm, Cuba/Russia/Venezuela, 2010.

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59 García Borrero, who criticises the positive conception of the characters in Fernando Pérez's films ("personajes impecablemente positivos, destinados a triunfar más allá de cualquier circunstancia adversa", García Borrero: "MADAGASCAR", s.p.), does not deal with the cinematic breaks in these 'hero stories'.

60 Concerning the one-dimension nature of the portrayal of trauma in Hollywood films, which [establishes] a "simple causality between the injury experienced and the character of the protagonist", see Michaela Krützen: *Dramaturgie des Films. Wie Hollywood erzählt*, Frankfurt a.M., Fischer, 2004, p. 37. Also see Bernard Wutka and Gottfried Fischer. "Drehbuchentwicklung in der Cinetraumatologie." In: Trauma. *Zeitschrift für Psychopathologie und ihre Anwendungen* 11, no. 4, 2013, pp. 35–47.

Madagascar. Dir.: Fernando Pérez. 50 min., ICAIC, Cuba, 1994 [DVD, trigon-film, 2010].

La pared de las palabras. Dir. Fernando Pérez. 90 min., Producciones de la 5a Avenida, Cuba, 2014.

La película de Ana. Dir.: Daniel Díaz Torres. 100 min., ICAIC, Jaguar Films, Cuba, Austria, Panamá, 2012.

P.M. Dir.: Sabá Cabrera Infante, Orlando Jiménez Leal. 15 min., ICAIC, Cuba, 1961.

Santa y Andrés. Dir.: Carlos Lechuga. 105 min., Producciones de la 5ta Avenida, Promenade Films, Cuba, Colombia, France, 2016.

Últimos días en La Habana. Dir. Fernando Pérez. 91 min., Besa Films, ICAIC, Wanda Visión, Cuba, Spain, 2016.

La vida es silbar. Dir.: Fernando Pérez. 110 min., ICAIC, Wanda Visión, Cuba, Spain, 1998.

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TIM CHRISTMANN

Guatemala's National Police Archives as a Place of Traumatic Repression and Recurrence in Contemporary Documentary Cinema[1]

Introduction

Since the end of the bloody wars in the mid-1990s, Central America has widely disappeared from international news headlines as a result of being considered "not spectacular anymore"[2]. A closer look at the region reveals that this common belief is far from true. Recently, the whole *Istmo* ("Isthmus"), as Central America is often called in Spanish, and especially Guatemala, has been generating widespread attention in the field of humanities and social sciences, particularly in memory and (cultural) trauma studies.[3] One of the main reasons for this renewed interest in how society, justice, and the arts in Guatemala process the traumatic experience of the brutal *conflicto armado interno* ("internal armed conflict"), which officially ended in 1996, is undoubtedly the accidental discovery of the National Police archives in 2005, the key object of investigation in this tripartite contribution. After considering the circumstances surrounding the discovery of the archives and their importance for a deeper understanding of Guatemala's painful past, this study compares the aesthetic representations of the *Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional* (AHPN) in contemporary documentary cinema, with primary focus on Ana María Cuevas' *El eco del dolor de mucha gente* (Guatemala/UK, 2012); *Granito: How to Nail a Dictator* (USA, 2011) by Pamela Yates, Paco de Onís and Peter Kinoy; *La isla. Archivos de una tragedia* (Guatemala/Germany, 2009) by Uli Stelzner;

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1 This paper is an abbreviated and updated version of my final degree thesis submitted to Saarland University in February 2016.

2 Sabine Kurtenbach et al.: "Einleitung. Zentralamerika – heute: Aufbruch in die Moderne und Festhalten von Traditionen." In: Sabine Kurtenbach et al. (eds.): *Zentralamerika heute. Politik, Wirtschaft, Kultur*, Frankfurt a.M., Vervuert, 2008, p. 11 [my translation].

3 In 2015, one of the leading research groups on Guatemala, the Grupo de Investigación sobre Guatemala de Frankfurt (GIGF) at Goethe University Frankfurt, published the volume *Guatemala: Nunca más. Desde el trauma de la guerra civil hacia la integración étnica, la democracia y la justica social* (Roland Spiller et al. (eds.), Guatemala, F&G, 2015). The title ("Guatemala: Never Again") renders homage to the first Guatemalan truth report, Guatemala: Nunca más, published in 1998 by the catholic Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (REMHI; "Recovery of Historical Memory") project.

and Claudio Zulian's *Guatemala, les disparus de la dictature* (France, 2016). Firstly, I take into consideration the documentaries' relevance for Guatemala's traumatized collective memory. Secondly, my paper analyzes to what extent the films visualize the AHPN as what German memory expert Aleida Assmann calls a "traumatic place"[4]. Inversely, I argue that the contradictory attitudes towards the (physical) site of the archives shown in the movies are emblematic of the ongoing intense struggle for cultural memory in contemporary Guatemala, whose society and hence collective memory are still heavily fragmented[5] after 36 years of traumatizing internal war and massive human rights violations.

The 'Big Bang' for Guatemala's Culture of Memory

Among the many conflicts in Central America, the so-called Guatemalan civil war occupies a special position, for it is considered "the longest and bloodiest in the region"[6]. However, the generally used term "civil war" between military regimes and various guerilla movements is by no means adequate for describing what happened in Guatemala from 1960 to 1996. More appropriate designations are "state terrorism"[7] against supposed communists or even a racist "extermination campaign"[8] against the indigenous Maya population, which constitutes the country's demographic majority. On 25 February 1999 when the *Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico* ("Historical Clarification Commission", CEH) published its 12 volume report, *Guatemala: Memoria del silencio* ("Guatemala: Memory of Silence"), the full and cruel extent of this state-organized mass murder was revealed for the first time. Between 1960 and 1996 more than 600 massacres had been perpetrated, over 200,000 people had been killed, approximately 45,000 Guatemalans had become victims of forced

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4 Aleida Assmann: *Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*, 5th ed., München, Beck, 2010, p. 328.

5 Fragmentation of collective memory is a main characteristic of collective traumata (cf. Karen Genschow and Roland Spiller: "Trauma colectivo y (post)memoria audiovisual en América Latina del siglo XXI. Introducción." In: *Iberoamericana* 17, no. 65, 2017, p. 13).

6 Tatjana Reiber: *Demokratieförderung und Friedenskonsolidierung. Die Nachkriegsgesellschaften von Guatemala, El Salvador und Nicaragua*, Wiesbaden, VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2007, p. 107 [my translation].

7 Anika Oettler: "Zwischen Vergangenheit und Zukunft: Vergangenheitspolitik in Zentralamerika." In: Sabine Kurtenbach et al. (eds.): *Zentralamerika heute. Politik, Wirtschaft, Kultur*, Frankfurt a.M., Vervuert, 2008, p. 279 [my translation].

8 Thomas Fischer: "Die Rekonstruktion politischer Gewalt. Zur Rolle von Wahrheitskommissionen in Lateinamerika." In: Thomas Fischer and Michael Krennerich (eds.): *Politische Gewalt in Lateinamerika*, Frankfurt a.M., Vervuert, 2000, p. 278 [my translation].

disappearance, and more than one million people had fled to neighboring countries, chiefly to Mexico. In view of these figures, the CEH concluded that the Guatemalan state had committed "acts of genocide"[9] on a large scale. According to this commission, the army and other official bodies were (and are still) responsible for 93 percent of the total number of human rights violations, whereas merely three percent of the acts of violence are attributed to guerilla groups. Furthermore, the report determined that 91 percent of all the atrocities had been executed between 1978 and 1984 under the dictatorial presidencies of Fernando Romeo Lucas García and Efraín Ríos Montt. In 83 percent of the cases investigated by the CEH, the victims were members of Guatemala's indigenous communities.[10] In spite of these numbers, the armed forces as well as other governmental agencies continued to deny their involvement in any human rights abuses since almost no official documents proving their guilt were available at that time.[11]

It was only the unexpected discovery of the Guatemalan National Police archives, generally known as *Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional* (AHPN), in June of 2005 that brought to light the "documentación probatoria"[12], i.e. documents providing evidence of the government's responsibility for the majority of these human rights violations. To illustrate the far-reaching impact of discovering the AHPN on Guatemala's social and political memory discourse, I refer to Alexander Wilde's idea of "irruptions of memory", defined as:

> public events that break in upon […] [the] national consciousness, unbidden and often suddenly, to evoke associations with symbols, figures, causes, ways of life

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9 CEH (Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico): *Guatemala. Memoria del silencio. Conclusiones y Recomendaciones*, Guatemala, CEH, 1999, p. 48. http://www.undp.org/content/dam/guatemala/docs/publications/UNDP_gt_PrevyRecu_MemoriadelSilencio.pdf [01.05.2018] [my translation].

10 Cf. ibid., p. 52.

11 At that time, the only official paper proving the government's involvement in war atrocities was the so-called *Diario Militar* discovered in 1999 (cf. Kirsten Weld: *Paper Cadavers. The Archives of Dictatorship in Guatemala*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2014, pp. 63–64).

12 Mónica Leonardo: "Guatemala. Luces y sombras en el camino hacia la verdad, la justicia y la reparación." In: Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos (ed.): *Contribución de las políticas de verdad, justicia y reparación a las democracias en América Latina*, San José, IIDH, 2011, p. 196. https://www.iidh.ed.cr/IIDH/media/1583/contribucion-de-las-politicas-vjr-2011.pdf [01.05.2018].

> which to an unusual degree are associated with a political past that is still present in the lived experience of a major part of the population.[13]

Hardly any other concept would be more suitable to describe the accidental discovery of the AHPN in the capital's *Zona 6*. In the aftermath of an explosion in an ammunition depot, staff members of the *Institución del Procurador de los Derechos Humanos* (i.e. the Guatemala Human Rights Commission) came across the archives, housed in five run-down buildings on the compound of Guatemala's *Policía Nacional Civil*, the former *Policía Nacional*. More than 80 million documents gave proof of 116 years (1882–1997) of extensive government surveillance activities, making the AHPN the biggest "archives of repression"[14] in Latin America. The explosion that had led to the finding of the countless papers was tantamount to a veritable 'Big Bang' for Guatemala's culture of memory – the beginning of a new chapter in the country's difficult process of coming to terms with its traumatic past. In his article, Featherstone emphasizes the significance of archival knowledge for historiography: "The archive is the site for the accumulation of primary sources from which history is constructed"[15]. That is why the investigation of the files found in the AHPN constituted unprecedented progress towards a new interpretation of Guatemala's recent history.

A major step forward was certainly the publication of the 500-page report *Del Silencio a la memoria* ("From Silence to Memory") in 2011. This paper, whose title is a clear reference to the CEH's *Memoria del silencio*, is to be understood as a necessary sequel and completion of the CEH's report. The new investigations could produce evidence of the intensive collaboration between the *Policía Nacional* and the Guatemalan army, both guilty of the systematic surveillance and elimination of supposed opponents of the dictatorships. The analysis of only a tiny part of the 80 million documents – 20 million papers

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13 Alexander Wilde: "Irruptions of Memory: Expressive Politics in Chile's Transition to Democracy." In: *Journal of Latin American Studies* 31, no. 2, 1999, p. 475.

