Film and Cultures of Memory

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(eds.)

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Film and Cultures of Memory:
Preface

Film and memory are undoubtedly interwoven in various ways. Audio-visual media, particularly films have a strong impact on how we imagine, think about and attribute meaning to the past. They hence play a vital role in the construction of cultural and historical memories. From an intercultural perspective, films invite us to discover and experience how different cultures relate to the past and how the respective film cultures have found specific approaches to memory. Furthermore, film can also be a medium of oblivion or escapism allowing a temporary escape from a burdening past or grim present. Likewise, many films reflect on remembering and forgetting on an individual level, thus exploring capacities or deficiencies of the human mind. The contributions in this book present various cultures of memory and the representation of memory and memories, remembrance and oblivion through different film cultures.

In the past twenty years, determining the way cultures relate to their past has become one of the key issues in the field of humanities.[1] The latter was shaped by ground-breaking studies on cultural memory conducted by Jan and Aleida Assmann[2], referring to the pioneer work of the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, who had focused on the social embeddedness of memory, i.e. "frames" that allow a community to remember.[3] Further contributions to the field have been made by Aby Warburg, an art historian whose Mnemosyne project aimed to collect a visual memory of mankind across different cultures. French historian, Pierre Nora, whose monumental *lieux de mémoire*[4] subsequently inspired numerous studies on memory worldwide, insists on a

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[1]   *Cf.* Erll, A. / Nünning, A. (eds.): *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2008; Erll, A.: *Memory in Culture*. London, Palgrave MacMillan, 2011.

[2]   Assmann, J.: *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, München, Beck, 1992; Assmann, A.: *Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*, München, Beck, 1999.

[3]   Halbwachs, M.: *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire [1925]*, Paris, Presses Universitaires, 1952

[4]   Nora, P.: *Les lieux de mémoire*. 3 vol. Paris, Gallimard, 1984-1992.

distinction between history and memory,[5] the latter relying on media for remembering and actualizing the past. As Erll and Wodianka point out, audio-visual media, especially films, have become the main vector of cultural memory in occidental societies, particularly since the 1980s.[6]

Film – as probably all cultural media – does not simply reflect the status quo of a society's memory. While it can be in line with a general majority trend, especially as a medium of popular culture, it can also be backward-oriented and perpetuate outdated and long overcome images or ideas about the past. The latter orientation, however, is more often than not sanctioned by a controversial reception. Film furthermore has the potential to imagine or suggest alternative ways of dealing with the past or even of opening new perspectives that are opposed to general trends in a given culture of memory.

Some rather influential representations of the past for cultural memory include the TV series *Roots* (1977) regarding the African American memory, Marcel Ophuls' documentary film *Le Chagrin et la Pitié* (*The Sorrow and the Pity* (1969) that contributed to the end of the myth of "résistancialisme"[7] in the French culture of memory on the Nazi occupation 1940-44, or the TV series *Holocaust* (1978) and Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985) as two diametrically opposite approaches to the filmic representation of the deportation and murder of European Jews. As these examples reveal, film has often played a crucial role in the emergence of repressed or subaltern memories.

For the study of a medium of memory, Astrid Erll[8] suggests three layers of analysis that can also be applied to film. Firstly, an intra-medial perspective which aims at examining the "rhetoric of memory" within a film can be adopted. This comprises careful readings of films while paying close attention to narrative and aesthetic features of the representation of memory and to the meaning assigned to the past. Secondly, the relation between film and memory can be analyzed through a diachronic approach looking into the inter-medial dynamics between earlier and later representations of past events. While these first two approaches remain chiefly within the context of the

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[5]   Nora, P.: "From Lieux de mémoire to Realms of Memory." In: Nora, P. (ed.): *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past (Vol. I: Conflicts and Divisions)*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1996, pp. XV-XXIV, here p. XVII.

[6]   Erll, A. / Wodianka, S.: "Einleitung: Phänomenologie und Methodologie des ‚Erinnerungsfilms'". In: Erll, A. / Wodianka, S. (eds.): *Film und kulturelle Erinnerung. Plurimediale Konstellationen.* De Gruyter, 2008, pp. 1-20.

[7]   Rousso, H.: *Le syndrome de Vichy: De 1944 à nos jours*. Paris, Seuil, 1990.

[8]   Erll, A.: "Literature, Film and the Mediality of Cultural Memory." *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*. Eds. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning. Berlin / New York: de Gruyter, 2008, pp. 389-398.

media, the third perspective put forward by Erll focuses on film's impact on cultures of memory. This approach hence reflects an interest in the interaction between film and society and involves a wider socio-cultural context in its analysis. Erll refers to it as plurimedial because it takes into account further cultural media whose objects are situated in the context of other representations of the past, e.g. literature, the press, etc.. Her approach insists on the medium's interplay with a community's cultural memory and the film's embeddedness in the broader pluri-medial context of discourses about the past. It is therefore rooted in a specific culture of memory.

The contributions in this book combine these levels of analysis and illustrate how different cultures of memory are shaped by film – or rather how film has influenced different cultures of memory. Many of the presented examples reveal that the study of the relationship between film and memory is particularly interesting if it delves into moments of societal change, such as the end of the Soviet Union, the generation shift entailing the disappearance of witnesses and survivors of the Shoah and World War II, or key periods of the Cuban Revolution. Numerous papers suggest close readings of films and also draw attention to other facets of the interplay between film and memory. Moments of passage and change such as New Year's Eve, for instance, may serve as occasions for suspending norms and rules, space and time, to escape from reality or to criticize the forces in power in a carnivalesque way, as revealed in the analysis of Soviet New Year's Eve movies.

This book is the result of close cooperation between the Saarland University (Saarbrücken, Germany) and the Petro Mohyla Black Sea State University in Mykolaiv (Ukraine). It combines papers by German and Ukrainian researchers from various disciplines who have a common interest in the way the medium film treats questions of memory, remembrance and trauma. The presented articles document a joint German-Ukrainian international conference which was organized in October 2012 at the Petro Mohyla Black Sea State University in Mykolaiv (Ukraine) with the support of the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service). The contributions invite the reader to discover various cultures of memory through case studies from Russia, Spain, USA, Cuba and Germany, and present different approaches to analyzing the relationship of the medium film with memory and remembrance.

Russian films and the shift from Soviet to post-Soviet times are the focus of the first two texts. In his paper "Soviet Theurgic Cinema: Magic, Music and Memory on New Year's Eve", Igor Ustyuzhyn (Kharkiv) takes the reader back to the tradition of the New Year's Eve movies in the Soviet era. Referring to Bakhtin's ideas on the function of Carnival, Ustyuzhyn argues that the

rather popular Soviet New Year's Eve movies can be read in the same way. He discusses *The Thirty-First of June* (1978/79) and *The Wizards* (1982/83), two productions of the Brezhnev era that stand out against "typical" films of the genre, such as *The Tales of the Russian Forest* (1966/67), and reads them as allegories with a double function: they inspired the public to forget and, by the same token, in a subversive way, to remember.

In her paper "Memories of Big City from Soviet and Post-Soviet Perspectives" Anastasiya Pshenychnykh (Kharkiv) provides an analysis of, to what extent, our way of imagining the city – Moscow in this case – has evolved over the last 40 years. She examines the memories of city life in the 1977 production *Office Romance* directed by Eldar Ryazanov and its contemporary 2011 remake *Office Romance. Our Time* directed by Sarik Andreasyan to point out how depictions of the city have been transformed and how the perspectives have shifted from the Soviet to post-Soviet era.

The following contributions take us to the North American continent. The memory of the Cuban Revolution presents the key object of investigation in Janett Reinstädler's (Saarbrücken) paper. She reveals that, from its beginnings until today, Cuban film has been intensively involved in a profound investigation of its national past. Furthermore, she analyzes the role of memory in three masterpieces of Cuban cinema: *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, 1968), *Fresa y chocolate* (Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, 1992) and *Alicia en el pueblo de Maravillas* (Daniel Díaz Torres, 1991), all of which were produced during crucial times of the Revolution. Reinstädler's analysis discusses different strategies of how the given films represent loathed memory and test the boundaries of the official memory of the Revolution. Now that the re-established diplomatic relations with the USA may herald a new era for Cuba, the article reminds us of the extent to which film has contributed to shaping and challenging the country's representation of its national history, while reflecting the present's needs.

