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New Approaches to Documentary

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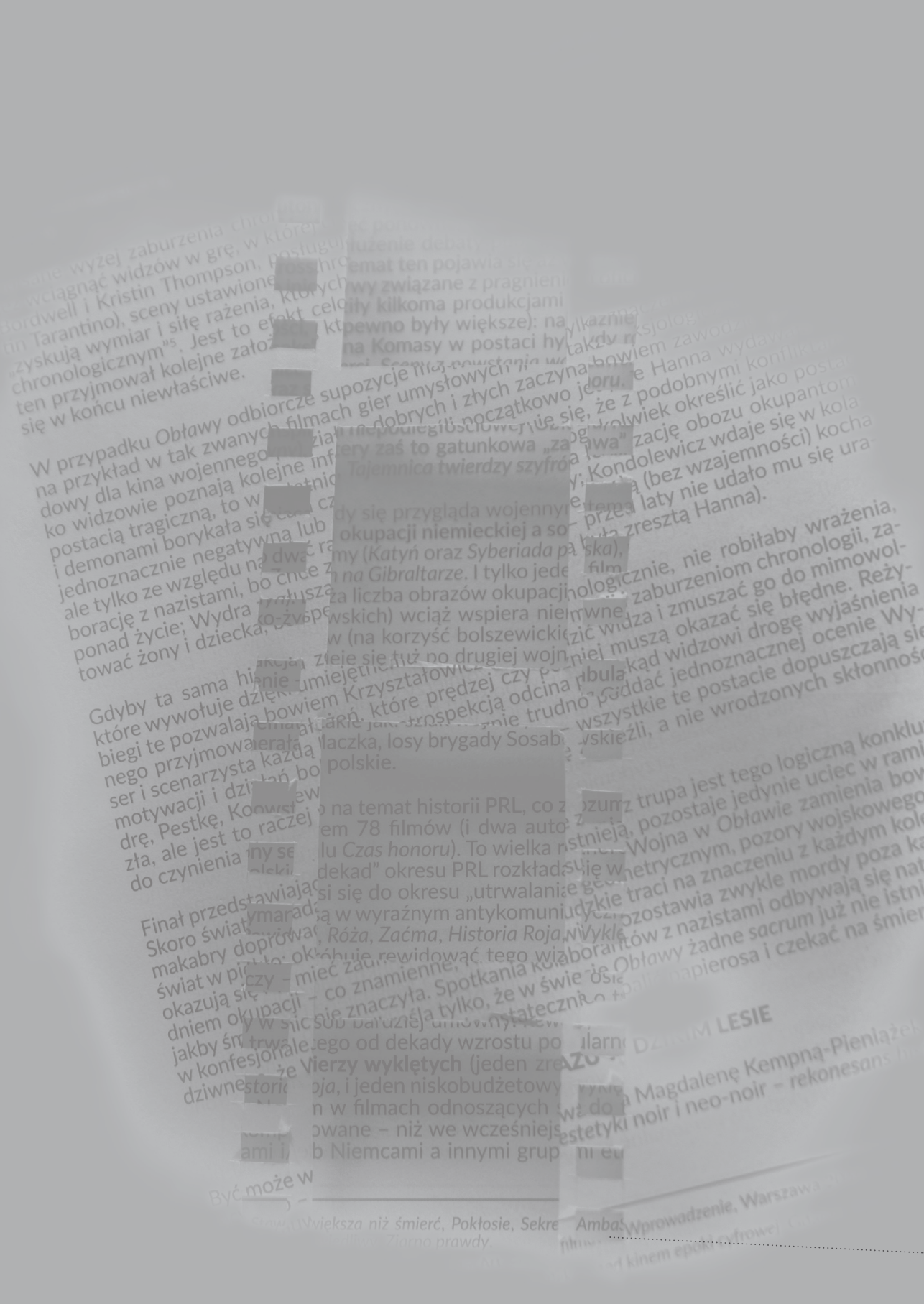

Editorial

Documentary Cinema Revisited

Documentary film is undergoing an intense transformation. In recent years, new genres have emerged, such as animated documentary or interactive documentary, as well as new names for previously existing but unrecognised phenomena, such as the mock-documentary. Technological changes have brought a lot of life to the subject, especially the emergence of mobile phones equipped with cameras, which brought filming almost under the radar, the spread of surveillance cameras and, last but not least, networking, creating global opportunities to show documentaries. The result is a situation in which anyone can, at least potentially, record reality with their phone (and there are few people who have never done so), anyone is subject to being recorded, even many times a day, and anyone can post what they have recorded to a global audience. Thus, with some exaggeration, it can be said that anyone can become the author, protagonist, producer or distributor, if not of a documentary film, then at least of documentary recordings of reality. There are also few spheres of life that escape documentary recording. The documentary is no longer just a social service, as it used to be, and not just a reverie about the fate of the individual, as it became somewhat later, but a form that has access to all forms and aspects of reality.

The watchword of our new issue of "Panoptikum" – "New Approaches to Documentary" should be understood in several ways. Firstly, then, it is about new phenomena in documentary filmmaking: new films that explore hitherto undiscovered territories or stand out for their original approach to film form. Secondly, transformations within documentary cinema, or more broadly, non-fictional recordings of reality – whether technologically motivated or not. Thirdly, new methodological approaches, new forms of reflection on the phenomenon of non-fiction, new conceptual categories, new theoretical approaches.

The volume begins with a definition of documentary filmmaking. Mirosław Przylipiak briefly reviews a selection of existing definitions and then builds his own. In his opinion, when defining a documentary film it is necessary to point out its difference not only from feature cinema – which most definitions have focused on – but equally from experimental cinema, as well as from various other factual forms. At the same time, the construction of the definition is an opportunity to consider issues such as the influence of the presence of the cam-

era on the behaviour of the people being filmed, the permissibility of staging on a documentary film set, a specifity of documentary editing, and many others.

Philipp Blum addresses one of the key issues in the reflection on documentary filmmaking, namely - the relationship between documentary and fiction. However, instead of separating the documentary from the fictional, as has been done so far, and building the definition of documentary on the juxtaposition of documentary and fiction, Blum proposes the exact opposite, metaphorically referring to gender theory. According to him, a queer person is a non-binary person who blurs boundaries and cannot be described in terms of a simple juxtaposition of male and female. Similarly, some documentaries are 'queer' - instead of separating the elements of documentary and fiction in them, we should recognise that they cannot be considered in these categories. Blum primarily includes so-called mockumentaries, but also other films that mix documentary and fiction. Since virtually every documentary film contains elements of both, it is reasonable to ask - although Blum himself does not draw this conclusion – whether all documentary cinema is queer?

Efrén Cuevas deals with documentary filmmaking about the past and introduces the concept of micro-history into the vocabulary of documentary filmmaking. It is taken from historical science, but on the ground of documentary film it is subject to modifications due to the specificity of the medium. Micro-histories are an attempt to combine, to synthesise, history and memory – in other words, macro history, dealing with major events and historical processes – with experiencing events at the grassroots level. Micro-historical documentaries are characterised by a narrow perspective, focusing on ordinary and sometimes even marginalised individuals, families, social groups, instead of the great figures and events so glorified by 'official' history. Moreover, they are keen to adopt a narrative form, making abundant use of family archives, family photographs, home movies, snapshots and sound recordings.

The subject of Sheikh Khurran's reflections is stock imagery and its impact on shaping the image of Pakistani society in documentaries relating to the events of 11 September 2001. Khurran looks at two films, or rather mini-documentary series: the two-part *Secret Pakistan* (2011) produced by the BBC and the five-part *Turning Point: 9/11 and the War on Terror* (2021), produced by Netflix. In both cases, there is a process of entextualisation, whereby images taken from the archives are detached from the context of their creation and placed in an entirely new context, that of the documentary in question, supporting its arguments. In both films, stereotypical images of Muslim communities are repeated, with women in hijabs (a symbol of oppression) and bearded men, often with guns,

without us ever knowing where, under what circumstances or why these images were created. They serve to portray Muslims as terrorists, hating the West, and Pakistan as a state playing a vicious game and in fact supporting terrorism. Thus, the stock archives become a new tool of colonial oppression. "What is lacking" – Khurran states – "are accounts of historically situated archives that could lead to a more nuanced understanding of post 9/11 trauma in the region."

The four abovementioned articles are theoretical in nature, dealing with the conceptual apparatus and mechanisms of documentary cinema. The following three, however, describe instances of activism when the aim of the documentary film is to effect social change. Thus, Raya Morag's article is devoted to a strand of Cambodian documentary cinema that attempts to confront the Khmer Rouge genocide in the country. At the same time, Morag sets in motion a broader context – that of documentaries which depict acts of genocide, so abundant in the 20th and 21st centuries. According to Morag, there is a new trend in recent times, which she calls 'perpetrator cinema'. Its focus is on the perpetrators of the crimes (and not, as before, on the victims); it is the perpetrators who are subjected to a kind of interrogation. A new phenomenon, previously unrecorded, has emerged in Cambodian films, namely the 'documentary duel' between the perpetrator and the victim, or the victim's descendant. What is at stake in this duel is not so much to get the perpetrator to confess, but for the victim to regain their dignity and for the perpetrator to be morally condemned.

Hongwei Bao dedicates his article to four films about the LGBT movement in China, made by activists of this community. The author emphasises that these films could appear thanks to the digital revolution, which has made it easier to produce and distribute independent films without financial, technical or institutional backing. In China, where the authorities are unfriendly towards the LGBT movement and the subject matter is virtually non-existent in the public sphere, it was particularly important. The films discussed by Hongwei Bao chart the history of LGBT movements in China, foster the formation of a collective memory of this community, consider the question of the specificity of China's LGBT movements, "they 'queer' the traditionally heteronormative documentary genre" – an interesting reference to Philipp Blum's article – and contest a heteronormative construction of China's collective memory by constructing alternative memories, all with the aim of changing the world with digital video cameras.

Chafic Najem's article is devoted to another phenomenon characteristic of recent years – the recording of reality with mobile phones. In this case, a particular situation is involved, namely films shot by prisoners, using smuggled phones. This gives rise to a new situation. For in the hitherto familiar genre of films

documenting the lives of prisoners, they were always observed from the outside. Here, the prisoners themselves shoot the film from their point of view. Moreover, Najem's article deals with a very specific situation: an attack by Lebanese police on a prison, recorded by a prisoner with a smuggled mobile phone and then spread on social media. Najem confronts two accounts of this police action: the official one, disseminated on television, and the 'underground' one, smuggled out of the prison.

Thus, the new approaches to documentary filmmaking presented in this volume have several dimensions. Firstly, it is about proposing terms, concepts, categories that are new to documentary cinema, such as 'queer' or micro-histories. Secondly, it is about the consequences for documentary filmmaking of new technologies, such as stock images, mobile phones, digitisation, the internet. Thirdly, it is about new themes, such as Chinese LGBT films or Cambodian 'perpetrator cinema', or new takes on old themes, like prison films shot 'from the inside'. Documentary cinema, as has always been the case in its history, is constantly evolving, transforming, reacting with its form and content to the changes brought about by reality.

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Defining documentary[1]

Abstract:

The aim of this paper is to define documentary film. After a brief review of existing definitions, the author proposes his own. The methods of working on the set and the textual features of the films are considered as distinguishing documentary filmmaking from other film genres. Issues such as the filmmakers' interference with the filmed reality, the criteria for distinguishing between fictional and non-fictional elements, the admissibility of special effects, the specificity of editing, and the place of the documentary film among other non-fictional genres are considered. The final definition is confronted with the most recent genres of documentary cinema, namely the animated documentary, the mockumentary and the web-documentary.

Key words: documentary cinema, definitions, specifity, textual features, working on the set

[1] This paper is based on a chapter from my book *Poetyka kina dokumentalnego*, published in Polish in 1999 (1. Edition) and 2004 (2. edition). For the purposes of this publication it has been revised, abridged, and, where possible, updated. Nevertheless, its main part was written in the late 1990s and is based on the state of documentary cinema, and knowledge thereof, at that time. I decided to translate it into English and publish it in a volume on new approaches to documentary because, I hope, the way I define documentary is still new and fresh.

It is striking, how many works on documentary cinema begin with a definition. This situation is unprecedented. Among the thousands of works devoted to feature cinema, as well as other film genres, it is difficult to find any that take the trouble to define their subject. It is clear that their authors are content with the formula that a feature film is what it is, everyone can see it. Meanwhile, there are dozens of definitions of a documentary film, as if almost every author felt a necessity to define their subject.[2] No wonder, then, that documentary film is perhaps the only film genre to have an 'official' definition, adopted by the World Congress of Documentary Filmmakers in Prague in 1948.

This situation only confirms something that is also all too evident: that the status of documentary cinema is far from obvious, that it is not entirely clear what documentary cinema is, what its determinants are, what criteria should be used to distinguish and analyse it, how to draw lines of demarcation between it and other motion picture genres.

This situation stands in peculiar contrast to the fact of the enormous development and proliferation of documentary filmmaking that has been taking place since the 1960s at least. Filmmakers make documentaries, television broadcasts them, streaming platforms stream them, audiences watch them, and none of these sides of the communicative polyphony experiences any particular stress. Most viewers are able to distinguish easily a documentary film in the flood of various audiovisual works. The trouble begins when one tries to describe this specificity. Whether this is because the documentary film is the practical embodiment of the controversy over the relationship between cinema and reality, or because of the filmmaking practice, which is often forced to bend the boundaries of the genre, or because of the enormous diversity of documentary filmmaking, which cannot be crammed into any uniform pattern - the attempt to describe what is intuitively distinguishable faces enormous obstacles. In what follows I will briefly comment upon the most common approaches in defining documentary cinema and then I will dare to work out my own definition.

[2] A spectacular testament to this situation is the gigantic project by Israeli filmmaker and academic, Dan Deva. He published a book which offers close readings of 30 definitions of documentary coined between 1985 and 1959 (Dan Geva, 2021). Two more volumes are in preparation: "Vol. II (1960-1990), in progress, will offer a reflective rendering of an additional 50+ definitions given to Documentary between the years 1960 and 1990. Volume III (1991-2022), under construction, reads through, analyses, contextualises, and reframes an additional 70+ definitions attributed to Documentary between the years 1991 and 2022." (https://www.cilect.org/news/view/1092; accessed 09.05.2023). This means that Dan Geva has gathered at least 150 definitions of documentary.

Review of existing definitions

Creative treatment of actuality

It seems appropriate to start this brief review of existing definitions from the famous Grersonian phrase, according to which a documentary film is a ”creative treatment of actuality” (Rotha, 1939, p. 70). The very wording is important here. ”Treatment”, often understood as ”interpretation” (e.g. in Polish, where the Griersonian phrase is translated as ”twórcza **interpretacja** rzeczywistości”) means first of all ‘working’ the material through, ‘processing’ it, which can lead to interpretation (but also, for example, to dramatisation), while the word ‘actuality’ does not simply mean reality, but external, current, factual reality, thus emphasising the perceptible side of reality and the spontaneity of filming what is in front of the camera (Edmonds, 1974, p. 11). Grierson’s phrase could thus more appropriately, though less neatly, be translated as ‘the creative reworking of the footage of current (in relation to the moment of filming) physical reality’.

Grierson’s phrase (which does not fulfill formal criteria of definition) is so lapidary that we should not expect too much from it. Nevertheless, it does locate the key tensions in documentary cinema that will be a constant theme of reflection from this point onwards. On the one hand, it is the tension between reality and its interpretation, between the object of observation and the observer’s subjective relation to it. On the other hand, Grierson’s term anticipates one of the most commonly used tools for describing this genre, i.e. the tension between surface and depth (More on this: Przylipiak, 2006). The surface, or ‘actuality’, becomes merely a starting point, a material that, through a processing, will allow us to see the ‘depth’, that is, the invisible. John Grierson’s monographer, Ian Aitken, has pointed out that the roots of such an understanding lie in idealist philosophy (the dominant current in Grierson’s university education), which distinguishes between the phenomenal and the real side of reality. Phenomena are detailed and accessible to empiricism, while reality is abstract and general. Reflecting reality serves the search for its general laws, ‘treatment’ subordinates ‘actuality’ to itself, phenomena merely provide the means to comprehend the real (Aitken, 1990).

Defining through the subject and social aims

John Grierson, however, is known less as an adherent of idealist philosophy and more as an active promoter of the idea that documentary film has specific purposes to fulfil in terms of educating a democratic society (Andrzej Kolodynski, 1981). The active propagation of such an understanding of documentary cinema, which some believe Grierson practised for purely tactical reasons (it was

easier to obtain state money for films that were, by definition, congruent in their aims with those of the state apparatus than for purely artistic works) (Vaughan, 1983, p. 30; Winston, 1995, pp. 98-99) determined that for many years to come documentary filmmaking would be defined through the prism of social service, especially in Anglo-Saxon tradition.

The strength of the Griersonian legacy can be seen in many definitions of documentary filmmaking. For example, Basil Wright, one of the more prominent filmmakers within the Griersonian movement, wrote that "documentary is not this or that kind of film, but simply a way of approach to public information" (cited by Barsam, 1973, p. 2). Willard van Dyke stated that in a documentary film "the elements of dramatic conflict represent social and political forces rather than the individual ones" (Engle, 1965; Barsam 1976 p. 275). According to Philip Dunne, what most documentaries have in common is that they are conceived as ideological weapons (idea-weapons) that are meant "to strike a blow for whatever cause the originator has in mind. Therefore, in the broadest sense of the word, documentary film is almost always a tool of propaganda". (Dunne, 1946; in Barsam 1973 p. 2). Raymond Spottiswoode defined documentary filmmaking as follows: "The documentary film is in its subject and approach a dramatised presentation of man's relation to his institutional life, whether industrial, social or political; and in technique, a subordination of form to content" (Spottiswoode, 1950, p. 289). In a detailed discussion, Spottiswoode excluded educational films (lecture films) from the realm of documentary filmmaking because they are not sufficiently dramatised; films about nature and individual characters (personal films) because they do not deal with institutions; and so-called city symphonies because they do not subordinate content to form.

Paul Rotha made the definition of documentary filmmaking the subtitle of his book. On the first page, under the title 'Documentary Film' embossed in large letters, he explains: "The use of the film medium to interpret creatively in social terms the life of the people as it exists in reality" (Rotha, 1939). Throughout the book, Rotha emphasises the social aspect of documentary filmmaking, proving to be the most faithful propagator of Griersonian ideas, more radical and explicit than his master. A documentary film should present the mechanisms that govern reality, and Rotha saw them in the sphere of social life, understood in a Marxian way. The documentary filmmaker is "a propagandist making use of the most influential instrument of his time. He does not march in the crowd, but goes just ahead" (Rotha, 1939, p. 114).

The aforementioned official definition, enacted in 1948 in Prague at the conference of the World Union of Documentary, can be regarded as the quintessence

of this trend. According to it, "By the documentary film is meant all methods of recording on celluloid any aspect of reality interpreted either by factual shooting or by sincere and justifiable reconstruction, so as to appeal either to reason or emotion, for the purpose of stimulating the desire for, and the widening of human knowledge and understanding, and of truthfully posing problems and their solutions in the spheres of economics, culture, and human relations." (in Barsam, 1973, p. 1).

According to Andrzej Kołodyński, the main sin of this definition is its excessive generality, as a result of which its requirements are met by every film of a realist nature. Indeed, the effort to cover as many areas as possible can be seen in its use of phrases that are either all-encompassing or poorly differentiated, such as "any aspects of reality" or "all methods of recording" (Kołodyński, 1981, p. 27-28). On the other hand, some formulations are unduly restrictive. While the restriction of recording technology (celluloid) can be understood, the restriction of the subject matter of documentaries to "economics, culture and human relations" is puzzling. In light of this, it is impossible to make a documentary film about nature (such as Muridsany and Perennou's *Microcosmos*, 1996) or space (such as Drygas's *State of Weightlessness*, 1994), or, for example, about rain (such as Joris Ivens's *Rain*, 1929).

It is interesting to note the presence of wording that refers to the ethics of documentary makers. They are supposed to pose problems in a 'truthful' way, and their working methods (e.g. reconstructions) on the set must be "sincere and justifiable". The introduction of such formulations into definitions must astound, for they clearly confuse the descriptory and normative approach. One does not say of poetry that it must be sincere and justifiable to be poetry, nor even of mathematics that it must rely on good counting to be mathematics. We usually say that dishonest poetry is bad poetry (but poetry nonetheless) or that a miscalculated mathematical equation is bad mathematics, but mathematics nevertheless. Here, by contrast, the ethical postulate becomes the criterion of the genre. A dishonest or unsubstantiated reconstruction (never mind who is judging it or on what basis) excludes the film from the noble documentary genre; and similarly, a film that presents a problem in a false way is not an unreliable, untrue, biased film, but nevertheless a documentary, it simply ceases to be a documentary. This ethical saturation of genological formulations has become firmly established in the history of reflection on documentary filmmaking, contributing to a great deal of confusion.

According to the official definition, the genre hallmarks are its extremely pragmatic and noble aims: to develop human knowledge and to pose and solve

(!) problems. A sceptic would probably ask whether any documentary film really develops human knowledge and understanding better than, for example, the films of Ingmar Bergman, or would demand an explanation of what problem was solved by, for example, Grierson's film about fishing for herring in the North Sea (Drifters, 1929), or the film about delivering letters by train (Night Mail, 1936). There is, of course, no good answer to these questions, except one that situates the definition under discussion in the historical context of 1930s British documentary filmmaking.

As far as the film form is concerned, only the question of reenactments is addressed, which is also a reverberation of the time when the definition was forged. The members of the Griersonian movement used reenactments so often that they could never have enough discussion on the subject. A distinction was made between the reconstruction of events that happened and events that did not happen - the latter being dismissed as fiction. A distinction was also made between the reconstruction of events that did not happen, but could have happened as typical or constituting a synthesis. Recurrent staging practices led, according to Brian Winston, to a complete confusion of boundary lines between fact and fiction (Winston, 1995, p. 120).

Defining through style and working methods

Documentary filmmaking can also be defined through the formal qualities of the films and the methods of working on the set. According to Richard Barsam, a non-fiction film

> stems from, and is based on, an immediate social situation: sometimes a problem, sometimes a crisis, sometimes an undramatic and seemingly unimportant person or event. It is usually filmed on the actual scene, with the actual people, without sets, costumes, written dialogue, or created sound effects. It tries to recreate the feeling of 'being there', with as much fidelity to fact as the situation allows. A typical nonfiction film is structured in two or three parts, with an introduction and conclusion, and tends to follow a pattern from problem to solution. Even more typically, it is in black-and-white, with direct sound recording (or simulated sound), a musical score written expressly for the film and conceived as part of a cinematic whole, and, often as not, a spoken narration. Its typical running time is 30 minutes, but some films run less, last less and some are ninety-minute feature-length films (Barsam, 1973, p. 4).

Bill Nichols found this definition ludicrous, not unreasonably so (Nichols, 1981, p. 173). Of course, a documentary film can have two or three parts just

as well as four or five; it does not need to use a musical score specifically written for it, and even if it did, this very characteristic would make it more like its great rival - the feature film - than different; a note that spoken narration can but need not occur, is only important as a tribute to the historical value of off-screen narration in documentary cinema. The exact specification of the type of tape and the length of the film is an aftermath of the stage when Barsam's definition was created, i.e. the late 1960s; while the statement that the sound can be direct - which could be a hallmark of documentary filmmaking - but can also be postsynchronous again makes it difficult to separate the documentary from the feature film.

The second part of Barsam's definition is vague and incidental , but the first one encapsulates, as if in a nutshell, several ways of defining documentary cinema. First, its distinguishing feature is the subject: the social situation. This sounds Griersonian, but the author immediately expands the field of definition in such a way that the Griersonian tinge disappears when it turns out that a social situation can be a problem, a crisis, but also "an undramatic and seemingly unimportant person or event."

This part of Barsam's definition also considers work on the set. A documentary film should be "shot on the actual scene, with the actual people". Work on the set is confined by a series of prohibitions: what must not be done in a documentary film. There are: no set design, no costumes, no written dialogue and no artificially fabricated sound effects. The list of prohibitions is random and could easily be made longer, but more importantly, this definition by negation is perhaps the most common in the colloquial understanding of documentary filmmaking.

Finally, this definition also refers to the filmmaker's goal (recreate the feeling of "being there") and, above all, to the viewer, who, while watching the film, is supposed to feel that he or she "is on the scene of events". Fidelity to the facts must, of course, be preserved, but only as much as the situation allows. It may be presumed that if maintaining fidelity to the facts could disturb the viewer's sense of "being on the scene", the facts should rather be dispensed with.

David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson define documentary filmmaking by the peculiarity of the process of production. In their view, the genre is distinguished by less control both in the preparation phase and during shooting:

"Typically, the documentary filmmaker controls only certain variables of preparation, shooting and assembly; some variables (e.g., script, rehearsal) may be omitted, whereas others (setting, lighting, behaviour of the figures) are present but often uncontrolled" (Bordwell, Thompson, 1990, p. 23).

The idea of documentary filmmaking as an 'uncontrolled' genre was first put forward by Richard Leacock in an article entitled "For an Uncontrolled Cinema" (Leacock, 1961), published at the dawn of the direct cinema movement. In his polemic, Bill Nichols argues that the documentary filmmaker does not have less power over the material, but understands this power differently. The aim of his work is 'to evoke highly natural behaviour' (Nichols, p. 1991, p. 13). Indeed, the technique of the documentary filmmaker differs from that of fiction directors. However, I agree with Bordwell and Thompson, that in many instances the filmmaker 'gives' voice to reality, without influencing or controlling it.

Nichols also makes an attempt to define documentary filmmaking through the properties of the 'corpus of texts', i.e. the immanent properties of documentary films (Nichols, 1991: 18-23). The American researcher enumerates the properties that characterise documentaries, such as: the predominance of argumentative structures, including in particular the structure of 'problem-solving'; a relative ease of jumps in time and space, considerably greater than in feature films (the spatio-temporal continuity is less important than the fluidity and continuity of the argumentation); the great role of the soundtrack and the verbal layer in building the dramatic structure of the film. One can argue about whether the American researcher has actually listed all the textual features of documentary film, but another factor is more important: textual features cannot be hallmarks of a documentary film, because they can very easily be faked.

Indeed, there is an asymmetry in this respect between the two great rivals, documentary and fiction film. A documentary film cannot 'simulate' a fiction film without falling into an internal contradiction, without self-destructing. A feature film, on the other hand, can perfectly - and has repeatedly done so, at least in fragments - simulate the documentary style. From this it follows that such a style actually exists, that there is a set of textual features that the viewer routinely associates with the documentary film. However, this set of characteristics is not sufficient to reliably identify documentary filmmaking, as they can easily be forged.

Defining through the context: indexing

Since the attempts to define the genre by the uniqueness of its social mission and by the peculiarity of its textual features fail, some researchers have turned to the option that a film becomes documentary not by its properties, but by the context in which it is placed. The viewer, when judging that the film they are watching is a documentary, sets his or her mind to a particular type of reading. This decision depends to a large extent on extra-textual circumstances. The

placement of a given film on a documentary TV channel, or a simple announcement of it in newspapers as a documentary, triggers the right type of reading, at least until the properties of the film itself, its textual features (e.g. excessive staging) make the viewer doubt the reliability of the extra-textual information. At the same time, the information that some fragments of a given film, even if they look very credible, have been staged, fabricated, immediately changes the viewer's attitude and effectively blocks the type of reading proper to documentary filmmaking.

Starting from these premises, Noel Carroll believed that the basis for considering a film as a documentary is to index it, i.e. to label it through the relevant institutions (Carroll, 1996a, p. 232; Plantinga, 1997, p. 16). In other words, a documentary film is a film that has been labelled as documentary by credible institutions or practices. The indexing of a film can be done in a number of ways: by discussing it in magazines devoted to documentary film or in documentary film history manuals, by showing it at documentary film festivals or in a television slot or on channels, by announcing it appropriately on television or in newspapers. Bill Nichols emphasises the role that the documentary community plays in the recognition of a film as a documentary. A documentary film is the product of those who consider themselves documentary filmmakers (Nichols, 1991, p. 15) and form a community, integrated through 'institutional practice', i.e. festivals, seminars, magazines, production and distribution companies, committed capital, etc. (Nichols, 1991, p. 15-18).

Certainly, in many cases, a film begins to function as a documentary because it has been screened at a documentary film festival, shown on television in an appropriate programming 'slot', or because it has become labelled as documentary in the cinema history. Yet it is not the case that any film can be labelled as documentary. For this designation to be effective, to be accepted by the audience, the film in question must be in harmony with the viewer's idea of what the documentary style looks like. The viewer will easily agree that *Gimme Shelter* (1970) by the Maysles brothers, showing the tragically ended concert of the Rolling Stones in Altamont, California, is documentary. The Rolling Stones are real, the concert at Altamont did happen, the people shown there did not play for the film. However, if Fellini's *Rome* (1972) were to be announced as a documentary, the viewer would have doubts, and if *Casanova* (1976) by the same director were to be announced in this way, the viewer would simply shrug his shoulders, because the textual features of the film (e.g. the elaborate, clearly artificial scenography, etc.) clearly indicate a way of working on set that cannot be reconciled with the common understanding of documentary style.

It follows that the textual characteristics (i.e. the qualities of the finished film) may be sufficient to exclude it from the documentary family, but they are not sufficient to establish its belonging to this family, because a feature film can "fake" all the textual characteristics of a documentary film. This is where the need for indexing comes from. The recognition of a given film as documentary demands three things to be taken into account at the same time: the method of working on set, the textual features, and indexing. Indexing is in fact nothing more than informing the viewer that there is a correspondence between the textual features and the methods of working on set suggested by them.

An attempt at my own definition

When we look again at all the definitions cited above, it becomes apparent that documentary film has attempted to be defined by: its social objectives (the education of a democratic society); its subject matter (the working people or, in other terms, the fields of economics, culture, human relations, or the "immediate social situation", and finally, most generally, man and his affairs); the methods of working on set, and more broadly, of working on the film; the textual features of the film itself, its style; the effect exerted on the viewer (the impression of truth, direct contact with reality, being on the scene of events); indexing, that is labelling as documentary by credible institutions or practices.

In what follows we will try to forge yet another definition of documentary. I will focus on working on the set and textual features – as they seem to me the most pertinent – and I hope to develop some new ideas and lines of argumentation.