14 Cf. AHPN (Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional de Guatemala): *From Silence to Memory. Revelations of the Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional*, Eugene, University of Oregon Libraries, 2013, p. xiii. http://archivohistoricopn.org/media/informes/fromsilencetomemory.pdf [01.05.2018]. For more information see also Kate Doyle: "The Atrocity Files. Deciphering the Archives of Guatemala's Dirty War." In: *Harper's Magazine*, December 2007, pp. 52−64. In other Latin American countries secret police archives also helped to bring to justice the perpetrators of state repression, e.g. the "Terror Archives" from Alfredo Stroessner's dictatorship found in Paraguay in 1992 (cf. Weld: *Paper Cadavers*, p. 17).

15 Mike Featherstone: "Archiving cultures." In: *British Journal of Sociology* 51, no. 1, 2000, p. 168.

have been cataloged so far[16] – could reveal the governmental structures and their methods of repression: keywords such as "abduction, torture, assassination, homicide, rape, disappearance"[17] were detected on 21 percent of the classified files. Therefore, it is not astonishing that the AHPN also served as one of the most important torture centers for the military regimes.

Today, one can become informed about current projects and activities as well as the history of the archives on the AHPN's website.[18] Victims and their families can find instructions on how to access the documents, and there is a link to the "AHPN Digital Archive" supervised by the University of Texas at Austin, where the scanned files can be consulted online. Opening the AHPN to a broader public is indispensable to "[e]ffective democratization [which] can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation"[19]. As a direct result of this archival knowledge, a Guatemalan court convicted former *Policía Nacional* members of forced disappearance for the first time in 2010. Despite some sporadic achievements, Guatemala's politics of memory must still be considered highly problematic because the majority of the crimes committed between 1960 and 1996 remain unpunished. Aware of the incriminating material found in the archives, many (former) official representatives try to stop any kind of investigation. Moreover, the Guatemalan government does not financially support the classification of the files, nor does it fund the maintenance of the buildings.[20] Thus, it is hardly surprising that many Guatemalans view the AHPN as nothing but an inconvenient "garbage dump"[21].

The AHPN and the Upsurge of Documentary

In her analysis, Julianne Burton highlights the "privileged status" of Latin American documentary, which she considers a "primary tool in the search to discover and define the submerged, denied, devalued realties" by "challenging

16 Cf. ACOGUATE: *Boletín de ACOGUATE. La justicia negada*, March−April 2017, p. 11. http://www.peacewatch.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/guatemala/dokumente/boletin_marabr_2017.pdf [01.05.2018].

17 AHPN: *From Silence to Memory*, p. LIV.

18 See http://archivohistoricopn.org/ [01.05.2018].

19 Jacques Derrida: *Archive fever. A Freudian impression*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 4.

20 Cf. ACOGUATE: *Boletín*, p. 11.

21 Weld: *Paper Cadavers*, p. 35.

hegemonic […] interpretations of the past"[22]. Although there is no major tradition of filmmaking in Guatemala due to a lack of state funding,[23] Burton's assessment applies to the Guatemalan context as well, especially when taking into account the period after the discovery of the AHPN. The strong impact of the archives being illuminated is not limited to the country's official historiography, as shown above. Likewise, it gave birth to a rich artistic production, which does not merely depict Guatemala's traumatic memory. In fact, audiovisual media significantly influence or even trigger cultural memory discourse by offering a counter-perspective and making visible the oppressed victims' point of view. By doing so, documentaries themselves are initiating a kind of healing process, since (individual and collective) traumata, which are "not fully grasped as they occur"[24], in a first step must be (re)integrated in the individual and collective consciousness in order to be redeemed.

Since the 1980s, directors have produced a handful of documentaries about the Mayan genocide, the most famous being *When the Mountains Tremble* (1983) starring Rigoberta Menchú and directed by Pamela Yates and Newton Thomas Sigel. Like the testimonial literature, e.g. *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (1983), those documentaries were meant to be "a weapon in the struggle for freedom"[25] against the military regimes. However, it was not until the signing of the peace accords and the end of dictatorial repression in 1996 that cinema could gain a more far-reaching influence within Guatemala itself. Film festivals like *Ícaro*, established in 1998, or *Memoria, Verdad, Justicia* ("Memory, Truth, Justice"), which has been organized since 2010 under the guidance of German director Uli Stelzner, have been playing a crucial role in developing social and political cinema in Guatemala. The name of Stelzner's festival underscores the audiovisual media's ambition to actively interfere in the real-world discourse: more than simply representing testimonies,

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22 Julianne Burton: "Toward a History of Social Documentary in Latin America." In: Julianne Burton (ed.): *The Social Documentary in Latin America*, Pittsburgh, The University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990, p. 6.

23 Cf. Ana Yolanda Contreras: "Haciendo memoria a través de las imágenes: dos documentales de la posguerra guatemalteca." In: *Istmo* 20, 2010, p. 1. http://istmo.denison.edu/n20/articulos/5-contreras_ana_form.pdf [01.05.2018]. In her article, Contreras praises the work of "Comunicarte", an independent organization that has been producing documentaries about Guatemalan state terrorism since the 1980s (see pp. 2ff.).

24 Cathy Caruth: *Unclaimed Experience. Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Baltimore et al., The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, p. 91.

25 Werner Mackenbach: "Zwischen Politik, Geschichte und Fiktion. Neuere Tendenzen in den erzählenden Literaturen Zentralamerikas." In: Sabine Kurtenbach et al. (eds.): *Zentralamerika heute. Politik, Wirtschaft, Kultur*, Frankfurt a.M., Vervuert, 2008, p. 514 [my translation].

the movies themselves assume the function of "(secondary) testimonies"[26], promoting truth and justice on behalf of the victims of state sponsored mass murder. One can clearly observe the documentaries' impact in the following example: Andreas Boueke, a German journalist, attended a movie screening at the German School in Guatemala City. After having watched a film about massacres perpetrated during the war, the pupils had to admit: "we had never heard about the massacres" and "the civil war is a topic we've never talked about before"[27]. In a country where the vast majority tends to keep quiet about the burdening past or even denies the cruel atrocities committed during 36 years of state terrorism, it is the duty of literature, arts, and audiovisual media to make the victims' voices heard and to "stimulate[] epistephilia (a desire to know) in their audience"[28].

A veritable boom in documentary cinema can be identified as a consequence of the discovery of the AHPN in 2005.[29] There are at least six documentaries that deal with the police archives, the first one being Uli Stelzner's *La isla. Archivos de una tragedia* (Guatemala/Germany, 2009). This movie concentrates explicitly on the victims' traumata by telling the stories of four Guatemalans who have suffered (and are still suffering) from their experiences of torture and loss of family members. *La isla* is dedicated to the many nameless murder victims, who so far do not have a place in Guatemala's official historical memory. The explosive potential of this film became apparent the day of its premiere in Guatemala City. While some wanted to frustrate the screening with a bomb threat, many (particularly young) Guatemalans flocked to the National Theater to get an alternative perspective on their country's painful past.[30] In order to establish such a counter-discourse, *La isla* combines the

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26 Aleida Assmann et al.: "Einleitung." In: Aleida Assmann, Karolina Jeftic and Friederike Wappler (eds.): *Rendezvous mit dem Realen. Die Spur des Traumas in den Künsten*, Bielefeld, transcript, 2014, p. 29 [my translation].

27 Andreas Boueke: *Guatemala. Recherchen auf heißem Pflaster*, Berlin, Horlemann, 2013, p. 112 [my translation].

28 Bill Nichols: *Introduction to Documentary*, 2nd ed., Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2010, p. 40.

29 There are also two novels with the AHPN as main topic: Rodrigo Rey Rosa's auto-fictional text *El material humano* and Rafael Cuevas Molina's *300*. This little-studied text, a collage of several statements on the recently discovered AHPN, puts emphasis on the fragmented Guatemalan collective memory: opinions on the relevance of the archives diverge significantly. The many factual parts of *300*, e.g. extracts from the CEH report *Guatemala: Memoria del silencio*, serve as correctives of the subjective, contradictory, and disputable testimonies.

30 Cf. Nora Martínez: "'Guatemala no tiene un futuro si no se establece un diálogo y el cine sirve para lograrlo'. Entrevista con el cineasta Uli Stelzner." In: *Istmo* 22, 2012, p. 3. http://istmo.denison.edu/n22/foro/03_martinez_nora_form.pdf [01.05.2018].

victims' oral testimonies with archival footage about the war serving as evidence of the military regimes' brutality against its own population. On repeated occasions, a movie projector that throws this archival footage on the dark, bare walls inside the AHPN is placed in the focus of the camera and thus itself becomes part of the diegesis.[31] By operating on such a meta-cinematic level, *La isla* deliberately reflects on the privileged role of audiovisual media described above.

An even stronger meta-cinematic reflection can be observed in *Granito: How to Nail a Dictator* (USA, 2011) by Pamela Yates, Paco de Onís, and Peter Kinoy. This film, a follow-up to Yates' first work, *When the Mountains Tremble* (1983), is the best proof that documentaries do not solely assume the function of *symbolic* (secondary) testimonies: In *Granito*, Almudena Bernabeu and other international lawyers, who are preparing an indictment against former Guatemalan dictator Efraín Ríos Montt, ask Yates for archival footage she had filmed for *When the Mountains Tremble*. These images – alongside the files found in the AHPN – constitute judicial key evidence of Ríos Montt's responsibility for genocide. The new dynamics made possible by Yates' documentary footage from the 1980s are symbolically underlined in the opening scene of *Granito*, where we see the close-up of an old film reel starting to turn.[32] If we consider *When the Mountains Tremble* "a weapon in the struggle for freedom", to once again borrow Werner Mackenbach's words, *Granito* is certainly a powerful weapon in the struggle for justice and human rights – even though Ríos Montt, who died in April of 2018, never faced consequences.

The tight interaction between cinema and the process of coming to terms with a traumatic past also becomes apparent in Ana María Cuevas' documentary *El eco del dolor de mucha gente* (Guatemala/UK, 2012). After decades of exile in the UK, the discovery of the AHPN encourages Cuevas, the protagonist of the movie, to return to Guatemala to investigate the murder of her brother Carlos. At the beginning of the film, she declares: "El descubrimiento del archivo arrojó un pequeño rayo de luz"[33]. The finding of the AHPN constitutes the starting point for a personal and cultural work of mourning. Cuevas knows that returning to Guatemala means confronting her trauma, which is not only a personal one but also a collective trauma shared by all the victims: "Mi historia

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31 See *La isla*: 0:13:16–0:13:18.

32 See *Granito*: 0:00:00–0:00:30.

33 "The discovery of the archives threw a small ray of light" [my translation], *El eco*: 0:08:36–0:08:40.

personal es sólo el eco del dolor de mucha gente"[34]. With her movie, the director claims justice for the many missing and their relatives, in a country not willing to find adequate means to assimilate its traumatic past, as denounces a victim at the end of *El eco*: "[Guatemala es] un país […] condenado a pena de amnesia perpetua"[35].