The long repressed and still vulnerable cultural memory of the North American First Nations presents the focus of Olena McLaughlin's (Stillwater) contribution. She analyses how this group uses film as a medium to establish and strengthen its cultural identity through memory. Taking *Smoke Signals* (1998), one of the first Native feature films, as a starting point, McLaughlin discusses the re-appropriation of their cultural memory by Native filmmakers in contrast to distorted Hollywood representations of "Indians". She reveals that film as a medium of (counter-)memory constitutes an act of self-definition and an exercise of cultural sovereignty for indigenous people.

The four texts of the last section of this book present case studies from different European film cultures. Oleksandr Pronkevich (Mykolaiv) adopts an

intermedial perspective. His comparative study of Bernardo Atxaga's famous book *Obabakoak* (1988) and its screen adaptation *Obaba* (2005) by Montxo Armendáriz discusses different strategies of memory for dealing with the past in the Basque country, in contemporary Spain. In the context of an almost obsessive memory boom regarding the Francoist era in Spanish cultural productions starting in the late 1980s, Pronkevich regards Atxaga's book as a reinterpretation of the past in order to conceive Basque cultural identity as an open, inclusive project; *Obabakoak* suggests to take a forgotten mythical past as a basis for a new identity project – by using postmodern narrative strategies. Armendáriz' film, however, is conceived in an opposite direction: It presents a protagonist trying to escape from a postmodern world in order to find happiness in an archaic and mythical Obaba.

The way German film represents the country's Nazi past and has contributed to shaping the country's culture of memory, constitutes the central subject of the two following contributions. While the question of cultural memory is usually discussed in national contexts, Christoph Vatter (Saarbrücken) examines the possibility of an intercultural memory of the period of World War II and of the Nazi regime in the German cinema of the 1950s and 1960s. In his contribution "Towards an Intercultural Cinematographic Memory?" he illustrates how the African continent was used as a cinematographic space to perpetuate officially discredited memories of heroism and the glorification of war. But in films such as Denys de la Patellière's *Taxi pour Tobrouk*, Africa also served as a third space in Homi Bhabha's sense i.e. to represent an intercultural dialogue in times of war, to imagine the Franco-German rapprochement and thus to probe the way towards a cooperation on the basis of a common, intercultural memory.

How German cinema deals with the Nazi past is also investigated in another paper. The historian Volker Venohr (Saarbrücken) takes the successful TV production *Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter* (2013) and its controversial international reception, especially its harsh critiques in Poland and Russia, to reassess the evolution of the myth of the honest German soldier and the "clean Wehrmacht", which has been established in German cinema since the post-war era. In his analysis, he argues that *Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter* has to be regarded on the continuity of the "Wehrmacht myth", but also represents part of a change in paradigm initiated in the 1990s which favored the individual and emotional perspective of soldiers over the contextualizing, more abstract approaches witnessed in former productions. He concluded that - in the context of the European integration and the current crises - the relationship between film and memory cannot only be understood as a vertical dialogue between generations, but likewise ought to be considered from a

horizontal perspective and as an opportunity for engaging in an intercultural dialogue about the past.

The final paper concludes this perspective for a pan-European collective memory by offering a close reading of Lars von Trier's *Melancholia* (2011). According to Tetyana Ostapchuk (Mykolaiv) this film immerses the spectator deeply into the European collective cultural memory. In her paper, she provides a detailed analysis of the numerous allusions, reminiscences and citations from the history of arts and investigates the filmmaker's use of intermediality and intertextuality as a strategy for referring to a shared European collective identity and for inscribing his film in a cultural tradition.

Saarbrücken, July 2015
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Soviet Theurgic Cinema:
Magic, Music and Memory on New Year's Eve

Introduction: Vera Pavlova, *Sub Specie Aeternitatis*

But we will get the tickets
But the seats will be uncomfortable
But the film will be a horror
But we will watch till the end
But instead of THE END OF THE FILM
We will read THE END OF THE WORLD
But the light will flash in the hall.
Vera Pavlova.[9]

Now we see through a glass, darkly.
St. Paul.[10]

Cinema in the USSR: The Most Important of All the Arts

In April 1979, Leonid Brezhnev, Chairman of the Soviet Supreme Council and (of course) the Communist Party leader, ordered the establishment of a new holiday – 'Soviet Cinema Day', that was to be celebrated annually, on August 27.[11] The date for a new holiday was not chosen by chance. It was a clear reference to the Head of the first Soviet government's decree *On Transition of Photographic and Film Trade and Industry under Auspices of the People's Commissariat of Education* issued on August 27, 1919.[12]

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[9] но мы достанем билеты / но будут места плохими / но фильм будет ужасным / но мы до конца досмотрим / но вместо КОНЕЦ ФИЛЬМА/ прочтем КОНЕЦ СВЕТА/ но в зале зажжется свет. Вера Павлова.

[10] *1 Cor.* 13:12.

[11] The Decree is reproduced in: *Sovetskoe Kino. Fotoalbom* [Soviet Cinema. Photo Album], Moskva, Planeta, 1979, p. 179.

[12] "Декрет о переходе фотографической и кинематографической торговли и про-мышленности в ведение Народного Комиссариата по Просвещению." The Decree is

Vladimir Lenin quickly realized the great propaganda potential and the mass appeal of the youngest of arts and declared the Cinema the most important of all the arts to the Bolsheviks. "Bolshevik № 1" "nationalized" (or, rather, "expropriated") the cinema industry and all Party leaders after him did not spare money on it, using the cinema as a tool for (in Brezhnev's words) "breeding of the new man [and] the creation of the developed socialist society."[13] Brezhnev was a film lover and the Soviet film industry was especially flourishing during his (or was it Suslov's[14]?) rule. From 1963 to 1982, Soviet film studios produced about 150 films a year that (if not shelved as it happened with El'dar Riazanov's *Man from Nowhere*, 1961, Aleksandr Askoldov's *Commissar* or Lev Slavin's *Intervention*, all 1967) were shown on television and in movie theatres all over the country.[15] The "legal" Soviet films would fall into three main groups:

1. Minor films with little artistic value, marked by Socialist realism propaganda that are not worth mentioning (the most numerous group);
2. Masterpieces, mostly based upon classics (Grigory Kozintsev's *Hamlet*, 1964; Ivan Pyr'ev's *The Karamazov Brothers,* 1968; Andrei Tarkovsky's *Solaris,* 1972);
3. "Release valve" films (again): mostly minor films, but some of them are nevertheless remarkable: Leonid Gaidai's *Ivan Vasil'evich Changes his Job*, 1973; El'dar Riazanov's *The Irony of Fate*, 1975 and *Office Romance*, 1977; Georgy Danelia's *Mimino*, 1977).

Release valve, or "a time to laugh"[16]

Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev's "grey cardinal", Mikhail Suslov, might have been evil, but he was far from being stupid.

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reproduced in: *Sovetskoe Kino. Fotoalbom* [Soviet Cinema. Photo Album], Moskva, Planeta, 1979, p. 8.

[13]   "Воспитание нового человека [и] в создание развитого социалистического общества." Leonid Brezhnev, quoted in: *Sovetskoe Kino. Fotoalbom* [Soviet Cinema. Photo Album], Moskva, Planeta, 1979, p. 10.

[14]   Mikhail Suslov and Leonid Brezhnev worked together for many years and died in the same year, 1982.

[15]   Mislavsky, V.: *Evreiskaia Tema v Kinematografe* [Jewish Theme in the Cinema], Kharkov, Skorpion, 2013, p. 614.

[16]   *Eccl*. 3:4.