The vast majority of the definitions of documentary film formulated so far have been guided by the intention of separating it from its great rival - feature cinema. This is justified by the history of reflection on documentary film, as well as the common understanding of this type of cinema. The first impetus in both colloquial discussions and theoretical reflection have been to distinguish "cinema of fact" from "cinema of fiction". However, such a distinction, while important, is not sufficient. In order to define documentary film, to highlight its distinctiveness, we must demarcate the boundaries on three sides. First, to separate it from fiction; second, to separate it from the so-called "experimental" or avant-garde cinema; third, to make distinctions within the vast field of factual programming.

Films of facts and films of fiction

The starting point for a definition of documentary film (…) is the simple conclusion that what the documentary "actually" records is not reality in itself, but a moment of encounter of a film crew with reality, or – more precisely – of people behind the camera with reality in front of the camera. This moment is the key distinguishing feature of documentary cinema, and the one that most clearly distinguishes between a documentary and a fictional film. To put it bluntly, in fiction film people behind the camera shape reality (space, set) and behaviour of the filmed people; in documentary cinema people behind the camera should not influence reality and the behaviour of the filmed people. So let us consider the most general formula of a documentary working method. It reads as follows (working definition no 1):

A documentary film is a film in which the filmmakers do not interfere with the filmed reality.

If this definition were to be elaborated on, it would take the form of a series of prohibitions. Their relatively complete list would be as follows: documentary filmmakers are not allowed to hire actors, write dialogues for the filmed people or influence their activities, direct their behaviour in front of the camera, change their appearance, transfer them without the viewer's knowledge to new places; they can't adopt the appearance of the filmed places to the filmmakers needs, or deform them using photographic or editing techniques. We can also try to use a positive clause: a non-fictional film is a film that records the natural behaviour of "normal" people (i. e. not actors) in their natural environment.

There are usually two kinds of objections to such formulations. First of all, talking about non-interference with reality as the basic distinguishing feature of documentary film is wrong, because the very fact of making a film, the appearance of a film crew in a given reality, is a powerful interference with reality, after which it is no longer the same. Secondly, the claim that in documentary cinema the filmmaker is not allowed to direct people's behaviour in front of the camera obviously disregards not only the elementary requirements of working on the set of each film (including a documentary), but also historical practice, i.e. the fact that among all the films that are regarded as documentaries, it would be difficult to find those in which there was no element of directing behaviour of the filmed people. One can, of course, say that it is all the worse for history, or that, in fact, hardly any real documentary has been produced so far, or, as some would like, that a documentary film is virtually impossible. Perhaps, however, it would be wiser to consider both the issue of the presence of the camera and the directing of the behaviour of the filmed people before reaching a final conclusion.

The presence of the camera as a form of interference with reality.

The first objection to defining a documentary film as the one in which the filmmakers do not interfere with what is in front of the camera is an assumption that the mere appearance of a film crew is a powerful interference with reality, because people change their behaviour in the presence of the camera.

The easiest way out of this situation, it seems, is to film with a hidden camera. It completely eradicates the abovementioned objection. The filmmakers do not interfere with reality, but observe it, as a result of which the full truth of human behaviour, its naturalness and spontaneity is saved. Yet it is puzzling that very few of the major films in the history of documentary cinema have been made using this method. This fact alone is enough to exclude it from our considerations. Although theoretically it solves many problems, in practice it is rarely used (above all for ethical reasons), and therefore it cannot help in an attempt to elaborate the determinants of documentary cinema.

So if we abandon the hidden camera solution, the problem of interference with reality returns. However, does it concern all documentary cinema, or only some of its forms? The categories of addressing proposed by Bill Nichols (Nichols, 1981, pp. 182-198) are useful to consider this issue. Nichols distinguished two types of addressing in documentary cinema: a third-person address and a first-person address. Nichols calls third-person addressing (which is typical to observational mode) such a form in which the characters shown in a documentary film do not in any way signal that they are aware of the presence of a camera. So they behave as if the camera were not there: they do not make eye contact with it, they do not talk to it, they do not make any gestures because of its presence. In this kind of documentary, the situation is fictional and similar to that of feature cinema. The filmed people pretend that they are not being filmed, that there is no camera, that they behave as if the act of filming were not taking place at all. First-person addressing, on the other hand, takes place when the viewer is the direct addressee of the speech from the screen. This happens in the case of an off-screen narration or when the filmed people talk directly into the camera. In both cases the fiction which we are dealing with in the observational formula is removed. It is especially visible in the form of an interview or in the statements of the filmed person directly to the camera. The filmed people do not pretend that the camera is not there. On the contrary: the crew and the situation of filming exist and are often shown openly (for example in the form of a reporter - the crew's delegate to the world of the film). Moreover, the filmed people behave the

way they do precisely because of the presence of the filmmakers. It seems that all the conventionality commonly associated with the observational model of documentary film has been overcome. The filmmaker does not act on the principle of non-interference with reality, but on the contrary - they openly interfere with it and films the effect of this interference. So, the problem of filmmakers' interference with reality, as formulated here, does not concern the whole of documentary cinema, but only a part of it, the one that uses a third person address. Let us limit ourselves now to this kind of cinema.

It must first be said that this problem is not the same in all situations. There are situations in which the presence of the camera is not only not a surprise and a deforming intervention, but is even an expected contribution to the ritual. This is what happens nowadays in all public events - celebrations, festivals, important political meetings, etc. The multitude of TV crews contribute to the atmosphere and scenery of such events.

The presence of the camera crew is relatively indifferent not only in the preplanned public situations, but also in completely different situations, such as unexpected, violent cataclysms and catastrophes, when people are so preoccupied with their activities that they do not pay attention to the presence of the camera.

So, the power of the film crew's interference with reality is directly proportional to the degree of intimacy and privacy of the situation. The more public it is, the more we can be sure that the presence of filmmakers did not change it. There is also a certain spectrum of relatively indifferent situations – e.g. when people just walk down streets, in parks or museums. The presence of the film crew in these places does not confuse them either, although some of the filmed people may already start to behave differently. When, on the other hand, proverbially speaking, the door to the apartment closes, and a documentary crew faces private situations to which it usually does not have access, the problem becomes acute. The documentary filmmakers do not give up without a fight, though, but try to accustom the filmed people to the presence of the camera and the film crew. For example, they stay at the shooting site for a long time, merging with reality, or they initiate the filmed people - like Flaherty the Eskimos - into the technical nuances of film production, and befriend them. It also happens that they arrange situations that serve something other than what the filmed people think, and in this roundabout way they achieve the naturalness of their characters' behaviour. At this point, Nichols seems to be right when, contrary to Bordwell, he writes that the directing of a documentary does not depend on less control over reality, but on other methods of exercising this control and its other goals.

So, responding to the objection to defining a documentary film as one in which the filmmakers do not interfere with the reality filmed, based on the argument that the mere fact of the appearance of a film crew is a powerful interference with reality, we can say that:

- this objection is justified in relation to only one form of documentary film, i.e. to the observational mode with a third person address;

- even within this model it is graded along the axis of privacy of the filmed event;

- at the most troublesome end of the scale, i.e. when filming small and private situations is concerned, the mere presence of the crew on the spot becomes a serious challenge for documentary filmmakers. Here, more than anywhere else, faith breaks down that it is enough to film reality to show what it is like. For in order to show what it is, you need to work on it, you need to restore it to its natural state, destroyed by the presence of the crew.

Trying to modify the initial definition, so that the results of the above considerations are taken into account, it can be said that:

(working definition no.2; new part in italics)

A documentary film is a film in which the filmmakers do not interfere with the filmed reality, ***or they interfere and this interference is a structural element of the film (1st-person address), or they interfere only to restore the state of reality which existed before the film crew was introduced.***

Let us now move on to the next problem, which is the issue of staging in a documentary.

Mise-en-scene in documentary

It seems that nothing could be more opposed to the idea of documentary cinema than directing events in front of the camera and staging the behaviour of the filmed people. And yet, perhaps as a paradox, the practice of staging is as old as documentary cinema, and it would be difficult to find a film in the history of documentary cinema that completely avoids any form of arranging what is there in front of the camera. Therefore it is necessary to ask why documentary directors use staging, despite the fact that it seems to be clearly contrary to the basic principles of the genre. There are several answers to this question.

First, the staging is driven by the elementary requirements of working on the set. In order to film someone, you need to set up the film equipment, and very often also the sound and lighting equipment. If in the script of the film there is a scene in which the protagonist crosses the street, instead of chasing him around the city and waiting for the moment when he decides to cross the street, he is asked to perform this easy-to-use action especially for the camera.

A second possible reason for staging is that the filmmakers would otherwise not be able to film a certain situation, either because they were simply not there, or because the situation by its very nature takes place away from the film lenses. Moreover, filming can be harmful to the filmed people. For example, the presence of a film crew at a court hearing, and then the public functioning of the finished film, can affect the verdict and the fate of the main character. For this reason, it is safer to use fiction.

Finally, sometimes staging is used in order to "open" reality, reveal some of its traits, which otherwise would not be revealed to the camera's eye. As Marcel Łoziński put it:

> [...] sometimes reality needs to be "activated", one has to give it some ignition, trigger certain objective situations - help to reveal its hidden truth, hardly accessible to the "objective" documentary camera. The trick is not to lie to the reality, but to be in harmony with it (Łoziński, 1992).

Are stagings and reenactments allowed in documentary cinema? It depends on what is expected of it. The task of a documentary filmmaker is to show filmed people in their full truth, starting from basic, administrative data such as name, age, gender, profession, through the truthfulness of the surroundings of the place of residence, to the truthfulness of their activities and behaviour. This means that we can immediately exclude from the area of documentary cinema such situations in which characters are played by actors, whether professional or even non-professional, but who play other people's roles during the film.

On the other hand, staging that consists in recreating simple, repetitive activities by real characters is allowed. Such reenactments, necessary for production reasons, belong to the everyday practice of documentary filmmaking and should not pose any ethical problems. Whether such reenactments are credible, and whether they are faithful to the actual behaviour of a given person, depends on the skills of the filmmaker, whose aim is to show natural reactions and behaviour of the filmed people.

As for the other forms of staging, let's call them "complex", in which whole situations are staged, or an actor is introduced, in order to "disturb", "press", "ac-

tivate" reality or to reveal its actual face, a valuable hint was offered by Krzysztof Kieślowski in his diploma thesis at the Lodz Film School. Kieślowski used an example of a hypothetical film about seducers and beautiful girls. If we make a movie about seducers, we can work with beautiful girls. They, by their behaviour, prompted by the filmmaker, try to extract the idiosyncratic behaviour of the seducers. If we make a film about beautiful girls, we can cooperate with seducers. What is unacceptable, however, is a collaboration with seducers when making a film about them and, likewise, a collaboration with girls when a film is about them (Kieślowski, 2020, p. 15).

That means that such staging is legitimate if a fictional element plays an auxiliary role, provoking a reality which is genuine and unstaged. However, situations in which fictional elements introduced by the team become the carrier of the film's message are not allowed.

Let us take a real example here. In the film *Curriculum Vitae* (Życiorys, 1975) by Krzysztof Kieślowski, a fictional element was introduced into the fabric of reality. An actor (though not a professional one), with a cooked biography and fictional name (Gralak), sat down in front of a real communist party control committee, which was to judge his life. If *Curriculum Vitae* was a film about Gralak, then of course the abovementioned rule would be infringed, because Gralak is a fictional entity. If, however, we treat this film as a film about the communist party, about the party control committee, about the mechanisms of its operation and the people who belong to it, then the staging used in this film is legitimate: the protagonist and his biography are only catalysts, which help to extract genuine reactions from real people.

After taking into account the latest findings, the definition will read as follows (working definition 3; new part in italics):

> **A documentary film is a film in which the filmmakers do not interfere with the filmed reality, or they interfere and this interference is a structural element of the film (1st-person address), or they interfere only to restore the state of reality which existed before the film crew was introduced**, ***or to extract the genuine behaviour of the filmed people, who are "normal" people at the moment of the filming.***

Non-fictionality

The phrase about "normal" people in this definition is clearly awkward. It means, of course, that these people are themselves, do not play anybody else, that documentary cinema shows reality as it is, not distorted by fiction. Although intuitively understandable, it eludes a precise description. The con-

cept of artistic fiction belongs to the most complex and ambiguous aesthetic categories, so an attempt to define non-fictionality as a negative for fiction would have to entail entanglement in the whole baggage of doubts surrounding fictionality.

Promising prospects for the distinction between fiction and non-fiction relate to the category of possible worlds. Usually, the real world is defined as one of the possible worlds, but differing from them in some aspects. Among these differences, the issue of the completeness is crucial. Fictional worlds are functional, that is, they contain only what is needed to tell the story and describe the surroundings. No matter how detailed the description of reality in a fictional work is, it is never complete, for its many properties go beyond the boundaries of this world. The test is the kind of questions that can be asked about such a world, led by the famous "How many children did Lady Macbeth have?" This question must remain unanswered, because Lady Macbeth's children do not belong to Shakespeare's drama. Unlike fictional worlds, non-fictional worlds are complete, i.e. they can be reasonably asked about facts and events not presented in the work itself. "The world is complete if every sentence (in a logical sense) that describes it is either true or false" (Łepkowska, 1991, p. 66). One can reasonably ask what illnesses Nanook suffered from as a child. The average viewer does not know the answers to this question, because the Flaherty film does not say it, but the question itself is sensible, and the answer belongs to the complete world, a section of which has been portrayed.

In view of the above characteristics, it can be objected that many feature films are reconstructions of real events. Almost every feature film contains authentic elements, such as real places, characters modelled on real or reconstructed events. Typically, films combine, in various proportions, fictional and non-fictional elements, and then "the descriptions of ontologically incomplete people, places and events or variations on real people, places and events [...] transform all units of the fictional world into incomplete units" (Carroll, 1996a, p. 238). However, one can imagine a very careful reconstruction, where all the elements relate to real people, events and places. Asking about Lady Macbeth's children does not make sense, but a question about the children of Christopher Columbus from Ridley Scott's *1492* does, because, although the film is fictional, (…) the main character is based on a real historical figure.

There is usually an attempt to resolve these dilemmas by saying that the documentary shows "genuine", "normal", "real" people or, as Bill Nichols wrote, "social actors." Each time the point is the same: that there are no actors in the documentary (even non-professionals), that no one plays a role, at least in the

sense that is proper to a feature film. However, all the above terms, are not only awkward (because one might get the impression that the actors are "abnormal" or "unreal"), but are still imprecise, partial (they concern only the authenticity of people, not, for example, places or events) and do not cover various less typical cases (e.g. a documentary about an actor).

This can be remedied by differentiating the levels of meaning of the cinematic image. There are many classifications of this type, to recall those from Barthes, Panofsky, Gombrich or Pryluck. For the purposes of this work, I want to use the Monroe C. Beardsley classification, cited by Noel Carroll (Carroll, 1996, pp. 240-241). According to it, three levels of meaning can be distinguished in every film image. First of all, each shot physically portrays its source, i.e. a real object, place, person or event recorded on the tape. In this sense, every shot of Rhett Butler in *Gone with the Wind* portrays Clark Gable, the shot of the interior of a spaceship from Star Wars shows an excerpt from the film set, and Godard's *Alphaville* shows the streets of Paris. Let us call this kind of meaning a source meaning.

Second, each shot represents a class of objects, people, or events: "people", "men", "women", "city", "forest", "catastrophe." Let us call this meaning "general meaning".

Third, the people, places, objects and events shown in a film have names and functions assigned to them for the purposes of that film. And so, Clark Gable becomes Rhett Butler, a fragment of the film set - the interior of a spaceship, and Paris - a gloomy city of a dystopian future called *Alphaville*. Let's call this meaning "nominal".

In a documentary film, the first and the third of the above-mentioned meanings must overlap. In other words: the source meaning is the same as the nominal meaning.

After supplementing it with the findings regarding the status of the presented reality, it takes the following form (working definition no. 4; new part in italics):

> **A documentary film is a film *that presents a fragment of the complete world, in which the nominal meanings are identical to the source meanings*, in which the filmmakers do not interfere with the filmed reality, or they interfere and this interference is a structural element of the film (1st-person address), or they interfere only to restore the state of reality which existed before the film crew was introduced, or to extract the genuine behaviour of the filmed people.**

Documentary Cinema and Avant-garde

We are interested in the borderline of avant-garde and documentary cinema for the simple reason that there are quite a few films that meet even the strictest conditions of documentary filmmaking in the stage of shooting, in which the condition of non-interference of the film crew into the filmed reality is fully respected, and which at the same time look radically different from mainstream documentary films. I am thinking of such films as *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) by D. Vertov, *Back and Forth* (1969) by Michael Snow, the series of "hyperreal" films by Andy Warhol such as *Sleep* (1964), *Kiss* (1963), *Eat* (1963) or *Empire* (1965) and *Real Italian Pizza* (1971) by David Rimmer. I have chosen these particular examples (you could put dozens of others in their place), because they reflect a relatively complete range of deviations from the documentary mainstream.

And so, the documentary character of *Man with a Movie Camera* is sometimes questioned due to the unusual editing of this film and the use of tricks, special effects such as superimpositions, split screen, animations, "strobe" photos (more on this: Petric, 1978). Snow's *Back and Forth* raises doubts as it breaks the traditional bond between the means of cinematic expression and the story. This film consists of shots of the classroom, captured in pans and tilts. You can see people coming in, talking inside the room, and also outside the window, etc. It is impossible to follow the story or the characters. The camera movements don't depend on the action, but become the objects of attention themselves. In order to understand this film, one must assume that "its subject are shots and camera movements" (Salska-Kaca, 1989, p. 191).

Warhol's hyperreal films are based on rejection of editing (*Sleep*) or any thematic development (*Sleep, Empire*). *Sleep* shows several hours of a man's sleep, captured in long takes, whereas in *Empire* we watch many different takes of the Empire State Building shot at different times of day and night. In *Real Italian Pizza* by David Rimmer we see

> an entrance to a pizzeria filmed on many different days and seasons, at different speeds. In a short film of just fifteen minutes, taking advantage of experimental means, Rimmer creates a dense, documentary image of a pizzeria in an average big American city. (Salska-Kaca, 1989, p. 194)

The aforementioned films raise three issues with regard to the definition of documentary.

First, it is an issue of applicability of special effects, such as high-speed, slow-motion, superimpositions, computer simulations, to documentary films. Secondly, there is the question of the relation of the means of cinematographic expression to the filmed reality (in the case of Snow's film). Third, it is a question of the syntagmatic order, or in other words, the editing of a documentary film.

CGI and special effects

With regard to the first of these issues, I want to adopt a normative solution: special effects and CGI shouldn't be used in a documentary film because they distort the indexical bond between filmed reality and its recordings.

In recent years, due to, among others, changes in technology and the style of communication, the limits of the documentary cinema tolerance for special effects and transformations of time and space have shifted significantly. Sometimes such effects play the role of an ornament, in other cases they play an important role in the aesthetic concept of a given film. Films in which technological transformations prevail, should be excluded from the genre in question. In other cases, however, when they play subsidiary role, there may also be arguments in favour of the documentary nature of a given film.

However, it is worth emphasising once again that the genre classification of a given film has nothing to do with the degree of its truthfulness. A film about a pizzeria in the middle of a city, which condenses time and space, can be much deeper and more incisive than a film about this pizzeria, which fully respects the principles of documentary cinema. Only the former, possibly wise, engaging, true and incisive, will not be qualified as a documentary, while the latter, possibly boring, false and superficial, will gain this qualification.

After modifying our definition by the recent findings, it takes the following form (working definition 5; new part in italics):

> **A documentary film is a film that presents a fragment of the complete world, in which the nominal meanings are identical to the source meanings, *in which the indexical fidelity to reality is maintained in each shot*, in which the filmmakers do not interfere with the reality in front of the camera, or they interfere and this interference is a structural element of the film (1st-person address), or they interfere only to restore the state of reality which existed before the film crew was introduced, or to extract the genuine behaviour of the filmed people.**

The problem of autotelicity

Another issue, raised here by the case of Snow's film, concerns the distinction between a documentary film and the so-called structural film. Structural film is a type of experimental film that exposes the structural, or even better - material factors of films, i.e. makes a type of film stock, lighting, camerawork, individual means of expression, etc., its subject, and makes the viewer aware of them. Thus, structural film operates on the lowest levels of film, examines the properties of language and material, its role ends where the primacy of the filmed reality begins, when the film begins to present, describe or tell something. In a structural film the filmed reality is secondary to the (exposed with special force) properties of the material, the camera or elements of the film language. According to Mirosława Salska-Kaca:

> the most characteristic and tangible feature of the avant-garde is the orientation of its work towards autotelicity, (…) i.e. (…) towards the film medium, means of expression available to cinema, methods of film narration, etc., and this influences the development of the specific aesthetics. Although a current of structural film has been distinguished, which deals only with such issues, the truth is that in all avant-garde works the trend of metalinguistic reflection is something that comes to mind from the very beginning (Salska-Kaca, 1989, p. 190).

The following reservation should therefore be made here: in a documentary film, the autotelic function either does not exist, or if it exists, it cannot suppress or dominate the basic function of recording of reality. Our definition then, supplemented with the issue of autotelicity, will be as follows (working definition no. 6; new part in italics)

> **A documentary film is a film that presents a fragment of the complete world, in which the nominal meanings are identical to the source meanings, in which the indexical fidelity to reality is maintained in each shot, in which the filmmakers do not interfere with the filmed reality, or they interfere and this interference is a structural element of the film (1st-person address), or they interfere only to restore the state of reality which existed before the film crew was introduced, or to extract the genuine behaviour of the filmed people, *in which the autotelic function cannot suppress or dominate the function of recording reality*.**

Editing and syntagmatic organisation of the material

A trivial experience of anyone who watches documentary films is that there are films which admittedly have been shot in compliance with the rules of documentary filmmaking (basically – respecting the rule on non-interference with the filmed reality and its consequences), but still do not resemble what is customarily regarded as documentary films. This is the case of Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*, which undoubtedly belongs to the canon of documentary cinema, but which to contemporary viewers who do not know the broader context may seem very far from it. Moreover, Vertov's film is not the most extreme example of this phenomenon – other examples are provided by Stan Brakhage's films, shot in compliance with documentary demands, but usually regarded as representatives of experimental cinema. More broadly, one can imagine a completely random montage of a series of documentary shots. Apart from special cases, we will not be inclined to consider it as a documentary film. To put it another way, some methods of syntagmatic organisation of material and some methods of editing adhere to the common understanding of documentary cinema, while others do not. A similar problem, although for completely the opposite reason, arises in the case of "hyperreal" films by Warhol. While in the first case, exemplified here by Vertov's films, the problem was the excess of editing and unconventional ways of combining shots, in the case of Warhol it would be the complete lack of editing. It means that there are some if not rules, then at least habits, concerning both the duration of film shots and the methods of their combination, which determine that a certain type of combination of shots is accepted as documentary, while some others are not.

When it comes to the shot length, it seems that general rules regarding film editing can be applied here, linking the duration of the shot with its informative content and the level of interest of the viewer. The length of the shot is regulated by the categories of minimum and maximum of perception, the minimum being the lowest threshold necessary to recognise the content of the shot, and the maximum being the moment when the content of this shot is already well recognised. Shots that are shorter than the time of the perceptual minimum cause an informative hunger, that is a lack of time to recognise their content, while shots that are longer than the maximum become boring or begin to have a contemplative value, which results not so much from the content of a given shot, but rather from the very fact of the flow of time. In both cases, the autotelic value looms ahead. The few-frame shots by Vertov, as well as the many-hour-long shots by Warhol, are devoid of any informative value, and at the same time they maximise the autotelic value, i.e. they draw the viewer's attention either to the editing itself

- in the first case - or to the length of the shot - in the second. For this reason, both of them fall outside the boundaries of documentary cinema.

However, the issue of the editing rhythm, duration of the shot, is only a prelude to the real problem, perhaps one of the most difficult, which is to define the boundaries between the editing forms allowed in documentary cinema and those that are not acceptable and the use of which "pushes" a given film beyond the boundaries of the genre. A documentary film should be composed in such a way that the viewer has a sense that a recording adheres to profilmic reality. At the same time – as Wojciech Wiszniewski, an outstanding Polish documentary filmmaker rightly states – documentary film manifests, if only primitively, an ordered image of the world, that is, a striving, characteristic of all human culture, to understand the world, to find its essence, its general principle (Wiszniewski, 1976, pp. 62, 63). The world can be chaotic, but the viewer expects an orderly image of it, which they can identify with reality itself. Therefore, a documentary film must imitate in its structure the conventional methods humans use for ordering reality. I consider this matter in details elsewhere (Przylipiak 1998; Przylipiak 2004, p. 98-103), so here I will just give my conclusions. Documentary films are commonly organised according to the category of time (e.g. one day in the life of a city) and space (near, far, beside, behind, etc.). In addition, the bond between the elements of the film may be analogous to the bond which humans use when connecting phenomena in reality. Willem Hesling (1989) attempted to establish a basic repertoire of argumentation patterns found in documentary cinema. In his view, the bond between assertion and argument acquires an irresistible power in the eyes of the viewer when it resembles the kind of bond that the viewer believes connects phenomena in reality. Hesling distinguishes six possible types of such bond – cause-effect, indexical, parallel, analogical, generalising and classifying) – which, to my mind, can be reduced to three: cause-effect, analogy/contrast and part/whole.

If we now complete the definition of documentary cinema developed so far with this thesis, our definition will read as follows (working definition no. 7; new part in italics):

> **A documentary film is a film that presents a fragment of the complete world, in which the nominal meanings are identical to the source meanings, in which the indexical fidelity to reality is maintained in each shot, in which the filmmakers do not interfere with the reality in front of the camera, or they interfere and this interference is a structural element of the film (1st-person address), or they interfere only to restore the state of reality which existed before the film crew was**

introduced, or to extract the genuine behaviour of the filmed people, *which imitates conventional methods humans use for ordering reality*, in which the autotelic function cannot suppress or dominate the function of recording reality.

Documentary cinema and non-fictionality

The third context that must be taken into consideration when defining documentary cinema is the context of the documentary film itself, or rather its place among various non-fictional (factual) subgenres. Two things at least must be taken into account: a Griersonian attempt to distinguish a "proper" documentary film among the plethora of early factual genres, and a proliferation of factual programming brought about by television.

As early as in the wake of documentary cinema John Grierson distinguished a genre of proper "documentary cinema", as opposed to "inferior" types, such as travelogues, nature films, etc (Grierson, 1932-1933). A distinguishing feature of this group would be the superb quality of the films, their incisiveness, their ability to catch the crux of the matter. Despite the efforts of Grierson and many other documentary filmmakers and theorists, it has not been possible to convincingly demonstrate that this quality can be expressed in terms of genres, that is, for example, that films which particularly profoundly portray human existence constitute a separate genre of documentary cinema.

Television has complicated the field of non-fictional broadcasts in two points at least: live broadcasts on the one hand, and snapshots, short documentary material used within other types of show (such as news), on the other. None of them can be regarded as a documentary film. Excluding snapshots means that what we call a documentary film must be autonomous, and documentary film material used within other types of show can't be regarded as such. A distinction between live (direct) broadcast and a documentary film is carried out on the basis of a time lapse (or the lack thereof): in live broadcast the moment of action, recording and the viewer's reception overlap, whereas in documentary films moments of action/recording precede the moment of reception.

After this modification, having taken into account the latest findings, the definition is as follows (final definition; new parts in italics):

***A documentary film is such an autonomous audiovisual text, existing as a separate whole*, which presents a fragment of the complete world, in which the nominal meanings are identical to the source meanings,**

in which there is a time lapse between the moment of action/recording and the moment of reception, in which the indexical fidelity to reality is maintained in each shot, in which the filmmakers do not interfere with the reality in front of the camera, or they interfere and this interference is a structural element of the film (1st-person address), or they interfere only to restore the state of reality which existed before the film crew was introduced, or to extract the genuine behaviour of the filmed people, which imitates conventional methods humans use for ordering reality, in which the autotelic function cannot suppress or dominate the function of recording reality.

I consider the above definition of documentary cinema complete at the present stage of development of this genre. It formulates a set of criteria on the basis of which I will select the material discussed in the following parts of this work. However, since many of the films I will discuss are situated on the margins of documentary cinema, their analysis will also be a form of verification of this definition. I wanted it to be as precise as possible. More important, however, than precision, never completely attainable, is that it provides tools for the analysis of borderline, impure cases, which supplement documentary cinema with methods and styles derived from other audiovisual kinds and genres.

Postscriptum

This was the final version of the definition when I first published it, in 1999. To my mind it was then "complete at the present stage of the genre". However, almost a quarter of a century has passed and "the present stage of the genre" is different now, because new forms of documentary cinema have emerged, which are not compatible with the definition. This is, interestingly, one more proof that definitions of documentary are closely linked with the time of their creation and that the necessity to constantly define the genre anew results from its incessant development, both in technology and aesthetics.

By "the new forms of documentary cinema" I mean animated documentary, web (interactive) documentary and – to a lesser degree – mock documentary. Each of them poses a challenge to the ways documentary cinema has been perceived throughout its history.

Animated documentary massively breaches the above definition of documentary. First of all, the idea of indexical fidelity to reality is breached. In some forms of animation, generated via algorithms, we do not have any form of reality in front of the camera. In other forms, like stop-motion or puppet animation, we

don't have a recorded independent reality, but a reality completely fabricated. Likewise, it is difficult to talk about non-interference with reality in front of the camera. And, finally, the division into nominal and source meanings is doubtful, when the look of the source is also fabricated.

I can see two possible solutions to this dilemma. The first one is similar to the way the issue of autotelicity was resolved: animated parts cannot suppress or dominate the function of recording reality. In this mixture of documentary and animated imagery it is still the documentary material which has the upper hand. The story and the characters are real, the worlds are complete, the film is imbued with real documentary records, both pictorial and acoustic. Animated fragments can illustrate some parts of the story, supplement it with emotions, enable a fresh look at worn-out documentary imagery, but in essence are subordinated to a documentary account about the real world.

The second solution is more radical. According to it, an explosive development of animation in recent decades is a result of more profound change, namely - a shift of moving images from analogue to digital recording. This shift absolves the very idea of representation. Instead of indexality, complete worlds and non-interference with reality we should talk about simulations, avatars and non-binarism. The question appears, though, if documentary cinema can survive without a binary idea of representation at its base? To my mind, it can't.