It is exactly this kind of social amnesia and governmental amnesty that Claudio Zulian's *Guatemala, les disparus de la dictature* (France, 2016) is denouncing. In poetic images, the film narrates the victims' fight for justice. At the very beginning of the film, we learn that in 2012, thanks to the discoveries made in the AHPN, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights convicted the Guatemalan state of forced disappearance and obliged it to produce a documentary about the atrocities committed between 1960 and 1996.[36] Since the government refused to fulfill this obligation, the victims themselves decided to realize their own movie in order to make visible their oppressed traumatic memories. Once more, we can observe audiovisual media's capability to satisfy the victims' essential and vital need for documentation and testimony.[37]

In order to get a complete picture of the documentary boom that followed the appearance of the AHPN, there are (at least) three more works that should be mentioned briefly: Gabriela Martínez Escobar's *Keep your Eyes on Guatemala* (USA/Guatemala, 2013) about the significance of the archives for Guatemala's politics of memory[38] and Izabel Acevedo's *El Buen Cristiano* (Mexico, 2016) about Efraín Ríos Montt's brutal military regime. *Finding Oscar*, directed by Ryan Suffern and produced by Steven Spielberg (USA/Guatemala/Canada, 2016), illuminates the Dos Erres massacre in 1982.[39] Although this movie does not explicitly put an emphasis on the police archives, it is remarkable that a well-known Hollywood producer like Spielberg opts for documentary cinema when it comes to represent the Guatemalan genocide. This says a lot about the genre's qualities and gives proof of the renewed (international) interest in Central America.

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34 "My personal history is only the echo of the pain of many" [my translation], *El eco*: 0:07:38−0:07:42.

35 "A country […] damned to perpetual amnesia" [my translation], *El eco*: 1:30:40−1:30:44.

36 Cf. *Guatemala, les disparus*: 0:02:30−0:03:00.

37 Cf. Monika Schwarz-Friesel: *Sprache und Emotion*, 2nd ed., Tübingen, Francke, 2013, p. 317.

38 Available on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NMsNtNn50Fs [01.05.2018].

39 Cf. [author unknown]: "Finding Oscar, un filme de Steven Spielberg hurga en las heridas abiertas de Guatemala." In: *El Periódico*, 06.04.2017. https://elperiodico.com.gt/nacion/2017/04/06/finding-oscar-un-filme-de-steven-spielberg-hurga-en-las-heridas-abiertas-de-guatemala/ [01.05.2018].

Failed Attempts of Repression

It is beyond doubt that the AHPN stands exemplarily for the collective trauma caused by 36 years of war in Guatemala. With regard to its filmic representation in Uli Stelzner's *La isla*, Roland Spiller asserts the AHPN buildings that this site "constitutes a place of trauma"[40]. In what follows, I would like to develop this idea by analyzing to what extent and through what aesthetic means the documentaries introduced above depict the AHPN as a "traumatic place" as defined by Aleida Assmann. According to Assmann, one of the main characteristics of traumatic places is the "heterogeneity of memories and perspectives"[41] associated with them. Unlike classical *lieux de mémoire*, traumatic places do not reinforce the dominating memory discourse since they testify about the oppressed and denied. In the documentaries, the fragmented and traumatized collective memory is mirrored in the opposed positions towards the unexpectedly discovered AHPN. While victims and their relatives are fighting for the transformation in a *lieu de mémoire*, the perpetrators do have a strong interest in banishing this compromising "memory of the state"[42] from the official discourse. Despite none of the previously mentioned films depicting these persons responsible for state organized mass murder as expressive concerning the discovery of the AHPN, its aesthetic visualizations are revealing of the assassins' attempts to repress the impact of the archival knowledge on the collective memory – especially in Uli Stelzner's *La isla*, which is largely characterized by what Bill Nichols calls a "poetic mode"[43].

In one of the first sequences in Stelzner's movie, we see a night panorama of Guatemala City. From a bird's-eye view, the camera slowly pans towards the badly lit area of the AHPN, which does not seem embedded in the structures of the metropolis.[44] It is rather isolated, hardly accessible, and separated by barbed wire from the surrounding urban areas. This shot is not only a clear reference to the archives' popular name, "La isla" ("the island"), but it stands primarily for the perpetrators' ambitions to conceal the full extent of their outrages by making the incriminating documents inaccessible. Those who dare to enter "La isla", because they wish or feel the necessity to investigate about the country's

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40 Roland Spiller: "Espectros en el archivo, aspectos mediáticos del trauma guatemalteco en *El material humano* de Rodrigo Rey Rosa y *La isla. Archivo de una tragedia* de Uli Stelzner." In: *Iberoamericana* 17, no. 65, 2017, p. 126.

41 Assmann: *Erinnerungsräume*, p. 329 [my translation].

42 Pierre Nora: *Zwischen Geschichte und Gedächtnis*, Frankfurt a.M., Fischer, 1998, p. 64 [my translation].

43 Nichols: *Introduction to Documentary*, p. 102.

44 See *La isla*: 0:00:58−0:01:23.

past, face a continuous threat. Within the area of the AHPN, Guatemala's *Policía Nacional Civil* – the successor of the *Policía Nacional*, responsible for large-scale human rights violations – still maintains a training academy, where they hold firearm shootings and fitness exercises. From its very start, *La isla* puts an emphasis on the menace that comes from the police, for example in the film's first scene, we observe a heavily armed squad running straight towards the camera and hence the audience. This shot gives a plausible feeling of the oppressive atmosphere ruling in and around the archives. The police cadets' shouting and gunshots are omnipresent, even when victims are looking through the files of their family members, who might have been killed by former National Police members.[45] Another literally *emblematic* example of how *La isla* is denouncing the official politics of amnesia and amnesty can likewise be found at the beginning of the documentary. At the end of a long, dark corridor inside the AHPN, the camera focuses on a closed steel door with the emblem of the *Policía Nacional* on it.

Fig. 1: The steel door with the emblem of the *Policía Nacional* (*La isla*: 0:02:49)

It is exactly this door that prevents the daylight from illuminating the dark rooms inside the archives. As long as the door remains closed, that is to say, while the police and other official institutions keep obstructing a culture and politics of memory respecting the victims' needs, Guatemala's future remains as dark as the interior of the police archives depicted in *La isla*.

The perpetrator's most obvious effort to hide the dimensions of their misdeeds is surely the transformation of the archive into a garbage dump, which is

[45] See *La isla*: 0:00:00–0:00:52; 0:53:02–0:53:41.

recurrent throughout the documentaries analyzed in this article. Notably *La isla*, but also *Keep your eyes on Guatemala*, attribute a certain significance to the outdoor area surrounding the buildings that house the AHPN.[46] In these sequences, at first appearance, nothing points to the fact that this locality represents the most important site related to the Guatemalan genocide. All we see is an enormous junkyard with rusty and decomposing car wrecks.

Fig. 2: The junkyard surrounding the AHPN (*La isla*: 0:16:12)

In order to remind the viewers that the ground shown in this scene is the AHPN and not primarily a car deposal, the director makes use of the insert "Das Archiv auf dem Gelände der Polizeischule"[47]. At the same time, there are also attempts to give back a touch of humanity to this shabby place, for example when a cellist is playing his instrument while sitting on the car wrecks.[48] But between the stacked automobiles, the hardly visible musician appears lost and insignificant.

The neglected exterior is nothing but a mirror image of the archives' interior. The deteriorating automobiles outside – a symbol of the tortured and killed victims[49] – correspond to the archive documents inside, which are in the same abandoned and wretched condition. Rolando, one of *La isla*'s protagonists

46 See *La isla*: 0:16:07–0:16:25; *Keep your eyes*: 0:03:03–0:03:33.

47 "The archives on the compound of the police academy" [my translation].

48 See *La isla*: 0:17:00–0:17:36.

49 Cf. Valeria Grinberg Pla: "Oralidad, imagen, acción. Intervenciones del cine documental en las batallas por la memoria del genocidio indígena en Guatemala." In: Roland Spiller et al. (eds.): *Guatemala: Nunca más. Desde el trauma de la guerra civil hacia la integración étnica, la democracia y la justica social*, Guatemala, F&G, 2015, p. 261.

working in the archives, is describing the chaos that was ruling within the buildings when they were discovered in 2005: "[Las fichas] estaban tiradas como basura sobre el suelo, en charcos"[50]. This seems hardly astonishing, since (not only) for the Guatemalan state these documents indeed do not have any personal, historical or political relevance. The deplorable aspect of the papers says a lot about the prevailing attitude towards the victims of state sponsored terrorism: the countless files, literal "paper cadavers"[51], and hence, the murdered themselves are nothing but a worthless 'waste-product' of history. Therefore, the perpetrators are striving for a quick and straightforward disposal of that hazardous rubbish from the past. Still, they did not succeed in their attempt to repress this traumatic component of the nation's collective memory. The sight of the millions and millions of files in state of putrefaction is so surreal that all movies dealing with the AHPN reproduce almost identical shots of the ruinous interior of the archives.

Fig. 1: Documents inside the AHPN (*Granito*: 0:59:46)[52]

Comparable to the "uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena"[53], these nearly incomprehensible, trauma-related images of the paper stacks are haunting the documentaries, which in the end integrate these images in the cultural memory discourse through medialization. Talking up again the rubbish metaphor, we could say the movies as well as the people working in the AHPN are in some extent recycling the waste, i.e. the

50 "[The files] were thrown all over the floor like rubbish, in puddles" [my translation], *La isla*: 0:04:24–0:04:30.

51 Weld: *Paper Cadavers*, p. 3.

52 Cf. *La isla*: 0:05:11; *El eco*: 0:08:12–0:08:54; *Keep your eyes*: 0:25:32–0:27:32.

53 Caruth: *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 11.

archival files thrown away by the perpetrators. While for the latter the archival knowledge threatens to contaminate Guatemala's cultural memory, for victims and researchers, this 'rubbish of the past', a symbol of the denied and the oppressed, represents an invaluable and powerful "counter memory"[54], a symbol of resistance and remembrance, that permits to draw new conclusions on genocide.

Transforming the AHPN

While for the collective of the assassins the AHPN constitutes a traumatic place that has to be repressed, the victims of human rights violations and their relatives perceive the same site as a place of traumatic recurrence capable of triggering painful memories that can all of a sudden become present again. In *La isla,* one can observe this recurrence in the moving testimonies of Armando and his sister Verónica, whereas in *Granito* it is a young woman named Alejandra who is "acting-out […] or emotionally repeating a still-present past"[55]. When Alejandra is confronted for the first time with documents that reveal details about the kidnapping of her father, she declares: "Tener estos archivos […] para mí es tener una parte de él, es encontrarlo aunque sea en papel pero yo voy encontrando a mi papá"[56]. Even though reading these files results in a traumatic "irruption of memory" within Alejandra – she is crying while she is talking –, it is at the same time a relief, a new starting point for her work of mourning finally having obtained certainty about her father's fate. Also for Verónica in *La isla*, it seems to be a painful burden to express her feelings inside the police archives. The more she talks about the loss of her beloved ones and her own traumatic experiences of being tortured, the more past and present are merging, so that at the end of her testimony she has to realize: "Lo único que sé es que desde entonces yo he sufrido bastante, nunca he sido yo feliz"[57]. As a long-term consequence, her trauma has provoked a constant change in personality, a loss of optimism and love of life. The shot chosen in this scene, a long, intense close-up of Verónica's face, establishes an emotional tie with the

54 Assmann: *Erinnerungsräume*, p. 384.

55 Dominick LaCapra: *Representing the Holocaust. History, Theory, Trauma*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1996, p. xii.