Figure 1: Poet Andrei Voznesensky (wearing a black turtleneck sweater, left) bitterly criticized by Nikita Khrushchev's Politburo in Kremlin (March 1963). Mikhail Suslov and Leonid Brezhnev sit next to each other in the middle.[17]

Obviously, Suslov read Lenin, but he may also have read Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975). In *Francois Rabelais' Works,* Bakhtin describes *festa stultorum*, "fools festivities," which took place in Medieval Western Europe and were especially wild and unrestrained when celebrated on New Year's Day or on the day of Epiphany.[18] Bakhtin gives a long quote from a French apologia for *fête des fous* dating back to the middle of the fifteenth century. According to this, the carnival festivity is necessary

> for buffoonery (that is our second nature and seem inborn) could at least once a
> year freely go out. Wine barrels burst lest we once in a while open them and let
> some air inside. We, people, are all badly made barrels that will burst, if the

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[17]   Aksenov, V.: "Tainstvennaia Strast'." [Mysterious Passion] In: *Kollektsia Karavan Istorii*, № 5, 2008, pp. 180-204, here p. 189. A witness of the event, Vasily Aksenov renders Khrushchev's speech addressed to Andrei Voznesensky: "Did you want to fool our youth? You won't, we will wipe you from the face of the earth! These boys dressed in sweaters come to the Kremlin as if to a kindergarten to ski. We will ski you here in such a manner that your asses will smoke. Right, comrades Communists?" ("Хотели сбить с толку нашу молодежь? Не получится, мы вас сотрём с лица земли! Приходят вот тут такие мальчики, как таковые, в своих свитерках, в Кремль, товарищи, как в детсад, на лыжах, что ли, покататься, мы вас тут так покатаем, что зады задымят, правильно, товарищи коммунисты?") *Ibid.*, p. 188.

[18]   On 6 January, Western Christians commemorate the visit of the magi to the baby Jesus and thus Jesus' physical manifestation to the gentiles.

wine of wisdom that is inside us constantly ferments with awe and fear of God. It is necessary to give air to the wine so that it would not go bad. That is why on certain days we allow buffoonery to ourselves in order to serve God in a more zealous way after it.[19]

It is a possibility that this apologia, rejected by Sorbonne theologians in Paris on March 12, 1444, convinced the Party leaders in Moscow some five hundred years later. Lest "the badly made barrels" "burst of the wine of (Leninist) wisdom," they were allowed not to "ferment with awe and fear", *i.e.* not to strictly stick to the *Moral Code of Communism Builder* kind of ethics "at least once a year," around the New Year's eve.

Beware of the Bear, or a formula of Soviet Art

The first sign of Carnival Night as the Soviet analogue of French *fête des fous,* celebrated on New Year's Eve, can be traced back to the year 1956 in Soviet cinema.

Figure 2: Carnival Night *(1956). The title screen.*

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[19] "чтобы глупость (шутовство), которая является нашей второй природой и кажется прирожденной человеку, могла бы хоть раз в году свободно изжить себя. Бочки с вином лопнут, если время от времени не открывать отверстия и не пускать в них воздуха. Все мы, люди, - плохо сколоченные бочки, которые лопнут от вина мудрости, если это вино будет находиться в непрерывном брожении благоговения и страха божьего. Нужно дать ему воздух, чтобы оно не испортилось. Поэтому мы и разрешаем в определенные дни шутовство (глупость), чтобы потом с тем большим усердием вернуться к служению господу." Quoted in: Bakhtin, M.: *Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable i Narodnaia Kultura Srednevekov'ia i Renessansa* [François Rabelais' Works and Folk Culture in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance], Moskva, Khudozhestvennaia Literatura, 1990, p. 87.

Then, El'dar Riazanov's *Carnival Night* completely ridiculed Serafim Ivanovich Ogurtsov, the stupid boss (of course, a Party member) who tried to forbid his employees to arrange a carnival on New Year's Eve and did his best to spoil the party.[20] It was clear to everybody that Ogurtsov's censorship was excessive and unacceptable, but confronting him openly only meant looking for trouble. So, the message was delivered to the boss by Fedor Petrovich Mironov in the fable form:

> The other day on the forest border under the pine
> There was a ball.
> Raccoon and Hedgehog, Deer and Doe
> Danced *pas d'Espagne*.
> And grey Hare under the bush
> Performed waltz Boston.
> Squirrels and Frogs danced too,
> All clinked glasses and drank … dew,
> Two Cuckoos made a duo and sang
> *Two Soldi*, *Liana* and *chastushkas*.
> Everybody enjoyed each other in the forest so much!
>
> All of a sudden Bear came in
> And poked his nose into everything:
> What did Badger sit on a bough for?
> What did Polecat go out to the stand for?
> And why are Raccoon and Mole
> Dancing tango and foxtrot?
> These "why?" and "what for?"
> Bored everybody to death
> And the green world of the forest
> Became dull as ditch water.
> The moral is easy to understand:
> What did Bear come to the ball for?[21]

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21   Намедни на опушке под сосной / Был бал лесной./ Енот и Еж, Олень и Лань / Плясали танец па д'Эспань./ А серый Заяц под кустом/ Исполнил лично вальс-бостон./ Плясали Белки и Лягушки, / Все пили, чокаясь … росу./ Дуэтом спели две кукушки / «Два сольди», «Ляну» и частушки./ Как было весело в лесу!/ И вдруг Медведь явился в лес / И сразу же во все полез:/ Зачем Барсук присел на сук?/ За чем Хорёк пошел в ларёк?/ И почему Енот и Крот / Танцуют танго и фокстрот?/ От этих «почему-зачем» / Вдруг стало скучно сразу всем,/ И вмиг в зелёный мир леска / Пришла зелёная тоска./ Мораль легко уразуметь:/ Зачем на бал пришел Медведь?

However, at the time, the moral was not so easy to understand for Ogurtsov:

> Ogurtsov: Fedor Petrovich, one moment, please. Listen, the fable is good, sharp, well performed…
> Mironov: So, did I do a good job?
> Ogurtsov: You did, but you see, it is not clear who this Bear is!
> Mironov: Er … But this is an allegory!
> Ogurtsov: Is it? Listen, Fedor Petrovich, when the next time you do a fable, do it without your … and just straightforwardly say the name and the position![22]

If my supposition is correct and the Party leaders meant the New Year period to be a *fête des fous* type holiday, then there had to exist a special, unofficial genre, such as the Soviet New Year film. These films, which were supposed to be shown on television on the December 31 or January 1, were meant to provide quality entertainment for "the working masses" that were busy drinking, dancing, flirting, singing and joking at New Year's parties. Of course, drinking, dancing, flirting *etc*., on the screen was appropriate then.

Besides their daily *panis,* Roman plebs had to be given *circenses* for about half a year. Soviet *proletarii* were much less demanding; it was enough for them to have entertainment in addition to their *olivier* for only a couple of days around New Year's Eve.[23]

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[22] О.: Федор Петрович, одну минуточку. Скажите вот что… Басня хорошая, зубастая, прочитал неплохо…
М.: Оправдал, значит, доверие?
О.: Оправдал, оправдал, но Вы знаете, неясно, кто, значит, этот Медведь?
М.: Э-э, так ведь это аллегория!
О.: Да? Вот что, Федор Петрович, в следующий раз будешь читать басню, давай без всякого это … а … а просто называй фамилию и место работы! (to directly give the name and the position meant to directly go to jail or to a mental hospital. As the Soviets joked, their constitution guaranteed freedom *of* speech, but not freedom *after* the speech). See: *Istoriya SSSR v Anekdotakh. 1917-1991* [Soviet History in Jokes. 1917-1991], Riga, Everest, 1991.

[23] *Olivier* is a traditional Russian festive dish, the salad made of meat, peas, boiled eggs, boiled potato and mayonnaise, a kind of American potato salad.

Figure 3: Carnival Night *(1956). Employees' responses to Ogurtsov's rhetorical question "What should our Soviet people hide their faces for? What for, comrades?"[24]*

The Double Impact on the Thirty-First of December

> Some folks' hearts sing,
> Some folks' hearts ache.
> He presses the button save,
> She presses the button delete.
> *B. G.*[25]

Below, I will discuss *The Thirty-First of June* (1978/79) and *The Wizards* (1982/83), two "Brezhnev" New Year films that stand out from "typical" films of the genre, such as *The Tales of the Russian Forest* (1966/67), *The Straw Hat* (1974/75), *The Irony of Fate* (1975/76) or *The Dog in the Manger* (1977/78).[26]

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[24] "Зачем нашим советским людям скрывать своё лицо? Зачем, товарищи?"