Web-documentaries pose another problem. They do not breach the definition in any explicit way. Perhaps only the part of the definition in which a documentary film exists "as a separate whole" can raise some doubts in face of the many modalities that web-documentaries can afford. Still, this objection is not fundamental, since any web-documentary is a separate whole, even if it offers many modalities of the recounted reality. So, the real problem lies elsewhere: our definition does not allow differentiation of something which is very different. It is as if this new form, a combination of documentary film with computer games, in which the viewer is not doomed to follow the only route through reality provided by the author, but instead can choose from among many routes, in which they can impose their own ways of ordering reality, doesn't in essence differ from regular documentary film. Perhaps a clause should be added to the definition, which would display a sensitivity to this new phenomenon.

Last but not least, mockumentaries. We can dispense with this problem easily, stating that mockumentaries are not documentaries at all, for they are all made up. The thing is not that easy, though. Mockumentaries usually use lots of documentary archival materials, and routinely use basic and well-recognised

documentary means such as interview and off-screen narration. Their relation to regular documentary films resembles the relation between regular and conceptual arts. They challenge premises on which regular documentary is based in order to raise awareness of these premises among viewers. Therefore they shouldn't be excluded from the domain of documentary.

There is also an additional reason to count mockumentaries in the documentary genre. We rejected the idea that a film can be called documentary only when it is truthful. Documentary films can and usually have a strong bias, can propagandise and even lie, without ceasing to be documentary. If we grant the right to be a documentary to films that lie, then all the more so can we not deny this right to films whose outright mission is to make people aware of lying. It is tempting to introduce the abovementioned modification to the definition, in order to update it. I will leave it to others, though, if anyone would like to take up the challenge.

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In Between Fact and Fiction. Queering the Borders of Documentary and Fiction[1]

Abstract:

The essay focuses on films between documentary and fiction, and their categorization by both film theory and audiences, particularly in the case of so-called mockumentaries. Using a semiotic and pragmatic perspective, I examine these films as practices of negotiating audiovisual identity in terms of genre. Drawing on Judith Butler's concept of "queer", I aim to describe the blurring of boundaries and the binary representation of fact and fiction in audiovisual media.

Key words: Documentary and Fiction, Identity of Film, Genre and Genre Concepts, Self-Reflexivity and Performativity of Film

[1] This text emerged out of some points from my PhD thesis (see Blum, 2017).

This essay explores the ambiguity of films situated between documentary and fiction.[2] Such films stand 'transidentically' between the genres of fiction and non-fiction, as well as between the audiovisual production of fact and fiction. These films have a diverse formal range, including essay films, fake documentaries, docudramas, scenic reconstructions, speculative visions of the future, drafts of the past, and seemingly unambiguous forms. Sometimes, these films resist being described with *one* generic concept. For instance, Orson Welles' "F for Fake" (1973, Orson Welles) could be described as an 'essay film', a so-called 'fake-documentary' or even a 'reflexive (or even 'performative) documentary' – in the sense of Bill Nichols (1994, 2001) – about art and authorship fakery. As a documentary that deceives its audience, this reflects on its subject by tricking the audience on the screen and through the screen. Is it now a fake or a truthful documentary that becomes 'truthful' precisely by deceiving its audience? This question, as I would like to emphasize, is posed by the film itself. In the following text, therefore, I want to look at films that aesthetically and sensually offer a perspective through the concepts of factuality and fictionality by being neither fiction films nor documentary films. To examine such films, however, the terms 'fictional' and 'documentary' must first be clarified.

As Roger Odin argued in his semio-pragmatic approach, I do not start from firmly established genres but from reading instructions. Already in 1986 Jean-Marie Schaeffer states, "Insofar as classificatory genericity (i.e., genre) is a category of reading, it naturally contains a prescriptive component, so it is indeed a norm, but a norm of reading."[3] (Schaeffer, 1986, p. 199f) According to Odin, it is the reader's construction of a real enunciator that establishes a "documentarizing reading" (Odin, 1984, 2022: 81-84, also Hediger, 2022, p. 13-15). Odin also addresses the documentarizing mode and the fictionalizing

[2] By the word fiction I mean works of fictional discourse, not the poetic process of producing these works. Fiction in this sense includes novels as well as fiction films or plays, but is not identical with these works, nor is it identical with 'narrative' or 'fictitious/fictive worlds, beings, times etc.' in the sense of something that exists only within a fictional work. For example, The Lord of the Rings names a fictional novel as well as three fictional films on a fictitious/fictive world: Middle-Earth, while both the novels and the films under the title Harry Potter place several fictitious/fictive characters in a world that refers to the real world – London in the Harry Potter-novels/films is not an unreal one it is a fiction of the real London, supplemented by fictitious/fictive characters and therefore produced within a fictional discourse, while it nonetheless persists in reality without these characters. The concept becomes more complex the more realistic or reality-bound the respective fictional (not necessarily fictitious/fictive) content presents itself and therefore does not demarcate itself from the documentary, but is open to it. (for more on this topic see Hamburger, 1987, Iser, 1993).

[3] Original: "Dans la mesure où la généricité classificatoire (c'est-à-dire le genre) est une catégorie de la lecture, elle contient bien entendu une composante prescriptive, elle est donc bien une norme, mais une norme de lecture [my translation]".

mode, amongst others, as 'modes of production of meaning [*modes de production de sens et d'affects*]' that I cite here:

Definition of the documentarizing mode:	**Definition of the fictionalizing mode (preliminary approach):**	**Definition of the fictionalizing mode (new proposition):**
- At the level of discourse: the production of information (with no constraint on the form) - At the affective level: undetermined - At the enunciative level: the construction of a real enunciator who can be asked questions in terms of identity, ways of acting, and truth	- At the level of space: construction of a world (a diegesis) - At the discursive level: construction of a narrative - At the affective level: relationship between *mise en phase* and narrated events - At the enunciative level: construction of a fictitious enunciator	- At the level of space: construction of a world (diegetization) - At discursive level 1: construction of a narrative (storytelling) - At discursive level 2: construction, from the narrative, of a "discourse" that conveys information and values - At the affective level: *mise en phase* with the story and thus with the values it conveys - At enunciative level 1: construction of a fictitious enunciator of the story and of characters [...] - At enunciative level 2: construction of a real enunciator of information and values, who is hidden – masked beneath the fictivization contract

Fig. 1. Documentarizing mode, fictionalizing mode (preliminary approach) and fictionalizing mode (new proposition) (Odin, 2022, p. 84, 77, 86)

Obviously, the documentarizing mode is not limited to documentary films, just as the fictionalizing mode is not limited to fiction films. For example, when watching documentary films, spectators also construct a world – diegesis/ diegetization (for this concept see also Odin, 2000, p. 17–23) – which is usually identified (or should be identified) with that world belonging to both the spectators' and the screen's. Fiction films also produce information from time to time about the 'fictivized'[4] worlds they are telling of and showing (and thus

[4] By using "fictive" in contrast to fictional I refer to Käte Hamburger who differentiates fictive [fiktiv] as in not existing outside of a work of fiction from fictional [fiktional] as in the attribution of a work of fiction (see Hamburger 1987).

realizing) on screen. Additionally, fiction films produce documents in the very literal sense: sounds and visions as once recorded of a world which is un-real outside the work of fiction – fictive – but is somehow real in the imagination of the audience and realized by the sounds and images which indicate the fictional existence of this imaginative world on screen. Jean-Marie Schaeffer argued that there are not two different kinds of representation, one fictional and one referential, but only one: referential. Even if a representation aims at a non-existent object, it cannot represent it as non-existent, because to represent something is to pose that thing as representational content. Schaeffer points out that fictional representations posit exactly the same classes of referents as those of any representation: external environment, bodily and mental states and acts. And this applies to all representations, regardless of their source, mode of access or mode of existence (see Schaeffer, 1999, p. 153f.). In conclusion, the terms "documentary" and "fictional" cannot be defined by privileged or unprivileged access to the real world. In film especially, the terms blur under the very aesthetic definition of the medium itself: to give an audio-vision of something which is as much a representation of something absolutely out of space and time by its presence as another something (the famous 'imaginary signifier' by Christian Metz[5]) but in the same way this presence is realizing the very (audio-visual) shape of a vision of a world being both: a text made out of sounds and images and textures which address the senses and the body of the spectator. And in this unique condition the question of the generic identity of film is still significant

Genre-Troubles, or 'Queering' the Identity of Film

Representing facts in difference (not in contrast) to representing fictions involves a – I want to say – binary of two basic paradigms of film reception. Ironically, many concepts that address films in the intersection of fictional and non-fictional filmmaking name this binary by combining, for example, documentary and drama (as 'docudrama' as well as 'dramadoc'), fact and fiction ('faction'), or the wide field of the so called fake-documentary, mock-documentary and so on (for more on these concepts see Lipkin/Paget/Roscoe 2006). These concepts literally summon a lack of documentary or even documentary authenticity. Especially the term mock-documentary seems to aim at a film which is only pretending to be a documentary, but why is it not? Jane Roscoe defines mock-documentaries as films that "look and sound like documentaries, but are not factual". (Roscoe, 2007, p. 908, see also Roscoe/Hight, 2001) This definition in my opinion is rather unsatisfactory from two perspectives:

[5] In order to understand the film (at all), I must perceive the photographed object as absent, its photograph as present, and the presence of this absence as signifiying." (Metz, 1982, p. 57)

> It defines documentary films as factual, which they are not. We can think of numerous instances of documentary films whose facts are false, such as propaganda documentaries from early examples up to the present, including cinematic conspiracy theories and infamous lies. Such films that claim or present false facts as true are in no way films that push our perceptual habits to the limit of their identification competence; quite the opposite. (for more on this subject, see Blum, 2021)

It presupposes that documentary film could be defined beyond its basic material: sounds and images. Of course, there are many documentary films, or even a wide majority of documentary films, that correspond to other images, separated knowledge, and generally the whole imagery of views and visions as well as sounds and tones of the world [*Weltbilder* and *Weltklänge*]. Finally, this short definition makes it impossible to think of the documentary film in terms of its fictional content, which it undoubtedly possesses.

To avoid any misunderstanding: of course, the theoretical tableau designed by Jane Roscoe and Craig Hight for the so-called mock-documentary is much more complex than the quoted definition suggests. They already prove their thinking with the subtitle of their book: "The Subversion of Factuality". The three degrees they examine in regard to 'mock-documentary' – parody, critique and hoax, and deconstruction – demonstrate the non-binary logic of their thinking. But I argue that if there are films whose most significant characteristic is their unambiguity between fact and fiction, why then should we define them according to this very binary? Conversely, we could also say: mockumentaries are fiction films, but they don't sound or look like them, so they are not fictional, or they may be fictional but their fictionality is not visible or audible.

The identification of fictionality and/or factuality of a film by the spectator, however, can only happen based on how the film looks and sounds. Certainly, there are historically grown habits of perception, and there are undoubtedly institutional framings that decisively influence the reading of the film (see Odin, 1984). Expressed in the genre terms "fiction film" and "documentary film", the partly oppositionally conceived conception of fact and fiction thus refers to a binary coding of audiovisual utterances that translates into patterns of perception and shapes the genre identities of films in a binary and, as it were, 'heteronormative' way. This binary coding is precisely what is opposed in films such as those Roscoe and Hight call 'mock-documentaries'. These films leave the conventional genre distinction behind because they cannot be understood as either documentary or fiction films. At the same time, however, they also alienate the spectator from their hitherto secure ability to identify. Therefore, under the impression of

such films, one can turn to Judith Butler and ask: "To what extent does discourse gain the authority to bring about what it names through citing the conventions of authority?" (Butler, 1993, p. 13) Unlike Butler, I am not concerned with gender, but with cinematic genres. I think that, in view of the distinction between fiction and non-fiction, we can speak of a binary coding of aesthetic acts of enunciation, which in itself leads to heteronormativity.

The heteronormative scope of the distinction between fiction and non-fiction is evident in terms such as 'fake-documentary' (see Juhasz/Lerner, 2006) and 'mockumentary', which has become internationally the most popular since the 1990s, as well as in the German terms "*fingierter Dokumentarfilm* [feigned/faked/fictitious documentary]" or "*Dokumentarfilmästhetik* [formal aesthetics of the documentary film]" (for more on these concepts see e.g. Berg, 1990, Hattendorf, 1994), and the French term "*documenteur* [documentary liar/editor]" (see Niney, 2009), which is inspired by the the Agnes Varda film of the same title. In contrast, the underdetermination of the generic form is to be understood and formulated here as the strength of such films, which entails a narrowing of the aforementioned corpus. I am interested in films that, while they cannot be defined as a subset of either fiction or documentary film, make the identification of fictionality and factuality the starting point of their audiovisual discourse on the formal-aesthetic level. In this regard, one's gaze first falls on the essay film, which, while conspicuous for its openness, is often also characterized by an intellectually advanced cinematic discourse that assumes an aesthetic subject. In contrast, however, the same is true for films whose identification liquefies generic perceptual practices and genre pragmatics, which can hardly be named using the term essay film. These are the films I call 'queer' (in inverted commas). It is clear to me that the term, which is occupied by queer theory and queer politics on the one hand and queer cinema on the other, is in this context seemingly detached from its environment of identity politics and the emancipatory project associated with it. I do not want to conceal this problem – if it is one. The term refers to a re-functioning not only in the sense of identity but also in that of identification and can also be used productively for identities beyond embodied beings such as human beings:

> If the term "queer" is to be a site of collective contestation, the point of departure for a set of historical reflections and futural imaginings, it will have to remain that which is, in the present, never fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage and in the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes. (Butler, 1993, p. 228)

Thus, there is little to be said against transferring the term's political purpose to the field of perceptual politics and testing it out in the practice of cinematic

aesthetics. For those films I have called 'queer' practice the crossing and liquefaction of identities mentioned in the quote. 'Queer' films are thus sensually concrete sites of negotiation of acts of identification between fictionality and factuality in the domain of audio-visual media. 'Queer' as a term for their labelling is not an attribution that identifies them as trans-generic or trans-identical, quasi as a genre through the back door, but the very moment of their aesthetic practice as a semiological act. In other words, 'queer' does not describe a holistic ensemble of films between documentary and fiction but refers to those very moments of audio-visual practice when we as an audience are unsettled while trying to identify whether we are watching a documentary or a fiction film. 'Queer' in this sense denotes, on the one hand, an aesthetic or even semiotic act of creating an audiovisual world (diegesis) where we cannot decide if it is our historically real world or a created one (fantastic or realistic). On the other hand, the term names an effect from the pragmatics of film, which aims at the question of how to handle a film (a sequence, a frame) for itself and how to handle audiovisual representation in general.

'Queer' Films: Addressing Genre as Non-Genre

According to François Niney, the fiction film shows a world in a frame, while the documentary film puts a frame in the world. In this relationship, the 'queer' film treats this same frame as the film's reference to a/the world. For example, "The Forbidden Quest" (1993) by Peter Delpeut compiles a variety of historically authentic footage taken during expeditions to the Arctic and Antarctic. It uses a total of 18 films, with footage from "South" (1919, Frank Hurley), "The Great White Silence" (1924, Herbert Ponting) and "Med Maud Over Polhavet" (1926, Odd Dahl) dominating quantitatively. Narratively, "The Forbidden Quest" is structured as a metafiction, where an otherwise anonymous filmmaker, only present as an off-screen voice, narrates his encounter with the sole survivor of a South Pole expedition in 1905/06. The survivor, J.C. Sullivan (performed by Joseph O'Connor). keeps film footage of this expedition given to him by the so-called 'picture-man' shortly before his demise. Thus, Sullivan claims to be able to substantiate his recollection with film recordings, reports on the discovery of a passage between the North and South Poles, and the expedition takes on the form of a metaphysical journey or *quest*, in keeping with the film's title, narrated by Sullivan, who is questioned by the filmmaker, now transformed into an interviewer in the *hors-champ* (on the separation of sound-off = non-diegetic sound from the off-screen-space and sound-*hors-champ* = diegetic sound from the off-screen-space, see Chion, 1992). In the montage of the film that the audience sees, the interview is underlaid over long stretches with the authentic footage. I want

to mention one sequence here in which the existence of a passage between the poles is to be proven for the first time:

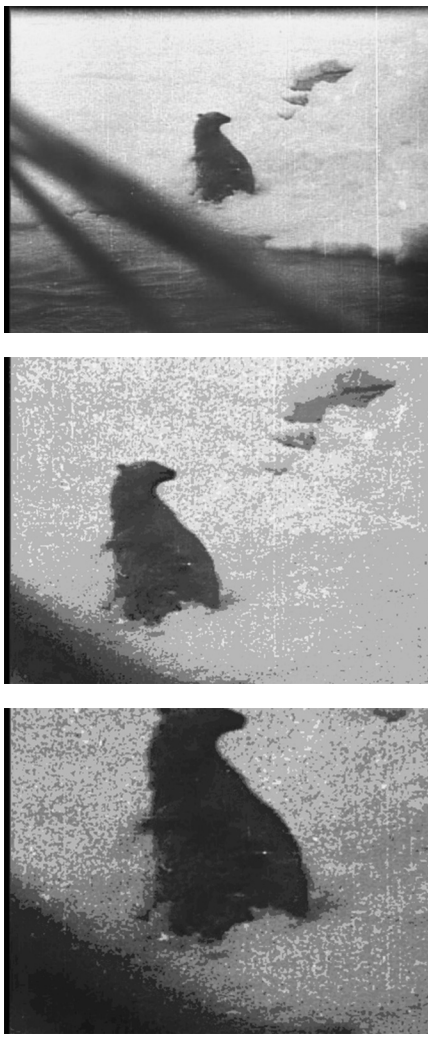

Fig. 2a-c: "The Forbidden Quest" Double-shots of the doubled bear

By claiming to have seen a polar bear in Antarctica, Sullivan clearly arouses the interviewer's scepticism, which probably goes hand in hand with that of the spectator. Sullivan also confirms in addition, "White bears belong to the other end of our earth." (Joseph O'Connor as J.C. Sullivan, "The Forbidden Quest", 0:20:35) The following images which follow that sentence do not show the same bear, so they do not represent a bear in a visual sense, but rather a narratively continuous hunting sequence constructed from the montage of archival images and performed audiovisually. By inserting the additional audible death shot into a loop, by increasing the angle of the shot in such a way that the grain and pictoriality of the film image become more and more apparent, the animal body coagulates into a mere cinematic embodiment (fig. 2).

The authentic document of a dying polar bear takes on a broader meaning in its audiovisual appearance: the audible rifle-shot and the repetition of the *shot* – as taken by the camera and through the editor's hands as well as a plot-point – with increasing enlargement of the detail draw attention away from the film as an event of recording a profilmic reality preceding the shot and redirect the attention towards a definition of the shot as a genuinely filmic event. The semiotic conception of the shot [*prise de vue*], defined by François Niney as a hybrid of an ultra-analogue icon, an index detached from the causative object and symbol adhering to the concrete,[6] comes to formal fruition here on a sensually concrete,

[6] "Les prises de vues sont des hybrides: des indices mais détachés des objets réels qui les causent; des icônes mais ultra-analogiques; des symboles mais adhérents au concret. Et aucun rasoir logique ne saurait trancher cette ambivalence des images ainsi prises (de vues et de vie). C'est ce mélange original qui fait leur puissance et leur vanité, entre réel et illusion (l'illusion est à proportion de l'effet de réel), reproduction et représentation, témoignage et tromperie." (Niney, 2009, p. 136)

i.e. audio-visually perceivable level, and thus audio-visually perceptible, while on the other hand on a performative level – since, according to the thesis, film here vividly reflects itself through its signifying material, insofar as it is not a dying polar bear that is shown and presented in the film, but first and foremost a cinematic polar bear that is made comprehensible as an audiovisual event. The supposed animal body formerly made of flesh and blood is not an animal body any longer, but a cinematic body made of grain. Such films offer access to the ways in which cinematic meaning and affect are produced by crossing the traditional pragmatics of genre. We can think of, for example, films like "Forgotten Silver" (1995, Peter Jackson, Costa Botes), in which an undiscovered New Zealand film pioneer is revealed through (mostly false) archival footage, "The Wild Blue Yonder" (2005, Werner Herzog), in which footage from NASA and from the Antarctic Ocean under the ice become documents of a journey to an alien planet and its natural world through the poetic power of the images themselves, or "This Ain't California" (2012 Marten Persiel), in which a fictional biography of a skateboarder from East Germany is created through fake and real footage as well as animated sequences. In the present case of "The Forbidden Quest", this point of reference is directed towards its very own material: image and sound. The example also shows that such films enter an exchange with horizons of knowledge and are linked to the forms of cinematic presence and absence in space and time. On the one hand, 'queer' films aim at the contingency and strategic orientation of knowledge, while on the other hand, by emphasising its medial genesis, expose it as being equally affected by reality and phantasmatics. The interplay of reality and phantasmatics also characterizes the aforementioned dimension of cinematic presence and absence, if the term phantasmatic and the phantasm on which it is based is not merely understood pejoratively as a mirage, but also productively as an image of desire or wishful thinking.

In order to point out the aspect of cinematic presence and absence, I'd like to refer to another example: The highly popular "The Blair Witch Project" (1999, Daniel Myrick, Eduardo Sánchez), which Roscoe and Hight mention as one example of their degree 'critique and hoax' (Roscoe/Hight, 2001, p. 191). Of course, similarly to the way in which "The Blair Witch Project" criticizes the manner of using archival footage as self-explanatory documents of the past from one point of view, "The Blair Witch Project" could be seen as a critical examination of staging authenticity, firstly by using techniques of 'direct cinema' and secondly through the simple operation of fictionalizing a recording camera as part of the plot as for example "C'est arrivé près de chez vous" ("Man Bites Dog", 1992, Rémy Belvaux, André Bronzel, Benoît Poelvoorde), or already "Die Delegation" ("The Delegation", 1970, Rainer Erler) and "David Holz-

man's Diary" (1967, Jim McBride) also did. I think in its textual arrangement the film by Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez performatively reflects on the constitution of cinematic meaning against the background of cinematic absence and presence in space and time. Like "The Blair Witch Project", the film is structured as a meta-fiction and initially presents its recordings of images and sounds as found footage. Through the use of two cameras and the narrow ensemble of acting figures, the film establishes a perceptual dispositive in its diegesis that not only shows what is visible in the images, but also implies their invisible makers – conspicuously exposed at the beginning of the film, in which the two cameras are presented as circling around each other and establishing the film as its very own subject (Fig. 3).

Fig. 3."The Blair Witch Project" Film spinning around itself.

In this way, the film refers to the dimension of off-screen space. And in this context, first of all, to the distinction between a diegetic off-screen space, the *hors-champ*, and a non-diegetic off-screen space (that of the real filming) the so-called *hors-cadre* or *hors-scène* as it is conceptualized in French film theory (for more on this subject see *pars pro toto* Vernet, 1988). While these two functional aspects are traditionally strictly separated in fiction films, in most documentary film they coincide, at least since direct cinema, if we understand diegesis as a cinematic, and not necessarily fictional or fictitious universe. In "The Blair Witch Project", this synthesis achieves the effect of seeing a film that is shooting itself, but whose shooting will never be completed, only interrupted. Referring to Burch's division of the *hors-champ* into six segments (see

Burch, 1981, p. 17[7]), Marc Vernet has conceptualized the sixth *hors-champ* behind the camera as 'the cinematic of this world' [*l'en deça*]. He states that the perception of this world presupposes a belief in a superior instance of surveillance – in a religiosity of the gaze or spirituality of movement that goes back far before cinema but is imitated in it to be played. This determination first shows that the perception of the film necessarily always includes the perception of its production – even if the fabula marginalizes this perception, as is usual in the classical fiction film. Here, Vernet basically takes up the common division between utterance and what is uttered and thinks it through for cinematic invisibility. Looking at "The Blair Witch Project", one can note the present absence of the recording devices – not only the cameras, but also the two different sound recording devices. The synthesis of *hors-champ* and *hors-cadre* is a basic conception of cinematic practice that can be interpreted as conventional in documentary films and as alienating or reflexive in fiction films. However, through the diegetic construction of the film as found footage and therein unfinished and fragmentary, this world, or the here of cinematic space, is transformed into a beyond, or there of cinematic time. The sameness of *hors-champ* and *hors-cadre* is thus supplemented here by a '*hors-temps*' – an out-of-time. 'Out-of-time' as it does not take place on screen but is simultaneously performed by the film. The term *hors-temps* – to clarify briefly – thereby narratively bundles the difference between narrated time and narrative time, in terms of the apparatus the film's own structure of seeing as a repetition of seeing, for each spectatorial gaze is inevitably preceded by another gaze, and textually the ruptures, voids and discontinuities of the filmic textual genesis. The only thing that makes "The Blair Witch Project" perceptible is the making of a film along with an apocryphal making-of. However, precisely in this, the imaginary signifier of the film contains a folding of reality and phantasm, or, one could say, as a 'queered' perception of both reality and fantasy, visible and audible facts of recorded sounds and images, and fictions of their comprehension. Film as a medium is fundamentally characterised by the reality of its perception and the imaginary it allows to be perceived. The 'queer' film capitalises on this mediality of film by textually translating this tension inherent in the medium.

[7] In the English version of Burch's Une praxis du cinéma (1969) "hors-champ" is translated as "off-screen space". Since there are several off-screen spaces: that of the story, that of the film shooting, that of the apparatus, that of the historical context and so on, I would like to stick to the French vocabulary in which hors-champ is the off-screen space of the story, or as I call it: the diegetic off-screen space.

Conclusion

To conclude, calling films between documentary and fiction 'queer' does not only make the reality of fictional discourses perceptible or warn against the false evidence of documentary images and sounds. Rather, it leaves behind the logic of identity categories of documentary and fiction film and relegates them from the place of cinematic genre pragmatics to a cultural pragmatics of the latter. Thus, on a performative, playful level, one is not set against the other, but the drawing of the border itself is radically questioned and revealed as a form of accessibility. The term thus makes it possible to understand films between documentary and fiction not only as false documentaries or as disguised fiction films. Rather, in the emphasis on performative play, the negotiation of identity categories in terms of genre, lies on the one hand in the reference to film itself as having always been both documentary and fictional. On the other hand, if we now move them closer to documentary after all, it is expressed in these forms that the real world is inconceivable without fictions. Reality is not only found, but is made of ideas, desires, convictions, ideologies ..., in short, fictions (for more on this point, see Heller, 2001). If there is a cinematic practice that can represent this reality permeated by fictions, it is transversal to the categories of documentary and fiction film. The 'queer' film would thus be a form of audiovisual approach to the world.

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New Paths for Exploring 'History from Below': Microhistorical Documentaries

Abstract:

This article proposes a specific category of documentaries that adopt a unique approach to explore the past, and which are referred to here as "microhistorical documentaries." These films fall within the basic parameters of written microhistory, a historiographical trend that emerged in the 1970s under the broader umbrella of "history from below." Those parameters include a reduced scale of observation, a central role given to human agency, a conjectural approach to archival research, and a reliance on narrative structures. But microhistorical documentaries also exhibit specific traits of their own, such as underscoring the affective dimension, using autobiographical and essayistic perspectives, drawing on the protagonists' personal memories to reconstruct the past, and using family archives (mainly snapshots and home movies). Films of this kind therefore differ markedly from the informational/expository model of the conventional historical documentary, sharing features with a certain type of contemporary documentary, with some traits that can be linked to a postmodern sensibility.

Key words: microhistory, documentary, history and film, autobiography, home movies

The ways of exploring the past in documentary cinema have been enriched in recent decades, with proposals that go beyond the classical informational/expository model that abounds in television channels and platforms. One of these approaches can be properly described as microhistorical, insofar as it exhibits the main characteristics of this historiographical trend that emerged in the 1970s: a reduced scale of observation of the past that sheds light on macrohistorical contexts; a central role given to human agency; a conjectural approach to archival research; and a reliance on narrative structures. This article analyzes what I therefore refer to as microhistorical documentary, the basic traits it shares with written microhistory, and its own specific features, related to its affective dimension and its use of personal testimonies, often including an autobiographical perspective.[1]

From Written Microhistory to Microhistorical Documentaries

Microhistory, as a specific approach within contemporary historiography, can be located within the broader context of what has come to be referred to as "history from below," which began to gain currency in the 1960s. History from below questioned the traditional approaches that studied major historical events and their protagonists, but also the quantitative approaches that had been in vogue during the preceding decades. The new historiographical approaches emerging under the broad umbrella of history from below foregrounded the everyday lives of individuals and social groups, with a perspective that opened up a dialogue with social and cultural anthropology, disciplines that were also acquiring greater importance in those years. Among these new approaches, it could be argued that microhistory — which began in Italy in the 1970s, with Giovanni Levi and Carlo Ginzburg as its best known representatives — became the most prominent, both in terms of historical practice and historiographical debates. This is evident in the abundance of existing literature published in different countries and languages, beyond the work of Italian microhistorians.[2]

No specific analysis has actually been made in historiography of the relationship between microhistory and documentary film, although it has been explored briefly in relation to the film medium or to fiction films by scholars such as

[1] This article is an updated version of the first chapters of my book *Filming History from Below: Microhistorical Documentaries* (2022).

[2] In addition to the publications analyzing specific case studies, it is worth mentioning the following texts: in the French-speaking world, the book edited by Jacques Revel, *Jeux d'echelles. La micro-analyse à la expérience*; in German, the publications of Hans Medick; in Spanish, the contributions by Anacleto Pons and Justo Serna in Spain and by Carlos Aguirre in Mexico; and in English, Sigurður G. Magnússon and István Szíjártó's book *What Is Microhistory? Theory and Practice*.

John Brewer. This author identifies neorealism as a clear precursor to Italian microhistory, from which it would take its humanist realism and its rejection of skepticism, and he asserts that Roberto Rossellini's film *Paisá* (1946) could be considered the first work of Italian microhistory (Brewer, 2010, p. 101). This perspective is of special interest because Ginzburg himself made reference to it in an interview he gave in 2014, when he remarked that neorealism — particularly the film *Umberto D* (1952, Vittorio de Sica) — constituted a foundational experience for him (2014, p. 91).