56 "Having those archives […] for me, it's having a part of him, it's like finding him, even if it's just in papers, but I'm finding my father" [English subtitles], *Granito*: 1:04:54−1:05:07.

57 "The only thing I know is that, since then, I've suffered a lot, I've never been happy" [my translation], *La isla*: 0:52:50−0:53:00.

audience and evokes empathy[58] – an empathy she cannot expect from the Guatemalan government. Despite the grief Verónica and her brother Armando have to endure during the act of testifying, the act of speaking itself is a crucial step in their work of mourning. After the interview, the two siblings are leaving the dark, chaotic, and mazy interior of the AHPN through the formerly closed steel door with the emblem of the *Policía Nacional*, passing the threshold into a literally brighter future: for the first time in *La isla*, daylight, veritable rays of hope, can enter the obscure buildings of the AHPN.[59] Thanks to the victims' testimonies, light is shed on the war atrocities that the police, army, and government try to deny by oppressing the archival knowledge.

While Alejandra, Verónica, and Armando are reliving their traumata, two other protagonists of *La isla*, Ajpuu and Rolando, are responding to their traumatization by what we can define as a form of "working-through"[60]. The two young men, whose fathers were kidnapped and killed during the war, are actively taking part in the formation of a new culture of memory in Guatemala. Both are working in the AHPN-project, where they participate in the rescue of decomposing files. For Ajpuu, this work is a kind of personal duty or therapy, since saving the archives is one way to keep alive the memory of his murdered father, as he declares in the following quote: "La muerte de mi papá para mi significó el tener que cargar la memoria de él"[61]. On the other hand, the young Maya has converted his grief into a poem respectively rap song in Spanish and Kaqchikel, one of Guatemala's indigenous languages. "Llegó la hora de conocer verdades" and "el pasado no se olvida"[62] are the key phrases that are expressing hope for an end of amnesia and amnesty in Guatemala. When performing his music, Ajpuu is leaving behind his old, traumatized personality and becomes the rapper Nim Alae, who does not want to hide anymore behind the mask and white protective suit he must wear inside the AHPN. While Nim Alae is walking self-confidently through the run-down buildings, there is no more feeling of fear or powerlessness. Now the victims of state sponsored terrorism are ruling in the police archives and have taken possession of the countless paper stacks.

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58 Cf. Spiller: "Espectros en el archivo", p. 123.

59 See *La isla*: 1:18:45−1:19:13.

60 LaCapra: *Representing the Holocaust*, p. xii.

61 "For me, my father's death meant to have to carry his memory" [my translation], *La isla*: 0:09:13−0:09:24.

62 "The time has come to know the truth"; "the past is not forgotten" [my translation], *La isla*: 1:21:26–1:24:37.

Contributing to the AHPN's recontextualisation presents likewise an important element of Rolando's work of mourning, although it is extremely difficult for him to come to the place, where his father was tortured – a place in deplorable conditions, as he is bemoaning:

> De hecho, es una de las primeras cosas que te impactan […] cuando vienes y ves este edificio horrible. Y cuando entras por sus pasillos que en esa época eran unos pasillos oscuros sin ventanas ni luz ni nada. Y es muy probable que en estos mismos pasillos haya muerto gente o haya sido torturada gente. Es duro estar aquí metido, pero al mismo tiempo yo lo veo como… que estás en medio de esta energía, digamos, así jodida, es como una reafirmación de estar vivo.[63]

It is interesting that in his statement Rolando is highlighting a certain energy that is radiating from the site, an energy able to set in motion new dynamics in the form of a healing process not only within individuals, but also within the Guatemalan society as a whole. In order to visualize what Rolando is saying, the director of *La isla* uses a hand-held camera, whose instable movements are in stark contrast to the slow and static images governing throughout the rest of the documentary. The energy or special aura Rolando is talking about seems tightly associated with the archives' constitution as a garbage dump. The outdoor shots of the skeleton-like AHPN buildings we are seeing in this scene confirm this assumption.[64] The run-down constructions, metaphorical reflections of the suffering and traumata related to this place, are injured just like the victims and their relatives are. The filmic techniques Stelzner resorts to are reinforcing the fact that the war atrocities are inseparably inscribed into the physical site of the archives. By projecting historical footage of human rights violations onto the cold and dark walls inside this traumatic place,[65] different layers of time are superposing similar to flashbacks within a traumatized person. Further, in several sequences in *La isla*, but partly also in *Guatemala, les disparus*, we are hearing an unpleasant sound reminding us of the squeaking of heavy steel doors.[66] In combination with the gloomy prison cells depicted at the same time, the squeaking turns into the metaphorical whimpering of the persons tortured and killed within the AHPN. But how is the aura of this dark

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63 "In fact, it's one of the first things that hit you [...] when you come and see this horrible building. And when you walk through the corridors, which at that time were dark corridors without windows or light or anything. And it is very likely that in these corridors people have died or have been tortured. It's hard to be in here, but at the same time for me... being in the middle of this, let's say, fucked up energy is like a reaffirmation of being alive" [my translation], *La isla*: 1:19:33−1:20:14.

64 Almost identical shots can be found in *Keep your eyes*: 0:03:59−0:04:22.

65 See e.g. *La isla*: 0:14:47−0:14:52.

66 See *La isla*: 0:19:30−0:19:35; *Guatemala, les disparus*: 0:12:38−0:13:15.

and surreal traumatic place, its "phantasmagoric character"[67] as Spiller calls it, affected by the ongoing transformation into a true, well-classified archive?

Indeed, the rescue and digitalization of the millions of files is omnipresent in all the documentaries analyzed in this article.[68] Bringing order to the chaotic police archives is essential trauma work, since to deal with traumatization means (re)creating meaningful structures that have been destroyed.[69] An alternative cultural and political memory discourse is only achievable when the documents found in the archives finally reveal their secrets, when they will have been transformed in a *lieu de mémoire*, as defined by French historian Pierre Nora.[70] Finally yet importantly, the island-like AHPN, which so far is isolated from the surrounding city just like traumata are separated from the individual and collective consciousness, must be reintegrated in the urban space and made accessible (physically as well as mentally) to a broader public. In the following quotation, Armando expresses the hopes shared by many victims: "Esos papeles pueden hablar, pueden decirnos dónde poder encontrar a nuestros familiares"[71]. In *La isla* the documents do actually 'speak': in many sequences, the rustling of the papers being deciphered is the only sound we are hearing. The archivists, on the contrary, remain silent. In their protective suits, they look like trash collectors or criminologists investigating a crime scene.[72] The archivists-criminologists are carefully uncovering the forensic pieces of evidence by removing the dust of the past from the files.[73] The AHPN – the movies do not leave any doubt about this – is one of the most important crime scenes related to Guatemala's murderous dictatorships. Yet, Grinberg Pla reminds us that the AHPN called "La isla" is only a tiny "'island' of memory and justice"[74] in the vast sea of amnesia and amnesty, which Guatemala still is.

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67 Spiller: "Espectros en el archivo", p. 110 [my translation].

68 See e.g. *Granito*: 1:00:22–1:01:16; *El eco*: 0:33:27–0:33:54.

69 Cf. Stephen K. Levine: *Trauma, Tragedy, Therapy. The Arts and Human Suffering*, London et al., Jessica Kingsley, 2009, pp. 89–106.

70 Cf. Pierre Nora: "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*." In: *Representations* 26, 1989, pp. 7−24.

71 "These papers can speak, they can tell us where to find our relatives" [my translation], *La isla*: 0:18:50−0:19:04. Not always do the documents provide the expected answers, as Armando desperately states after having consulted his relatives' files: "Todo es falsedad" ("Everything is false" [my translation], *La isla*: 1:17:43−1:17:46).

72 See *La isla*: 0:03:15−0:03:58. We find a similar sequence in *Granito*: 1:03:44−1:04:00.

73 See *La isla*: 1:13:30−1:13:45; *Keep your eyes*: 0:29:44−0:29:59.

74 Grinberg Pla: "Oralidad, imagen, acción", p. 262.

Fig. 4: The transformation of the exterior of the AHPN (*Guatemala, les disparus*: 0:39:31)[75]

Despite all difficulties, the progress made in the recent years is remarkable, most noticeable when comparing the depiction of the AHPN in the different documentaries. In Claudio Zulian's *Guatemala, les disparus de la dictature* from 2016, the aura of the archives is substantially different from the one represented in Stelzner's *La isla* (2009). The paper stacks are well arranged, there is light inside the buildings, the walls have been repainted in a bright white, the exterior of the AHPN looks surprisingly proper and welcoming under the summer sky, and even some flowers are blooming in the place, where numerous persons have been tortured and killed.

Here we can observe what Aleida Assmann has already stated with regard to the Nazi concentration camps: the conservation and conversion of a traumatic place into a *lieu de mémoire* inevitably comes along with a "loss of authenticity"[76]. However, literature, arts, and audiovisual media are capable to preserve and perpetuate the oppressive aura of places like the *Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional*. The poetic images of *La isla* and other documentaries discussed in this paper are the best proof of that.

Conclusion: the AHPN – a Place of Extremes

The *Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional* is a place of extremes in every sense of the word, the focal point of Guatemala's fragmented and traumatized collective memory. Keeping more than 80 million documents, the AHPN is,

75 Cf. *Guatemala, les disparus*: 0:11:44–0:12:37.

76 Assmann: *Erinnerungsräume*, p. 333.

first of all, extreme in its size. Not less noteworthy is its impact upon Guatemala's culture of memory. While the government's indifference towards the victims' needs remains rigid, the illumination of the police archives signified a veritable 'Big Bang' in the fields of literature and filmmaking. The responses to the discovery of the AHPN – unexpected "irruptions of memory" – we observe in the documentary movies analyzed in this paper can likewise be described as extreme, since they bring to light severe traumatization. As a place of trauma, the AHPN is extremely contested. The documentaries mirror this struggle for memory by representing the archives, on the one hand, as a dark and dilapidated site (not only) the perpetrators do not attribute any importance to. On the other hand, the films put an emphasis on the transformation of the AHPN in a *lieu de mémoire* open to everyone. The documentary movies themselves play a crucial role in this process: by integrating the victims' long-oppressed (hi)stories in Guatemala's collective memory, they act as a counterbalance to the state's politics of amnesia and amnesty, and thus, make an essential contribution to the victims' process of recovery from their traumata.

Filmography

El Buen Cristiano. Dir.: Izabel Acevedo. 120 min. Centro de Capacitación Cinematográfica, A.C. Mexico, 2016.

El eco del dolor de mucha gente. Dir.: Ana María Cuevas. 95 min. Armadillo Productions. Guatemala/UK, 2012.