[25] "У некоторых сердце поёт, / У некоторых – болит. / Он нажимает на "Save", / Она нажимает "Delete." B[oris] G[rebenshchikov], *Nekotorye Zheniatsia* [Some Folks Get Married] in: Grebenshchikov, B.: *Pesni BG* [BG's Songs], Moskva, EKSMO, 2013, p. 357.

[26] There are two more films in this category worthy of an article: Mark "Mrak" Zakharov's *Obyknovennoe Chudo* [Ordinary Miracle] (1978/79) and *Tot Samyi M'yunhauzen* [The Very Munchhausen] (1979/80). His *Formula Liubvi* [Formula of Love] (1984/85) is a slightly different case.

Under review, both films greatly deviate from the books they are based upon; they are slightly (perhaps more than slightly) too serious for the New Year *fête des fous* and last, but not least, address the issues of magic ("it is not typical, comrades"[27]) and memory.

There is a chance that the directors, the scriptwriters and the lyricist Leonid Derbenev were inspired by Vladimir Solov'ev's idea of "free theurgy": the world that "lies in evil" can only be healed with a special, "theurgic" kind of art that synthesizes, or harmoniously combines, Theology, Philosophy and Science.[28] Solov'ev (1853–1900) did not live long enough to see a film as we know it, but there is little doubt that he would have also suggested using it for "breeding the new man," not the *homo soveticus*, but the God-like one.[29]

Playing Hard on the Thirty-First of December: *The Thirty-First of June* [30]

> Tell me, how we will get to know,
> How will we get to know again
> That you are my and I am your Love and destiny?
> *Leonid Derbenev*.[31]

By 1978, both Leonid Kvinikhidze and Nina Fomina had already tried their hand at a New Year film. Fomina wrote a script for *The Tales of the Russian Forest* (shown on TV in 1966/67), and Kvinikhidze directed the vaudeville *Straw Hat* (shown on TV in 1974/75). John Boynton Priestley (1894-1984) was also "reliable", being considered a "progressive" English writer, almost a

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[27] Ogurtsov's favourite saying.

[28] For Solov'ev and his followers, art was practical theurgy. It is not a coincidence that the magic wand was made of a log with the word "LOVE" carved into it and that it looked exactly like a pencil (*The Wizards*). The protagonist of *The Thirty-First of June* (who in Strugatskys' terms "evolved into a magus") was a painter.

[29] Solov'ev predicted the appearance of a new kind of art no later than in 1890. Solov'ev, V.: "Obshchii Smysl Iskusstva." [General Meaning of Art] In: Solov'ev, V.: *Stikhotvorenia. Estetika. Literaturnaia Kritika* [Poetry. Aesthetics. Literary Criticism], Moskva, Kniga, 1990, pp. 139, 507.

[30] Première: December 31, 1978, on TV. Director: Leonid Kvinikhidze. Scriptwriters: Nina Fomina, Leonid Kvinikhidze. Composer: Aleksandr Zatsepin. Lyrics: Leonid Derbenev. Starring: Nikolai Eremenko as Sam Penty, Natalia Trubnikova as Princess Melicent, Vladimir Zel'din as King Meliot and Mr. Dimmock, Aleksandr Godunov as Lamison and Bob Taylor, Ludmila Vlasova as Lady Ninette and Ann, Igor Yasulovich as Master Jarvie and Doctor Jarvis, Vladimir Etush as Master Malgrim.

[31] "Скажи, мы сможем узнать откуда, / Опять мы сможем узнать откуда,/ Что ты – моя, а я – твоя любовь и судьба?" Derbenev, L.: *Ishchu Tebia* [Looking for You].

classic in the USSR.[32] The Kvinikhidze-Priestley-Fomina combination must have appeared not only to be safe, but also to be a winning combination. Therefore, in 1978 "the responsible comrades" at the Committee on Television and Radio Broadcasting commissioned them a New Year musical.

The final product turned out to be shocking. The costumes appeared to be too provocative, the jokes and "allegories" were not only religious, but also bordering on dissident and not much of Priestley's material was actually used. But Fomina and Kvinikhidze reinforced Priestley's play with mirror reflections and clearly hinted at the reincarnation of the 12th century characters into the 21st century. For the first time, Soviet viewers had to synthesize medieval *dramatis personae* with their (post) modern "doubles" (performed by the same actors) and to wonder why not all of them corresponded.

Characters and Plot

I. Medieval characters:

Melicent of Peradore is a young, beautiful and courageous 12th century princess who cannot find a match among her contemporaries. She is surrounded by:

1. Lady Ninette, the court dame whose ambition is to become the Queen.
2. Lamison, Melicent's court musician and dancer. Lamison loves Lady Ninette, but since Lamison is "neither Sir nor Peer", Lady Ninette is not interested in him.
3. King Meliot, a widower who, on the regular basis, forbids Lamison's songs and dances as they "do not go along well with Royal honour."
4. Master Jarvie, a man of science and the court physician.
5. Meliot's male servant who always accompanies the King.
6. Two wizards, Master Malgrim (the malignant one) and his uncle, Master Marlagram (the good one). Both enchanters hunt for Melicent's magic brooch that used to be Merlin's.

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[32] Soviet publishing house *Raduga* published Priestley's novel *Angel Pavement* in the original, Vladimir Basov made the film *Opasnyi Povorot* [Dangerous Turn] based upon Priestley's play *Dangerous Corner*. *Teatral'naia Entsiklopedia* [*Encyclopaedia* of Theatre] introduced Priestley to a Soviet scholar as an author who "exposes vices of English bourgeois society." A[nikst], A[leksandr]: "Priestley." In: *Teatral'naia Entsiklopedia* [Encyclopedia of Theatre]. Vol. 4, Moskva, Sovetskaia Entsiklopedia, 1965, p. 468.

II. Modern characters:

Sam Penty is a single, talented and courageous artist who lives in the 21st century and works for a Western advertising company.

Figure 4: The Thirty-First of June *(1978). Sam's first appearance, note his black turtleneck sweater.*

His surroundings:

1. Ann, the secretary of Sam's boss. Ann loves Sam, but Sam is indifferent towards her.
2. Bob Taylor, a musician and dancer working for the same advertising company.
3. Mr. Dimmock, Sam's boss, the head of the advertising agency. Mr. Dimmock appreciates Sam and treats him the way he would treat his child.
4. Doctor Jarvis, a psychiatrist.[33]
5. Quenie, a sexy mulatto barmaid interested in Mr. Dimmock.

On "Lunaday, the 31st of June", Melicent sees Sam in her magic mirror and falls in love with him.[34] With the help of Master Malgrim's magic she is able

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[33]   It is a possibility, that Priestley took the name for the doctor from the popular book: Jarvis, D.C. M.D.: *Folk Medicine. A Doctor's Guide to Good Health* (published first in the USA in 1958). The book was also translated into Russian: Jarvis, D. S.: *Med i Drugie Estestvennye Produkty. Opyt i Issledovania Odnogo Vracha* [Honey and Other Natural Products. A Doctor's Experience and Research], Bukharest, Apimondia, 1981.

[34]   Priestley, J. B.: *The Thirty-First of June. A Tale of True Love, Enterprise and Progress in the Arthurian and Ad-Atomic Ages*, London, Mandarin, 1996, p. 1.

to travel through time, and through the wall of Sam's room, to pay the artist a short visit.

As soon as Sam meets Melicent, he, too, falls in love. Unfortunately, Melicent could not stay in the 21st century for long and had to return to "her" 12th century Peradore. As mementos, she takes Sam's digital watch and his cassette recorder. Upon returning to her kingdom, Master Malgrim suggests sending Melicent to Sam for good, on one condition; she must give him her magic brooch. Master Marlagram urges Melicent not to give the brooch to his evil nephew and promises to do his best to send the Princess to the 21st century, at no charge.

The two enchanters start a war. Master Marlagram sends Melicent to the 21st century, but at the same time Master Malgrim brings Sam to the 12th century. As a result, Melicent nearly stabs a couple of men in the 21st century for not paying enough respect to her Royal Highness and Sam (also known as the White Knight) is imprisoned in a 12th century jail.

Melicent returns to Peradore and frees Sam, but when the clock strikes twelve, and Lunaday ends, the lovers are separated again, each of them forced to return to their original century. However, we soon see Melicent entering through a wall of a 21st century pub where Sam sits drinking. She explains that she came to stay with Sam, but in order to stay there for good there was one condition: to sacrifice memory. Both Melicent and Sam must forget their time spent in Peradore and believe it was just a dream.