The absence of explicit references by historians to the relationship between microhistory and documentary film is perhaps understandable given that documentaries have not traditionally formed part of a shared cultural background like literature or fiction films. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that when studying documentary film, some very interesting parallels with microhistory emerge. This does not include the typical historical documentaries made for mainstream audiences, popularized by theme channels like History (formerly History Channel). Without dismissing a connection between such documentaries and microhistory outright, it seems rather tenuous, as the former are generally conceived as vehicles for disseminating history, usually understood in the macrohistorical sense, focusing either on past eras or on major historical figures. Because of their informative character, they generally fall into what Bill Nichols has defined as the "expository documentary" (1991, pp, 34-38). As Nichols explains, expository documentaries offer an argument about the world, giving the impression of objectivity and of well-substantiated judgments, with the argumentation of an omniscient commentator/narrator as their dominant textual mode, all of them features quite distinct from microhistorical approaches.

In contrast to those expository documentaries, in the 1970s and 1980s new approaches began to appear in non-fiction film that exhibit clearer similarities to microhistorical historiography. The films adopting these new approaches began to question the characteristic omniscience of the expository documentary and often included the research process itself as part of the film, thereby also bringing the filmmaker in front of the camera and breaking the objectivist paradigm popularly associated with documentary film. They also incorporated autobiographical perspectives, in which memory — personal or collective — was a central focus, and they made use of hybrid formats in which the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction, narrative and essayistic structures were not always clearly delimited. And they explored new uses of the archival footage, with approaches that were more conscious of the problems such footage posed, but also of its po-

tential, with appropriation strategies that in some cases resembled those used in experimental films.

This creative hotbed has provided the milieu for the emergence of a type of documentary dealing with historical issues that I have termed "microhistorical documentary." It is important to point out that qualifying these documentaries as microhistorical implies positing an analogous rather than a literal translation of the practices of professional written history to documentary filmmaking. Each field is governed by its own strategies and approaches, related to both the obvious differences between written and audiovisual language and the different research strategies employed in each field. As is the case in most historical research, microhistorians base their work on an intensive analysis of the sources they find in archives, and, as they often explore eras prior to the 20th century, they work largely with written documents. On the other hand, although they also conduct intensive research, filmmakers rely heavily on audiovisual sources and work with them with a more creative approach, in which formal and/or aesthetic questions may be as important as strictly historiographical issues. Besides, as is equally true of written microhistories, it is important to note that these documentaries exhibit differing degrees of affinity with the most typical features of microhistory, ranging from films whose microhistorical qualities are more paradigmatic, such as *The Maelstrom* (1997, Péter Forgács), to others whose relationship is looser, such as *History and Memory* (1991, Rea Tajiri) or *Lost, Lost, Lost* (1976, Jonas Mekas).

With the foregoing qualifications in mind, it can be asserted that what is referred to here as microhistorical documentary fits within the general parameters of microhistory, as it is usually understood and practiced in contemporary historiography. To support this assertion, the following section offers an overview of the main features of microhistory and how they apply to microhistorical documentaries.

Basic Traits of the Microhistorical Approach

The change to the scale of observation is without doubt the most characteristic feature of microhistory. In contrast to historical studies traditionally focused on the macro level, microhistorical research proposes a reduction of scale for the purpose of developing a different understanding of the object of study. As Jacques Revel explains, "varying the focal length of the lens is not simply about enlarging (or shrinking) the size of the object caught in the viewfinder, but about altering its form and structure ... about transforming the content of what is being represented (in other words, the decision about what is actually representable)" (1996, p. 19). The objective here is not to offer particular case studies as

"examples" of general theories, but to discover, through a "microscopic" analysis, historical realities that have gone unnoticed in macrohistorical analysis, in order to better explain a particular era. This objective inevitably brings up one of the most common questions raised in relation to microhistory: its representativeness. Herein lies the main challenge of microhistory: to propose an alternative pathway to historical knowledge based on the microanalysis of personal and social relations, in order to make a significant contribution to our understanding of more general contexts of the society and culture to which their case study belongs.

Microhistorical documentaries are likewise characterized by a reduced scale of observation, focusing on specific individuals, families, or social groups, generally of an ordinary or marginal nature, far removed from the big figures and events of public history. Specifically, two main features should be stressed when considering this reduction of scale in these documentaries. First, the objective behind the reduced scale is not to conduct a strictly ethnographic or observational study located in the present of the filmmaker, as happens in many documentaries dealing with unknown protagonists, but to explore the past, to perform a historical investigation. And secondly, they have to place their "micro" analysis in relation to relevant macrohistorical contexts, which makes these documentaries historiographically representative in their own right. This is an essential feature of the microhistorical documentary, as it is of microhistory in its differentiation from social and cultural anthropology. In some cases, this representativeness will be quite clear, as it is in *The Maelstrom* or in *The Missing Picture* (2014, Rithy Panh). In other cases, it may not be so obviously foregrounded, but it will always emerge through the historiographical tension between the micro- and macrohistorical dimensions. Therefore, for a documentary to be understood as microhistorical it is not enough just to reconstruct a personal or family past. This needs to be brought into dialogue with the broader macrohistorical contexts that frame those personal or family histories.

Closely linked to the vindication of the micro scale is the centrality of human agency, the consideration of the individual as the main historical subject, freely engaging in social relationships, in contrast to more determinist approaches associated with structuralism or quantitative history. Ginzburg and Poni point this out explicitly in their article "The Name and the Game," where they argue for a prosopography from below, a history focusing on the proper name (i.e., a specific individual) as a guiding thread for archival research, which would be associated with a study of the subaltern strata of society (1991, pp. 1-10). Microhistorical documentaries also prioritize human agency, i.e., the analysis of the free action of the protagonists, as a means of understanding more general

historical contexts. This feature is particularly accentuated when the films are autobiographical in nature — a point that I will return to later.

Microhistorians also advocate the use of narrative structures in writing history, once again in contrast to the strategies used in quantitative and *longue dureé* histories. This idea is consistent with the frequent choice to focus their research on an individual or family, whose history is most appropriately expressed in narrative form. They also often admit the possibility of including the historian's voice in the narrative itself, in what could be described as a metadiscursive strategy, a technique rarely found in earlier historiographical approaches. Microhistorical documentaries generally employ flexible and innovative narrative strategies too. In contrast to the omniscient argumentation of the expository documentary, they offer perspectives that are more limited in terms of their cognitive ambition, due not only to the reduced scale of the object of study, but also to the position of the filmmaker/narrator or the delegated narrators. There is frequent use of structures that combine narrative elements with other more essayistic features, where the filmmaker's voice, either explicit or conveyed through formal strategies, permeates the discourse more obviously, as can be seen in films such as *The Missing Picture*, *A Family Gathering* (1989, Lise Yasui) or *For My Children* (2002, Michal Aviad). In this way, these documentaries reflect Giovanni Levi's suggestion that microhistory should incorporate "into the main body of the narrative the procedures of research itself, the documentary limitations, techniques of persuasion and interpretative constructions," so that "the researcher's point of view becomes an intrinsic part of the account" (1991, p. 106). It would be fair to say that these self-reflexive strategies have been integrated into documentary cinema more naturally than into historiography, often openly interrogating the different layers of the past preserved in archives or in the memory of their protagonists, underscoring the constructed nature of the work.

These features have led some to associate microhistorians with postmodern approaches, in that they foreground the constructed nature of historical studies, in clear contrast to traditional historiographical approaches and the claims to "total history" of quantitative or serial approaches. This raises a complex question of great relevance to contemporary written microhistory whose in-depth exploration is beyond the scope of this article, although it should be noted that both Giovanni Levi and Carlo Ginzburg have dismissed the postmodern label, explicitly stating their rejection of the skeptical or relativist positions often associated with such an approach (Ginzburg, 1992, pp. 82-96; 1993, pp. 31-32; Levi, 1991, pp. 104-108). The postmodern label has also been applied specifically to microhistorical documentaries. Robert Rosenstone seems to understand them

this way when he suggests that the most genuinely postmodern historiography is not being done by historians, but by filmmakers, identifying as a paradigmatic example a film with a clear microhistorical approach, *History and Memory* (1996, pp. 201-218). However, the postmodern dimension that Rosenstone identifies in these films does not seem to be related to an epistemological skepticism in the Derridian tradition. This can be deduced from the features he points out as postmodern, which range from their capacity "to tell the past self-reflexively" and "make sense of them [past events] in a partial and open-ended, rather than totalized manner" to their way of reminding us "that the present is the site of all past representation and knowing" (1996, p. 206). It is worth questioning the extent to which microhistorians would be comfortable with all the features that Rosenstone describes as characteristic of a postmodern history. But it seems reasonable to assume in any case that microhistorical documentaries fit neatly within the parameters proposed by Ginzburg or Levi for an exploration of new historiographical pathways, without this meaning the adoption of the epistemological skepticism associated with a certain kind of postmodern sensibility.

Family archives

The use of the archives also links the written practice of microhistory and its filmic variant, although their use in documentaries exhibits some specific features. A microhistorical approach requires an intensive study of available archives, which are not always sufficiently comprehensive, as the issues chosen for study are not the kind of matters that are systematically registered in public archives. However, the lacunae and missing data can sometimes be as eloquent as the documented information. It then becomes necessary to employ conjecture as a method, as Ginzburg proposed (1980, pp. 5-36). This author compares the historian to a doctor or detective (in the style of Sherlock Holmes) who works with clues or symptoms in order to draw some conclusions. This can give rise to more unorthodox historiographical approaches, as he argues with reference to the work of Natalie Z. Davies in *The Return of Martin Guerre*. The Italian historian applauds his American colleague's combination of erudition and imagination, proof and possibility, leading her "to work around the lacunae with archival materials contiguous in space and time to that which has been lost or never materialized" (2012, p. 70).

Microhistorical documentaries also involve a thorough study of available archives, although they rely especially on audio/visual documents, taken from public, personal and family sources. Public archives — mainly newsreels and TV news — are used occasionally, on the basis of their more conventional in-

formative nature, to provide a basic macrohistorical context within which the microhistorical narratives can be placed. Sometimes the documentaries attempt a deconstruction of this archival footage, especially when it has the quality of propaganda, like the newsreels made by the Hungarian communist regime included in *Class Lot* (1997, Péter Forgács) or by the Khmer Rouge in *The Missing Picture*. They may also use personal documents, like letters and diaries, which cannot be considered properly part of the family archive, since they are not generally shared with other family members and they are preserved privately. These personal documents play an important role in some of the microhistorical documentaries, such as *Something Strong Within* (1994, Robert Nakamura) and *From a Silk Cocoon* (2005, Satsuki Ina). In the latter, for example, the parents' letters and diaries — read aloud in a voiceover — actually constitute the main source of information in the film.

But there is no question that the most common type of archive used in microhistorical documentaries is the audiovisual family archive: home movies, snapshots, and (less commonly) sound recordings. Such sources tend to be rare, especially home movies, which were costly to produce until the popularization of video in the 1980s, and which have also been affected by a lack of concern for their preservation until recently. Filmmakers are thus faced with a task of reconstruction that in some cases is similar to that performed in written microhistory. The conjectural approach becomes important here too, in relation to the need to fill in lacunae and silences, to infer the stories behind the celebratory nature of snapshots and home movies, and to complement these sources with other documentation that can convey their full complexity. What is undeniable is that the family archive constitutes a valuable source for a history from below, since it usually focuses on the lives, cycles, and rites of ordinary "anonymous" families, outside of the official records of public events. It thus provides a reduced scale of observation that foregrounds human agency. The fragmentary and non-systematic nature of these archives also fits in well with the concept of the miniature proposed by German scholar Alf Lüdtke — in his explanation of the history of everyday life — to stress the small scale where "the 'density' of life situations and contexts of action can be made vivid and palpable" (1995, p. 21). Lüdtke proposes creating a collage or mosaic with these miniatures to form societal "patchwork" structures, linking them together in a network of interrelations, thereby addressing the issue of how to apply the knowledge acquired on the micro-scale to larger historical frameworks. Any family archive could actually be understood as a patchwork, which acquires meaning in the most immediate interpretation of the family circle it belongs to, but which also acquires a broader, historiographical value when it is used by a historian/filmmaker to construct a microhistorical

narrative. This "family archival patchwork" gives access to the past in its own ways, revealing through its images the social and cultural tapestry of the ordinary life of an era. Besides, home movies may also include the recording of public events, which can offer perspectives complementary to public records, and sometimes can end up being the only testimony, as occurred with the famous footage of the assassination of J. F. Kennedy filmed by Abraham Zapruder.

The importance of family archives in microhistorical documentaries can be seen, among many other examples, in one of the most paradigmatic cases of this approach: the films of Péter Forgács. The Hungarian filmmaker has a filmography composed mainly of historical documentaries relying on home movies as their main archival source. Standing out among his best films is *The Maelstrom*, a microhistorical exploration of the Shoah through the history of the Dutch Jewish Peereboom family. In the visuals, he combines the home movie collection of this family, shot between 1933 and 1942, with the home movies of Arthur Seyss-Inquart, the Reich Commissioner for the Occupied Dutch Territories. In its soundtrack, Forgács uses the captivating music of Tibor Szemző, with a few inserts of audio recordings from radio broadcasts and public speeches. With these elements, the film shows masterfully how microhistory can contribute a new perspective to our understanding of history by virtue of its reduced scale of observation, the focus on the proper name as a guiding thread for historiographical research, and the priority to human agency, conveyed through a narrative-type structure.

Specific features of microhistorical documentaries

Beyond these features shared between written microhistory and microhistorical documentaries, there are some unique traits that the filmic practice brings into play in microhistorical documentaries, related mainly to the affective dimension and the use of testimonies, often of an autobiographical nature. The affective dimension of the microhistorical exploration clearly distances these documentaries from written history. The film medium offers a range of strategies that underscore this affective dimension, from the sensation of the present moment generated by the audiovisual recording to others like the use of extradiegetic music or, in the case of autobiographical narratives, the filmmaker's voice-over narration. The end result generally contains an unquestionably powerful emotional/affective charge that can bring into play more complex spectator reactions than those elicited by conventional historical narratives, facilitating a stronger level of identification with the stories told. Moreover, it is not unusual for these documentaries to contain a clearly performative dimen-

sion that directly appeals to and seeks to engage the spectator. This is not really so different an approach from that used by microhistorians, who sometimes seek an explicit dialogue with the reader, but the film medium offers tools that can result in a higher level of involvement.

The affective engagement of the microhistorical documentary is also enhanced by the frequent inclusion of testimonies by protagonists and witnesses. This is a direction that microhistorians do not generally take, as their work often relates to eras for which only written sources survive; however, it does connect to another related historiographical approach: oral history. Although microhistorians and oral historians are situated in the same context of social history and are often inspired by an interest in "history from below," there is actually very little dialogue between them, with exceptions such as the studies by Michel Frisch (1990, pp. 147-175) and Dan Sipe (1991, 75-87), who actually cites Lise Yasui's microhistorical documentary *A Family Gathering*. In microhistorical documentaries, personal testimonies are often a key element, whether they appear in the form of interviews with the protagonists or through the filmmaker's own autobiographical commentary. These interviews sometimes form part of the research process but do not end up appearing in the documentary, as is the case of some of Péter Forgács's best-known works. But in most cases such interviews form an explicit part of the microhistorical narration of the past, as one of the threads used by the filmmakers/historians in their research. Interviewing can even become the dominant research strategy, resulting in a documentary so close to oral history that we might question whether it should really be classified as microhistorical, partly due to its lack of use of archival research.[3]

The autobiographical perspective used in some of the microhistorical documentaries constitutes an approach generally absent from professional written history. While it is true that over the last century a tradition of historians' autobiographies has been consolidated, often these tend to focus more on the professional dimension of the authors as historians, as Jeremy D. Popkin maintains in *History, Historians, and Autobiography* (2005), than on the study of periods of recent history based on the author's own personal experience. In the documentary field, however, it is relatively common to find films of a microhistorical nature presented explicitly from autobiographical perspectives. This is not to imply that the autobiographical should be equated with the microhistorical, as if the mac-

[3] This can be found, for instance, in certain documentary films from Argentina that review recent history in tune with a microhistorical sensibility: from the immigration stories documented in *Hacer patria* (2007, David Blaustein,) or *Carta a un padre* (2013, Edgardo Cozarinsky,) to the stories of the victims of forced disappearances during the last dictatorship, such as the pioneering film *Juan, como si nada hubiera sucedido* (1987, Carlos Echeverría,) or Nicolás Prividera's *M* (2007).

rohistorical belonged to the public and the microhistorical to the private, which would also include the autobiographical. Such a conclusion would be erroneous not only because there are autobiographical approaches with no historiographical intention, related more to personal introspection, questions of identity, or sociological concerns, but also because in microhistory it is not just the scope of the study that matters, but the historical knowledge gleaned from applying the "microscope" to the object of study. Having clarified this point, it seems reasonable to assert that in microhistorical documentaries the autobiographical perspective makes personal memory the foundation of the historiographical enterprise, establishing a specific link between lived memory and public history.

This representation of personal memory poses specific challenges that the best autobiographical films manage to tackle successfully.[4] The past remembered from this perspective is contemplated and interpreted from the present, constructing the kind of complex structure characteristic of Deleuze's crystal-images (1989, pp. 65-83). The exploration of personal memory in the autobiographical documentary also entails its transfer into the public sphere, its conversion into a shared discourse. This explicitly brings into play another of the core issues in the contemporary understanding of memory: the interwoven nature of the personal and social dimensions, of personal memory and social or collective memory. It is individuals who remember, but as social beings their memories are influenced by the social and cultural contexts in which they take part; and those memories are in turn shared socially, constructing a collective understanding of memory. This can be observed in autobiographical documentaries, as narratives of identity that filmmakers construct in interaction with their familial and social contexts, and as films that become shared public discourse, contributing to the construction of collective memory.

In this social dimension of autobiographical experience, it is clear that the family constitutes the first and most fundamental context of socialization. This acquires special significance in autobiographical documentaries, as is reflected, for instance, in Jim Lane's proposition of the "family portrait" as one of the basic categories of the American autobiographical documentary (2002, pp. 95-119). It is interesting to note how Lane places the exploration of these family networks in relation to their social and historical contexts, implicitly suggesting a potential microhistorical dimension. He observes that "these family portraits often stand in a tension with an official past that may often be contested in various stories told by individuals" (Lane, 2002, p. 96). Juliette Goursat is more explicit in

[4] For a proposal to analyze personal memory in film (as applied to a particular case), see María del Rincón, Marta Torregrosa and Efrén Cuevas, "The Representation of Personal Memory in Alan Berliner's *First Cousin Once Removed*," *Studies in Documentary Film* 12, no. 1 (2018): 16-27.

making this connection, as the title to one of the chapters in her book on autobiographical documentary, "Je(ux) d'echelles. Le devenir collectif sous l'angle de l'histoire personelle," creates a play on words out of the title of the book edited by Jacques Revel on microhistory, *Jeux d'echelles* (2016, pp. 145-190). Goursat highlights the journey from the "I" to the "we" articulated in a series of autobiographical documentaries with a historical approach, from the films of David Perlov and Jonas Mekas to the Chilean documentaries on the Pinochet dictatorship that she chooses as a case study.

The interaction between personal and social memory also involves specific approaches to the use of family archives in these autobiographical documentaries (Cuevas, 2013). These family archives constitute a primary context where the filmmaker's mnemonic work moves beyond the individual "I" into the more immediate social context. Moreover, these archives are often related to broader contexts, like trips, vacations, or public events that explicitly reflect wider social contexts within which that mediated memory exists. They are also important for intergenerational memory transmission. Personal memory, as a memory of lived experience, covers the biographical arc of each individual, but it expands insofar as we are all receivers of a memory transmitted from one generation to the next. In the last century, snapshots and home movies were added to oral and written transmission, becoming powerful mnemonic anchors in the transmission of memory, as has been explored by scholars like Marianne Hirsch, with her concept of postmemory (2012, pp. 29-54). Hirsch applies this concept to memories marked by historical traumas suffered by the previous generation, in whose transmission family photographs play a key role. These are memories not experienced personally by the next generation but that still have a strong impact on them. Similar effects are explored in microhistorical documentaries with an autobiographical approach, such as *History and Memory*, *A Family Gathering*, and *The Missing Picture*.

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Microhistorical documentaries have become a productive way to explore the past in documentary films. This article has shown how these films fall within the basic parameters of microhistorical practice, with its reduced scale of observation, the central role it gives to human agency, its reliance on narrative structures, and its conjectural use of audiovisual archives (mainly home movies). Films of this kind differ markedly from the informational/expository model of the historical television documentary, as their historiographical purpose is clearly different, employing strategies such as the affective engagement of the spectator,

new ways of appropriating the family archive, essayistic features that include the presence of the filmmaker in the process, and autobiographical approaches where personal memory becomes the foundation of the historical enterprise.

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Entextualizing History through Archives: Representation of Muslim Identity in Post 9/11 Documentaries

Abstract:

Representation of Muslims in media post the Sept 11 attacks in the US largely focused on themes of terrorism and extremism. Such homogenized representation was particularly problematic in non-fiction media such as news and documentaries which use archival footage to create 'reality'. The consequent circulation of these images across the globe is one of the many examples through which Muslim representation has been constructed through stock footage and sourced media images in media post the 9/11 attacks. In this paper, I examine stock images in documentary films in the form of archives to examine the representation of Muslim identity in the post 9/11 world. Using Malitsky's framework of entextualization to analyze archival material in post 9/11 documentaries, I argue how stock images create a power differential between the East and the West (Said, 1979) reinstating imperial domination. Therefore, this paper intends to examine the use of archives that have been entextualized and re-present history to shape representation of Muslims across spatial and temporal differences through documentary films. To do so, I critically examine two post 9/11 documentaries – *Secret Pakistan* (2011) and *Turning Point: 9/11 and the War on Terror* (2021) – to study how these films position the role of Pakistan as an Islamic nation in the Global War on Terror.

Key words: post 9/11 media, documentary, entextualization, Muslim representation

In September 2001, a collection of moving images was broadcast on renowned news channels across the globe such as Fox News, CNN, and BBC World. The images consisted of a group of people in a Muslim country as the men were speaking in Arabic and women were wearing hijab (veils), while celebrating on streets. Some images show people eating cake in a small restaurant, a man distributing cake and sweets for free, a woman smiling enthusiastically outside the restaurant, kids dancing on the streets, and cars passing by playing loud music and screaming "Allah Akbar!" (God is Great). In one of the images, we see two white men, seemingly news reporters, filming these activities while smiling at the crowd. These images are juxtaposed together in a single video which did not have any supporting information about the cause for celebration, exact dates, time or location of the on-going activity. However, the information that is available refers to the spatiotemporal and socio-political context under which the moving images were broadcast.

These different images were released on September 11, 2001, hours after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. They were aired on CNN, FOX News and BBC World juxtaposed with headlines such as "Palestinians celebrate at Damascus Gate" and "Muslims Celebrating after Attack on World Trade Center". Today, these images have become part of a larger archive, presumed to represent Palestine and the Muslim world's reactions to the attack on the World Trade Center. The story broadcast on various news channels is a part of the wide range of archives that show the reactions and hatred of Muslims towards the United States which speak to their role in the Twin Tower attack on September 11, 2001. The images and the reactions are still circulated widely till now on the internet under similar headlines as in 2001.

The example of Palestinians celebrating after the September 11 attacks is just one of the many examples in which videos and images have been circulated globally to represent Muslims in Western Media post-9/11 attacks (Bail, 2012: 855). The dominant tropes about Muslim representation in Western Media since the 9/11 attacks have been Muslims as terrorists (Corbin, 2017), Muslim women as subjugated and oppressed by hijab and Islamic laws, also known as Shariah (Wagner et. al, 2012), and most Muslims belong to an Arabic country in the Middle East despite the region being macro-ethnic and multiracial with multiple ethnic minorities (Ghareeb, 1983). Such stereotyping of Islamic states, including Pakistan, has been common in post 9/11 media practices. This form of representation stigmatizes a perception of Muslims in a war with the West, Muslims as enemies, and it is used to justify the radical actions taken by the US government under the label of War on Terror (Kabir & Bourk, 2012: 325). While Western

representations of the East have been used to justify colonialism and imperialism (Said 1981), there is a need to update and expand upon analysis to account for contemporary events, particularly the post-9/11 world (Dabashi, 2015).

In this paper, I examine stock images in documentary films in the form of archives to examine the representation of Muslim identity in the post 9/11 world. Negative stereotypical and homogenous representations of Muslims in media related to the Sept 11 attacks is particularly problematic when it comes to non-fiction media such as news and documentary which use archival footage. The use of stock images in documentary films has particular consequences as it is limited in the indexical representation of conveying meaning and value of the event (Rosen 230). Therefore, the image alone may not fully capture the significance of the actual moment or presence and requires additional context or interpretation through other forms of narrative devices.

The process of taking a piece of discourse from its original context and framing it into a historical text is what I will refer to as entextualization in this paper. This is a fundamental process of power and authority because it allows for certain voices and perspectives to be privileged over others. By extracting discourse from its original context, those in power can control the narrative and shape public discourse in a way that serves their interests. The concept of entextualization was first introduced by linguistic anthropologists Erving Goffman (1967) and Dell Hymes (1986) and has been further developed by scholars such as Bauman and Briggs (1990), who explored its implications for power and authority in various contexts. Entextualization is a complex and dynamic relationship between the text, its original context, and the various contexts in which it is being received and interpreted. Therefore, it is important to consider both the relationship between the viewer and the text as well as the historical context in which the text was created and is being interpreted.

Entextualizing Muslim Identity through Archives

Malitsky (2010) argues that the process of entextualization can be understood through the notion of indexicality both as a "trace and deixis" that creates a visual image (p. 358). Indexicality refers to the physical connection between an image and the object or scene that it represents. This connection is created by the fact that the photograph is produced by the direct action of light on a light-sensitive material, such as film or a digital sensor (Gunning, 2008). This imprint creates a direct link between the image and the object or scene it represents, and this link is what gives the image its unique historical claim in the form of an archive. Indexicality as trace indicates a past event while deixis connects to

a spatial context in which the image is created (Malitsky, 2013). The spatio-temporality of the process of entextualization formulates a representation for the viewer to comprehend how representation is formulated through moving images.

In this paper, I build on Malitsky's framework of entextualization to analyze archival material in post 9/11 documentaries arguing how stock images contribute to an oriental gaze – which creates a power differential between the East and the West (Said 1979) - further stereotyping Muslim representation. Therefore, this paper intends to examine the use of archives that have been entextualized and re-present history to shape representation of Muslims across spatial and temporal differences through documentary films. To do so, I examine two post 9/11 documentaries – *Secret Pakistan* (2011) and *Turning Point: 9/11 and the War on Terror* (2021) – to explore how these films position the role of Pakistan as an Islamic nation in terrorism and Global War on Terror. In doing so, my goal is to highlight the oriental gaze embedded in media images that have been reproduced over the years to create a Muslim social imaginary that is extremist, violent, and follows Islamic orthodoxy. I further use the example of these two documentaries to identify the visual techniques through which the archives are entextualized to essentialize Muslim identity.

One such example is the case of *Secret Pakistan* (2011), a two-part documentary by the BBC which aired on 26 October 2011. The documentary revolves around the representation of one of the most controversial and sensitive events of the 21st century, that is the killing of Osama bin Laden, the founder of the world's most infamous terrorist organization, Al-Qaeda, in 2011 by United States Navy SEALs while he was hiding in a remote city of Pakistan. The documentary further argues that Pakistan 'double-crossed' the US despite being an ally in the War on Terror by claiming that Pakistan's intelligence-services helped the Taliban by providing them with training and support for terrorist activities. In doing so, the documentary uses archival footage, omnipresent narration and interviews of American officials to support its claims and thus create an "imaginary" historical reality. The two-part series is an influential documentary produced in the past two decades as within 24 hours of its release, it received an audience of 1 million (4.1%). The series also generated controversy after Pakistan blocked BBC World News claiming it contained anti-Pakistan content and that the program was one-sided. To consider the role of indexical representation of Muslims as terrorists, I will be focusing on the first part of the documentary in this paper.

Following the documentary and other similar forms of non-fiction representation in Western media, a general assumption prevailed that Pakistan betrayed

the US by hiding the world's most notorious terrorist. Without any concrete evidence, this assumption developed into a historical event or fact through the use of moving images which functioned as an archive in the documentary. Such claims and assumptions rely on the medium of documentary film due to the tendency of archival documents having a more influential representation of history on screen. Robert A. Rosenstone (2019), an American historian, wrote widely on the reconstruction of history on screen. His book titled, *History on Film/Film on History*, specifically looks at the complications of recreating a historical fact on screen as he argues that documentaries can invoke feelings, emotions, and responses from audiences. He states:

> This is done in a variety of visual and aural ways — not just through the images used, but also in the way they are framed, colored, and edited; as well as through the soundtrack, the quality of voice of both narrators and witnesses, the words spoken, the sound effects, the music from found sources, or composed, to heighten the impact of the images. Like the dramatic film, the documentary wants you to feel and care deeply about the events and people of the past (74).

As illustrated in Rosenstone's argument, historical facts as represented through documentary are not just situated in the past but also have a relationship with the way the audience perceives and interacts with the moving images. Malitsky identifies this relationality as a negotiation between "the speaker, the addressee, and the time and place of enunciation" (p. 360). For instance, in *Secret Pakistan,* the opening sequence consists of a montage of shaky and unclear images which are edited together at a fast pace. The various images are of police patrolling the streets with guns, bearded men arguing with armed forces on a road, a woman wearing a blue veil, and various images of terrorists with guns, bombs falling on landscapes, and members of the US army fighting in Afghanistan. These images are backed by an omnipresent narration which raises many questions over the role of Pakistan in giving terrorists refuge in the country. A few of the many similarly spoken words by the narrator in the opening sequence are:

> …this series tells the hidden story of how for a decade Pakistan deceived America and the West and was then found out…Above all it is the story of how Pakistan, a supposed ally, stands accused by top Western intelligence officers and diplomats of causing the deaths of thousands of coalition soldiers in Afghanistan.