Finding Oscar. Dir.: Ryan Suffern. 100 min. FilmRise. USA/Guatemala/ Canada, 2016.

Granito: How to Nail a Dictator. Dir.: Pamela Yates. 104 min. Skylight Pictures. USA, 2011.

Guatemala, les disparus de la dictature. Dir.: Claudio Zulian. 62 min. ARTE France/Catherine Dussart Production. France, 2016.

La isla. Archivos de una tragedia. Dir.: Uli Stelzner. 85 min. Ohne Gepäck Filmproduktion/Iskacine/Asosciación Luciernaga. Guatemala/Germany, 2009.

Keep your Eyes on Guatemala. Dir.: Gabriela Martínez Escobar. 55 min. University of Oregon Libraries. USA/Guatemala, 2013.

When the Mountains Tremble. Dir.: Pamela Yates and Newton Thomas Sigel. 83 min. Skylight Pictures. USA/Guatemala, 1983.

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MELANIE GRAHAM

Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home* as a Visual Representation of Trauma[1]

The representation of trauma in visual arts, essentially rendering traumatic experiences into narrative and illustrative form has the ability to act as a source of healing. Alison Bechdel's 2006 graphic novel, *Fun Home*, does just that. A graphic novel can be thought of as a sequence of images that are often accompanied by text which frequently tells a story or provides information. Eddie Campbell, a Scottish comic artist and cartoonist states:

> The term graphic novel is currently used in at least four different and mutually exclusive ways. First, it is used simply as a synonym for comic books. For instance, I recently read of an eight-page graphic novel that I myself once drew. Second, it is used to classify a format – for example, a bound book of comics either in a soft- or hardcover – in contrast to the old-fashioned stapled comic magazine. Third, it means, more specifically, a comic-book narrative that is equivalent in form and dimensions to the prose novel. Finally, others employ it to indicate a form that is more than a comic book in the scope of its ambition – indeed, a new medium altogether.[2]

Despite being referred to as a "new" medium in 2007, the fourth interpretation of graphic novels was actually coined in 1964 but not widely recognized until Marvel Comics capitalized on the idea almost two decades later in the early 1980s. Some graphic novels can be tools for introducing different cultures while others are expressly educational. However, it was Art Spiegelman's 1986 publication, *Maus*, which propelled the genre onto the mainstream literary scene and challenged the common misconception of graphic novels as longer, fictional strips of childlike comics, elevating the genre to be recognized as a distinct artistic ability to be able to render trauma into visual form. While comic books still embody a youthful resonance, graphic novels have worked to establish themselves both in the literary and artistic world, tackling noteworthy, mature topics such as the Holocaust and the Iranian Revolution.

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1 This paper is an abbreviated and updated version of a chapter in my master thesis submitted to Radford University in April 2016.

2 Eddie Campbell: "What Is a Graphic Novel?" In: *World Literature Today* 81, no. 2, 2007, p. 13.

Alison Bechdel, a literary and graphic artist, began her career by producing a cartoon strip entitled "Dykes to Watch Out For" in 1983 but recently expanded her work to include graphic novels which prove to be a provocative exploration of sexuality within a modern family. Bechdel's verbal narrative is visually mapped by drawn images and cartooning, using visual details as a means of perceiving and representing her own world, thus she has been deemed a feminist interventionist in literary and visual culture.[3] Although *Fun Home* takes on an autobiographical component, grappling with generational, personal, sexual, and even socio-political entanglements, this graphic novel enters new territory by establishing itself as fundamentally different because of its visual representations of trauma, rather than the traditional written form, which affords readers the opportunity for different kind of understanding. *Fun Home* offers the chance to analyze the queer body in a particular cultural milieu, mainly white, middle-class America from the 1960s to the early 1980s, and addresses the compulsory heterosexuality and imposed heteronormativity of those decades which stigmatized gender non-conformity.

And even though visually stimulating traumatic representation is far from a new concept, the art form of the graphic novel, one riddled with taboo topics, certainly had potential for controversy. In most instances, rules revolving around any family silence or secrecy is entirely dependent on each individual familial unit, but Bechdel shares all. Like an exhibitionist shedding their clothing in a public place, Bechdel's bold choice to produce her version of the truth is provocative. Still, she maintains excellent relations with what remains of her immediate family. The book is in fact dedicated to Bechdel's mother, who acknowledges her own struggles with the many frank revelations revealed throughout the text, and her two younger brothers, who all agree much fun was had in spite of the hardships. Hence, with her most important supporters secured, Bechdel was prepared to handle reactions from the rest of the world. Attempts to ban *Fun Home* span an entire decade, the first public complaint came from Missouri in 2006 and the most recent from North Carolina in 2016. A patron of a public library in Missouri protested the inclusion of *Fun Home*, originally claiming children might be accidentally exposed to the mature content, but the true reason soon surfaced that *Fun Home* too closely resembled pornography. Similarly in 2016, students at Duke University, adults, protested against the graphic novel's depictions of lesbian sexuality, arguing it is pornographic and should not be included on their summer reading list. It must be noted that both times no official action was taken

[3] Jane Tolmie: "Modernism, Memory and Desire: Queer Cultural Production in Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*." In: *Topia* 22, no. 1, 2009, p. 88.

against *Fun Home*, hence these grievances were few in comparison to praise. In fact, the vast majority of the world accepted *Fun Home* with open arms. Applaud was widespread from the New York Times to the international market, and since publication *Fun Home* has been translated into seven languages including French, Italian, Portuguese, German, Hungarian, Korean, and Polish, with a Chinese publication scheduled for the future. The graphic novel was even modified into a musical script and the play graced Broadway in 2015 followed by traveling performances. The musical rendition is also set to premiere in Tokyo and London in 2018.

And yet, before the translations, musicals, and international success, there was just one graphic novel, *Fun Home*. *Fun Home* is comprised of seven chapters, spanning for two-hundred and forty pages that are creatively drawn in black ink and situated against a gray-blue wash of background color. The font and illustrations vary in style and size, allowing for each individual panel to tell a story within itself. Similar to a rapid-fire photo series, or comic-like boxes typically found in newspaper printings, Bechdel employs shapes, most frequently squares and rectangles, to represent her version of a single paragraph. So while paragraphs are used to convey full thoughts and link to one another throughout a traditional piece of writing, Bechdel's panels despite containing minimal words, typically only one sentence if that, have the power to portray an entire message, a paragraph if you will, when the image is also considered. Hence, the text that accompanies the image does not simply mirror the other, but each contains their own complex ideas and both are worthy of unfolding separately. Thus, despite working together, readers must decode both the written text and the drawn images to gather the complete message, in order to fully comprehend the depth and intensity of the story because the panels provide information in their own right. Bechdel does not merely draw her images but emphasizes each line with repetition. The thickness and scratch marks present evident struggle throughout her process, sketching and re-sketching perhaps only to realize she cannot change the traumatic events of the past, nor can she change the memories in her mind, thus, setting them free onto the pages of her graphic novel became all Bechdel knew how to do. Facial expressions riddled with emotion, body posture and positioning, side glances, choices in literature, intricate wood grain and paisley wallpaper; it is the smallest details within each depiction that proves, despite the written text not telling the whole story, Bechdel does not leave anything unsaid.

Applying Trauma Theory to *Fun Home*

Today, the interdisciplinary field of Trauma Studies has grown in scope since developing as a way to study the Holocaust and its enduring consequences; now Trauma Studies has expanded to include the study of other collective historical traumas (such as the Vietnam War and systemic racism) and to include sexual abuse as a cause of trauma that is also a phenomenon of everyday life for many women and children. Judith Herman and Laura Brown have helped to broaden the definition of trauma to include the more hidden, private experiences that are not really "outside the range of normal" (as genocide and war are) but instead are part of daily experiences because of society's institutions and systems that perpetuate oppression.

Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home* represents homophobia, heterosexism, and heteronormativity as causes of psychic trauma in the lives of individuals. Homophobia can be understood as prejudice against homosexual people or anyone who appears not to be heterosexual; heterosexism is a system of attitudes and discriminatory practices that privilege heterosexuality as the only norm or that assume its superiority over all other forms of erotic attraction; and heteronormativity – an outcome of heterosexism – is the system of discriminatory attitudes and practices that recognize dichotomous or binary gender roles of masculine and feminine as the only acceptable gender norms within an overarching normative heterosexuality. Bechdel exposes how heteronormative discursive practices and institutions marginalize gay and lesbian lives. To make this argument, the article uses feminist therapist and theorist Laura Brown's understanding of "insidious trauma". Brown argues,

> The private, secret, insidious traumas to which a feminist analysis draws attention are more often than not those events in which the dominant culture and its forms and institutions are expressed and perpetuated. Feminist analysis also asks us to understand how the constant presence and threat of trauma in the lives of girls and women of all colors, men of color in the United States, lesbian and gay people, people in poverty, and people with disabilities has shaped our society, a continuing background noise rather than an unusual event.[4]

Using, in addition, Dominick LaCapra's theory of "acting-out" and "working-through" trauma and feminist therapist Judith Herman's theories about trauma and narrative, this article looks at how Bechdel represents narrative, even more so visual narrative through artistic imagery, as a form of healing from trauma both for the individual and society. Bechdel renders into narrative and

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[4] Laura S. Brown: "Not Outside the Range: One Feminist Perspective on Psychic Trauma." In: Cathy Caruth (ed.): *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995, pp. 102–103.

illustrative form the kinds of trauma that occur every day in the lives of gay males and butch lesbians, and how their use of narrative constitutes a form of healing from trauma.

"Sexual Shame Is in itself a Kind of Death": Verbal and Visual Narrative Heals

In a world that continues to be plagued by homophobia and structures of oppression, Bechdel challenges cultural and sexual hegemony by placing emphasis on history, especially the history of the gay and lesbian liberation struggle. Indeed, "*Fun Home* queers the genre of historical graphic narrative by insisting that the traumatic history of a closeted gay man and his protolesbian daughter is contained within larger historical events"[5]. While *Fun Home* does not reveal very much about Bruce's childhood directly, the atmosphere and cultural milieu of the United States, in which he was raised, was riddled with intense homophobia. Mixed in with McCarythism and the anti-communist climate of the Cold War was a witch hunt against gay males and lesbians referred to as the Lavender Scare, because lavender was the color commonly associated with homosexuality.[6] Mass firings of gay men from the United States government took place in the 1950s: "The typical case involved a homosexual confronted with circumstantial evidence that he had associated with 'known homosexuals' or been arrested in a known gay cruising area. Almost all those accused quietly resigned rather than risk further publicity"[7]. In his history of the gay liberation struggle, *The Lavender Scare*, David K. Johnson writes: "When not referred to directly as homosexuals or sex perverts, such persons were often called 'moral weaklings,' 'sexual misfits,' 'moral risks,' 'misfits,' 'undesirables,' or persons with 'unusual morals'"; and worst of all, homosexuals were considered "security risks". Thus, presumed to be lacking morals because they rejected conformity to straight, bourgeois culture, homosexuals were categorized as careless, easily seduced, and then coerced into disclosing classified information. Presumed to be more susceptible to blackmail than heterosexuals, homosexuals were presumed to pose a threat to national security and were removed from federal employment. The Lavender Scare – a fear that homosexuals posed a risk to national security and needed to be systematically removed – permeated 1950s culture.[8] Hence,

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5 Sam McBean: "Seeing in Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*." In: *Camera Obscura* 28, no. 3, 2013, p. 104.