In the epilogue, Melicent and Sam, both dressed in white, visit a small museum devoted to Peradore.[35] The curator dressed in black, obviously identifiable as Master Malgrim, tells the couple that the museum is open only once a year, *i.e.* on June 31. He shows the couple many things that belong to the 12th century and mentions Princess Melicent's name and the cassette recorder that is part and parcel of the medieval exposition. Due to their memory loss, Melicent and Sam are not able to recognize anything. All Sam can do is telling the curator that his wife's name is also Melicent and then he suggests to Melicent that they get out of there quickly. The slightly bewildered, but happy couple walks up the stairs holding hands. The lonely and slightly puzzled curator, as a spectator of the show, is "staying low."

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[35]   White clothes are obviously a sign of purification and victory. See *Dan.* 12:10, *Rev.* 3:5 and, especially, *Rev.* 7:14: "These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Figure 5: The Thirty-First of June *(1978). Melicent and Sam, dressed in white, getting out of the museum, leaving Malgrim 'El Memorioso' behind.*

The camera pans showing manikins representing King Meliot, "First Lady Ninette", Master Jarvie, Master Marlagram and Lamison and finally stops on a 'faceless' Malgrim's manikin with Merlin's brooch fixed to his robe.

If I understand the underlying message correctly, Master Malgrim did get the magic brooch that arguably represents the "total recall" and absolute memory. As a result, he remembers everything and can do much; he can even control the Milky Way (as the prologue to the film suggests), but he's l(L)ost f(F)ace now: nobody respects or loves him.[36]

The film was shelved shortly after the premiere. This most likely happened, not because of Aleksandr Godunov's "treason," but, simply, because the Ideology Committee read the allegory politically. Peradore, situated "in the centre of Europe," but "having no roads," no cassette recorders and no digital watches, giving no freedom to artists, looked very much like the Soviet Union of the 1970s that deserved or even had to be forgotten to go on.

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[36] Babylonian Talmud (Treatise *Berakhot*) explains that the Milky Way is the river of fire streamed forth before the Ancient of Days (*Dan.* 7:10). Lost Face is Chief Makamuk's nickname after his disgrace in Jack London's story *Lost Face* well known in the USSR. London, J.: "Poteriavshii Litso." [He Who Lost Face] In: London, J.: *Belyi Klyk. Rasskazy* [The White Fang. Stories], Moskva, Khudozhestvennaia Literatura, 1981, pp. 240-248.

Figure 6: The Thirty-First of June *(1978). The last screen. Master Malgrim's manikin with Merlin's brooch attached to his robe and his face (if any) covered. Like children in Jack London's story, spectators are encouraged to ask a question: "Who was Lost Face"?*

Playing Soft on the Thirty-First of December: *The Wizards*[37]

> "Leave her!" the whole world screamed to me.
> "But I loved her."
> "She is a sinner. There is no place in paradise for her."
> "But I loved her."
> "You are not strong enough to restrain her ardour!"
> "But I loved her."
> "Her ringlets will weave a loop for you."
> "But I love her."
> *Aleksandr Novikov.*[38]

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[37] Première: 31 December, 1982, on TV. Director: Konstantin Bromberg. Scriptwriters: Arkady and Boris Strugatsky. Composer: Evgeny Krylatov. Lyrics: Leonid Derbenev. Starring: Aleksandr Abdulov as Ivan Pukhov, Aleksandra Yakovleva as Alena Sanina, Valery Zolotukhin as Ivan Kivrin, Emmanuil Vitorgan as Victor Kovrov, Mikhail Svetin as Foma Bryl', Ekaterina Vasil'eva as Kira Shemakhanskaia, Valentin Gaft as Apollon Mitrofanovich Sataneev, Roman Filippov as Yuly Tsezarevich Kamneedov.

[38] Novikov, A.: *Rasstan'sia s Nei* [Leave Her] ("Расстанься с ней," – весь мир кричал-вопил. / "Но я ее любил."/ "Она грешна, ей места нет в раю!"/ "Но я ее люблю." /

Konstantin Bromberg, famous for directing the immensely successful science fiction movie *Electronic's Adventures* (1979), could not go wrong asking Arkady and Boris Strugatsky to write the script for his New Year film. The Strugatsky brothers were arguably the best Soviet Sci-Fi authors ever, so Strugatskys' "allegories" could have been the director's only concern.

It is almost certain that the director explained to the authors that, after *The Thirty-First of June* ban, their satire would not pass censorship anyway.[39] As a result, the Strugatskys produced a completely new piece that only slightly resembled their own cult novella, *Monday Starts on Saturday* (1965), and its bitter sequel, *Tale of Troika* (1968). Thus, the "light" *Wizards* (1982) appeared there.[40]

Characters and Plot

Alena Sanina is a young, beautiful and clever kind of Project Manager at the Laboratory of Absolute Surprises at NUINU in Kitezhgrad.[41] She is in love with Ivan Pukhov, a young, handsome tuner from Moscow. The lovers set their wedding day for December 31and agree to live in the capital.

Alena's boss, Kira Shemakhanskaia,[42] the Director of the Institute, is in love with her deputy director, Ivan Kivrin. Kivrin proposed to her several times, but Shemakhanskaia always refused to marry him because of constantly pressing matters at work:

"Умерить ее пыл не хватит сил!" / "Но я ее любил." / "А локоны совьют тебе петлю!" / "Но я ее люблю!").

[39]   It is also a possibility that Konstantin Bromberg knew that his film had to compete with "Mrak" Zakharov's *Dom, Kotoryi Postroil Swift* [This Is the House That Swift Built] to be shown on 31 December, 1982, and tried to play as safe as possible. There is little doubt that the censors were able to see underlying political messages in *The House* and that is why they chose *The Wizards*.

[40]   One of the screen versions of the film is published in: Strugatsky, A. and B.: *Stsenarii. Zhidy Goroda Pitera. Stalker* [Screen Versions. The City of Peter's Jews. Stalker], Moskva, Tekst, 1993, pp. 62-108.

[41]   NUINU is an acronym for Scientific Universal Institute of Unusual Service (Научный Универсальный Институт Необыкновенных Услуг), meaning both pleasant surprise and disappointment in Russian.

[42]   A possible reference to Aleksandr Pushkin's *Skazka o Zolotom Petushke* [The Tale of the Golden Cockerel] (1834) where *Shamakhanskaia Tsaritsa* [Queen of Shamakha] is both a sorceress and the source of all troubles. (Pushkin, A.: *Skazki* [Tales]. Moskva, OGIZ Molodaia Gvardia, 1933).Anna Akhmatova argued that Pushkin's last tale was a challenge to Nicholas I.: Akhmatova, A.: "Posledniaia Skazka Pushkina." [Pushkin's Last Tale] In: *Zvezda*, 1933, № 1, pp. 161-176.

Kivrin: For the seventh time I am asking you to marry me.
Shemakhanskaia: For the seventh time I am telling you, I will. When I have time.[43]

Figure 7: The Wizards *(1982). Ivan's first appearance. Note his white turtleneck sweater and Beethoven poster in the background.*

Alena's colleague, Apollon Mitrofanovich[44] Sataneev, is neither talented, nor young, and Alena shows no interest in him at all, but Sataneev wants to marry Alena, no matter what. When he figures out that Shemakhanskaia is in love with Kivrin, he spreads the rumour that Alena and Kivrin have decided, secretly, to get married in Moscow very soon. Shemakhanskaia looks into her magic mirror, sees Kivrin waiting for somebody at the airport and gets jealous. She casts the "winter heart" spell upon Alena, making Alena forget both her fiancé and her good nature. She immediately turns into a selfish and

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[43] This kind of behaviour was actually encouraged by the Communist Party. A famous Soviet song urged the Soviets "first to think of the Motherland, and only then of themselves." In line with this line the Strugatsky brothers defined a magus this way: "Every person is a potential magus, but he becomes one only when he begins to think less of himself and to think more of the others." Strugatsky, A. and B.: "Ponedel'nik Nachinaetsia v Subbotu." [Monday Starts on Saturday] In: Strugatsky, A. and B.: *Ponedel'nik Nachinaetsia v Subbotu. Skazka o Troike* [Monday Starts on Saturday. The Tale of the Troika], Moskva, Tekst, 1992, p. 100.