As illustrated through this narration, supporting the fast-paced editing of stock images, in the first two minutes of the film, the culture of Pakistan is de-

picted as an extremist, fundamentalist, and conservative nation. Words such as 'double game', 'betrayal' and 'deceived' supported by the visuals build on moving images of local marketplaces and men holding guns depict Pakistan as a nation that has collectively provided refuge and shelter to terrorists. The process of entextualization here provide visual images that are juxtaposed together as indices which function as an archive for Muslim culture in Pakistan. Such a representation of Pakistan in the documentary led to a criticism that it presented a biased narrative which conformed to the political and ideological need of the West (USA) to justify the breach of sovereignty and borders of a foreign nation to carry out an armed mission.

Such incentives behind the documentary, *Secret Pakistan,* come as no surprise given that Rosenstone argues that documentary "encompasses both the notion that the documentary refers to an actual world of the past, and is at the same time always positioned, ideological, and partisan," and that "on screen we see not the events themselves, and not the events as experienced or even as witnessed by participants, but selected images of those events carefully arranged into sequences to tell a particular story or to make a particular argument" (72). Here Rosenstone's arguments help shed light on selected images referring to a particular temporality regardless of the profilmic space - the space in which images are filmed. (Jaikumar 2019).

As a result, to maintain a critical view of the arguments and claims made in *Secret Pakistan*, what becomes important is not the context provided by the voiceover in the documentary (Lee, 2012), but the context in which the film was produced and the context behind the archives. This leads to the second documentary that I use for analysis in the paper that concerns talking head interviews as voiceovers which complicates the process of entextualization by personalizing stock images as representative of the interviews. *Turning Point: 9/11 and the War on Terror* (2021), directed by Brian Knappenberger and produced by Netflix, depicts the role played by various Muslim states in the Global War on Terror. This is a five-part documentary series that looks back at twenty years of 9/11 and the Global War on Terror by building on archival material and interviews with government officials, journalists, and civilians to dig deep into contextualizing twenty years of 9/11 through a global lens that has roots in imperial domination through proxy wars. For my arguments in the article, I will be particularly referring to Pakistan as a Muslim state and its role in the Global War on Terror.

In the first episode of *Turning Point: 9/11 and the War on Terror* the portrayal of the creation of the Taliban is narrated through an interview with Ahmad Rashid, a senior journalist from Pakistan and also the author of the book *Tali-*

ban. In the interview, he describes the context of third-world proxy wars during the Cold War and points out how billions of dollars were spent in training the mujahedeen for war against the Soviet Invasion in the late 1980s. As Rashid further narrates the context of the creation of the Taliban through militant training by US armed forces, the archives portray a narrative of the process. Shots of Muslim men praying collectively in outdoor spaces are juxtaposed to photos of men in the armed struggle carrying and transporting weapons. As the interview further describes how this was an act of Islamic resistance for the natives supported by the US army, we see people getting prepared with heavy machinery and jets being a part of the resistance movement. The archives in this scene do not only depict the historicity of the creation of the Taliban but also bring in spatial connections to the barren land and underground training camps in which the mujahidin were initially mobilizing people for Islamic resistance to the change in location in more urban local spaces where aid and support with heavy machinery was a changing factor in their successful struggle against the Soviet Invasion.

Samuel Sieber (2016) in his study of the politics of the archive in the 're-presentation' of archived newsreel footage in news and documentary argues that "through retrospectively constructing and restaging significant events and cultural identities, media demonstrate more than a stipulating power to determine discourses and shape visual regimes" (25). Sieber's argument here demonstrates that entextualization has the power to shape and influence cultural memory, national consciousness, cultural difference, ethnic identities and religious beliefs. In this way 're-presentation' of archival images can also create and shape representation of the Others, and the way oriental gaze is constructed. Thus, *Turning Point: 9/11 and the War on Terror's* use of a native informant, such as Ahmed Rashid, indexes an authenticity of the narrative of Muslim identity. Although, the interview avoids biased claims of Muslim extremism, the stock images that visually guide the narrative function as deixis that builds a relationality between the referent and the indexical origin (p. 360). This relation creates an oriental gaze as it essentializes a spatial connection of the stock images to the production of a historical image about a non-Western identity, as in this case the "secret" Pakistan.

Politics of the Archive

Bauman and Briggs (1990) in their essay on "Poetics and Performance as Critical Perspectives on Language and Social Life" examine the social and cultural contexts in which texts are circulated. This according to them works on four levels: access, legitimacy, competency, and value. Thus, the institutional

structures that legitimate archives are also adding value to it by making it accessible for distribution. As Jamie Baron (2012) argues, archives should not only be understood as documents that are proof of history but also that reproduce history through circulation of archival images. A stock image in the form of a document becomes "archival" precisely because within a new film it is recognized by the viewer as "found" and is thereby endowed with some form of evidentiary authority" (Baron 104). In arguing this, Baron helps highlight the use of archives as evidence for viewers to prove the claims made by a documentary. Baron further suggests that an archive is understood as a relationship between viewer and the text. She states that "I am calling for a reconceptualization of the "appropriation film" as not merely the manner and matter of the text but also as a matter of reception, dependent on the effects the film produces, namely, what I refer to as the 'archive effect' (104).

The notion of reception is evident through the dialectic reception in which *Secret Pakistan* was received locally and internationally. Critics of the documentary claimed that the images and the interviews in the documentary support a one-sided and biased opinion that Pakistan supported Al-Qaida and helped Osama bin Laden seek refuge in the country. These claims are articulated in the documentary by using stock footage and archival materials obtained from various sources to support the arguments of the documentary. The images which mostly consist of Taliban soldiers training in Afghanistan, images of men in beards in rural areas and streets, shaky and dark footage of everyday traffic, footage of wanted terrorists, and armed police forces on streets. Moreover, a large part of this consists of such images which do not relate to the specific spatiotemporal events and claims being made in the documentary. These images are backed by an ominous soundtrack and interviews of American CIA officials, terrorists and a narration, all of which together creates an atmosphere of uncertainty and dangers that loom over Pakistan. These images acquired through sources such as Getty Images, AP Archives and National Archives (US) are juxtaposed and presented in a way that they, as stated by Sieber, "reveal a political mediality in which the articulable as much as the visual remain volatile constructs subjected to intervening transformations" (25). As a result, the way the archival materials in the film are selected to represent spaces of daily life activities in Pakistan and their consequent interpretation as well as reuse signify the institutional processes and politics underlying the collection processes of media archives.

Although *Turning Point: 9/11 and the War on Terror* provides a more comprehensive contextual narrative of the emergence of Muslim extremist groups, it fails to engage with the politics of authenticity in the interviews by having

former director of the National Counter-Terrorism Center narrating the story of the execution of Osama bin Laden. In *Turning Point 9/11 and the War on Terror,* the archives similarly lack spatio-temporal significance by juxtaposing shots of troops in mountainous areas and military training centers in Pakistan that depicts the landscape of Pakistani support for Al-Qaeda. Craig Whitlock, one of the interviewees, and the author of *The Afghanistan Papers: A Secret History of War*, specifies how this was a 'double game' played by Pakistan as they took aid from US against Al-Qaeda while internally supporting and providing shelter to Al-Qaeda members. Similar patterns of archival footage of marketplaces and daily life activities of Muslims in Pakistan is juxtaposed to the interviews which further reinstates a universalist representation of Muslim in the nation.

The archives used in the first part of *Secret Pakistan* comprise of a mountainous terrain, a building with bullet holes in walls, bombings in an open field. The images alone do not hold any specific information which signifies the spatiotemporal settings under which they were captured. What establishes their representation is the context in which they are used. Juxtaposing bombings in the field with narration describing US military might and juxtaposing images of a building with bullet holes with narration describing the failure of Taliban militants, is what gives context to the images and thus allow filmmakers to use images as, to use Malitsky's (2012) term, "visual pointers". Though the image of a mountainous terrain alone does not represent the areas of terrorist hideouts, rather their contextual use as a mountain range in Afghanistan is what represents the historical relevance of the image. In this way, the stock images act as indexes and bring 'aliveness' to signs when these moving images are juxtaposed (p. 250).

The institution processes and politics of archives is also evident in *Secret Pakistan* through the list of sources mentioned in the ending credits through which the archives were collected. The list includes a variety of sources such as online stock image galleries Getty Images and BBC Motion Gallery; archives from AP archives and Reuters news agencies, and US national institutions such the US Department of Defense and UK Ministry of Defense. Although the documentary does not refer to the original location and dates in which the images were captured, the variety of platforms through which the images were acquired signifies the institutional politics and geopolitical goals embedded in their reuse in the process of entextualization in the documentary. As a result, the archives do not signify a contextual reference to the original events and circumstances in which they were obtained, instead as Jaikumar (2019) notes, the reuse of archives refers to "the politicization, commodification, memorialization of images that have temporal associations" (239). Juxtaposing the material and spectral,

Jaikumar builds an argument of how images are in a reproduction cycle that is in entanglements of spatial and temporal configurations changing from one context to another due to colonial and imperial ideologies.

It is also interesting to note here the images were acquired from sources outside of the geographical and national boundaries of Pakistan, yet the narrative of the documentary represented an imagined national community of Pakistan with the aid of archives acquired from transnational resources. Such an inclination to rely on archival media is partly due to the lack of access documentary filmmakers have in certain parts of the world, hence, archival footage provides a way to offset the geographical and temporal limitations faced by filmmakers while reducing production costs such as on-site crew and re-creation of historical events (Kalow 5). Furthermore, it provides filmmakers with the margin to add desired contextual references to the narrative and arguments of the documentary in an attempt to improvise with visual storytelling (Kalow 36). Such a practice complicates the indexical relationship of archival representation as it relies on visual techniques to define Muslim identity discourse.

Conclusion

The circulation of archives in the form of stock images across the globe is one of the many examples through which Muslim representation has been constructed in media post the 9/11 attacks. The underlying themes of much of this representation is to frame Muslims around the globe as perpetrators of terrorist activities in the world. In this paper, I have argued that such themes and practices problematize representation of Islamic nations such as Pakistan by analyzing stock images as a unit of analysis to study Muslim representation. To uncover the politics of archive in the use of stock images to create Muslim representation, the process of entextualization is useful as it historicizes Muslim identity beyond stock images as documents of archival material.

Nazia Kazi (2021) reiterates this notion of Islamophobia by situating it in a larger discourse of systemic power and authority. Kazi is reflective of the global networks of power that place Muslims in opposition to white supremacy, thus, racially acquiring certain traits and characteristics. Media texts in the form of movies, television shows, and news are avenues of global circulation that work towards stereotyping the Muslim as the other, in this case, the terrorist other. Similarly, Khaled Beydoun (2019) explores 'American Islamophobia' and situates it in structures of power exerted by law and foreign policy regarding nation and citizenship. Beydoun's notion of global law is significant to realize the potential of imperial regimes in the execution of Islamophobic racism. Islamophobic rac-

ism thus is created through such images in which universalistic claims about an identity is historicized, such as locals in Abbottabad in *Turning Point: 9/11 and the War on Terror* were depicted as supportive of extremist ideologies through audio-visual juxtaposition. In the case of *Secret Pakistan*, the archival images, and interviews recontextualize the Muslims in Pakistan and Afghanistan. It not only questions Muslim belief systems but also projects them as deceitful people in the region. In doing so it further essentializes Muslim stereotypes by universalizing this trait amongst a larger region in which Muslims from both countries were supportive of the acts.

Archival visual storytelling of the creation of the Taliban contextualizes Muslim extremist groups indexing the rituals and practices of such groups that are embedded in specific religious belief systems. Other than creating a narrative arc through the spatial significance of Afghanistan's Muslim struggles, the archives also portray a global phenomenon. The use of archives in the interview with Ahmed Rashid in *Turning Point: 9/11 and the War on Terror* shows how the Arab world supported the armed struggle of the *Mujahidins* (freedom fighters) in the following years. Kris Manjapra (2021) examines the history of colonialism through a global lens as a form of resistance as the local articulation of colonialism articulates the binary opposition of the colonizer and colonized. To move away from these binaries Manjapra proposes a global perspective of rereading history to situate it amongst the transnational exchange of capital, warfare, and freedom struggles. From this perspective, *Turning Point: 9/11 and the War on Terror's* approach to documentary is of a global lens that resists universal narratives of representing religious fundamental beliefs. What is lacking are accounts of historically situated archives that could lead to a more nuanced understanding of post 9/11 trauma in the region.

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A New Paradigm for the Genocidal Interview: The Documentary Duel and the Question of Collaboration

Abstract:

A global boom in mainly documentary films interviewing perpetrators recognizes the current shift from the era of the witness to that of the perpetrator. Post Khmer-Rouge Cambodian cinema (1989–present) is a unique and highly important case of perpetrator cinema. It proposes for the first time in cinema direct confrontation between first-generation survivor-filmmakers and perpetrators, a new form of genocidal interview: the documentary duel. Enabled both by the intimate horror of the autogenocide and the Khmer Rouge tribunal (the ECCC), dueling with high-ranking perpetrators shifts power relations between the two. In contrast, dueling with low-ranking perpetrators and collaborators, never to be tried, does not generate this much-desired shift. Thus, Cambodian collaboration revealed through cinema stresses the immense importance of the law in promoting familial-social-cultural processes of acknowledgement of accountability. Further, Cambodian duel documentaries constitute the ethics of "moral resentment" (my term), while objecting to and disrupting the political view that reconciliation is the only legitimate response to the atrocious past.

Key words: Perpetrator Era, perpetrator cinema, Cambodian autogenocide, genocidal interview, documentary duel, moral resentment, perpetration, collaboration

The New Post-Khmer Rouge Cambodian (mainly documentary) Perpetrator Cinema (1990s–2020s) is part of a recent global phenomenon of perpetrator cinema, an unprecedented twenty-first century boom in films that deal with genocidal or other mass-killing events by focusing on the perpetrator figure as their main protagonist or interviewee.[1] However, although it is part of this global phenomenon, the cinema that grew out of the Cambodian autogenocide[2] (1975–1979) is paradigmatic, due to the number of films produced and their novel form of addressing the perpetrator.[3] The notable difference between the Cambodian autogenocide – meaning that the enemy was not a foreign Other but a member of the same imagined community (sharing the same origins, ethnicity, language, and religious belief) – and the other major genocidal catastrophes of the late twentieth century (from Rwanda and Sierra Leone to former Yugoslavia) reflects on the extraordinariness of this cinema in terms of its negotiation with perpetration. For the first time in the history of post-Holocaust cinema, the duel is established: a new form of direct confrontational interview between the first- (or second) generation survivor and the perpetrator.[4]

The autogenocide, during which the Khmer Rouge (KR) murdered almost two million of their own people, a quarter of the population at the time, made this confrontation possible. After the fall of the regime, both high- and low-ranking perpetrators continued to live their lives alongside their former victims; past intimate violence once again turned into the daily closeness of members of the same imagined community. Undoubtedly, the establishment of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia for the Prosecution of Crimes Committed during the Period of Democratic Kampuchea[5] (ECCC[6]) then enabled thousands of witnesses and civil parties to confront the perpetrators, thus deeply affecting

[1] See Raya Morag (2020a).

[2] The term "autogenocide" was coined by Ervin Staub (1992, pp. 7, 191).

[3] This corpus includes films such as *Enemies of the People: A Personal Journey into the Heart of the Killing Fields* (2009, dir. Thet Sambath and Rob Lemkin); *S21: The Khmer Rouge Death Machine* (*S-21, la machine de mort Khmère rouge*, 2003, dir. Rithy Panh); *Survive: In the Heart of Khmer Rouge Madness* (*L'important c'est de rester vivant*, 2009, dir. Roshane Saidnattar); and *About My Father* (2010, dir. Guillaume Suon).

[4] A Jewish survivor–Nazi perpetrator direct encounter is unimaginable in post-Holocaust European cinema. In contrast to the Cambodian context, the basic situation could not have been realized: the wide majority of Jewish survivors did not return to their homes in Germany (or other European locations) and the option of confronting the Nazi perpetrators was unimaginable and indescribable.

[5] Democratic Kampuchea was the government founded when KR forces defeated the US-backed Khmer Republic of Lon Nol in 1975. It existed until 1979. See "Khmer Rouge History", http://www.cambodiatribunal.org/history/cambodian-history/khmer-rouge-history/, accessed: 11/10/2022.

[6] The ECCC is a special Cambodian court, often called the KR Tribunal, set up in 2006 pursuant to a 2003 agreement between Cambodia and the United Nations to prosecute only high-level KR leaders of former Democratic Kampuchea. See "Introduction to the ECCC", https://www.eccc.gov.kh/en/introduction-eccc, accessed 11/10/2022.

the taboo-ized public sphere and supporting the only medium that can stage such a confrontation – documentary cinema.[7]

This paper has three aims: First, to introduce the documentary duel as a new paradigm for the genocidal interview. Second, to reflect on the representation of Cambodia's collective collaboration with the KR. Un-addressed by the ECCC, this collaboration is also under-represented in the New Post-KR Cambodian perpetrator cinema. I contend that an examination of the entire corpus suggests that it is the workings of the ECCC that enabled such unprecedented dueling with the high-ranking perpetrators. Since the ECCC did not bring low-ranking perpetrators and collaborators to trial, the various forms of cinematic dueling with both are oriented mostly towards the spectator (and not the interviewees, who, knowing they would not be tried, are indifferent to accountability and in rural Cambodia still exert power over their former victims).

Third, and consequently, this paper aims to introduce the phenomenon of "moral resentment" (my term) emanating from these circumstances. The films dealing with low-ranking perpetrators and collaborators suggest that the subject position of the collaborator is fraught with denial and ambiguous within the biological (or symbolic) post-autogenocide family. With the absence of laws to support the breaking of the taboo on discussing or acting upon the widespread collaboration of the KR period, familial-social-cultural processes of coming to terms with the past are blocked. As the comparison between the films analyzed below shows, dueling between members of a family creates intergenerational aporias not less than intergenerational transmission of the genocidal trauma. Reflecting on both as irresolvable in 2000s Cambodia, the films simultaneously propose for the spectators new ethics of moral resentment. While Shoshana Felman (2002) understands the relationship between trauma and the law as a highly unstable dynamic, stating that the Eichmann trial tried to put an end to trauma but inadvertently performed an acting-out of it, Cambodian dueling, dependent to a large extent on the ECCC's transformation of the public sphere, directs moral resentment toward both high- and low-ranking perpetrators and collaborators, as well as the films' spectators. Opposing the Western paradigm of reconciliation, moral resentment should thus be seen as both a new attitude and an active praxis.

[7] And, to a lesser extent, an imaginary staging of this encounter format in fiction cinema.

The Documentary Duel and the High-Ranking Perpetrator

The emergence of perpetrator cinema in Cambodia is exceptional. In the absence of any supportive social-intellectual movement, and under the taboo and censorship of the post-KR period, collecting perpetrators' accounts is a process undertaken simultaneously with taking victims' testimonies and rebuilding the audiovisual archives.[8] Perpetrator cinema has emerged despite facing various obstructive factors, such as the blindness of the West to the KR genocide, censorship inside Cambodia on the KR period and its absence from the education curriculum from 1979 until the early 2000s, and the 35 years of UN silence on the KR genocide that further encouraged Cambodians to ignore their past. It was only when the ECCC began its work in 2006 that testimonies of survivors (as well as civil parties[9]) and perpetrators' accounts entered more forcefully into the public sphere. The dueling gets special resonance because of the workings of the ECCC while the perpetrators' incarceration takes place either after the duel ends (as in *Enemies of the People: A Personal Journey into the Heart of the Killing Fields* [2009, dir. Thet Sambath and Rob Lemkin]) or before it begins (as in *Duch*, *Master of the Forges of Hell [Duch, le maître des forges de l'enfer*; 2011, dir. Rithy Panh]).

The most conspicuous characteristic of the direct-encounter-turned-duel is its (explicit or implicit) transformation of power relations, especially in regard to high-ranking perpetrators. Although in all the documentary perpetrator films the high-ranking perpetrators do not take full accountability, through the dueling they either partially confess to their crimes and/or reveal part of the truth in regard to the KR regime. Thus, I contend, the duel shifts the twentieth-century "ordinary man" enigma and, instead, based on a lengthy interaction, enables a representation of this change-in-the-making of (post-) genocidal power relations.

Perhaps more than any other post-traumatic oeuvre in post-Holocaust world cinema, that of French-Cambodian director Rithy Panh paves the way for the cinematic representation of the perpetrator figure. Eight years after the completion of his *S-21: The Khmer Rouge Death Machine* (2003), Panh's *Duch, Master of the Forges of Hell* embodies the notion of "documentary dueling" to

[8] This work is being carried out by both the Bophana Audiovisual Center and by the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam). See http://bophana.org/; https://dccam.org/home, accessed: 11/10/2022.

[9] The ECCC is the first court trying international mass crimes that provides an opportunity for victims to participate directly in the trial proceedings as "civil parties". See ECCC, "Who is Eligible to become a Civil Party?" https://www.eccc.gov.kh/en/victims-support/civil-party-information, accessed: 11/10/2022.

its fullest, while implicitly staging the question of whether it might be a "civilizing" process for the (high-ranking[10]) perpetrator. In this corpus, however, the main protagonist is neither the perpetrator nor the survivor, but the duel itself. Accusations of dishonesty, historically one of the most frequent grounds for dueling, inform the underlying tension between the survivor-interviewer and perpetrator-interviewee. The first-generation survivor is undoubtedly aspiring, after years of effort, to extract the perpetrator's confession. The films show, however, that after escalation of the conflict, it is ultimately the duel's explicit or implicit transformation of power relations that is at stake, rather than the (usually failed or partial) confession. In this corpus, it is the survivor's status and courage that, encountering deep interactional obstacles, shape the flow of the confrontation.

Duch is a distinctive example of perpetrator documentary, evident in the way that its director, a survivor of the Cambodian genocide, identifies his main goal: to confront the perpetrator, Kaing Guek Eve (nicknamed Duch, the former commandant[11] of the notorious torture and execution center Tuol Sleng, code-named S-21,[12] who was arrested by the ECCC in 2010).

The only interviewee in *Duch* is Duch himself. For the making of the film Panh spent hundreds of hours during the period of Duch's arrest and trial interviewing him.[13] During the interviews, Panh asks Duch to read out loud from slogans of the Cambodian Communist Party, prisoners' accounts, his own contemporary comments written on these accounts, interrogators' reports, and rules written for the guards. He also asks him to look at photo prints taken of prisoners before their execution and at paintings of scenes of torture and suffering in execution center S-21, and to listen to video testimonies describing the atrocities carried out under his command.

Through this, Panh constitutes an epistemology of unvindictive resentment, one that demands an ethical response not only from the perpetrator but also from the spectator. Holocaust survivor and writer Jean Améry's (1980/1966)

[10] Duch is not considered a Big Brother/Perpetrator. This term refers especially to Brother Numbers 1–4 (Pol Pot, "Brother Number 1", was the KR leader, the general secretary of the party during the Cambodian genocide; Nuon Chea, "Brother Number 2", was the chief ideologist of the KR, Prime Minister of Democratic Kampuchea; Ieng Sary "Brother Number 3", was the foreign minister and deputy prime minister; Khieu Samphan, "Brother Number 4", was Cambodia's head of state). But, being Pol Pot's chief executioner and the first to stand trial by the ECCC, Duch became the symbol of the high-ranking perpetrators.

[11] As the head of the government's internal security branch (Santebal), Duch oversaw the Tuol Sleng (S-21) prison camp. He was convicted of crimes against humanity, murder, and torture, and on February 2, 2012, the ECCC extended his sentence to life. He died in prison on September 2, 2020.

[12] "The 'S' . . . stood for *sala*, or 'hall', while '21' was the code number assigned to *santebal*" (Chandler, 1996: p. 3).

[13] See Panh and Bataille (2013).

writing on resentment raises a vital conceptualization of time, which, I suggest, is also embodied in perpetrator cinema's structuring of time-sense: "The moral person demands annulment of time – in the particular case under question, by nailing the criminal to his deed" (p. 72). According to the Amérian experience, after a short post-war period in which he felt that Holocaust victims were listened to and respected in Germany and Europe, the politics of forgetting became hegemonic to an extent that the "camp-self"/"victim-self" took over the much-desired "survivor-self." When victimhood was again repressed politically, the camp-self, feeling loneliness and social isolation, prevailed. In 1976, thirty-one years after the end of World War II, Améry writes:

> What happened, happened. But *that* it happened cannot be so easily accepted. … Nothing has healed, and what perhaps was already on the point of healing in 1964 is bursting open again as an infected wound.[14] (p. xxi)

At the heart of this thought, Améry is staging the political conflict between collective progress and survivors' struggles with the past, between the victims' need for recognition and (both German and European) society's political urge to promote social stability through reconciliation; and, consequently, I maintain, in line with Jacques Derrida's (2001) contention regarding politics' sabotage of pure forgiveness, their need to assure expected political transactions and financial gains.

Améry's resentment is harbored in the victims' immense sense of betrayal. However, similar to the perpetrator films' mindset, this is not the Nietzschean (2009/1887) or the Max Schelerian (2010/1914) resentment/*ressentiment* embodying the mental attitude of the weak and powerless – the *Schlechtweggekommenen* – against their aristocratic masters. Opposing both Nietzsche's and Scheler's dominant conceptualization of resentment/*ressentiment*, Améry's innovation lies in his definition of resentment not as an unconscious uncontrollable negative impulse of human nature, but as a highly self-conscious state of personal morality. Enabling an insightful introspection into the humanness of resentment, he opposes Nietzsche for despising victims, regarding them as weak, inferior, and cowardly, but rather elevates their dignity, having been forced by circumstances beyond their control. Moreover, Améry, in an exceedingly bold move, rejects the entire psychological-moralist tradition that follows the Nietzschean premise, which became paradigmatic in Western thought, by seeing resentment as a kind of sickness that harms the "patient" while repressing its ethics.

In *Duch,* Panh uses three major strategies repetitively and alternately to modify our perception of time as it chains us to a permanent past; all three, built on

[14] Emphasis in the original.

editing, demonstrate the profoundly affective power of resentment during the survivor – (high-ranking) perpetrator battle. In their projection of resentment, they attempt to construct for Duch a representation of the Cambodian past as a moral time and to reverse power relations.

The first strategy is to demand that spectators remodel their conception of time by showing very short video clips or photos inserted into the interviewing process. These materials reveal Duch's responses to be lies but also, and simultaneously, incessantly "take" the spectator back to the past. Their representation lasts no more than a few seconds, thus for spectators they function as flickers of time-consciousness, marking their distinction from the conventional undemanding easiness of cinematic flashbacks. Flickering sometimes so quickly that some images seem almost ungraspable, they are nevertheless engraved on the spectators' consciousness thanks to their contrasting content and the repetition of the technique.

The second strategy is the use of the accumulation of materials on Duch's desk at the center of the *mise-en-scéne*. These materials, mostly comprising written documents and still photographs taken from S-21, are orchestrated on the desk. As Duch reads them, points to his signature, looks at and reflects on them, he is returned again and again to the past. Since Duch had read these execution accounts while he was the director of S-21 and regarded them as true confessions, Panh's requirement that he re-read them becomes a form of re-enactment of Duch's deeds through the speech act. His re-reading becomes a substitute for his unperformed confession, for his obstinate refusal to acknowledge responsibility for his crimes. The re-reading is also a substitute for – and ironically at the same time refutes – Duch's lies.

Whenever Duch refrains from looking, the camera's gaze forces the audience to witness the sight of his signature, his comments in red ink, or the expressions of the doomed prisoners in their mugshots. As Panh writes in his autobiography:

> Duch asks me why I'm always showing him photographs. "What's the point"? he asks, in that tone of his. I answer, "But the thing is … they're listening to you… Bophana's[15] here. Taing Siv Leang too. I believe they're listening to you." (Panh and Bataille, p. 261)

The major components of Panh's ideology of resentment built through the dueling are not only the refusal of future reconciliation and the disordering of temporality as a way to bring the perpetrator back to his past deeds. Returning to the past as an act of resentment also means rupturing the moment of the ev-

[15] The love story between Bophana and her husband and her subversive stand against the KR and her torturers in S21 became one of Panh's major symbols.

erlasting now that it is rooted in denial. The Now in *Duch* is the time of denial realized as a continuous mindset of tactics and manipulation. After all, the "willing executioner" unfolds his denial of the past in the present; the "twilight state of knowing and not-knowing", as Stanley Cohen (2001, p. 80) calls it, happens in the present, while blocking out the past. Rupturing the attachment between denial and the Now as its dominant temporalization therefore elevates resentment's value and makes it more coherent than Améry (1980/1966) suggests:

> Resentment blocks the exit to the genuine human dimension, the future. I know that the time-sense of the person trapped in resentment is twisted around, dis-ordered, if you wish, for it desires two impossible things: regression into the past and nullification of what happened. (p. 68)

The third strategy that transforms the perception of time for both Duch and the spectator is the present absentee Panh, whose "documentary voice" (Nichols, 2008, p. 78) is heard in every way possible except physically. Panh completely avoids a corporeal appearance before the camera, and, together with his physical "muteness", his representation of the dead becomes more total. The interview-based encounter between Panh and Duch is built on a conjuring act, which makes the dead play the Third, meaningful Other. But the dead are more than ghost-participants; ceaselessly presented through both the accounts and the photos, they become the third participant.

In the following, a description of one of the striking confrontation scenes will serve as an example of the strategies of resentment put forward by Panh against the "immensity and monstrosity of the natural time-sense" (Améry, 1980/1966, p. 81). As seen throughout *Duch*, in this confrontation scene as well, Duch's desk is at the heart of the *mise-en-scéne*.

[*Duch is shown sitting near the desk. Bophana's photo is noticeable, however the desk is loaded with many piles of documents and a computer. Duch is holding a photograph of a tortured prisoner, the camera follows his gaze. In the background, a propaganda song is heard*]. Panh presents Duch's following monologue:

> DUCH. Let's talk about hitting intelligently. Mam Nay aka Chan could beat someone while thinking about what he was doing because he was not hungry for recognition. He was a very good interrogator. He behaved according to the answer he got. He hit very hard. He would deliver a very strong blow from time to time if it was necessary. He would strike one, two, three blows [*Cut to a four-second illustration shot of a blow that lasts the time the blow itself takes. The last words of the sentence are heard as a sound bridge over the inserted shot*] and almost never reached five!