6 David K. Johnson: *The Lavender Scare*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 2004, p. 217.

7 Ibid., p. 3.

8 Ibid., p. 9.

the Lavender Scare unleashed pervasive homophobia affecting many generations to come.

Homosexuality was considered not only an offense that could justify firing but one that carried the connotation of mental illness and was prosecutable by law. In 1952, The American Psychiatric Association listed homosexuality as a psychiatric disorder in the first *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-I). Hence, there is no doubt that gay Americans in the 1950s and 60s faced an anti-gay social system. Stonewall historian David Carter states: "By 1961 the laws in America were harsher on homosexuals than those in Cuba, Russia, or East Germany, countries that the United States criticized for their despotic ways"[9]. Carter further illuminates that at the end of the 1960s, not one law – federal, state, or local – protected gay men or women, not to mention there were no openly gay politicians, police officers, movie stars, public school teachers, doctors, or lawyers.[10] And while there was some early resistance to homophobia in the form of the Mattachine Society, who used the term homophile to refer to their organization, the social and legal oppression of homosexuals prevailed.

However, the late 1960s brought about many oppositional voices, such as the Civil Rights Movement and anti-war demonstrations against the Vietnam War, which ultimately served as catalysts for the gay and lesbian civil rights movements. The Stonewall Riots took place in June of 1969 and are widely considered the single most important event leading to the modern gay liberation movement and the fight for LGBTQ rights in the United States. While the streets in Greenwich Village, New York City, New York, erupted with violent demonstrations when police raided the Stonewall Bar to arrest gay patrons, it was the first time that thousands of gay demonstrators went out into the streets to protest the intolerable situation imposed on gay males and lesbians by the routine raids of gay bars.[11] Even though Christopher Street was filled with pride and police and the sense of liberation and equality for gays, the Mattachine Society intervened and encouraged peace among the protesters.[12] Despite not providing a total historical overview, Bechdel both describes and draws the cultural milieu of her childhood. The panel, halfway through *Fun Home,* depicts Alison walking by the Stonewall Inn, kicking a can, oblivious to the message scrolled out beside her: "We homosexuals plead

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9 Ibid., p. 15.

10 Ibid., p. 2.

11 David Carter: *Stonewall: The Riots that Sparked the Gay Revolution*, New York, St. Martin's, 2004, p. 195.

12 Carter: *Stonewall*, p. 196.

with our people to please help maintain peaceful and quiet conduct on the streets of the village – Mattachine"[13].

It was not until 1974 that the seventh printing of the DSM-II no longer listed homosexuality as a category of disorder. Despite not directly experiencing the beginning of the gay rights revolution, Bechdel's childhood coincided with the struggle for equality and the open fight for homosexual rights. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for her father Bruce. With his death in 1980, just six years after the removal of homosexuality from the list of psychological disorders in the DSM-II, Bruce was born into and operated within a thoroughly homophobic cultural milieu. Just as the panel below (fig. 1) portrays, *Fun Home* exposes the generational differences between Bechdel and her father; Bechdel's references to sexual liberation and community suggest that her life is significantly different from her father's both personally and historically. Bechdel portrays herself coming out in a culture of lesbian feminism but Bruce does not have access to the social world that might allow him to assume an openly gay identity.[14]

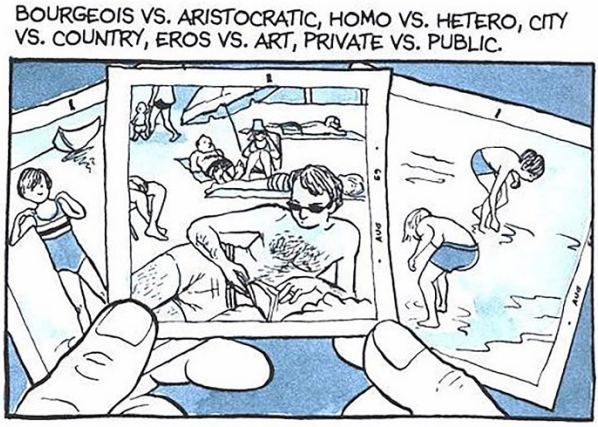

Fig. 1 (*Fun home*: p. 102)

Bechdel herself is even searching for an understanding of her father. Her graphic memoir situates her father as a closeted gay man who suffers deep psychological damage from the intense homophobia of 1950s America. Bechdel manipulates both literary and historic figures to account for her

[13] Alison Bechdel: *Fun Home*, New York, First Mariner Books, 2007, p. 104.

[14] Ann Cvetkovich: "Drawing the Archive in Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*." In: *Women's Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 1, 2008, p. 123.

childhood. The realization occurs that this family her father worked so hard to create, whom he sacrificed his sexual identity for, was a source of trauma. Bechdel as an author and illustrator – and in turn Alison as the protagonist in *Fun Home*[15] – would never be able to rid themselves of the foundation their father developed. Bechdel wastes little time with descriptions of Bruce before announcing: "My father began to seem morally suspect to me long before I knew that he actually had a dark secret"[16]. Bechdel claims: "He used his skillful artifice not to make things, but to make things appear to be what they were not"[17]. Bruce's tedious behavior seems well-thought out, and while he might perform to strangers or fellow church members as a loving parent, high school teacher, and successful owner of a funeral home in the small town of Beech Creek, Bechdel manipulates facial expression and body posture through the imagery of the following panel (fig. 2) to state otherwise. The panel portraying the Bechdel family at a Sunday service depicts Bruce with a guilty demeanor. His body language reveals a certain discomfort, Bruce's slouching shoulders and disappearing neck give way to his shame as he sheepishly cuts nervous eyes toward the Priest; Bechdel's penned drawing of her father suggests he is literally trying to cower away. Next to Bruce sits Alison, using her hand to support her head, as is her middle brother, the two visually allude to knowing, even from a young age, that church and their attempt at being a family, is a totally sham. Furthest from Bruce is his wife who appears stern, cold, lost, even struggling to keep up their heteronormative lie.[18]

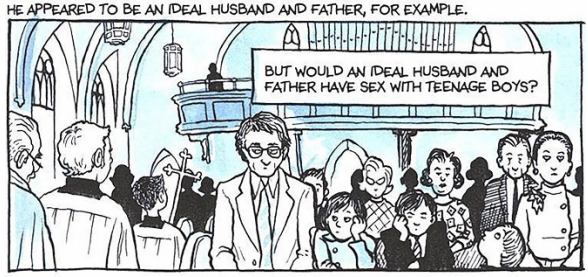

Fig. 2 (*Fun home*: p. 17)

15 Alison Bechdel is the name of the author/illustrator and the protagonist in *Fun Home*. For the purposes of this article, "Bechdel" is used in reference to the author and "Alison" is used in reference to the main character in the graphic novel.

16 Bechdel: *Fun Home*, p. 16.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid., p. 17.

Bechdel describes her father's fully developed self-loathing, caused by internalized homophobia: "[H]is shame inhabited our house as pervasively and invisibly as the aromatic musk of aging mahogany"; Bruce's self-rejection can be understood in relation to the cultural milieu in which he was raised. Born in 1936, his adolescence and young adulthood, arguably the most formative years of one's development, occurred during the Lavender Scare and its homophobic attitudes. American society in the 1950s and 60s purged and demonized homosexuals, preventing Bruce from embracing his same-sex desire. Under the pressure of such a harsh heterosexist regime, Bruce attempts to comply out of "homosexual panic." Queer theorist Eve Sedgwick describes "homosexual panic" as "the most private, psychologized form in which many […] western men experience their vulnerability to the social pressure of homophobic blackmail"[19]; in other words, this panic drives gay men to hide their homoerotic feelings and experiences. The cultural stigmas associated with same-sex desires have proven traumatic by distorting Bruce's own sexuality. Cultural homophobia represents Bruce's desires as monstrous and shames his sexuality; homosexual panic creates internalized homophobia and Bruce is incapable of owning his same-sex desires. He does everything he can to conceal his same-sex desire and relationships, seeking out encounters in which he can guard his secret and maintain control.

While his mentality can only be supposed, perhaps Bruce thought marriage would prevent his desire for men; nevertheless, Bruce is not fulfilled and continues "acting out" by courting other males. Hence, after Bruce's youth escapes him, once he is deep into pretending heteronormativity, he chooses to engage in sex with men who could never fully commit themselves to a relationship with him. Bruce channels his same-sex desire towards considerably younger men who are unable or unwilling to acknowledge the vulnerable position Bruce put them in. Bruce's effort to seek out a certain type of individual is a reflection of his own inability to commit. Bruce never allows his same-sex desire to develop into real love. He is uncertain of how to proceed with his desires in an appropriate way. Bruce himself does not consider his desires appropriate because of the cultural and societal restrictions that he has been forced to exist within; thus, Bruce is incapable of entertaining the idea that same-sex desire can indeed produce love or a committed relationship that can be publicly acknowledged. So, Bruce does not allow himself to engage with anyone even remotely close to his age or ready for an adult, committed relationship.

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[19] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick: *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1985, p. 89.

Bruce remains steadfast in his desire to preserve his heteronormativity, posing as a "straight" man who is heterosexual, involved in a loving marriage, a man who even produces children; Bruce, however, had been "acting out" his same-sex desire destructively by choosing to live a secret life. He held no regard for his wife, and if it were not for his children's youth, they perhaps would not have been so blind to their father's reality either. Bruce succumbs to the hegemonic ideal of masculinity in a patriarchal society; he allows his desires to be poisoned by the homophobia that is part of American ideology.

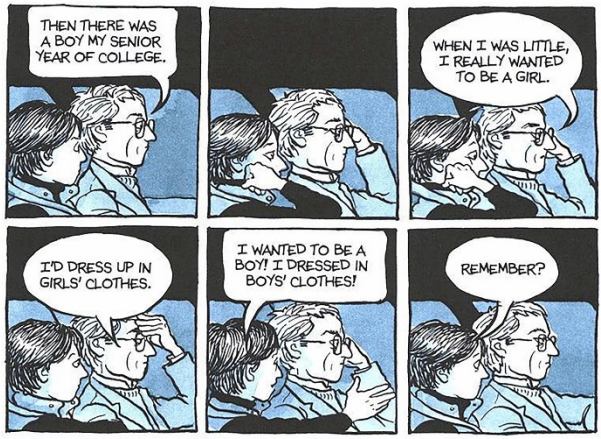

Fig. 3 (*Fun home*: p. 221)

However, Bechdel details Alison's second to last interaction with Bruce as more straightforward, providing more insight into her father than ever before. For two pages, Bechdel employs twenty-four square panels, similar to photograph film rolls, closely resembling one another but each encompassing slight differences.[20] The conversation depicted takes place on the way to the movies and Bruce divulges two separate sexual experiences with males. His eye bulges (he is driving so only his profile is displayed) and Bruce's facial lines are emphasized, signaling difficulty, as he shares personal experiences that, before this conversation, have always been a secret. Moving throughout panels, his left arm change positions six different times. First out of sight, then supporting his head, finally scrawled across his forehead, and while there is no motion, one can make the assumption Bruce is rubbing his forehead,

[20] Bechdel: *Fun Home*, pp. 220–221.

unsure if he has just divulged too much information. As his arm relaxes, so do his eyes, his demeanor becomes altogether subdued and he reverts to back to his usual, unimpressed facial expression. But the panel above (fig. 3) shows Alison immediately identifying with her father despite the drive home being described as "mortified silence", no doubt due to the tension of such secrets escaping but also because of Bruce's shame.