[44] A likely reference to Denis Fonvizin's *Nedorosl'* [Minor] (1782). The combination of the three names suggests an idea of a good-looking (Apollo) ignorant (Mitrofan) evil doer (Satan) who by definition can be a successful Soviet administrator, but cannot be a wizard.

pragmatic career woman; now she believes she would benefit a lot from marrying Sataneev.

Foma Bryl', Alena's employee and good friend, explained the essence of the winter heart spell to Ivan Pukhov this way:

> What is enchanted? Enchanted is when you are turned into a log or into a goat, for example. One can read in any manual about it. Everybody knows it, so nobody is interested.[45] It is very rarely used nowadays. The real sorcery takes place when they let you keep your appearance, but take spring and the things like it out of your heart and put severe winter inside. Then, the person changes. He understands everything, but evaluates things in a different manner.

Bryl' also tells Ivan that the only way for Alena to remember him and return to her normal self is to share a kiss before the clock strikes twelve on December 31.

Figure 8: Pamela Colman Smith.
The Magician *(1909).*

Figure 9: The Wizards *(1982). Ivan Pukhov with a magic wand ordering Alena to appear.*

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45   Most probably Bryl' alludes to the folk fairy tale *Sister Alenushka and Brother Ivanushka* (*Sestritsa Alenushka i Bratets Ivanushka. Russkaia Narodnaia Skazka*, Moskva, Sovetskaia Rossia, 1976) known to any Russian (in 1976 only *Sovetskaia Rossia* Publishing House printed at least 300 000 copies of it. The number of printed copies of *Soviet Cinema* in 1979 was only 25 000). Alenushka's Ivanushka was turned into a kid, but retained his memory then. In our case the situation is reversed. Ivanushka's Alionushka retained her beauty, but lost her memory and thus turned into an animal within, degrading from a witch to a bitch.

Ivan (accompanied by his younger sister Nina) rushes to Kitezhgrad and meets Alena on December 30, but Alena neither remembers nor recognizes him. The greeting kiss plan did not work, so Foma Bryl' and his friend, Victor Kovrov, have to teach Ivan to go through walls. As Alena remembers Ivan whenever she is asleep, so the plan is to go to Alena's bedroom in the middle of the night and to get a kiss from the Sleeping Beauty. This plan does not work either; Alena awakes a moment before the kiss. The desperate Ivan then penetrates NUINU and travels through walls to steal the magic wand. He gets home, waves the wand and demands, "I want Alena to be here" (Ivan's position and his clothes are definitely reminiscent of the famous "Magician" card from the Waite-Smith Tarot deck).

But instead of Alena Sanina appearing, Ivan has summoned chocolates, a cow, a doll and furniture all named "Alena." Kovrov and Bryl' ask Ivan not to use the magic wand any more and Ivan agrees. The wizards return it to NUINU, where it belongs, and decide to go *ad fontes*, *i.e.* to Kira Shema-khanskaia's office to ask the director to disenchant Alena. Shemakhanskaia agrees to speak to Ivan in private and the conversation goes as follows:

> K[ira] S[hemakhanskaia]: I cannot take the winter heart spell back, Alena deserved it.
> I[van] P[ukhov]: But you do not know her at all!
> KS: Do you? Are you sure, *you* know her?
> IP: Yes. You see, I understood, I have just understood that I love her even the way she is now.
> KS. I believe you. But, nevertheless everything will stay the way it is.
> IP: But why? Why?
> KS: Because she will not marry you anyway.
> IP: And whom will she marry? Will she marry this … Osatanelov of yours?[46]
> KS: What has comrade Sataneev to do with it? It is her *karma*.
> IP: Or your revenge.
> KS: She chose her way herself. It is only punishment for her betrayal.
> IP: Whom did she betray?
> KS: First of all, she betrayed you, as I understand it.
> IP: You know, I am an ordinary man and your complexities and hints are not clear to me. Please, disenchant her. Only let her remember me, and then we will sort everything out ourselves!
> KS: But in this case she will recall not only you. Do you want it?
> IP: I do.

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[46] "Osatanelov" means "the one who became Satan-like."

KS: But I don't.
IP: So you assumed the right to dispose of other people's destinies?

Meanwhile, Sataneev has signed a marriage contract (a thing unheard of in the USSR) suggested by Alena. In order to keep his promise to make Alena deputy director, he decides to become the director himself and works out a plan to overthrow Shemakhanskaia. He knows that important bosses from Moscow are coming to see the magic wand in action and to celebrate the New Year at NUINU. To discredit Shemakhanskaia, he replaces the magic wand with an ordinary pencil (which looks the same) and steals the wand.

On New Year's Eve, when the honorable guests arrive in the hall, they find no tables, no food, no drinks and no New Year tree, either. Shemakhanskaia asks them to calm down and explains that it was done on purpose. She says that all necessary things will appear after she has waved her magic wand, but when she does so, nothing happens at all.

With the wand hidden up Sataneev's sleeve, he announces to the guests that comrade Shemakhanskaia has just publicly proved that she is no good; she has failed to deliver all the New Year's stuff, but he is quite capable of doing so. Whilst performing his magic trick, Sataneev forgets that the wand takes all wishes literally and he uses a Russian idiom for winning the case that means, "to be on the horse." He wishes to find himself on a horse in this house and immediately flies up into the air to be stuck to the carved horse that decorates the span roof of the NUINU skyscraper.[47]

Sataneev is obviously freezing there and Alena begs several men to help him down, but they all refuse. Ivan Pukhov, risking his life, finally volunteers to help his rival and gets Alena's kiss. Immediately, Alena's scarlet dress turns snow white, she remembers everything and the New Year ball starts.[48]

Everybody starts dancing to the final song, which is rather unusual for the country of Scientific Atheism:[49]

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[47]   Span roofs of old Russian houses were usually decorated with a horse figure, a solar symbol.

[48]   *Cf. Is.* 1:18: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."

[49]   In Brezhnev's USSR, Scientific Atheism was a mandatory course for any University student. Vera Pavlova described the 1970s this way: "We did not know what envy was, / We bolted down a fixed meal, / We wiped ourselves with *The Pravda* [the Truth] only / And we believed in Atheism ("Не знали, что такое зависть,/ Глотали комплексный обед,/ Одною «Правдой» подтирались / И веровали: Бога нет"). Pavlova, V.: *Sem' Knig* [Seven Books], Moskva, EKSMO, 2011.

1. They say that this world gets older every year,
That the Sun hides behind the clouds and shines not so brightly.
They say that everything was better before.
Let them say it, but do not listen to them.
Let them say it, but do not listen to them.
Let them say, do not trust them.

Refrain
Many coloured, enormous and merry,
Subject to neither days nor years
This world is dazzle young,
It is as old as we are.

2. They say that in the beginning there were miracles,
But wizards got extinct together with the mammoths.
And that the door to the country of Magic and Fairy Tales has been shut forever.
Let them say it, but do not listen to them.
Let them say it, but do not listen to them.
Let them say, do not trust them.

3. They say that Truth got tired of fighting Lie,
That there are no more fearless and noble knights,
That from now on one should measure everything with a crooked measure.
Let them say it, but do not listen to them.
Let them say it, but do not listen to them.
Let them say, do not trust them.

4. The world was designed by exactly that kind of person: a young, fearless,
Almighty wizard, a brave knight.
Then this world was given to us
For us to be joyous and happy there.
The world is immense and miraculous,
No matter what they say.[50]

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[50]   "Говорят, что с каждым годом этот мир стареет,/ Солнце прячется за тучи и слабее
греет./ Говорят, что все когда-то было лучше, чем теперь,/ Говорят, а ты не слушай,
говорят, а ты не слушай,/ Говорят, а ты не верь. / Разноцветный, огромный, веселый, /
Неподвластный ни дням, ни годам./ Этот мир ослепительно молод, / Столько лет ему,
сколько и нам. / Говорят, что поначалу было все чудесней, / Но волшебники исчезли с
мамонтами вместе./ И в страну чудес и сказок навсегда закрылась дверь,/ Говорят, а
ты не слушай, говорят, а ты не слушай,/ Говорят, а ты не верь./ Говорят, что правда с
кривдой воевать устала,/ Что без страха и упрека рыцарей не стало,/ Что отныне все
на свете ты кривою меркой мерь,/ Говорят, а ты не слушай, говорят, а ты не слушай,/

Figure 10: The Wizards *(1982). The New Year ball scene, one of the final screens.*

The fact that this song passed the Soviet censorship now seems like a Christmas miracle, but sometimes these things happen.