Those who hit without thinking were like Comrade Touy. He wanted the same power as Comrade Pon but he never reached Pon's level because I hadn't had much time to train him. Thus, he had only one method: torture. Biff! Boom! He controlled his blows so that the prisoner wouldn't die. He wanted to compete with Pon. [*Cut. The camera reveals an image that soon will be comprehended as video testimony, which Panh shows to Duch (and the viewers) in order to refute Duch's previous statement. Duch watches the video on his computer.*]

[*The person speaking in the video shows a still picture and, pointing to it, says*:] I met Mam Nay aka Chan in 1973 in the secret prison M13. I saw him use an AK47 to execute someone. [*The video's frame is enlarged and we see him on the entire film screen*.]

There was a place there that we called the winner's podium. When a person was tied to it, he was to be executed. Every prisoner knew what it meant (execution). On that day, the prisoners were gathered around the podium. Chan killed one of them with his rifle. Blood splattered all over the prisoners standing around, on everyone who was there. It was terrifying. He wanted to scare us with this behavior.

[*Closeup on Duch. He laughs*.]

[*On the soundtrack we hear the propaganda songs. Duch is seen sitting behind his desk. The noticeable documents are different to those shown at the beginning of the scene*]

DUCH. You can put it that way. But if you do, you will make me acknowledge lies. I will not accept this. My officers knew how to hit and all the rest. But to say that Mam Nay was the one who shot is not true. Not true. I wouldn't say Mam Nay never hit anyone. [*His last words are heard over a four-second video archive of a b/w propaganda film of KR cadres walking in a line in the countryside with their weapons*]. He had beaten prisoners in the past. Sometimes he interrogated with his eyes closed. From time to time he would get up and pick up his long stick to hit with. [*Duch shows the presumed length of the stick on his stretched arm. The desk is shown from another angle with Bophana's photo once again on top of one pile of documents*]. Then he would go to sleep. [*A two-second shot (in color) is seen of a skinny tortured prisoner tied to the podium and bending his head*]. Then he would come back to interrogate the prisoner. Mr. Witness may keep talking, there's nothing I can do. There's nothing to document this. … Mr. Witness is speaking up, but he has no documents either. So he can keep talking all he wants.

As this description shows, this typical scene, which lasts circa three and a half minutes, includes insertions of four still photographs, two "flickering"

short clips, and two archive clips presented as videos. This meticulous editing attests to Panh's commitment to a moral regression to the past, creating a resentment that "blocks the exit to the genuine human dimension, the future… for this reason the man of resentment cannot join in the unisonous peace chorus all around him, which cheerfully proposes: not backward let us look but forward, to a better, common future!" (Améry, 1980/1966, pp. 68–69). The belief in being somewhat fundamentally conditioned by the past, shared by Panh and Améry, stands in contrast to Duch's constant denials declared repetitively in this scene. His reaction to the proliferation of materials presented by Panh reveals it is rooted in a total un-acknowledgment that has characterized all the years Panh spent shooting the film. As Panh (2013) says: "Thanks to the cinema, the truth comes out: montage versus mendacity" (p. 114) and "Duch reinvents his truth in order to survive. … I edit my film, therefore, against Duch. The only morality is the editing, the montage" (p. 186). Thus, it is obvious that Panh refrains from anchoring the confrontation in the discourse of reconciliation, forgiveness, and similitude, and that his objection to this discourse is revealed through embracing the discourse of responsibility, accountability, justice, and difference as part of the Amérian philosophy of resentment.

The Documentary Duel and the Question of Collaboration

In contrast to Panh's incessant confrontation with the high-ranking perpetrator during the dueling in *Duch*, two of the major films that present low-ranking ex-KR cadres that were involved in KR crimes (*Red Wedding* [2011, dir. Lida Chan and Guillaume Suon] and *Angkar* [2018, dir. Neary Adeline Hay]), raise the question of confronting the collaborators. Under the unprecedented circumstances of the complicity of most of the Cambodian people with the Pol Pot regime (whether they voluntarily joined the movement, often as young people following the KR propaganda against Vietnam, King Norodom Sihanouk's[16] support of the KR, and US carpet bombing during the early 1970s, or involuntarily under the regime's terror and suppression), defining the corpus of perpetrator cinema entails an additional layer of reference both to the huge number of (mostly hidden) low-ranking perpetrators and (being everywhere and nowhere) collaborators.

[16] A 1970 military coup initiated by the general Lon Nol ousted Norodom Sihanouk, King of Cambodia, and paved the way for the US-backed Khmer Republic. Sihanouk fled to China and North Korea, there forming a government-in-exile and resistance movement. In 1975, his support of the KR movement allowed his return to Cambodia as the KR figurehead head of state. Although initially supportive of the KR, his relations with them declined and in 1976 he resigned and was placed under house arrest until 1979, when Vietnamese forces overthrew the KR.

The question of collective collaboration, which transcends the individual cases depicted in the films, is under-represented in the New Cambodian perpetrator cinema. This highly sensitive issue is embodied in the response to the question of French director Bruno Carette and the Cambodian-survivor co-director Sien Meta in *Bitter Khmer Rouge* (*Khmers Rouges Amers*, 2007). Reth, an ex-KR soldier, reflects on the paradoxical and pre-emptive failure of the ECCC – and, metonymically, the entire Cambodian society – to bring low-ranking perpetrators to trial: "Trying KR? But which KR for heaven's sake? KR, but who wasn't a KR"? Is Reth's avoidance of the term "collaborator" a symptom of the phenomenon in question?

The Cambodian direct, non-archival, face-to-face confrontation with the perpetrator/collaborator is derived and realized through the directors' activism, which acknowledges and thus breaks the intimacy of the (horrific) neighborhood prevalent in post-1979 rural Cambodia, where low-ranking perpetrators/collaborators, still exerting power, live among their former victims. However, as the films show, breaking this intimacy does not transform the power relations between them (as we saw during duels with high-ranking perpetrators), mainly because the low-ranking perpetrators and collaborators knew they would not be tried in the ECCC. This meant, moreover, that the wider question of complicity in the communities the KR regime ruled was considered sufficiently dealt with after the ECCC trials had come to a close. As studies of the ECCC show, it contributed to exposing the few indicted high-ranking perpetrators while normalizing the many who were not brought to trial, so blocking the option of collective coming-to-terms with collaboration. Although Cambodian cinema does not present any master narrative of complicity, it does deal with it through the cinematic dueling.

In Neary Adeline Hay's 1.5/second-generation[17] documentary film *Angkar*, the filmmaker, who was born out of a forced marriage,[18] accompanies her father, Khonsaly Hay, the only survivor of his family, to the village of Ta Saeng (in northern Cambodia), where he had been subjected to four years of forced labor. After over forty years living in France (where the family fled after staying a few years in a refugee camp on the Thai border), Khonsaly Hay meets the villagers who had been his torturers, the guards, the camp's perpetrators and collaborators (who participated in criticism sessions, who supervised the hard labor in the rice fields, etc.), and the collaborator-spies (*schlops*).

[17] See Susan Rubin Suleiman (2002, p. 283). Most of the directors whose films are mentioned here, including Panh and Hay, were child survivors. Thus, according to Suleiman's distinction, they neither belong to the first nor to the second generation, but to the 1.5 generation.

[18] A marriage between total strangers enforced in order to increase the number of KRs as well as to control the family unit. See Raya Morag (2020b).

Angkar is the first documentary film to render through a personal story the suffering caused by low-ranking perpetrators and collaborators in rural Cambodia. Neary Hay, as Khonsaly's daughter, received the perpetrators' permission to film the sequences of the meetings with her father. Thus, the heart of the film is built on sheer *verité* scenes that she shot as the cinematographer, creating an unnatural, eerie "home-movie-with-the-perpetrators" film.[19] In contrast to the duels in the films that interview high-ranking perpetrators (like Duch), in this film the talks take place in the presence of many people over food, drink, the sharing of memories, and laughter.

Following the opening scene, the film's title, *Angkar* (literally in Khmer, "The Organization", Cambodia's Communist Party), written in huge red bold letters, appears on the entire cinematic screen. This design is pre-emptive of the film's strategy of naming the perpetrators (especially those not seen in the film but known to be in the village, like the cannibals [who removed human livers and regularly drank the gallbladder bile of their victims], the cut-throat Khmer, and the executioners). In this, the film meta-reflexively declares cinema's powers in establishing a visual duel with Evil. The red color refers of course to danger; thus, together with the act of naming, it serves to break Angkar's terror, still felt in the village.

The film structures two non-linear parallel narratives that intertwine throughout the film: of the father, heard in the voice-over in Khmer, and of the daughter/filmmaker, heard in the voice-over in French. The double narrativization is a major strategy for the filmmaker/daughter to honorably oppose her father's reconciliation with his former oppressors, as well as strictly oppose these low-ranking perpetrators' and collaborators' refusal to be engaged with questions regarding their deeds. The duel, in other words, is taking place through the film's cinematic language not less than through the father's encounters with his former torturers. The filmmaker's voice-over is heard: "There was still a fearful respect when you spoke of them. As if the victim you'd been had never entirely left you". The double-narrative structure not only presents the daughter–father and second–first generation relationships, but, through the editing, also contrasts the perpetrators' and collaborators' reactions of evasion, lying, indifference, and denial with a woman's voice, and with her objections as revealed through her film. In this way, the film both relates to the question of complicity and constitutes moral resentment.

[19] As the filmmaker told me, her father stayed at the village, met his former acquaintances, and from time to time she joined them with a small video camera. It was just the two of them, with no extra film crew. Nothing could be planned in advance (personal conversation via Skype on August 17, 2018).

The second strategy that builds moral resentment is Hay's insertion into various scenes of very short (two-second) closeups of the faces of the perpetrators. In this way she uses the editing to stress both her perspective on her father's consciousness/memory/subconscious, still haunted by the perpetrators and collaborators, and partially obsessed with them. It is as if he is reminded of them: the taking over of his camp-self over her own postmemorial reflection. The exposure of the perpetrators' and collaborators' faces engraved on the cinematic screen stand against their un-repentant anonymity; and, most importantly, the brief closeups, bringing the past again and again through the killers' and collaborators' faces, stress her objection to reconciliation and support of Amérian moral resentment. Through these insertions she expresses her disagreement with her father's declaration to the perpetrators and collaborators that although he lived and suffered in the village, he is not interested in revenge, he believes in Dharma, and is happy to see them again. The frightening closeups, I suggest, are a form of dueling that constitutes for the spectator the obligation to not reconcile and to remember.

Later, her father refers to one of the old women in the village as Mother and hugs her. Back then she supported him and once risked herself by giving him food (though she finally turned him in). The spectators hear Neary's voice-over saying: "When you spoke about passive resistance, the woman you called Mother, I couldn't understand. For me there were only ever victims and their executioners." Then Neary Hay's voice is heard again:

> One and a half to three million dead, out of a population of seven million, in three years, eight months and twenty days. Cambodians killed Cambodians. Like a man killing his brother, so that the shame of it made the whole family keeps [sic] the crime a secret. This silence, which passes on no memories, is the shame within which I grew up. The silence of a people's collective shame.

Hay's taking the spectators back to the past is unlike Panh's acts with Duch. Duch refuses to relate to the genocide and Panh's various means force him, through the duel, to do just that, while simultaneously constituting a new epistemology for the spectators. Hay's strategies of re-modeling the cinematic time through narration and editing are not oriented towards the perpetrators and collaborators, but rather towards the spectators. Using the commentary she wrote for the entire film (as the scriptwriter) and the editing, she advances the epistemology of moral resentment: In one of the last scenes of the film, over a landscape of the village at night, her father's memories are heard in the voice-over describing how he left his family during the KR-forced deportation (from the

cities to rural Cambodia) and after just five days in the jungle was caught by the soldiers of Angkar: "They took us to a village in the middle of the jungle. The village was called Ta Saeng. That day I was confronted by…"; with a series of cuts, the next shots present the faces of the perpetrators and collaborators on the cinematic screen. Their roles are printed with big red letters over their faces while her father's voice discloses their names and roles: "Chief of District, Ta So; Pat, Bourreau, executioner; Égorgeur, Moeung San, Throat Cutter; Ta San, Collabo, collaborator". The spectators, who were not familiar with their names or with their specific roles until this scene, and who got to know them partially through the filmed meetings, are now confronted not only with the naming, but with their total exposure. The faces that were part of semi-friendly talks or appear for a few seconds, flickering as a brief nightmare, are bestowed through this noticeable infographic with the responsibility they mostly refused to accept. This intertwining of the father's narration and the daughter's cinematic language, thus, gives extra weight to her "tagging" of the perpetrators and collaborators as such.

Coda

Angkar's competing voices create irresolvable tension, but, most importantly, they emphasize the immense importance of the law in breaking what Robert Eaglestone (2017) terms (in the context of Nazism) a "public secret":

> The public secret is not just about what is known or occulted. It has active, shaping effects…in its universal acceptance, it creates a passivity in the victims; it deforms the lives of all caught in it; it covers up knowledge by "hiding in plain sight"; it deforms creativity; and worse, it makes victims complicit with their own trucidation. The consequences of these deformations are severe. Unlike a shared collective memory, for example, the public secret creates not a community but an "un-community", binding people in shame and secrecy. (p. 26)

In the documentary film *Red Wedding* (*Noces Rouges*), co-directed by second-generation female director Lida Chan and male director Guillaume Suon, the protagonist, Sochan, is a former victim of forced marriage and rape. Afraid and ashamed to talk about this trauma, Sochan kept silent for thirty years till the ECCC was formed. Though Sochan directly confronts several of the low-ranking perpetrators and collaborators who forced her into marriage and supervised her marital and gang rapes, she can hardly constitute a dueling with her sister-in-law, who was a KR cadre and assisted in Sochan's forced marriage. Although this docu-activist film follows Sochan as a civil party bringing her complaints against the KR leadership to the ECCC, especially against female perpetrators and col-

laborators, the perpetrators and collaborators still exert power in the village and inside the family,[20] maintaining the paradoxical situation of widespread violent collaboration as a "public secret".

The perplexity of the relations between perpetration and complicity becomes part of the trauma of the autogenocide, which – as the films show – is lived as an unresolvable aporia. In a situation in which all collaborators are native, local, and intimate, an active denial of moral culpability becomes an urgent issue for mainstream society. Thus, in its representations of moral resentment through various forms of dueling, Cambodian cinema has paved the way for audiences to discover a new ethics, one that emanates from the exceptionality of the autogenocide and the political-social-psychological and cultural situation in identity-torn Cambodia in the post-autogenocide age.

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In Queer Memory: Mediating Queer Chinese History in Digital Video Documentaries

Abstract:

This article examines the digital and cinematic mediation of queer memory in four independent Chinese documentaries: *Queer China, "Comrade" China* (dir. Cui Zi'en 2008), *Our Story* (dir. Yang Yang, 2011), *We Are Here* (dir. Shi Tou and Jing Zhao, 2016) and *Shanghai Queer* (dir. Chen Xiangqi, 2019). All these films have been made by queer identified filmmakers and have used the digital video documentary format as an activist strategy; all have strived to record China's queer history in the post-Mao era. However, because of the filmmakers' gender and sexual subjectivities, together with the historical and social contexts in which these films were made, the four documentaries remember China's queer history in different ways. Together, these documentaries contest a heteronormative and a homonormative narrative of Chinese history by constructing alternative memories; they also insert queer people's voices and experiences into that history. All these mediations testify to the heterogeneity of queer people's experience, as well as the overdetermination of queer memory as a result of a contingent assemblage of factors such as time, place, technology and filmmaker's gender and sexual subjectivities.

Key words: queer, digital, documentary, history, memory

At the end of the film *Shanghai Queer* (**上海酷儿** dir. Chen Xiangqi, 2019), a 90-minute digital documentary about Shanghai's queer community history, filmmaker Chen Xiangqi is shown to be playing the harmonica on the edge of an empty, concrete drainage tunnel. The diegetic music sounds meditative and melancholic. Outside the tunnel, the sky turns dark. The moon ascends and casts its light on the tunnel, creating a crescent-shaped shadow. A rainbow flag drops down from the top of the tunnel. Then, three vertical lines of intertitle emerge on the right-hand side of the screen: "We are living in a transitional age. I am just a transitional person. Gao Yanning." (Figure 1) These lines come from the Shanghai-based public health professional, Professor Gao Yanning, who offered the first course in LGBTQ studies at a Chinese university. Interviewed in the film, Gao talks about Shanghai's queer history and his role in it. He is highly aware of the historical condition which enables and also delimits his own academic activism, noting the "transitional" nature of the times and suggesting that the future will be better. Using this line to conclude the film, the filmmaker seems to be expressing the same sentiment: the history under documentation is ultimately an incomplete one; although what an individual can do is limited, there is still hope as more people are joining the movement; this is what makes social change possible.

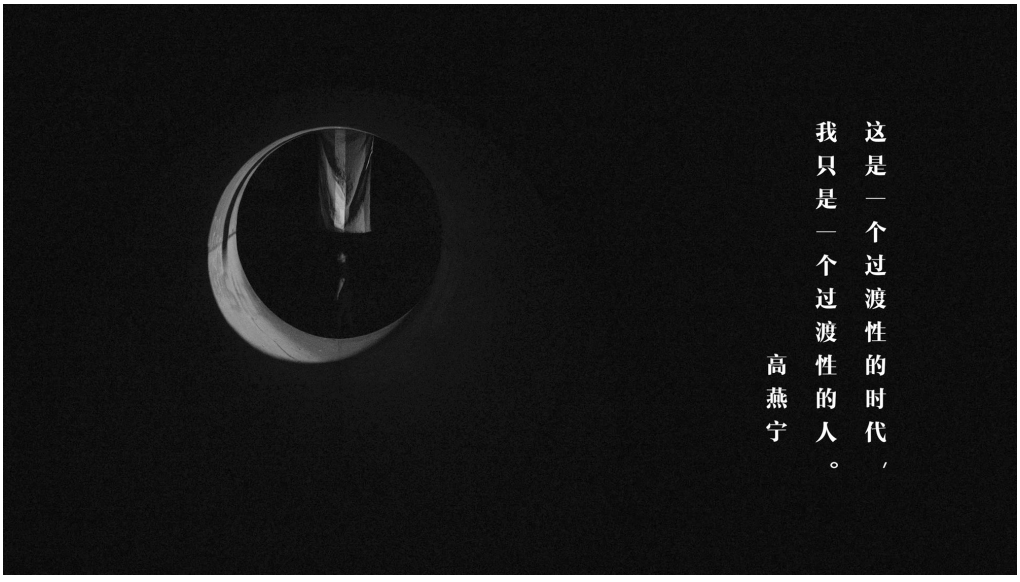

Figure 1. Shanghai Queer closing scene (Shanghai Queer screenshot).

Shanghai Queer is a digital video documentary directed by a queer-identified Chinese filmmaker to document Shanghai's queer history in the first two decades

of the twenty-first century. It is both an effort to document a vibrant urban life and a fast-disappearing grassroots history, and an endeavour to construct a collective memory for the local queer community. As the filmmaker and interviewees share their personal memories of Shanghai's queer scenes, the documentary also constructs a historical archive and collective memory for Shanghai's queer community. The community and collective memories that the film constructs challenge the official construction of memory in China, where LGBTQ people remain invisible.

This chapter examines the digital and cinematic mediation of queer memory in four Chinese digital documentaries: *Queer China, "Comrade" China* (誌同志 dir. Cui Zi'en 2008, 60 min.), *Our Story* (我们的故事 dir. Yang Yang, 2011, 42 min.), *We Are Here* (我们在这里dir. Shi Tou and Zhao Jing, 2016, 58 min.) and *Shanghai Queer* (上海酷儿 dir. Chen Xiangqi, 2019, 90 min.). All these films were made by queer-identified Chinese filmmakers who use digital video documentaries as an activist strategy; all strive to document China's queer history and construct queer community memory in the post-Mao era. These films demonstrate the contested nature of memories in contemporary China. As "counter-memories", these films offer alternative narratives to national and official memories; they also constantly revise, rewrite and reenergise the queer community memory. It is in the process of narrating and re-narrating memories that identities, communities and counter-hegemonic politics take shape.

In what follows, I will first offer a brief historical context for the four documentaries by revisiting the development of queer identity, community and culture in post-Mao China, highlighting the role of digital media and films in constructing queer community memories. I will then conduct a critical analysis of the four films by focusing on the similarities and differences in terms of their narratives, aesthetics and politics. My analysis will emphasise the digital and technological affordances of digital video films in enabling particular types of memory-work. This article will end with a critical reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of these memory-works, highlighting the contingent nature of memory and the performative acts of remembrance.

The Use of Digital Video in Queer Activism

All four films were made between 2008 and 2019, which happened to be a historical period when queer identities, communities and cultures underwent a rapid development in the People's Republic of China (Bao, 2018). Homosexuality was decriminalised in 1997 and removed from the *Chinese Classification of Mental Disorders* (Fourth Edition) in 2001 (Kang, 2012). In the aftermath

of China's entry into the World Trade Organisation in 2001 and the lead-up to the Beijing Olympics in 2008, the Chinese government relaxed its control over civil society slightly. The relatively permissive social and political atmosphere gave rise to an increasingly visible queer public culture. At the same time, international HIV/AIDS funding helped establish LGBTQ community groups in different parts of China as part of the global HIV/AIDS campaign to reach vulnerable communities. Many of the queer community films were made in this historical context.

Technological innovation also facilitated the production and dissemination of queer films. Digital video cameras were introduced to China in the 1990s and helped usher a "DV generation" (Zhang and Zito, 2015) of filmmakers. Armed with digital video cameras, a group of young filmmakers whom I call the "queer generation" (Bao, 2019) started to document their own lives and the community life with which they were familiar. Queer filmmakers were among the first groups of people to embrace the digital mode of production and circulation, largely because of the community's early adoption of online dating and also due to the fact that traditional modes of filmmaking had been denied to them. Queer filmmaker Cui Zi'en (2009) once proclaimed that the age of celluloid film was over and that the age of digital video had arrived. Cui calls the type of film-related queer activism "digital video activism": "We do not think that we should advocate and promote those so-called standard, artistically refined and well-made films. We call for actions to change the world using digital videos." (Cui, 2009) The political and activist orientation of queer filmmaking is therefore clear.

Alongside the proliferation of queer film production also came the establishment of queer film festivals and screening events, such as the Beijing Queer Film Festival (2001-present), Shanghai Queer Film Festival (2017-present), Shanghai Pride Film Festival (2015-present) and China Queer Film Festival Tour (2008-2012). There were queer filmmaking workshops such as Queer University, which was designed for ordinary community members without filmmaking experience to learn filmmaking and later to showcase their films (Tan 2016; Bao 2021). In turn, these public or semi-public film screening events encouraged more community film production and exhibition. At the same time, the widespread use of smart phones in the 2000s and the proliferation of social media and video streaming platforms in the 2010s also encouraged more queer people to make and circulate their films online, on social media, and on 'small screens' (Voci 2010).

The making of a queer community history documentary is the outcome of a contingent assemblage of factors, or "stakeholder configuration" (Rhyne, 2009), including finance, technology, filmmaker, film crew and community

support. Such an undertaking often relies heavily on community resources and cannot be achieved by one person alone. These films are often made on a shoestring budget; much of the work is voluntary, undercompensated and is therefore a labour of love, both for the film crew and for the interview participants. The filmmaker is often a queer activist trusted by the community. They do not have to be a professional filmmaker with abundant filmmaking experience. However, it is essential that they have extensive connections and a wide social network to reach out to for necessary financial, logistical and technological support.

Due to the Chinese government's censorship of queer issues and film productions, making queer films involves considerable political and financial risks for the filmmakers. Despite the decriminalisation of homosexuality in Chinese law in 1997, queer films have consistently been put into a negative light in the official eyes, equated to promoting sexual perversion, advocating unhealthy lifestyles and propagating Western ways of life. Although the representation of sex is overall seen as taboo in Chinese media because of the lack of a film classification system in China, the representation of "sexual perversion" such as homosexuality is an alarming red line that many filmmakers dare not cross because of the pedagogical role that arts and culture are expected to play in creating and promoting a "socialist spiritual culture". The National Radio and Television Administration (NRTA, formerly the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television) frequently issued official bans on queer representation on screen and digital media (Shaw and Zhang 2018). The latest wave of such bans took place in 2021 when the NRTA issued instructions to remove "effeminate" men from all streaming platforms (Wang and Bao 2023). The Chinese government's hostility towards queer issues means that queer films cannot receive official production permission; no official funder is willing to fund these films and no official distributor can distribute these films due to the risks involved.

As a result, the majority of Chinese queer films can only remain independent or even underground productions, funded by individuals or non-governmental organisations, and distributed through individual, community and online networks. This funding, production and circulation model has shaped the aesthetics of queer films in specific ways: these films are mostly digital video documentaries made individually by amateur filmmakers with home digital video cameras and at a low production cost. Most of them adopt an interview technique or follow an observational mode (Robinson 2015). They are often screened at queer community spaces, queer-friendly business venues and queer (or independent) film festivals. It is the existence of queer community organisations, spaces and networks that make these films possible. Because of this, the target audienc-

es of these films are often queer-identified community audiences, rather than the general, heterosexual public. These audiences are often self-selected, more activist-oriented and risk-taking urban youth who are willing to put up with poor technical qualities and the lack of a strong narrative arc and appreciate the historical and social values of the films. Despite this, these queer film events are extremely vulnerable to changing government policies, frequent police raids, and constant shortage of staff and resources. For example, Beijing Queer Film Festival (now Love Queer Cinema Week) has had to fight a "guerrilla warfare" with the police and the censors by frequently changing its name, screening venue and programme (Bao, 2019). Organising a queer film festival in China thus becomes a form of social and political activism.

Documentary films play an important part in constructing memories for the queer community. In *Screening Queer Memory*, Annamarie Horvat (2021) pinpoints the lack of and the need for queer screen memory research; she also argues that screen media play a vital role in constructing queer community memory because the "postmemory" (Hirsch 2008) passed down from generation to generation in other communities is rarely possible within the queer community. Dagmar Brunow (2019) makes a strong case for the use of amateur films, including lesbian home videos and queer digital video documentaries, in constructing queer memories when queer people are under-represented or non-existent in official records. Christopher Pullen (2006) and Thomas Waugh (2011) have highlighted the importance of queer documentaries for the formation of queer communities in the North American context. The making of queer documentary is therefore not only urgently needed but also absolutely essential for a community which has been long denied a history and its own memory.

Making a community history documentary is a challenging task also due to the high stakes involved concerning the politics of representation. Kobena Mercer (1990) calls this "the burden of representation"; that is, artworks about minority subjects are often riddled with the question of representability. Whether they represent the community truthfully and comprehensively is a major question in the viewers' mind. This is often a challenging, if not impossible, task because a community has multiple segments, and all of them lack recognition and therefore all need representation in media and culture. But the length and scope of a film is ultimately limited; this means that there will inevitably be selections and prioritisations, gaps and omissions. How to represent queer community history and how to construct queer memory is therefore a contested question. There is often no consensus about what this history and memory should look like. Under these circumstances, the filmmakers' subjectivity, experience and politics

play a vital role. With these caveats in mind, I shall now turn to each one of these films to examine their representational strategies and queer politics which have a direct impact on the type of memory-work they produce.

Queer China, "Comrade" China: **In Search of Chinese Queerness**

As one of the first "out" gay celebrities in China, queer writer, filmmaker and activist Cui Zi'en was undoubtedly a suitable person to be tasked with China's first queer community documentary. To be the "first" one entailed both opportunities and challenges. A previously closeted community would finally have its history written and memory recorded, and the significance of this could not be underestimated. Archival research and oral history seemed to be the most appropriate methods to uncover this hidden history and memory. There were challenges in finding interviewees and research materials, because a large part of this history remained hidden or even lost, and only a limited number of people were brave enough to "come out" to the public and speak in front of the camera. Fortunately, Cui is a well-respected community leader and has extensive connections, through which he was able to locate important archival materials and secure necessary contacts for interviews.

There were also other obstacles, some of which were logistical: Cui was based in Beijing at the time and had limited time and funds for the documentary production. This meant the film could only primarily focus on the queer community and culture in Beijing instead of other Chinese cities. This led to the Beijing-centrism, and North-centrism, of such a queer history. Also, Cui had more access to the gay men's community, and thus lesbian, trans and other communities were underrepresented in the film. Logistics aside, there were also epistemological challenges; they concerned how to conceptualise queerness and Chineseness, as well as how to see history, which I explain below.

First, what is queer, and whose history is the film representing? In an interview with the filmmaker, Cui expressed that the film was a product of its time and was therefore not able to incorporate some recent concepts and identities:

> *Queer China, "Comrade" China*, produced in 2009, was essentially a piece about 2009. It could not have included anything from 2010 or 2011, not even a concept. For example, concerning the concept LGBTQ, now we have the addition of "I" [intersex], but the idea didn't even exist at the time. There wasn't much of a queer part to that work, as it dealt more with the movement. (Cui in Fan 2015, p. 247)[1]

[1] The year of production for *Queer China, "Comrade" China* is contested. The film was completed in 2008 and screened in 2009. Most academic accounts identify the production year to be 2008 (Bao, 2015, 2018, 2019, 2021; de Villers, 2017). This chapter follows the convention.

Because of Cui's understanding of LGBTQ at the time, the film serves to consolidate rather than disrupt identities, rendering gender and sexual identities more fixed than fluid. Also, Cui chose to use the Chinese term *tongzhi* (literarily comrade, meaning gay or queer) to encompass all the gender and sexual minorities, hence the title of the film *zhi tongzhi* (documenting *tongzhi*). First proposed by Hong Kong gay activists as a decolonising strategy, *tongzhi* has been used by queer people in the Chinese-speaking world to denote "Chinese" LGBTQ people; in its actual use, the term has a strong emphasis on gay men (Chou, 2000; Engebretsen and Schroeder, 2015; Bao, 2018). In other words, in emphasising queer decolonisation, the term *tongzhi* can in fact reinforce the gay male hegemony in the LGBTQ community. As a result, the film interviewed more gay men than other gender and sexual minorities, and a documentation of queer history risks becoming a gay history. In a way, the strategic adoption of the term *tongzhi* also predicts the weaknesses of queer representation in the film.