Bruce never reaches the "working through" stage of his insidious trauma and therefore is eternally saddled with self-loathing rejection. Their last father/daughter date had the potential to be enlightening and reassuring for young Alison; instead, she is faced with her father's embarrassment and even questions who, in that particular situation, acted as the parental figure. Dominick LaCapra explains "working through" as a countervailing force in response to trauma. Critical distance is a necessary component to "working through", the ability to partially disengage from the trauma and acknowledge existence of self regardless of oppression. Furthermore, "it's via working through that one acquires the possibility of being an ethical agent"[21]. Hence, the ability to make judgments based on one's own moral compass and disregard socially accepted heteronormativity to instead pursue one's own individual desire is the epitome of "working through". Bruce's internalized homophobia and the cultural milieu in which he was raised never allowed him to reach such satisfaction. Heterosexism, heteronormativity, and homophobia damaged Bruce and perhaps even drove him to commit suicide. Bechdel writes: "dad's death was not a new catastrophe but an old one that had been unfolding very slowly for a long time"[22] as if, it is to be understood, Bruce's entire life was a catastrophe.

The circumstances of Bruce's life and death, however, become an essential part of his daughter's "working through." Whereas Bruce never "works through" the trauma he has endured in a homophobic society, Bechdel's memoir narrates both verbally and visually the process whereby the young Alison works toward self-knowledge and acceptance in a way her father never could. Within the pages of *Fun Home*, Bechdel, as an artist and a daughter, a writer and an illustrator, challenges the oppressive structures that span across generations and participates in the process of social change. Bechdel's deep reflection proves that Bruce no doubt suffered traumatically from a hidden sexuality for many years but instead of condemning him, Bechdel

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21 Dominick LaCapra: "An Interview with Professor Dominick LaCapra [by Amos Goldberg]." In: *Shoah Resource Center: The International School for Holocaust Studies* 9, 1988, p. 3.

22 Bechdel: *Fun Home*, p. 83.

narrates a sense of compassion, even a sense of identification. In adulthood, Bechdel revisits the events of her childhood and with more clarity accounts for their gender inversions, realizing similarities with Bruce. She realizes that the two existed in vastly different generations and had much different cultural experiences that affected their self-acceptance and acceptance of their sexuality. Likewise, feminist and queer theorist Ann Cvetkovich states that Bechdel bears witness to the "secrecy and shame" of Bruce's life that concealed his trauma in order to understand the development of her own sexual identity and to "be the sympathetic witness who can make available the rich and contradictory story of his life so that he is something more than a pedophile, suicide, or tragic homosexual"[23].

Bechdel both writes and draws the character version of herself, Alison, not without trials associated with her same-sex desire but in contrast to Bruce, who is much less equipped both mentally and socially to resist the culturally constructed dichotomies of gender and sexuality. As a small child, Bechdel was introduced to a non-binary gender presentation, which as a grown artist she represents in panel form as an epiphany in the young Alison's wide eyes (fig. 4). Upon spotting a "butch" lesbian for the first time en route to Philadelphia with her father, suddenly Alison is introduced to a different kind of woman, one that she had been discouraged from emulating. With her shoulders hunched over and hands between her legs that no doubt dangle from the diner booth rather than reach the floor, Alison's eyes are glued to this newfound female form. Even though they never exchanged words, this woman inspired in Alison the realization that women exist in all different shapes and sizes, have non-conforming gender presentations, and similarly operate in any occupation. Even though Alison denies wanting to look "like that" when she is interrogated by her father who is distressed by her fascination with the butch lesbian, Bechdel recalls "recogniz[ing] her with a surge of joy"[24]. *Fun Home* critic Marjorie Allison notes that Alison not only realizes she is like the butch woman but she identifies with her rather than with traditional femininity, thereby urging readers to respect gender differences that are usually marginalized.[25] This occasion propels our protagonist into a realm of discovery – heteronormativity is not absolute – while also laying the foundation for the realization that indeed women's sexual orientations are fluid. Little by little, gradually over the years, Bechdel details young Alison escaping the constricting

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23 Cvetkovich: "Drawing the Archive", p. 113.

24 Bechdel: *Fun Home*, p. 118.

25 Marjorie C. Allison: "(Not) Lost in the Margins: Gender and Identity in Graphic Texts." In: *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* 47, no. 4, 2014, p. 92.

ideals associated with gender and heterosexual love; hence, in retrospect Bechdel asserts, "the vision of the truck-driving bulldyke sustained me through the years"[26].

Fig. 4 (*Fun home*: p. 118)

Further inspection of the bulldyke, "a most unsettling sight", for Bruce, exposes that Alison was not the only character with noticeably expressive eyeballs. Standing taller than the skinny man accepting her delivery, the bulldyke complete with broad shoulders and extra weight, a considerably big woman whose breasts and belly both bulge, symbolizes a significantly different type of woman sporting short hair with keys dangling from her belt, a true member of the work force. Bechdel writes that perhaps the sighting haunted Bruce and she illustrates his facial expressions as worried. Bruce glances, snarls even, over his shoulder to glare at the bulldyke, but is sure to remain hidden behind the coatrack so his curious yet disgusted demeanor does not give him away. Upon reengaging with Alison, his jaw line protrudes as his eyebrows and stern eyes demand denial on Alison's behalf. The panel reveals Bruce's swift intention to leave the luncheonette, his eyes facing forward with determination to leave the afternoon in the past while pulling young Alison along the sidewalk. Likewise, Jennifer Lemberg notices Bruce's eyes and claims "this emphasis on looking in these panels suggests the overwhelming visibility Bechdel assigns to this figure and engages us in seeing the connection between Alison and the bulldyke that her father is anxious to erase"[27]. Just as

[26] Bechdel: *Fun Home*, p. 119.
[27] Ibid., pp. 136–137.

Bruce is quick to dismiss his daughter's interest in this butch lesbian figure, suppression of emotion then becomes a constant in the Bechdel household.

Suppression of emotion is portrayed as prevailing throughout Alison's early life and eventually that silence, which is associated with sexual repression, causes her to act out. When she first encountered a cadaver at her family's funeral home, Alison, unlike her father, was not accustomed to suppressing feelings. With a dead body on the table, Bruce requests Alison's assistance and she is met with exposed genitals and the cadaver's chest spilt open. While the text just above the panel reads, "the man on the prep table was bearded and fleshy, jarringly unlike dad's usual traffic of dessicated old people" (fig. 5), the visual depiction demands the readers run their eyes up this very hairy, dead man's legs but insist on a hard stop before the open cavity because the penis lays limp as Bruce situates his hands in an effort to continue the examination.[28] And even though the word choice, "jarringly" suggests surprise, it's the visual image of young Alison, portrayed only as an onlooker, her side profile, jet-black in the bottom right corner of the panel that stands out and sends shock waves.

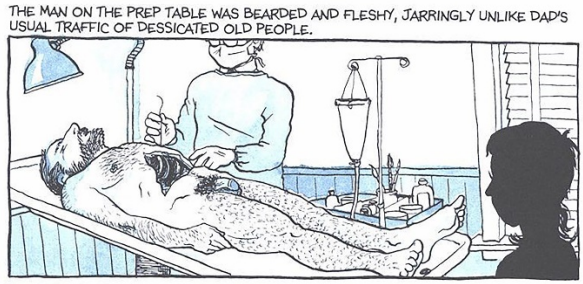

Fig. 5 (*Fun home*: p. 44)

Yet, young Alison was frozen both physically and verbally, Bechdel recalls "I studiously betrayed no emotion"[29]. This studious avoiding of emotions characterizes the Bechdel family. Unable to express emotions, Bechdel reproduces the younger version of herself, Alison, "acting out". In *Fun Home*, Alison exists within a household that evades emotion and seemingly values heteronormativity. Her suppression of emotion is directly inherited from her father and her home life induces counterproductive "acting out" as a response to trauma. Alison acts out – succumbing to repetitively destructive behavior – in an effort

[28] Ibid., p. 44.
[29] Ibid.

to understand her own self, and in an effort to exude control over the heteronormative home in which she resides.

Even as Alison's form of "acting out" persists over time, LaCapra claims that "working through" can be simultaneously taking place during this unconscious response to trauma. Dominick LaCapra explains "working through" as a countervailing force, as the desirable result when processing trauma: "In the working-through, the person tries to gain critical distance on a problem, to be able to distinguish between past, present and future"[30]. It is via the "working through" that one acquires the possibility of agency.[31] Bechdel aligns Alison's discovery of the self-induced orgasm with the beginning of her talents as a graphic artist and both signify critical distance from society's incessant social stigmas. In the weeks following her first menstrual cycle, and after the realization that ignoring her monthly bleeding would not make the matter disappear, Alison is depicted illustrating her own fantasies while also mastering the art of masturbation.[32] Confidence emerges within Alison and as Jennifer Lemberg states: "Bechdel uses her art to foreground instances of seeing during which she achieves clarity about her own needs and fantasies"[33]. Thus, Alison begins to demonstrate "working through" in *Fun Home* by owning her thoughts and accepting both a physical and emotional response to them. No longer does young Alison doubt what her mind produces but rather trusts that she is capable of gaining awareness of her identity. Instead of resisting non-heteronormative desire and pleasure, Alison is both described and shown embracing them, beginning with her explorations in autoerotic pleasure and continuing, once she leaves home, with explorations in same-sex pleasure.

As an author, Bechdel acknowledges the oppression associated with her upbringing in the small town of Beech Creek and declares her sexuality in college after escaping the confines of her home and home town. She writes: "My realization at nineteen that I was a lesbian came about in a manner consistent with my bookish upbringing. A revelation not of the flesh, but of the mind." While Bechdel had yet to confirm her realization with sexual activity, she remembers "having qualms since I was thirteen" and further recalls first stumbling across the alarming prominence of the word "lesbian" in her dictionary.[34] In the graphic novel, Alison begins "working through" by conducting research into the literary world, thus confirming her knowledge and same-sex

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30 LaCapra: "An Interview", p. 2.

31 Ibid., p. 3.

32 Bechdel: *Fun Home*, pp. 170–171.

33 Jennifer Lemberg: "Closing the Gap in Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*." In: *Women's Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 1, 2008, p. 135.

34 Bechdel: *Fun Home*, p. 74.

desire among the literary greats, she soon realizes that independent bookish research (this panel literally depicts a book in her right hand and the other down her pants, fig. 6) provided only a provisional world in which to exist: "It became clear I was going to have to leave this academic plane and enter the human fray"[35]. Hence, Alison continues "working through" by taking steps to find a physical human community.