According to St. Luke, Israeli leaders responded to neither "soft" messages from Jesus, nor to "hard" ones from John the Baptist: "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance. We sang a dirge, and you did not weep."[51] The Soviet leaders turned out to be a little bit more sensitive: whilst *The Thirty-First of June* was, to quote King Meliot, "banned forever" and jailed (*i.e.* shelved) by a Russian Herod, *The Wizards* turned out to succeed and, for answering "the working people's numerous requests", it regularly appeared on Soviet TV.

Говорят, а ты не верь./ Мир таким и был придуман – юным и бесстрашным,/ Всемогущим чародеем, рыцарем отважным./ И для радости и счастья нам подарен этот мир,/ Необъятный и чудесный, необъятный и чудесный,/ Кто бы что ни говорил." Леонид Дербенёв.

[51]   *Lk.* 7:38.

Conclusion: To Give Good Guys a Lesson

> My tale is a lie, but there is a hint there.
> That is to give good guys a lesson.
> *Aleksandr Pushkin*.[52]

In his *Description of Greece,* Pausanias tells us a story of Trophonius, Apollo's son, a magus and a famous builder.[53] When the Boeotians were suffering from drought for more than a year, they decided to consult the Oracle of Apollo at Delphi. Surprisingly, Pythia redirected them to the Oracle of Trophonius in Lebadeia, but the Boeotians had no idea what she was talking about and how to find it.[54] Nevertheless, they went to Lebadeia and decided to follow the beehive that took them to a small cave. The leader of the group entered it and found Trophonius, who told him that he was prophesying there. He also explained what he expected the pilgrims to do before entering the cave.[55]

Since then, the one seeking revelation lived on sacrificial meat for several days and then went to Trophonius' cave, taking honey and dressing in a special flax *chiton*. However, there was one more important condition to be met: the prerequisite for the initiation was drinking from the two nearby springs that allegedly had occult power.[56] The first spring was called the Spring of Lethe (Forgetting) and the second, the Spring of Mnemosyne (Memory).[57]

It seems as though the lesson that the "good guys" are supposed to take from the story of Trophonius is as follows: they should know that forgetting and remembering are of the same nature and, just as systole and diastole, go together and thus are both of vital importance. The next level (to echo St. Paul and *the Eagles*) is to learn "to discern the spirits" and to correctly choose "some dance to remember" and "some dance to forget."

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[52] "Сказка – ложь, да в ней намёк:/ Добрым молодцам урок." Final lines of Aleksandr Pushkin's *Skazka o Zolotom Petushke* [The Tale of the Golden Cockerel] (1834).

[53] Paus., 9, 37, 3. Pausanias: *Opisanie Ellady* [Description of Greece], Moskva, ACT-Press, 2002. I am thankful to Lidia Starodubtseva for the reference: Starodubtseva, L.: *Liki Pamiati* [Faces of Memory], Kharkov, KhGAK, 1999.

[54] Interestingly, there is a place with a similar name in the Crimea (*Livadia*).

[55] Paus., 9, 40, 1.

[56] In Russian fairy tales, we often find "live" and "dead" waters that are necessary for resurrecting the protagonist. Interestingly, the "dead" water has to be applied first.

[57] Paus., 9, 39, 4.

Figure 11: The Wizards *(1982). The wizards Kovrov and Bryl' making the New Year white "initiation" suit for Ivan Pukhov.*

Borges' Funes El Memorioso did not learn this lesson and was not able to go beyond his third, seven-year life cycle: merciless Mnemosyne killed him.[58] Fortunately for Fomina's Sam, Melissa, the queen Bee, 'danced' him to the Spring of Lethe and he dared to drink from it. In conclusion, he won the woman he loved and lived happily with her after it.[59]

On the other hand, Kira Shemakhanskaia believed her fiancé had changed for the worse, chose to forget what Ivan Kivrin was all about and nearly lost him. Ivan Pukhov, on the contrary, despite the drastic change, chose to remember the good nature of his fiancée (though apparent in the "sleeping mode" only) and was able to win her back.

Evidently, it is difficult to tell if Strugatskys' *Wizards* were meant to complement Nina Fomina's idea of memory. Nevertheless, now it is almost obvious that on New Year's Eve *The Thirty-First of June* added to *olivier* was the message to forget, whilst *The Wizards* – was the message to remember.

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[58] Borges, J. L.: "Funes, Chudo Pamiati." [Funes, Miracle of Memory] In: Borges, J. L.: *Proza Raznykh Let* [Prose of Different Years], Moskva, Raduga, 1984, p. 98.

[59] Notably, the Wachovski brothers' Cypher tried to play the same card but lost, not unlike the unworthy bodyguard who entered Trophonius' cave for selfish reasons and was found dead. Paus., 9, 39, 5.

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Memories of Big City from Soviet and Post-Soviet Perspectives

Memories as Situated Knowledges

"Memory is an open system",[60] but its construction is always dependent on the frames that relate it to specific horizons of time and identity[61]: "Memory is knowledge with an identity-index, it is knowledge about oneself, that is, one's own diachronic identity, be it as an individual or as a member of a family, a generation, a community, a nation, or a cultural and religious tradition."[62] In this regard, memory is not knowledge from "a universalist perspective",[63] but "situational knowledges" which are shaped by contextual parameters – an individual, a culture, a time period etc. – and have partial perspective, that is, represent a certain vision, a subjective image of the situation.[64] In other words, one and the same reality fragment is memorized differently depending on a certain perspective or point of view which serves as a frame[65] for construeing a unique interpretation of the world.

The idea that our memories of a situation can vary to a great degree from individual to individual, from culture to culture, from one time period to another holds true not only for what is remembered from a certain perspective, but also for how it is remembered[66]: how versions of the world are communicated and shared by means of medial externalization – from oral

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[60]   Assmann, J.: "Communicative and Cultural Memory." In: Erll, A. / Nünning, A. (eds.): *Media and Cultural Memory*, Berlin, New York, Walter de Gruyter, 2008, p. 113.

[61]   *Ibid.*

[62]   *Ibid.*, p. 114.

[63]   *Ibid.*, p. 113.

[64]   Haraway, D.: "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." In: *Feminist Studies*, vol. 4, no. 3, 1988, pp. 581, 583.

[65]   Illouz, E.: *Consuming the Romantic Utopia. Love and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism.* San Diego, University of California Press, 1997, p. 3.

[66]   Erll, A.: "Cultural Memory Studies: An Introduction." In: Erll / Nünning (eds.): *Media and Cultural Memory*, p. 7.

speech to writing, film, the Internet.[67] The externalization of a memory is its surface or its material aspect,[68] but it gives access to its mental "depth". It might be regarded as a source for exploring specific ways of thinking, apprehension and cognition of the world: how a reality fragment is conceptualized, what mental image of the situation "outside the window" is construed, how the mental vision changes with the shift in a memory frame or perspective.

Over the past few years, the cinematography of Russia demonstrates the desire to reanimate the film narratives of the Soviet past from the post-Soviet perspective. This is satisfied by remaking Soviet films and interpreting them in the context of the capitalist society. In this case, a historical period and its culture represent that frame or "body through the eyes of which" a situation acquires a partial vision[69] conceptualized and externalized in films. A remake has as an object to rewrite the original text which, on the one hand, is still topical and in demand in a new cultural situation[70] and, on the other, is in need of re-vision.[71] The latter means viewing the past memory with a fresh, clear look, seeing difference differently, or rethinking the situation and, with it, rethinking the means by which this situation is memorized within film.[72] With the shift in the temporal perspective, one and the same situation is conceptualized and externalized as a different mental and filmic image. The technique of updating – the modernization of the story and its retelling with the help of the language of new technologies[73] – has become a popular way of remaking Soviet versions. A bright example in this connection is *Office Romance. Our Time* (2011) directed by Sarik Andreasyan - the remake of the Soviet full-length film *Office Romance* (1977) directed by Eldar Ryazanov.