Second, what is Chinese? This film is obviously about a "Chinese" queer history, but what is culturally specific about this history? Through interviews, Cui points to some aspects which may be thought of as "Chinese". For example, in the film, sociologist Pan Suiming is invited to explain the ancient Chinese conception of gender and sexuality, which celebrates diversity and fluidity along the *yin-yang* mutation; queer activist Xian introduces the flying rainbow kite initiative as a Chinese queer activist strategy when a Pride march is deemed too Western and too risky; interview footage taken from a mainstream Chinese TV programme explains the history and meanings of the term *tongzhi*. All these seem to support Cui's efforts to construct a "Chinese" queer history with its distinct genealogies and cultural sensibilities. However, throughout the film, the transnational linkages of Chinese queer activism are also unmistakably clear. For example, many international expats who had worked in China and contributed to Chinese queer activism are interviewed in the film, as are activists from Hong Kong, Taiwan and the Chinese diaspora. They are all seen as queer activists and allies who have contributed significantly to China's queer movement. The documentary has both Chinese and English subtitles. The international dimension of the documentary challenges an essentialised understanding of Chineseness and Chinese queer cultural specificity.

Third, what is history? And whose history is it? *Queer China, "Comrade" China* adopts a traditional, book chapter-style structure, moving chronologically from one chapter to another, thus constructing a linear, progressive historical narrative, in which the "age of intolerance" eventually will give way to

the "age of acceptance". The film charts important historical events and offers a "who's who" of queer or queer-friendly celebrities. These celebrities include sociologists, legal scholars, medical experts, health professionals, media professionals, writers, filmmakers, artists and community leaders (Figure 2). Many of these celebrities are heterosexual identified; their appearance in the film thus represents the queer community's acknowledgement of their contribution to the public understanding of the issue of homosexuality. Ordinary LGBTQ people's voices seem missing from this account. In the film, we see the cinematic construction of a "monumental history" (Foucault, 1991) for China's queer community; this history demonstrates how the hegemonic power relations in post-Mao society have produced the *tongzhi* discourse and subject.

Figure 2. A collage of interviewees (Queer China, "Comrade" China screenshot).

Responding to the above questions, Cui explained to me in an interview that he had wanted to make a display window but ended up making a sieve (Bao, 2021, p. 80). A display window reveals hidden stories; the multiplication of these windows adds to the richness and complexity of history. A sieve, in contrast, leaves things out: as one yields some facts and perspectives, one loses others. In other words, the more one tries to capture, the more one may end up leaving out. Cui's "window" versus "sieve" metaphors are illuminating, and

his dilemma is a philosophical and epistemological one. It is useful to understand a film as an audio-visual archive of history and reservoir of memory. Commenting about the relationship between memory and the archive, Jacques Derrida (1995) writes:

> Because the archive, if this word or this figure can be stabilised so as to take on a signification, will never be either a memory or anamnesis as a spontaneous, alive and internal experience. On the contrary: the archive takes place at the place of ordinary and structural breakdown of the said memory. *There is no archive without a place of consignation, without a technique of repetition, and without a certain exteriority. No archive without outside.* (Derrida, 1995, p. 11, original emphasis)

In other words, the representation of queer memory on screen inevitably stabilises and objectifies that memory, creating hierarchies of visibility and legitimacy for various types of memory. As people remember things, they inevitably forget or omit things – such is the nature of all memory-work. The only solution is to acknowledge these weaknesses and continue working on them, in the hope that the next work, or the revised version, will be better but also with the understanding that a perfect representation is unachievable. Cui's regrets would be addressed, to some extent, by subsequent filmmakers with alternative queer histories, but none of them can produce a perfect memory due to the imperfect nature of memory-work.

Cui has adopted an objective stance in *Queer China, "Comrade" China*, where the filmmaker's voice and subjectivity is not clearly articulated in the film. The entire film is structured in a book format and divided into nine chapters, with each chapter dedicated to a specific topic, giving the audience a sense of historicity and authority. The filmmaker's subjectivity is largely absent from the film. Cui's documentary technique draws heavily on the "direct cinema" tradition which emphasises objectivity and discourages subjectivity, and which was widely used in China's "new documentary movement" (Berry, Lu and Rofel, 2010). Such a representational strategy would be disrupted by queer women filmmakers, who resolutely inserted their voices and subjectivities into their films.

Our Story: **The Personal is Political**

The film *Our Story: The Ten Years "Guerrilla Warfare" of the Beijing Film Festival* (*Our Story* for short) begins with the filmmaker Yang Yang's soliloquy when

she was visiting Peking University in 2011, recalling how the first Beijing Queer Film Festival had started there ten years before:

> How does my story start? I can't remember clearly. That year, we didn't have a poster, neither did we have a film catalogue. I was a second-year student at Peking University at the time. We had a student Film and Television Society which maintained contact with Chinese independent cinema. In mid-November, Cui Zi'en, Zhang Jiangnan from the Film and Television Society, and I sat in a café on Peking University campus and planned the festival. A month later, the film festival took place. (Yang Yang in *Our Story*)

As one of the founders and organisers of the film festival, Yang was in a good position to direct a film about the first decade of the festival. The film is narrated from the first-person point of view, and Yang's subjectivity is clearly manifested throughout the film. Yang's female voice is calm, reflective and even nostalgic, giving the audience a sense of her personality and subjectivity. But Yang soon shifts the narrative voice from "I" to "we" (hence the title "our story"). What the collective pronoun "we" refers to is not clear and often shifts according to contexts: from the Beijing Queer Film Festival collective to all the queer people in China and even to everyone who fights for freedom of expression in China. However, one thing is clear, this film constructs Yang's personal memory as a collective memory shared by many people.

Figure 3. A "memory map" of the Beijing Queer Film Festival, 2001-2011 (Our Story screenshot).

In the film, the filmmaker presents a memory-map, showing the screening locations the festival had used in the past decade on an official map of Beijing and marking them with pictures from the festival (Figure 3). The festival's screening venues are located in different parts of the city, testifying to how difficult it was to find screening venues, together with the "guerrilla warfare" (Bao, 2019) strategy that the organisers had to adopt in order to circumvent government censorship. The queer memory map effectively rewrites Beijing's official city map by inscribing queer people and their memories on it. On the map, all the heteronormative spaces have been turned into queer spaces and all the lifeless placenames have been brought to life through the memorable moments from the festival.

Our Story was made in 2011 to mark the tenth anniversary of the Beijing Queer Film Festival. This was also a time when the festival took place again in the city centre against all odds. Yang's narration takes a slightly pessimistic and nostalgic tone, suggesting that she was aware of the difficulty in keeping the festival going. At the end of the film, when Yang finishes her story, she leaves the hot ashes of a campfire glowing in the darkness, indicating that there is still hope despite all the challenges that are going on.

We Are Here: **Articulating Queer Feminist Politics**

In 2015, to mark the 20th anniversary of the United Nations World Conference on Women (UNWCW), the Ford Foundation commissioned a documentary film about the impact of the UNWCW on Chinese feminism. The film, titled *We Are Here*, was directed by Chinese women filmmakers Shi Tou and Zhao Jing, both of whom are queer identified. Shi Tou is one of the most prolific lesbian artists, filmmakers and activists in mainland China. Zhao Jing (aka Sam) was co-editor of *Les+*, China's longest running and now defunct zine for queer women. How did two lesbian filmmakers remember the history of Chinese women and Chinese feminism?

The Fourth UNWCW, which took place in Beijing in 1995, was the largest of its kind. The *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* passed at the conference has become an important document in global women's history. At the Non-Governmental Organisation Forum accompanying the main conference, a lesbian tent was set up for the first time in UNWCW history (Figure 4). At the conference, delegates from different nations debated heavily on whether to include lesbian rights in the conference resolution. Hilary Clinton made the famous speech on "lesbian rights are human rights" (Levenstein, 2018). The conference is a milestone in both women's history and queer history; it therefore

makes sense to connect queer memory with feminist memory in the film. *We Are Here* can thus be seen as the filmmakers' efforts to connect queer history with women's history and to write Chinese queer women's experience into the history of Chinese feminism.

Figure 4. The lesbian tent at the United Nations World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995 (We Are Here screenshot).

There are also conceptual difficulties to connect queer and feminist issues in the Chinese context. This is because there are different strands of feminism and queer activism, not all of which can comfortably coexist with each other. For example, state feminism represented by the All China Women's Federation, China's biggest women's organisation supported by the state, often takes a heteronormative, homophobic and anti-sex stance. At the same time, China's LGBTQ movement, dominated by gay men and gay identity politics, is often oblivious to women's issues and feminist politics. Situated at the intersection of the two camps, queer feminists must struggle to find their own space and articulate their politics. *We Are Here*, made by two queer feminists, can be seen as an effort to locate a lesbian space and articulate a Chinese queer feminist politics.

The documentary is divided into two parts: the first half is an oral history account of Chinese participants' experience at the 1995 UNWCW. Many peo-

ple, including government officials and non-governmental organisation workers, were interviewed, showing that most of them – including those working for the All-China Women's Federation at the time – supported queer rights and therefore refuted the claim about the possible incompatibility between feminist politics and queer politics. The second half of the film documents queer women's activism in Beijing between 1995 and 2015, with a strong focus on queer women's participation in feminist activism. Examples include the "feminist five", the five women who were arrested by the Chinese police for their anti-domestic violence campaign that year (Fincher, 2018). Although mainstream narratives about the "feminist five" emphasise these activists' feminist identity, their queer identity is often underplayed. By drawing attention to the intertwined relationship between feminist and queer issues, the film makes a strong statement about the necessary imbrication between gender and sexuality, and between feminist and queer politics.

Inserting Chinese queer women's voices in the global history, *We Are Here* also conveys a sense of international solidarity between women and queer people across the world. Made at a time when there was growing nationalism in different parts of the world and increasing antagonism in global geopolitics, the memory of the 1995 UNWCW is a much needed one: it reminds people of the intertwined relationship between China and the world, and the solidarity between women and queer people who suffer from gender and sexuality-based discrimination and injustice. The title *We Are Here* moves the memory-work to the present, articulating an uncompromising queer feminist stance and testifying to the contemporary relevance of that memory.

Shanghai Queer: **The Importance of Being Local and Ordinary**

Shanghai Queer, a documentary about Shanghai's queer history from 2003 to 2018, starts its narrative with a historical event. In April 2018, China's queer community launched a social media campaign, using the hashtag #Iamgay to garner mass public support, and this eventually led to the social media website sina.com reversing its ban on LGBTQ issues (Liao, 2019). The beginning of the film shows a gay activist using a loudspeaker to make a public speech about LGBTQ rights in a park in Shanghai (Figure 5). This was a rare instance of public protest and community defiance. Starting the film with a political speech gives a sense of historical significance and political urgency.

Figure 5. A gay activist makes a public speech in a park in Shanghai in 2018. (Shanghai Queer screenshot).

As the film title suggests, *Shanghai Queer* is about queer people, community and history in Shanghai. The importance of *Shanghai Queer* can be best understood in the genealogy of documenting queer community history, especially in contrast with *Queer China, "Comrade" China*. *Shanghai Queer* and *Queer China, "Comrade" China* have a lot in common, but they also have significant differences. One is a local history, and the other attempts to create a national history (although this national history ended up being Beijing- and North-centric). Both films interviewed celebrities and experts, but *Shanghai Queer* interviewed ordinary citizens as well as scholars and activists. Most of the *Shanghai Queer* interviewees are LGBTQ identified and this differs from *Queer China, "Comrade" China*'s predominantly heterosexual-identified expert panel. These differences were created partly by the filmmaker's intentions and partly by time: China was more open in the 2010s than in the 2000s, with more queer people brave enough to "come out" in front of the camera. An important thing to note about the two films: No "masking" techniques such as blurring of faces on screen or using voiceover are used, showing a great sense of openness and authenticity. The two documentaries therefore constitute the collective "coming out" of the Chinese queer communities, through documentary mediation and digital memory.

Figure 6. Older gay men come out on screen and share their stories. (Shanghai Queer screenshot).

Figure 7. A Shanghai-based trans woman (Shanghai Queer screenshot).

In many ways, *Shanghai Queer* offers a more democratic and decentralised version of the community history and memory. The queer history depicted by *Shang-*

hai Queer seems more local, mundane and grassroots-oriented. Besides celebrities and experts, ordinary queer people also appear on screen, telling their stories and sharing their memories. These include three old men revisiting the local gay venue Lailai Dancehall and reminiscing about the old days (Figure 6). Also, *Shanghai Queer* manages to represent a wider spectrum of gender and sexual identities. The film covers the lives of drag queens, trans people, sex workers, the elderly and queer people living with disabilities. In the film, a trans woman teacher talks candidly about her identity, relationship and work (Figure 7). These vivid personal stories make the city feel real and the community relatable. These stories bespeak the complexity of identities and experiences; they also challenge the entrenched heteronormativity in Chinese society and the emerging homonormativity in China's LGBTQ community.

The filmmaker Chen Xiangqi is a community leader, having successfully founded a queer website, led a queer women's group, run an LGBT Centre and participated in some feminist activist campaigns. In a post-screening Q&A, Chen introduced her motivations to make the film:

> I've led an LGBTQ NGO for 15 years. I often feel that very few people in today's China are documenting the history and activism of marginalised groups. When we look at these historical events, they are not simply moments of memories or nostalgia. They are inspirations for us. We can learn from them about how our predecessors lived their lives despite all the social prejudices and what they did in response. (DOCO 2019

Chen highlights the necessity of documenting the history and memory of marginalised groups such as queer people. She also refuses to dwell on nostalgia and emphasises the contemporary relevance of the memory-work instead. Chen is keenly aware of her gendered subjectivity as a female filmmaker, and of the importance of having women's voices in filmmaking and memory-work:

> Women have played a crucial role in history. If we are not aware of their contributions, this may have to do with the ones who write history. We need to document our own history, and history should be written by us. Only in this way can we see more women's perspectives represented in history. (DOCO 2019)

Shanghai Queer therefore presents as many female as male interviewees. The interviews were conducted in a friendly and supportive manner, like everyday chats between friends. The documentary is gently paced, intercutting between interviews, old photos, Shanghai's cityscape, and the filmmaker's poetic voiceover narration. Chen's female subjectivity and politics are clearly manifest-

ed in the film through voiceover narration and through her embodied presence in front of the camera.

Celebrating the local, the ordinary and a female filmmaker's perspective, *Shanghai Queer* showcases a wider and more diverse range of queer histories and memories that cannot be reduced to a singular narrative; it also demonstrates the conditions and possibilities of mobilising queer memories for political and activist purposes.

Conclusion

In summary, this article has examined four queer community history documentaries produced in the PRC between 2008 and 2019. All these films were made by queer identified filmmakers who used digital video documentaries as an activist strategy; all strived to document China's queer history and construct a queer community memory in the post-Mao era. Despite using traditional broadcasting techniques such as interviews and talking heads, all have inserted queer people's histories and memories into China's national narratives. They "queer" the traditionally heteronormative documentary genre (Deklerck, 2017); they also showcase a multiplicity of queer people's voices. In doing so, they help imagine and construct a collective queer identity (Robinson, 2015).

However, because of the filmmakers' gender and sexual subjectivities, together with the historical and social contexts in which these films were made, the four documentaries remember China's queer history in contingent ways. *Queer China, "Comrade" China* narrates China's queer history from an academic perspective, focusing on gay men's experience and expert voices and with a slightly optimistic tone; *Our Story* is an autobiographical historical account made by one of the organisers of the Beijing Queer Film Festival on its tenth anniversary; *We Are Here* was made by lesbian identified filmmakers interrogating the relationship between queer history and women's history, celebrating Chinese lesbian history and articulating a queer feminist politics; *Shanghai Queer* focuses on Shanghai's queer community history, but the film takes a more defiant stance as it was completed in the immediate aftermath of China's social media ban on LGBTQ issues and the queer community's protest to the ban. Together, these documentaries contest a heteronormative construction of China's collective memory by constructing alternative memories; they also insert queer people's voices and experiences into that memory.

The making of digital video documentaries can be seen as a form of cultural and political protest. According to John Berger, one protests in order to "save

the present moment, whatever the future holds" (2015, p. 80). The four documentaries, as historical archives, have tried to capture the living memories of the present before these memories are put under erasure or amnesia. These various types of memory work testify to the heterogeneity of queer memory; they also manifest the overdetermination of queer memory as a result of a contingent assemblage of factors such as time, place, technology and the filmmaker's gender and sexual subjectivities.

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A Defiant Act of Looking: Prisoners' Illicit Documentary Practices of Shooting-Back

Abstract:

During an armed security operation on Lebanon's most notorious prison, an image emerges from the POV of a prisoner. Capturing the military vehicles and the prison bars obstructing his vision, a prisoner snatches a photograph through his illicitly smuggled cellphone camera.

In this article, I follow the events of Lebanese authorities' intervention on Roumieh Central Prison's Bloc B and collect a sample of images and videos produced and circulated by prisoners as the operation was taking place. By examining the frame, composition, POV, sound, and montage of such amateur fragmentary cellphone recordings, I note two major modes of framing adopted by prisoners; one frames outside the bars and the second frames inside. I contextualize such modes of framing as 'counter-shots' in relation to the state's media strategies of legitimizing its repressive actions and I argue that prisoners utilize smuggled media technologies, such as the cellphone and its camera, as a response to the state's performative acts of sovereignty. Prisoners operationalize the frame and the POV to create a 'counter' way of seeing and documenting the events on Bloc B. Hence, prison cellphone recordings reflect not only what is portrayed inside their frames, but also their means of production. Through the framework of media as practice and the notion of media witnessing, I argue that the illicitly produced modes of framing reflect a practice of media production based around the smuggling of media technologies into the prison. Through such a practice, prisoners produce images and videos to represent and document their lived expe-

riences, relay testimonies, and make the audience bear witness to the horrific and precarious conditions of incarceration; hence, engaging in a practice of documentation from the prison.

Key words: Digital technology, prison, amateur recordings, media practice, media witnessing, cellphone camera, state warfare, new media, frame, POV

On the morning of January 12, 2015 the Lebanese Internal Security Forces (ISF) stormed Roumieh Central Prison (RCP), the biggest and most notorious prison in Lebanon. The operation resembled an armed-forces invasion of a geographical territory in its intensity, planning, and weaponry. As described by the Lebanese Minister of Interior Affairs at the time the purpose of the operation was to reallocate prisoners and put an end to the illegal activities taking place in the infamous Bloc B, the part of RCP known to house individuals affiliated with fundamentalist Islamist groups. On the day of the ISF operation, a photograph taken through the bars of a prison-cell window began circulating on social media. The photograph, taken from the POV of an inmate in Bloc B, captured the ISF vehicles approaching the building and preparing for their operation. Shortly afterwards more images and videos began surfacing, notably a video recorded by an inmate showing the panic in the corridors of the prison. In this article, I address the role of the fragmentary amateur cellphone recordings produced and circulated by prisoners during the conflict with the ISF operation on RCP's Bloc B. The operation on Bloc B instigated an event where prisoners' illicit engagement with smuggled media technologies generated and exposed a new form of prison documentary; one that is controlled by prisoners and emerges from the prison. Therefore, I attempt, through the examination of such fragmentary amateur documentations behind bars, to understand and trace the practices of production emerging as prisoners in Lebanon smuggle and utilize media technologies during conflict with the authorities.

Since 2012, there have been various instances of smuggling of digital media technologies into Lebanese prisons. Prisoners illicitly get access to cellphones and an internet and telecommunication connection, and accordingly, produce and circulate images and videos which are then remediated on social and news media platforms. This is deemed illegal and Lebanese authorities are constantly attempting to stop and limit prisoners' access to cellphones (Najem, 2016, 2023). However, the event I discuss in this article presents a situation where the production and circulation of recordings was prompt and immediate; prisoners'

amateur recordings infiltrated news reporting on the prison in the media as the event was taking place and provided a 'counter-frame' to the way the state was representing this clash with Islamist prisoners. In this article, I collect and analyze images and videos produced and remediated during the ISF operation on Bloc B and I aim to examine the modes of framing reflected in such fragmentary amateur recordings, trace their means of production, and consider them as visual and sonic testimonies of a precarious life behind bars. In addition, I explore such prison cellphone recordings in relation to local and international news media's representation of events and the Minister of Interior Affairs' many media appearances. I argue that, during events of conflict with the authorities, smuggled media technologies, such as the cellphone and its camera, were utilized as a response and reaction to the state's performative acts of sovereignty and brought forward new ways of 'seeing' and techniques of representation as the result of prisoners' operationalization of the frame and POV. I revisit Lebow's (2012) articulation of the 'counter-shot' vis-à-vis the notion of the frame (Butler, 2005) and showcase that, during the events of 2015, two major modes of framing emerged from RCP aiming to document prisoners' conflict with the authorities: the first mode documented the ISF and their invasion, and the second mode documented the implications of the operation behind bars. Thus, one mode looks out and the other looks in.

I am inquisitive regarding the ability of such mediated modes of framing to bear witness and reveal not only the (anti-)aesthetics of the images produced, but stimulate imagination around their 'means of production' and reflect the constant struggle of prisoners to develop and engage with practices of media production. Therefore, I adopt the theoretical framework of media as practice, more specifically Mattoni's (2012) framework of activist media practices. I also attempt to reflect on the testimonial possibilities of such images and videos through the notion of media witnessing (Andén-Papadopoulos, 2014; Frosh and Pinchevski, 2009; Torchin, 2012).Then, I argue that the production and circulation of prison cellphone recordings is not arbitrary, however, it is part of more established illicit prison media practices built on the operationalization of media technologies, establishing networks of communication, and the production and circulation of representations and documentations from behind bars. By utilizing the POV and the frame, prisoners attempt to create political affinity, call for mobilizations and support, and testify to their precarious conditions. Reflecting on the limitations of the 'counter-shot' metaphor, I discuss the exchange of frames and 'shots' as they have resulted in the emergence of a new political vision, a new 'way of seeing' as a result of prisoners' usage of cellphone cameras and the ability to mediate their photographs and footage. I conclude that prison cellphone recordings

functioned as 'counter-shots' in the context of this ISF operation, with benefits and limitations. The recordings brought an audience to the prison to experience the violent events from the position of the prisoner, and relayed testimonies of incarceration as well as fright and terror during the violent event. However, such recordings were easily appropriated in news discourse on RCP, and served as yet another component with the partisan narratives on RCP's Bloc B.

Representation and Documentation from the prison

Documentations of penology have traditionally constituted a form of visual realism that relates to governance, imperial administration and colonial violence, and surveillance technology, which have the tendency to present themselves as natural, unchanging, and ahistorical. As West (2017) argues, analog photographs helped propagate the assumption that the image 'speaks for itself' within the realm of criminology. This gave photographs evidential objectivity in the court of law over, for instance, oral testimony. Moreover, Tagg (2002) writes of the visual realism of criminal and phrenological photography as identified with penological and disciplinary regimes; similarly, Rabinbach (1992) discusses scientific kinesthetic photography as utilized through the Fordist labor discipline, and other scholarship addresses the role of photography in relation to visual realism in governmental surveillance of prisons and warfare (Appadurai, 1996; Feldman, 2000). This captures the essence of prison representations and documentations. Be it a documentary crew, a surveillance camera, a journalist, or a governmental administration, various aspects of penology have often been captured, documented, represented, and archived from the outside in. However, my premise in this article is to ask; what happens when such representations of penology begin to emerge and travel from the inside and out? What political visions might this evoke?

In 'Shooting with Intent: Framing Conflict' (2012), Lebow discusses the role and functions of counter-shot photography in relation to the long interconnection between war and cinema. The existence of a 'shot', and the placement of the camera from the POV of the gun, necessitates the existence of a shot from the other perspective – that of the barrel – which Lebow (2012) refers to as the 'counter-shot'. Likewise, I raise in this article the possibility of the existence of a counter perspective to the realist representation and documentation of conflicts behind bars besides that of sovereign power, which has historically been responsible for producing, framing, and archiving modes of confinement. Prisoners' communicative and documentary practices far precedes this article; prisoners have always tried to document and represent their lived experiences

whether through written testimonies, poems, novels, biographies, or through administered media practices such as podcasting, theater performances, or photography.[1] However, the case study I am engaging with contains an imminent illicit aspect; prisoners smuggled and claimed control over the camera and the cellphone which frees their processes of production and circulation from any forms of administrative control or censorship over the production of footage. In addition, there is a specificity to the technological materiality of the cellphone. In the case study discussed, prisoners get hold of a technological device that allows them to 'shoot' through a camera, as well as archive, document, communicate, and circulate immediately and promptly their photographs and footage through a hybridity of networks and applications. Unlike the traditional approach to the form of prison documentaries, the prisoner here is at the center of this practice of documentation; they illicitly gain control over the technological device, produce, and circulate their footage from one side of the bars to the other. Therefore, in this article, I am proposing an approach to the examination of a new form of prison documentation; a documentation from, as opposed to on, the prison.

Shooting-Back as a Documentary Practice of Bearing Witness

The conceptual approach of this article is partly influenced by that of Didi-Hüberman who, in *Images in Spite of All* (2012), seeks to understand through the images themselves the means of production responsible for their creation, by reemphasizing and re-imagining the experiences of those behind the camera. The image provides a space for imagination while still positing a specific moment in space and time, Didi-Hüberman argues. The image remains indicative of an experience, an event, and a practice for those who deliberately take the active choice to smuggle in and utilize digital technology, consciously and strategically frame a photograph and footage, and circulate such recordings to various media ecologies outside the prison. Here, a media studies theoretical approach, that of media as practice, can be of help in conceptualizing prisoners' mode of production and steering the analysis beyond just a symbolic examination of media representations. More specifically, I utilize the theorization of 'activist media practices' (Mattoni, 2012) as a backbone for the analysis. Activist media practices are defined as "routinized and creative social practices in which activists engage". Activists' engagement includes both the interactions with media objects and media subjects. The first entails their engagement through the cellphone as they generate and/or appropriate media messages, and the second entails their

[1] See O'Hearn (2017) for a discussion on prisoners' communication practices; Hafez (2002) and Freeman (2009) for a discussion on prison novels and other writings in confinement; see Walsh (2019) on prisoner' theater performances; Fleetwood (2020) on prison art and aesthetics.

interactions with media practitioners, such as journalists and social media activists (Mattoni and Treré, 2014, p. 259).

Moreover, as the extensive literature on media witnessing have argued, cellphone and digital technology open an opportunity for a witness to channel their testimony during the very act of witnessing, which can help in creating witnesses to distance suffering (Andén-Papadopoulos, 2014; Chouliaraki, 2015; Frosh and Pinchevski, 2009; Torchin, 2012). Therefore, I adopt the notion of media witnessing as the "witnessing performed in, by, and through the media" (Frosh and Pinchevski, 2009) to draw on the testimonial potential of prison cellphone recordings. More specifically, I operationalize Andén-Papadopoulos' (2014) definition of citizens' phone camera recordings as a ritual of bearing witness aimed to create visual evidence to "produce and sustain feelings of political affinity and solidarity" (765). Digital media witnessing becomes "an act of representation that publicizes conflict death from the locals' perspective so as to mobilize emotion and invite a response, be this revenge, outrage, contempt, fear or empathy" (Chouliaraki, 2015, p. 1362).

Methodological and Contextual Considerations: Tracing the Practice

In order to create a sample of prison cellphone recordings and contextualize it in relation to the events of 2015, the process of data collection was as follows; I monitored the news reporting of the ISF operation on Bloc B of two international media institutions, France24 and AlJazeera, and three Lebanese local media institutions, AlJadeed, MTV, and Future TV on January 12, 13, and 14, 2015. Furthermore, I conducted a search on YouTube based on two main hashtags in Arabic; "Roumieh Prison Bloc B", "Roumieh Prison Islamists".

The collected pool of prison cellphone recordings is then analyzed in accordance with a set of analytical tools; composition, sound, montage, POV, (re) mediation. The purpose of these analytical tools is to move the analysis beyond just the symbolic analysis of representation and attempt to understand the practice of video and image production behind bars through the visual traces. Each analytical tool in this case can be delineated visually on the screen while still reflecting the practice responsible for it. Hence, this creates a connection between the images and videos, the material practices implemented by prisoners, the context of the ISF operation on Bloc B, and the appropriation of such amateur recordings by media institutions.

Lebanese Penology

Prisons in Lebanon, especially RCP, suffer from failed infrastructure, miserable conditions, overcrowding, arbitrary arrests, and segregation of prisoners based on partisan and sectarian ideologies (El Hindi, 2013). Partisan sectarian identities have further influenced the fragmentations and affluence behind bars. Most notable to these formations are the Islamists. According to Lons (2016), following armed conflicts between the ISF and armed groups on the northern border with Syria, the ISF began to arbitrarily arrest individuals that it claimed were Islamists. The arrests were not made based on a clear legal framework, however, and what took place amounted to processes of vilification (ibid.). Islamists were then confined in one building bloc inside RCP; Bloc B. Therefore, Bloc B hosts a plethora of prisoners that are deemed to be 'Islamists', however, a few of them have gained prominent power inside the ecology of RCP due to partisan sectarian connections, imposed a hierarchy inside their building, and positioned themselves at the top of the food chain (El Hindi, 2013). Due to its history of violence with the authorities and the reported smuggling and access to digital technologies and internet access, Bloc B gained notorious reputations in media narratives and became the subject of various sensational news reporting (Najem, 2016).

I present the analysis in three major 'acts'; the first concerns the legitimization of the ISF operation on Bloc B and the establishment of a state 'way of seeing' the event, the second concerns prisoners' modes of framing and the production and circulation of prisoner produced amateur recording, and the third concerns the 'counter-insurgent' media appearances that followed the ISF event and aimed to reclaim control over the figurative 'frame'.

Legitimizing Warfare – Establishing Ways of Seeing

It is vital to understand this ISF operation in the prison as part of a bigger war on "terrorism", as the Minister of Interior Affairs called it during a press conference; a process of re-establishing state sovereignty.[2] It is important to read the Minister's ISF operation as a media event that aimed to create an image of sovereignty and strength with regard to his policies; it was not so much an operation to eliminate the dominion of those who had political affluence behind bars as a political message that the authorities are "capable, capable, capable" of bestowing sovereignty, to quote the Minister at the press conference.[3] This operation did not mark the end of the powerful position of Islamists in Lebanese

[2] See Video I in appendix

[3] See Videos II & III in appendix

prisons, in spite of what the authorities wanted the Lebanese people to believe (Rushchenko, 2018). Instead, through what Amel (1986) conceptualized as a hegemonic sectarian balance, prisoners with strong partisan connections remained at the top of the food chain in RCP.