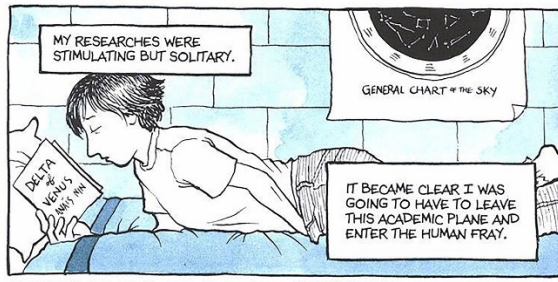

Fig. 6 (*Fun home*: p. 76)

Futhermore, she was expecting her admission of same-sex desire to be a validation of her individuality, and yet the author/artist portrays her younger self as becoming more aligned with her family than ever imaginable. She makes the brave declaration to her parents and in the blink of an eye is met with both resistance and her family's biggest secret. Bechdel reflects that at the time of her letter home, "my homosexuality remained at that point purely theoretical, an untested hypothesis. But it was a hypothesis so thorough and convincing that I saw no need not to share immediately"[36]. Immediately afterward, Alison is depicted in the fetal position on the floor clinging tightly to the phone as her father's same-sex experiences are revealed: "I had imagined my confession as emancipation from my parents, but instead I was pulled back into their orbit"[37]. Indeed, overshadowed by the new knowledge of her father's long time secret, Alison is shown throwing herself into becoming the best lesbian she can be. She steadily "works through" her same-sex desire by joining the gay union at her university and while at first taking on a silent role of observation, as her family's secrets – particularly her father's hidden sexuality – emerge, so does adolescent Alison's involvement in this organization.

35 Ibid., p. 76.
36 Ibid., p. 58.
37 Ibid., p. 59.

She volunteers to distribute flyers, attends more social events, such as a gay dance, and finally finds herself immersed between more than just sheets.

Bechdel dedicates multiple panels in the exploratory phase of her newfound sexuality to illustrating sexual acts. Naked bodies are strewn between blankets, Alison's head even ends up between her first girlfriend's legs. Her eyes nervously open, staring down into the abyss of her first bush, and Alison's left hand is timidly placed on another female's hips. In another panel, both hands are firmly grabbing the other's hips and Alison's eyes are closed, the visual changes allude to an increase in comfort and perhaps worry fell by the wayside, because Alison is depicted as embracing this sexual experience. So, between her first girlfriend's legs, Alison finds her lesbian desire – which she previously declared without any experiential evidence – to be true.[38] Yet, the announcement, instead of liberating her from Beech Creek, pulls her back into her family's drama.

However, *Fun Home* still shies away from denouncing the family and childhood home. Bechdel confesses that while it would be easy enough to dismiss her early life, complete with a closeted father, as a "sham", she rejects that notion. Indeed, they were a family and sincerely did operate within the walls of that immaculate house. That is not to say, however, that the author claims normalcy for her family. Church attendance was perhaps only in an effort to snap the perfect photograph, and any notion of fun in this home was immediately halted if the décor – which Bruce so obsessively staged – was threatened.[39] Bechdel discloses a constant tension within her childhood home as well as hidden beneath bursts of kindness from Bruce and equally unpredictable angry rages.[40]

Hence, her upbringing proved rigid and lonely; in fact Monica Pearl, a scholar on graphic novels, notes that the extremely "atomized" family is best represented by a panel in which the entire house is shown with invisible walls and each family member is in a separate room, pursuing individual projects, "as in an artists' colony" rather than in the stereotypical or "fantasized" family (fig. 7).[41]

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38 Ibid., p. 80.

39 Ibid., pp. 16–18.

40 Ibid., p. 21.

41 Monica B. Pearl: "Graphic Language: Redrawing the Family (Romance) in Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*." In: *Prose Studies* 30, no. 3, 2008, p. 286.

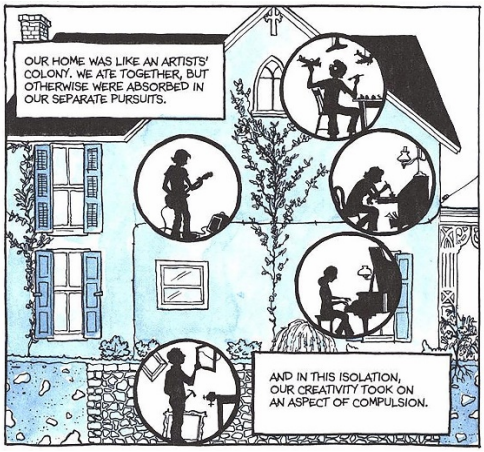

Fig. 7 (*Fun home*: p. 134)

Despite this "atomized" family, Bechdel continuously draws parallels between herself, Alison, and her father, Bruce, within the pages of *Fun Home*. Regardless of their discrepancies during his time alive, their similarities are unavoidable and despite having to resort to guesswork about most of Bruce's same-sex behavior, this memoir is about both of their explorations into self and identity. Bechdel's memoir can be seen as prying open that closet door as it announces, and in turn produces, butch lesbian sexuality.

The author, who doubles as the artist, explores the ongoing impact of traumatic homophobic histories on successive generations in the mid-twentieth century. Bechdel describes *Fun Home* as "[a] narrative of injustice, of sexual shame and fear, of life considered expendable. It's tempting to say that, in fact, this is my father's story. There's a certain emotional expedience to claiming him as a tragic victim of homophobia"[42]. Thus, Bruce deserves more than being, quite literally, written off as yet another stereotypical male who succumbed to systematic oppression and sacrificed his life; in fact, *Fun Home* works to uncover the oppressive structures of homophobia and heterosexism in an effort to undo those sinister dichotomies. Instead of deeming Bruce a closeted victim, Bechdel dares to develop her own understanding through narrative and visual form and encourages her readers to do the same.

Fun Home is an example of art acts as reparation and provides the ability to understand the connections between her father's life and her own in an effort to work through the trauma that can accompany queer identity. This

42 Bechdel: *Fun Home*, p. 196.

graphic novel not only addresses Bruce's trauma and its effect on his family, but also acts as the artist's claim to authority, the representation of her own story. Trauma theorist Judith Herman affirms the action of telling a story as the basic principle of empowerment for those who have experienced trauma in their lives.[43] Furthermore, reconstructing the trauma into narrative form often incorporates life experiences into a coherent story that "puts trauma in its place" so that it does not have to continually disrupt the present, causing one to "act out" in destructive ways. Bechdel reflects on her entire maturation process, including her complex relationship to her troubled father, providing childhood context and adult reflections upon the past to readers. Herman continues to elaborate that incorporating both actions and emotions in the narration of traumatic experiences is essential to healing; Bechdel allows access into the deepest depths of her uncertainty, her complicated emotions about her father, and her struggles to understand her sexuality. In regards to her own growing pains and gradually learning her father's secrets, she shares intimate moments within the pages of *Fun Home* both in literary and pictorial form.

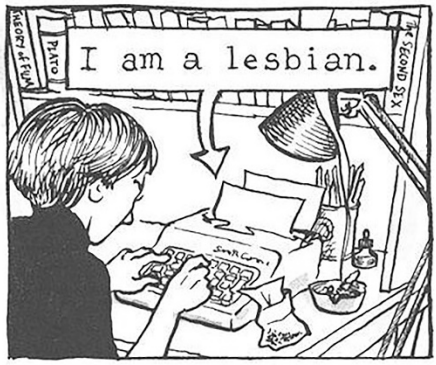

Fig. 8 (*Fun home*: p. 58)

The author uses a recursive structure in *Fun Home*, first mentioning a specific memory and returning pages later to elaborate upon it allowing her readers to be active participants. Instead of producing a linear text, Bechdel produces panels from her memory that vary in size and avoid chronology which forces readers to revisit past events, jumping back and forth in time, much like one's own memory functions. Another scholar suggests: "[R]eaders who face the challenge of the material Bechdel presents are

43 Judith Herman: *Trauma and Recovery*, New York, Basic Books, 1992, p. 175.

forced to make choices, conscious or not, about what line of narration to follow and how to do it"[44]. Hence, just as she has worked to construct this memoir, readers, too, have an equally demanding duty and a translation of the images to complete on their own. The reader has to work to decide which panels to study for clues, which text aligns with which illustration and how to make sense of the book as a whole; this graphic novel requires much attention because instead of simply reading words, the reader must also engage their visual imagination and literally look deeply into each scenario Bechdel presents in her illustrations. The reading experience of graphic novels is complicated:

> By seeing and reading themselves into the story, readers can actively reimagine how the world is constructed and how they are similar to and different from the world the writers present. What has been marginalized is brought to the centre and given a privileged place in these stories.[45]

Hence, in this graphic-memoir testimony, past traumatic events are integrated into Bechdel's life story, and, by extension, affords readers the opportunity to envision themselves in a fictional world that affords human insight into the lives of people who are marginalized and traumatized because of their sexual identity.

While Bruce struggles to live – let alone love – without his culture's unrelenting heteronormativity and compulsory heterosexuality, his daughter cultivates her own resistance to such oppression. As an author and artist (fig. 8), rendering her own life into narrative form affords Bechdel a kind of healing from the trauma that she experienced as the child of a closeted gay father who commits suicide and as a young lesbian attempting to find self-acceptance in a stifling, homophobic small town. Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home* redefines the connections between memory and history, private experience and public life, as well as individual loss and collective trauma. *Fun Home* queers the perspective on trauma and illuminates the relation between the catastrophic events that shatter lives and the everyday, hidden or insidious traumas that can damage the lives of LGBTQ persons. Toni Morrison once said: "I suppose all artists have either to bear witness or effect change – improvement – take cataracts off people's eyes in an accessible way. It may be painful, but that's [her] job – to enlighten and to strengthen"; so even though creating this memoir proved trying for Bechdel, reflecting on her past, on her relationship with her father, both verbally and visually, ultimately *Fun Home*

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44 Allison: "(Not) Lost", pp. 76–79.

45 Ibid., p. 74.

provides healing for her and a "taking off of cataracts"[46] from the eyes of readers who may not see the hidden damage done by homophobia.

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46 Jill Matus: *Toni Morrison*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1998, p. 13.

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Which patterns do (audio-)visual works use to tackle the unspeakable events of trauma? How can we describe the relationship between traumatic experience and artistic (audio)visual works? And, are there great differences in the medial forms, in which the arts from the East to the West deal with the rejected experience of the past? This compilation presents the results of the fourth research project between Petro Mohyla National Black Sea State University (Mykolaiv, Ukraine) and Saarland University (Saarbrücken, Germany). Including theoretical reflection on trauma theory, these papers study examples of (audio-)visual art working through trauma in Eastern and Western Europe, North and Central America and the Caribbean. The analysed objects of art embrace films, monuments, photographs, woodcuts and (graphic) novels, dealing with Stalinist repression, (Post) World War II losses, the Chernobyl nuclear catastrophe, the silenced crimes of the Francoist dictatorship, the persecution, humiliation and criminalization of homosexuals in the US and long lasting state terror in Cuba or Guatemala.