To legitimize his ISF operation, the Minister of Interior Affairs highlighted many reasons for the invasion of the prison. Surrounded by a team of military, security, and policy personnel, the Minister of Interior Affairs conducts a press conference explaining the role and aim of the ISF operation. A television screen behind him shows the journalists in the room and people at home footage and images captured using CCTV cameras of riots and fights in the prison. According to the Minister, the reason for the armed invasion is to relocate prisoners from one bloc to another. The proof of the need for this is the CCTV footage being shown behind him, and the purpose is to end the reign of the Islamists and reinstate state sovereignty[4].

The press conference resembles a trial where the defendant is absent; there is no difference between the trial and the judgement, the trial is the judgement and the criterion of judgement is the prisoners' compliance with the regime of abduction. Feldman (2015) writes with regard to prisoners' compliance: "the post-Fordist prison produces the 'entrepreneurial autonomy' of a prisoner as a "terrorist" through confinement that promotes the detainees' noncompliance with their detention as their compliance with the war on terror. In an ironic variation of the regimens of cognitive capitalism, the subject of penal production becomes the production of an incarceration-resistance subject" (36). The Minister performs his role as the enforcer of justice, arguing for the verdict to be implemented. The audience experiences this 'judgement' from the perspective of legitimized power; their only 'window' to envision and understand the prison is the images recorded by the CCTV camera. Through the press conference, the Minister presents images which are in turn mediated by the mainstream media, interpreting the reality of the prison from his own POV (See Figure I). The frame, as a form of visual interpretation of reality, is imposed on the audience here in accordance with the POV of state power; the Minister and his team of officials. As Butler argues (2005), camera angles, the frame, and subjects in the frame suggest that those who capture and construct a frame have an active role in the perspective of war. They have a conscious choice in drawing the borders of the frame and choosing what to put in and keep out of it, hence providing an (audio-visual) interpretation of the reality of war. Unlike previous events in RCP, local television channels' engagement with this conflict sided with sovereign power, mediating

[4] See Videos I, II, & III

a storyline by "interpreting in advance what will and will not be included in the field of perception", to borrow from Butler (Ibid., 823). By adopting this form of embedded reporting, Butler writes on embedded reporting that the mainstream media's "gaze remained restricted to the established parameters of designated action" (Ibid., 822).

Figure I. Surrounded by security officials and reporters, Al-Machnouk legitimizes the operation in Bloc B using CCTV footage.

Prison Cellphone Recordings as Counter-Shots

The ISF operation was initiated at 6AM, at which time the Lebanese mainstream media was not covering or reporting on the event. The first image of the operation to circulate on digital platforms was produced by a prisoner and published by online news blogs and news sites, although its initial circulation from the prison may not have been intended for such.[5] Three military vehicles surrounded by soldiers are shown through the bars of what appears to be a window of a prison cell. The mere existence of a photograph taken from this perspective embodies a way of looking that has been considered to be illegal by the state, and is manifested in a practice of media production that the state has been aiming to dismantle.

After surveying the prison cellphone recordings collected on the ISF intervention in Bloc B, I noted the emergence of two major modes of framing, which I term below as Looking Out and Looking In. The difference between the two relates to where the camera is aimed. In the first mode of framing the camera is directed at the sovereign power/authority personnel invading the prison, and in the second the camera is directed at what the authorities are invading and the upheaval in the prison. The first thus primarily captures the authorities, be it personnel or vehicles, as they are about to begin their operation. These recordings are often calm and taken from the voyeuristic POV of the prisoner. The second may appear more familiar to the viewers, as they show the events of the ISF operation and the prisoners' panic, often including loud sounds and pleas for help. Both modes of framing were commonly used by news reports covering the ISF operation. Snippets of video recordings were reused, with sound and image often edited separately, and then inserted into the television news coverage. Since the ISF operation took only nine hours based on the Minister's press conference and the recordings that I collected were produced and circulated in that short period of time, I can state with certainty that the immediate circulation of the footage from the prison was accomplished using an internet connection. The urgency in shooting and circulating a recording affects the aesthetics of the recording itself, especially those created as the ISF operation was taking place. It is not clear whether such recordings were uploaded directly by prisoners onto social-media sites or circulated to an outside party responsible for the broader dissemination.

[5] See Example I in Appendix

Looking Out-side the Prison Bars

Figure II. Image from Bloc B moments before the military operation.

The photograph shot from behind bars (Figure II) was widely shared on social-media sites and news platforms alike, and was one of the first photographs relating to the ISF operation to be circulated by prisoners. It features certain aesthetics in terms of composition that are similar to other photographs of this nature. A news report by MTV on the incident, for instance, appropriated images that have been taken from the same angle (see Figure III).[6] This news report was broadcast on the eve of the operation; the captions that accompany the photograph are "Roumieh Prison", "the fall of the legend of the prison!", and "communication found between prisoners and terrorist fragments in Tripoli". The report provides a few details on the operation and re-states the allegation of a link between Islamist prisoners and bombings that took place in Tripoli.

In 'Shooting with intent: Framing conflict' (2012), Lebow draws on the relationship between the camera and the gun through the analogy of the shot/counter-shot; the shot is the POV of the gun, and the counter-shot that of the barrel. Lebow's analysis raises two important factors in the analysis of the prison cellphone recordings in the context of conflict – the POV and the frame. Even though no gun barrels are visible in Figures II and III, the POV of the prisoner frames the military and security personnel and their weaponry, encapsulating the essence and symbolism of the figurative gun. From this perspective, I argue

[6] Also see Video IV in Appendix

that such imagery is a form of counter-shot. It presents the viewer with a new POV that the gun is pointed at. Interestingly enough, the frame captures the prison bars that situate the image at the end of yet another figurative barrel: imprisonment. The conscious choice to include the prison bars in the frame further situates the image in a context and delimits it as testimony. Furthermore, by claiming control over the POV, the prisoner behind the camera invites the audience to witness the war or invasion from the perspective of the defenders; the prisoners. The significance of POV here, as Lebow (2012) would argue, is that it brings the viewer "into the war as a virtual participant" (45). In contrast to the press conference discussed, which framed our reality of the incarceration through the frame of sovereign power (as seen in Figure I), imagery made from the POV of the prisoner shifts the focus, and the audience perceives reality from the frame of the prisoner for once (as seen in Figure II and III).

Images under the mode of framing of looking out were taken from behind bars, both literally and figuratively, and in each case, the subject who took the image was at a higher elevation than the military personnel. From a compositional standpoint, all of the people shown seem to be calm, giving the photographs a more reflective and voyeuristic feel. By utilizing this POV, the prisoner positions the audience against the ISF; the view of the outside world is hindered by the presence of the prison bars. In addition, the presence of the prison bars is a strong visual testimony to imprisonment; the image bears witness to the prison and the position of those holding the camera in it. When encountering the image divorced from its context, the viewer can still create a connection between the image and incarceration, as it makes use of the symbol of the bars. Such photographs manifest the essence of both the POV and the frame in reflecting the intentionality of framing adopted by the prisoner behind the camera. Moreover, the differences in angle between the photographs is crucial to understanding that the producers of these images were not randomly filming or photographing from the prison cell window, and instead all saw a very specific and clear target and chose to shoot that target from different angles to accentuate this opposition and document its presence and intensity. There is a clear intention on the part of the prisoners to document coercive power, and to relay this to outside parties as evidence.

The representations of state power, the prison architecture, and prison bars are central to the practice of image-making in this context. The representation of state power is at the heart of the photographs; it gives each meaning, and differentiates them from other possible recordings. By focusing the camera on the apparatus of state power, the producer draws a clear connection between this power and the

purpose of the photograph. Similar to the traditional 'counter-shot' composition, the photographer stands against state power, the two entities facing each other yet far from having a symmetrical relationship. To borrow the metaphor of Lebow (2012): the POV of the barrel is aimed at the prisoner, and that barrel is being looked back at from the POV of the prisoner through the camera lens. The former is about to attack, while the latter is defiantly looking back. The prison bars in the photographs symbolize confinement in a space and the limitation of mobility, foregrounding the vulnerable position of the prisoners and their inability to flee the violence that is about to be inflicted upon them through the representatives of state power, and with the help of the POV, the viewer is also positioned behind these very bars. The viewer's experience of incarceration is generally derived from the traditional frame of the outside looking in, as discussed earlier in this article, and their frame is primarily constructed through the Minister's press conference (as seen in Figure I). Upon encountering photographs such as that of Figure II, the viewer experiences the outside from inside, and thus a shift in the visual culture relating to incarceration. It is from this position that representations from the prison begin to impact the 'way of seeing' incarceration.

Figure III. Images captured by a prisoner 'Looking Out'.

Looking In-side the Prison Bars

The second mode of framing depicts the ISF operation from inside Bloc B. This type of recording predominantly consists of videos recorded from the POV of the prisoner, and can be differentiated from the other mode in two major ways: First, such videos were shot and produced at a much faster and chaotic pace, and include recorded speech or a voiceover. Second, they attempt to show the environment in which the prisoners were living, including prison cells and fellow prisoners, rather than aiming the camera at the apparatus of state power. Such recordings mainly capture the aftermath, the chaos, and the rioting of pris-

Figure IV. Video footage from Bloc B documenting the upheaval amid the military operation.

oners when the security personnel entered. The camera is constantly moving and shifting in an attempt to capture the events, rather than being fixed and targeting one specific frame.

After watching the collected recordings and examining both 'raw' and edited media, I found that most of the fragmentary footage used by news reports and circulated online had been adopted from one long video recorded by a prisoner during the operation. I did not manage to find the full video, but the longest single shot raw (unedited) version I found was 42 seconds (a frame of which is shown in Figure IV). This video was shot from the POV of a prisoner inside Bloc B, and shows the panic in the corridors of the building and the prisoners' attempts to use their belongings to block the entrance. Fragments of this video were used in news reports by MTV, AlJadeed, and Al-Jazeera. The prison cellphone recording remediated by AlJadeed does not include voiceover narration, but captures some of the ambient sounds of prisoners and water flooding the space.[7] However, in other news reports voices and narration were often superimposed. For example, the MTV report appropriated certain fragments of the original recording from Bloc B; however, cross-analysis of the frames showed that the MTV report had a long narration added, and the ambient sounds from the prison had been altered.[8]

MTV showed 16 seconds of this footage alongside captions that read "Roumieh Prison", "the fall of the legend of the prison!", and "prisoners of Bloc "B" pleading for help". The video also contains an imposed voice-over of a prisoner's voice recording stating: "guys, the situation is really horrible here, some are injured, others are wounded, but thank god they haven't gotten into the building yet, but the

[7] See Video V in appendix
[8] See Video IV in appendix

situation is horrible in the first, second, and third, tanks everywhere". Directly after this statement there is a cut; instead of the narrator speaking, the video depicts a group of prisoners screaming "Allah Akbar". The cut makes clear that it is the result of the montage done by MTV. In addition, it appears that the voiceover described above was added to the footage by MTV from a different source. There are common frames between the videos used in AlJadeed and MTV news reports; while the former does not feature any narration the latter does, and during this narration we do not hear the noise and sounds of the surroundings as much after the cut, when the prisoners are shouting. In this context, I claim that there is a conscious editing process, one that imposed voice-over narration and the shouting of "Allah Akbar". The work of (re)montage significantly alters the testimonial message of the prison cellphone recording. Through editing and imposing sound and a voice-over the two news reports differ in meaning even though they use the same footage produced by the prisoner.

Figure V. The operation in Bloc B from the frame and POV of the Internal Security Forces.

Based on the composition of the footage, the prisoner cellphone recording used by AlJadeed, MTV, and Al-Jazeera was produced by the same prisoner.[9] It is apparent that the person recording is amongst, or one of, the other individuals in the mutiny and possesses a cellphone camera. His voice-over positions him within the frame. The prisoner moves the camera along his field of vision; the camera is

[9] See Videos IV, V, VI

an extension of the prisoner's vision, which records and, by extension, archives his experience of seeing. Instead of assuming a position and holding a steady and (semi) fixed frame, as in the first mode of framing, the camera moves vertically, horizontally, and diagonally. The fast, chaotic, and shaky composition of the video indicates that there is something precarious taking place, a dangerous event that disturbs the normal state of being. The prisoner filming does not aim the camera at his fellow prisoners; instead, the camera is positioned through back and side angles (as seen in Figure IV). The video shows the danger of the situation due to the ambient sounds, and reflects the actions of the prisoners in response to a military and security intervention. Accordingly, the viewer gets to experience the reactions of the prisoners amid the chaos.

The significance of the POV and frame resurface in this mode of framing as well. The frame shows the belongings of the prisoners scattered on the ground, an indication of violence and shock, underscoring the prisoners' panic. As spectators, we are not sure about the order of events, but understand through the panic that a form of riot is taking place and that there is a level of familiarity between the prisoners and their environment. The audience is, once more, engaged with the recorded events through the POV of the inmates.

An important factor in this mode of prison cellphone recording is sound: When prisoners decide to adopt a video format, they invite the viewer to experience not only the uncertainty of conflict, but also the horror and panic relating to the overwhelming sounds of explosions, screaming, and shouting. A new and different form of POV is at play here; a sonic one. An additional perspective on the video format and speech here is sonic framing in the form of the narration of the prisoner shooting the video. The voice-over narration of the prisoner in the video seems to be descriptive, as he provides context regarding what has happened and what the camera fails to visually convey.[10] It is unclear whom he is addressing; however, based on his tone and choice of words, the video seems to address someone the prisoners do not see as an adversary, and perhaps may view as an accomplice. "We have a lot of injured… thank god they haven't gotten in yet" the prisoner says – a statement that is not confrontational so much as a testimonial. The use of "they" implies that the target audience knows who "they" are. Footage such as this enhances the testimonial element in parallel to the aspect of mobilization that is discussed earlier. As it is not clear who the target audience is, this audience is not positioned as an adversary; instead, they are brought into this precarious environment and positioned side-by-side with the prisoner.

[10] See Video V in appendix

After the Raid: Reclaiming the Frame and Erasing the Image

Figure VI. The minister, his team, and a TV camera crew go into RCP – Bloc B after the operation.

"We have successfully implemented the military operation", the Minister of Interior Affairs declared after the ISF operation on Bloc B adding, "we man-

aged to move all the prisoners from one bloc to another and no harm has been inflicted on any of them".[11] He emphasizes that the ISF operation was intended to dismantle the communications infrastructure and practices in RCP, which were allegedly linked to terrorist attacks. After the press conference the Minister conducted several media appearances, two of which I briefly discuss: the first was a discussion with a famous political television host, and the second a (re)visit to Bloc B. During the former, the Minister asks the producers to play an 'unseen' and exclusive piece of footage from the ISF operation, which recorded by a member of the security personnel with a cellphone camera at the gate of Bloc B. Attempting to hide behind his fellow officers on the front line of the confrontation with the Islamists, the security personnel member records from his POV the aggression inflicted by the prisoners as the police attempt to enter the third floor of Bloc B (see Figure V).[12] The Minister uses this footage to support his description of the professionalism of the ISF, and as proof of the ferocity and terrorism of the prisoners. By presenting such a video, the Minister acknowledges the importance and political uses of raw, amateur, cellphone-shot footage as unambiguous proof of 'what really happened'. The aesthetic of the footage relays a certain, perceived truth. Unlike the footage shot by the prisoners, the audience here stands beside the authority personnel as they undergo attacks from the Islamists. The frame is snatched again and utilized by the ISF.

As discussed by Lebow (2012) in a broader sense, when watching such footage the viewer experiences the conflict, in this instance from the perspective of state power. The 'being there' component of the footage shifts from the position of the prisoner (shown in examples such as Figure IV) to that of the security personnel member (Figure V). Both pieces of footage – that produced by the prisoner and that produced by the member of the security personnel – are recorded evidence of the event taking place, they both even show the same bars at the gate of Bloc B. The audience become witness to the event depending on their position through the frame and POV; they can either be positioned alongside the prisoners or the ISF.

Authorities operationalize digital technologies during their counter-insurgent practices and are able to appropriate certain aesthetics to re-instate a specific 'way of seeing'. With the broad utilization of amateur footage by both sovereign power and individuals aiming for a 'counter-shot', it becomes necessary to carry a critical consideration of the political position of those responsible for the frame. For

[11] See Video II in appendix
[12] See Video VIII in appendix

example, it is important to ask: Who is shooting? Whose political field of vision are they contributing to? And whom or which party does such shooting benefit? Such questions emphasize the practice by assessing its political nature and engaging a sense of criticality to the frame with regard to those behind the camera.

The second major media appearance of the Minister following the military operation was his visit to RCP's Bloc B. As part of an 'exclusive' report by Al-Jadeed, the Minister enters the prison; this time, the state (represented by the Minister) invades the prison armed not with weapons, but with cameras and a camera crew (see Figure VI).[13] He wanders around the destroyed building with his bodyguards, guiding the camera to the various "illegal" belongings the prisoners had, such as the remnants of the digital technology responsible for the prisoners' media practices. Alongside the media team, the Minister takes the viewer on an adventure of re-seeing the prison from the POV of sovereign power.[14] The audience's gaze, initially shifted through the use of the camera by the prisoner, is shifted once again. This renders the prison subject to yet another raid – one conducted using the camera, which here is not a mere reference to a gun, but a direct extension of its power (Lebow, 2012). The viewer, this time, witnesses the aftermath of the military operation through the new lens of mainstream media led by the Minister himself; the new frame of the sovereign prevails. Attempting to keep pace with the Minister and his team, the reporter tries to cover the destruction in the building while simultaneously asking the Minister questions. The Minister reassures the reporter that the operation is over, everything is back to normal, they have defeated the enemy, and there is nothing left to see. Through visual practices the state reestablished police order, took control of the camera, and reclaimed the viewer, who is now on their side.

Shooting Back: A Defiant Act of Looking

As Butler (2005) argues in relation to embedded reporting, journalists' compliance with the regime of war inhibits a specific critical vision of sovereign power. This was exemplified in relation to the Iraq and Falklands Wars by Butler (2005) and Sontag (2003), respectively. Here, journalists avoided showing pictures of the dead and soldiers' coffins, and complied with the British government's discourse on war in order to be permitted access to the action in the case of the latter conflict. Through such processes the media actively controlled the "cognitive apprehension of war" (Butler, 2005, p. 823). I notice a similar trend of embedded reporting with regard to the military operation in Bloc B. I note here the absence of reporting on

[13] See Video VII in appendix
[14] See video VII in appendix

and coverage of the military invasion, and blatantly 'one-sided' coverage of mainstream media institutions. The prison cellphone recordings compensated for this by providing an alternative to the mainstream media. This, yet again, speaks to the 'counter-shot' component of such recordings. The countering element takes place here as the camera of the prisoner shoots the aftermath and destruction resulting from the 'gun' of sovereign power, yet does so by providing a window into the conflict that provides a counter perspective to the one provided by the mainstream media. Thus, prisoners' practice of footage and image production oppose not only the angle but also the lack thereof in the mainstream media's coverage.

I conceptualize both of the modes of framing that emerged from this conflict as forms of 'counter-shot' in order to further highlight the role of the camera, POV, sound, and frame in creating an opposing vision on warfare, and hence draw on the potential of prisoners' practices of 'counter-shot' production. In contrast to the audience's experience of the press conference, which reflects the reality of incarceration from the perspective of state power, the audience experiences this conflict from the position of a prisoner. The viewer, side by side with the prisoner, is subjected to state power. The POV, as Lebow (2012) would argue, brings the viewer "into the war as a virtual participant" (45). This aims to create witnesses among the audience, and documents a form of mobilization taking place; the footage mainly captures prisoners rioting against the authorities. The simple presence of the camera behind bars in this context creates an opportunity for defiance in the visual realm; it instigates a practice of 'visual' documentation that is inherently prohibited. Both Feldman (1991) and Lebow (2012) speak of the use of the camera in the context of "shooting back" as a provocation; here, the camera is a direct counterpart to the gun and a challenge to authority in that it allows the prisoners to reclaim their right to frame.

By conceptualizing such recordings as functioning as 'counter-shots', I do not intend to argue for their significance solely as opposing visions on warfare; they also have their limitations. This is connected to both the producers of such 'visions', and to the limits of the barrel POV type of photography. The style of photography that emerges from the POV of the barrel is limited in its ability to address injustices and lead to tangible change with regard to the repressive conditions that are responsible for the creation of such images in the first place. As Lebow argues, what such footage achieves is to "alter the superficial conditions" of the "subjective violence", and in such a case the changes are minimal or temporary. In the context of this case study, these limitations are further enhanced by the problematic partisan politics of the prisoners shooting the videos in the first place, and the narratives constructed around these in the media which prohibit, or reduce, forms of affect or responsibility on the part of the audience. Al-

though they may seem to use a similar style of 'shooting', it would be unfounded to equate the efforts of a problematic group such as the Islamists with, for example, a humanitarian organization recording the atrocities of the occupation, as per the example used by Lebow (2012). However, how are such prison amateur documentations useful then? And what can we learn from such emerging modes of framings instead of, say, dismissing the analysis of the counter-shot?

First, even though they might appear as chaotic forms of footage and image production, prison cellphone recordings are indicative of established production practices based on the illicit smuggling of a cellphone into the prison, the operationalization of the camera and the internet connection, and the establishment of networks of communications with affiliates outside the prison. While what is being documented inside the frame is key to understanding the function and intention of these amateur images and footage, what is left out of that very frame is also indicative of emerging documentary techniques and practices from the prison. Under surprise attack and amidst a violent interaction and heavy rioting against the ISF, prisoners still managed to produce and circulate their recordings from the prison. This is evidence that prisoners had already smuggled and acquired digital technologies, figured how to charge and top up their devices with credit, maintained internet and telecommunication connection, and sustained an exchange of information with their affiliates on the outside. The production of footage, especially during the mode of framing of looking in, was immediate and contextualized both the events and carried testimonies. If the allegations of AlJadeed are true and the footage shot in the dark corridors of Bloc B was in fact streamed live through a Facebook page, then prisoners' emerging techniques of documentation and modes of framing have intricately developed to the extent that news media had to resort to them for journalistic reporting.

Second, since confinement institutions are built on the control and separation of information, any emergence of sensory information from behind the walls carry with it testimonial possibilities of those responsible for its production and dissemination. Both modes of framing discussed earlier evoke a field of vision which embodies testimony as to the conditions responsible for their creation. The compositions of the images and videos, POV, positioning of the camera, use of voice-over, all relayed the fact that the practice of media production was driven by a sense of bearing witness. Such 'counter-shots' are eminent, first and foremost, in testifying to the fact that a practice of media production exists behind bars; images and videos are visible proof of the existence of a technological device capable of capturing, documenting, archiving, and circulating them from the heart of the conflict onto our screens. Also, such fragmentary amateur documentations relay the intentions of those who produced them, an intention

to document and testify to the lived experience amidst the events. In addition, as Butler would argue (2005), an interpretive power is imposed onto the photograph by the practice itself or the intention of the subject composing the image through the frame. The military vehicles, prison architecture, and prison bars are central to the composition of the photographs as testimony. Similarly, the choice of words and the hectic movement of the camera are driven by the need to testify to the overwhelming sentiments of horror facing state violence. This relays the prisoners' intention to record, produce, and instantly share "persuasive personalized eyewitness records with mobile and globalized target populations", as Andén-Papadopoulos would term it (2014, p. 760).

Consequently, there is an inherent dissident dimension to the emergence of the modes of framing discussed earlier; prison cellphone recordings begin to embody the illicit nature that is necessary for their production and circulation from behind bars. However, through visual dominance, the Lebanese authorities have attempted to erase prisoners' representations. According to Feldman (2015), the sovereign state conducts its war against the witnessing of that war, and invests its energies in sensory inscriptions and erasures of war. The mere presence of a camera and the existence of a practice of media production was one of the main reasons for the Minister to initiate a war. The raid on Bloc B was not only against the Islamists but against the idea that a POV and a frame, and – most importantly – an act of looking other than that of sovereign power could exist.

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Appendix:

Video I

AlJadeed News (2015, April 30) مؤتمر صحافي للوزير داهن المشنوق حول اوضاع السجون. [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/MjdS0VnnRfw. (Accessed January 19, 2023).

Video II

AlJadeed News (2015, January 19, 2023 المشنوق يعلن بدء مرحلة جديدة في سجن رومية. [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/dK-4teES_dE. (Accessed January 19, 2023).

Video III

Nohad Machnouk | داهن المشنوق (2015, January 13) سقوط الجيب الإرهابي في سجن رومية. [video] YouTube. https://youtu.be/C2tOJ9jUxA0. (Accessed January 19, 2023).

Video IV

MTV Lebanon News (2015, January 12) Prime Time News - 12/01/2015 - سقوط أقروطة السجن!. [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/OBz-rqQDlTg.

Video V

AlJadeed News (2015, January 12) النصرة تبث فيديو «وهاجمات سجن رومية". [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/0zVxfib9HlQ.

Video VI

AlJazeera Arabic قناة الجزيرة (2015, January 12) عملية أمنية داخل سجن رومية شرق بيروت.[Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/Mf7wIqalu1M

Video VII

AlJadeed News (2015, January 13). مشاهد خاصة لقناة «الجديد» من داخل سجن رومية. [Video]. Youtube. https://youtu.be/ybxU30LLnVQ. Accessed January 19, 2023.

Video VIII

LBCI Lebanon (2015, January 16). باب الفيديو...لحظة اقتحام المبنى ب في سجن رومية. [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/gUrLh1ikl6g. Accessed January 19, 2023.

Example I

Samaha, Nour. (2015, June 23) Riots in Lebanese Roumieh prison over living conditions. Al Jazeera. Retrieved on January 19, 2023. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/6/23/riots-in-lebanese-roumieh-prison-over-living-conditions.

La police libanaise investit "l'émirat jihadiste" de la prison de Roumieh (2015, January 13). Frances 24 Les Observateurs. Retrieved on January 19, 2023. https://observers.france24.com/fr/20150113-video-liban-prison-jabhat-nosra-jihadistes-roumieh.

Biographical entries

Dr Hongwei Bao is Associate Professor in Media Studies at the University of Nottingham, UK, where he also directs the Centre for Contemporary East Asian Cultural Studies. His research focuses on queer culture in contemporary China. Dr Bao is the author of *Queer Comrades*, *Queer China*, *Queer Media in China* and *Contemporary Chinese Queer Performance*.

Philipp Blum (PhD) is senior assistant (post-doctoral researcher) and coordinator of the "Netzwerk | Réseau Cinema CH" at the Seminar for Film Studies at the University of Zurich. Previously, he was a research assistant in the DFG research project on the history of documentary film in Germany 1945-2005. He completed his dissertation on experiments between documentary and fiction film in 2016 (published in 2017: *Experimente zwischen Dokumentar- und Spielfilm.* Marburg: Schüren). In 2019, he co-translated *Les espaces de communication* by Roger Odin (Berlin: oa books). He is currently working on a film-philosophical project on the cinematic concept of nature.

Efrén Cuevas is Professor of Film Studies at Universidad de Navarra. His main research interests include documentary cinema, autobiography, and home movies. On these topics, he edited the book *La casa abierta. El cine doméstico y sus reciclajes contemporáneos* (2010), and co-edited *The Man without the Movie Camera: The Cinema of Alan Berliner* (2002), and *Landscapes of the Self: The Cinema of Ross McElwee* (2008). He has also contributed to books such as *Amateur Filmmaking: the Home Movie, the Archive, the Web* (2014), and *The Cinema of Me* (2012). His latest book, published by Columbia University Press, is *Filming History from Below: Microhistorical Documentaries* (2022).

Raya Morag is Professor of Cinema Studies at the Department of Communication and Journalism, the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel. Her publications deal with post-traumatic cinema, perpetratorhood, and ethics; cinema, war, and masculinity; perpetrator trauma; documentary cinema; perpetrator cinema, and corporeal-feminist film critique. Morag focuses on a broad range of corpora: The New German Cinema, Vietnam War films, Israeli and Palestinian second *Intifada* cinema, New Cambodian cinema, and post-Cultural Revolution Chinese cinema. Morag has published five books and numerous articles. Her recently published book *Perpetrator Cinema: Confronting Genocide in Cambodian Documentary* (Columbia University Press, 2020a) won the 2021 Choice Outstanding Academic Title.

Chafic Tony Najem researches prisoner's illicit media practices and the smuggling of digital technologies into prisons primarily within the context of the Global South. Mainly positioned within the field of Media Studies, Chafic's research deals also with the fields of visual culture and documentary studies by questioning the political and testimonial prospects of the illicitly produced images and videos, modes of production, and the digital materialities behind bars. He recently received his PhD in Media and Communication Studies from the department of Media Studies, Stockholm University.

Mirosław Przylipiak is Professor of Film Studies at the University of Gdańsk. His main publications include the books *Kino stylu* zerowego/*Zero Style Cinema* (1994, sec. edition 2016), *Kino najnowsze*/*New Cinema* (1998), *Poetyka kina* dokumentalnego/*Aesthetics of documentary cinema* (2000, sec. ed. 2004), three books on American direct cinema, about 160 academic papers on various aspects of film and media, and numerous film reviews. He has translated nearly 30 books, mostly from the fields of psychology and film, and some poetry. He also made several documentary films and series of television educational programmes. Mirosław Przylipiak was a founder and first managing director of Academic Educational Television of the University of Gdansk and at present he is in charge of the Film Centre at this University. He has been awarded many international and national grants and fellowships, including the Fulbright Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation and the Polish Ministry of Higher Education, among others. His main areas of interest are: theory and aesthetics of cinema, documentary film, theory of film narration.

Khurram Sheikh is a PhD student at the Media School at Indiana University Bloomington. Khurram's research areas include postcolonial and global cinema where he studies Muslim film practices in South Asia and its diaspora. Khurram's research investigates questions of geopolitical negotiations of filmmakers that work across multiple scales and modalities at the intersections of nationhood, regionalization, and religious identity discourse in the post 9/11 world. Professionally, Khurram has been a recipient of Film Talents Fellowship by Goethe Institut (2018) and Beyond Borders Film Workshop at Indiana University (2017). He is also the co-director of InLight Human Rights Film Festival 2023. Currently Khurram works at the Muslim Voices Project at Indiana University that aims to resist Islamophobia by creating awareness through social media activism.

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