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[67]   Erll: "Cultural Memory Studies: An Introduction", p. 13; Erll, A.: "Literature, Film, and the Mediality of Cultural Memory." In: Erll / Nünning (eds.): *Media and Cultural Memory*, p. 389.

[68]   Erll: "Cultural Memory Studies: An Introduction", p. 4.

[69]   Haraway: *Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective*, pp. 583f.

[70]   Альмира Усманова: "Повторение и различие, или еще раз про любовь в советском и постсоветском кинематографе." In: *Независимый филологический журнал*, no. 69, 2004.

[71]   Doane, M. A. / Mellencamp, P. / Williams, L. (eds.): *Re-Vision: Essays in Feminist Film Criticism*, University Publications of America and the American Film Institute, 1984, p. 12.

[72]   Усманова: *Повторение и различие, или еще раз про любовь в советском и постсоветском кинематографе.*

[73]   Leitch, T.: "Twice-Told Tales: Disavowal and the Rhetoric of the Remake." In: Forrest, J. / Koos, L. R. (eds.): *Dead Ringers. The Remake in Theory and Practice*, New York, State University of New York Press, 2002, p. 47.

The films *Office Romance*, of 1977 and 2011, show little difference at the level of narration. The main character, Anatoly Yefremovich Novoseltsev, is a single father of two children. He works at an institution (a statistics bureau in the 1977 version and a rating agency in the 2011 remake) run by Lyudmila Prokofievna Kalugina – a strict and unmarried woman, nicknamed by her subordinates as "our frump". Novoseltsev dreams about a promotion that could help him to provide for his children, but he is too afraid of his boss to raise the issue with her. In order for Novoseltsev to get the promotion, his old friend Yuri Grigoryevich Samokhvalov (recently appointed assistant manager) advises Novoseltsev to flirt with Kalugina at the party thrown by Samokhvalov on the occasion of his appointment. As the events of the film develop, Novoseltsev falls in love with Kalugina. Although the story of both films is set in Moscow, its mental and medial images are entirely different: it seems that these are two cities, not one, portrayed on the screen and construed in mind. By analyzing the medial level – the interaction of linguistic means, non-linguistic means of communication and cinematographic techniques – of the Soviet and post-Soviet memories of the city life in the two films, I am attempting to investigate the mental "depth" of the two memories; the ways in which Big City's mental image has undergone transformations with the shift in the time viewpoints.

Conceptualization and Perspectivization of a Situation

In contemporary cognitive science, the process by which fragments of reality find meaning is in the process of conceptualization. The latter is understood as perceptual experience, as well as the central control of motor activity and the kinesthetic sensations it induces. Conceptualization further includes the interlocutors' apprehension of the discourse and the interactive context supporting it.[74] Ronald Langacker emphasizes that it is a common mistake to think of conceptualization as an image projected on a screen inside the skull for viewing. Instead, it should be identified with the mental experience engendered by viewing the world "outside".[75] From this point of view, the situations people are communicating come as open,[76] as already involving a subject who interprets them, rather than as situations that come to us

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[74] Langacker, R. W.: "Cognitive Grammar." In: Geeraerts, D. / Cuyckens, H. (eds.): *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 431.

[75] *Ibid*., p. 451.

[76] Eco, U.: *The Open Work*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1989.

ready-made as concepts. R. Langacker[77] compares, in figurative terms, the process of communication with the analogy of a camera as it focuses on a certain object: the direction of the speakers' attention to one and the same situation is understood as a prerequisite of successful communication. However, a speaker's conceptualization of one and the same situation brought into focus is rarely, if ever, identical to any other's. The reason for that, among other things, lies in what we might call the divergence of perspectives.

Figure 1: A change in perspectival location.

Source: *Mental Gassi*'s graffiti, Berlin

Perspective finds a broad understanding in discourse studies. It is equal to a subject's point of view – a position (time, place, social group, culture etc.) from which a person or a group view the situation and communicate their

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[77]   Langacker, R. W.: "Discourse in Cognitive Grammar." In: *Cognitive linguistics*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2001, p. 144.

views.[78] In its turn, perspectivization is interpreted as a speaker's situation externalization from his/her own or foreign perspective and perspectives interrelation in discourse.[79] The discursive perspectives from which the situation, notably the City of Moscow, undergoes interpretations and transformations in the films *Office Romance* and *Office Romance. Our Time* are Soviet and Post-Soviet time periods; to be more precise, two temporal viewpoints, 1977 and 2011, the years when the pictures were released.

In cognitive science, perspective is understood as a construal operation – a cognitive capacity to conceive and portray via media the same situation differently.[80] This construal consists in the following: a speaker can arrange in diverse ways his/her view of the scene depending on what conceptual vantage point he/she examines the object from and what relations are established between the vantage point and the scene.[81] The way we arrange our view influences the means we choose to describe the scene - the process known as perspectivization.[82] According to the analysis of Leonard Talmy's and Ronald Langacker's latest research in language, the viewing arrangement comprises the following aspects[83]: vantage point, perspectival distance, perspectival mode, and direction of scanning the scene. Vantage point is a conceptual place from which the object is mentally seen (for example, *the house is in front of the tree* vs. *the tree is in front of the house*). Perspectival distance – the distance from the vantage point to the object – can be distal, medieval or proximal (for example, *to run across a field* – a more distal perspective, two dimensional space vs. *to run through the field* – a more proximal perspective, three dimensional space). A vantage point can be stationary or moving, resulting in two perspectival modes: synoptic mode / summary scanning and sequential mode / sequential scanning of a scene (for example, *there are some houses in the valley* vs. *there is a house every now and then through the valley*). Direction of scanning is the cognitive capacity to trace different paths

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[78] Graumann, C. F. / Kallmeyer, W.: "Perspective and Perspectivation in Discourse: an Introduction." In: *Idem* (eds.): *Perspective and Perspectivation in Discourse*, Amsterdam, Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company, vol. 9, 2002, p. 1.

[79] *Ibid*.

[80] Langacker: *Cognitive Grammar*, p. 435.

[81] Langacker, R. W.: *Cognitive Grammar. A Basic Introduction*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 73.

[82] Verhagen, A.: "Construal and Perspectivization." In: Geeraerts / Cuyckens (eds.): *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics*, p. 48.

[83] See Langacker: *Cognitive Grammar. A Basic Introduction*; Talmy, L.: *Toward a Cognitive Semantics. Vol. 1: Concept Structuring Systems*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, The MIT Press, A Bradford Book, 2000.

of attention through a scene (*Your camera is upstairs in the bedroom, in the closet* vs. *Your camera is in the closet, in the bedroom upstairs*).

Figure 2: Figure-ground shift.
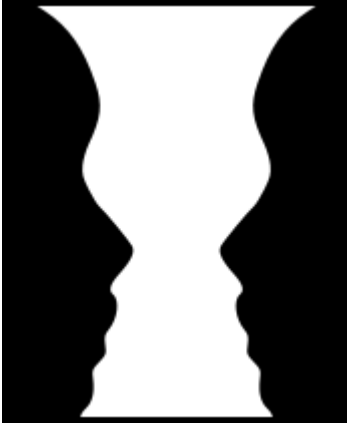
Source: *Cup or faces paradox* by Bryan Derksen - uploaded by User:Guam on 28 July 2005, SVG conversion by Bryan Derksen.

Our mental ability to observe one situation from different viewpoints is based on bodily experiences we get from the interaction with the world through our visual perceptual system. *Figure 1* illustrates how the image we see and the meaning we get changes with the change in our location: the fence is gradually assembling into the portrait when a subject is moving one quarter of the circle around the object of perception. People can also mentally choose a certain vantage point that may be different from the place they occupy. To arrange the view of a scene, not only can we mentally occupy a spot in the space, we can view the scene from temporal viewpoints, from the positions of other individuals or groups, or from the perspectives of different conceptual domains or spheres of knowledge. *Figure 2* can be seen and the mental view can be arranged in two different ways depending on what conceptual domain we prefer as the background to place the drawing against – container or human faces. With the change in the conceptual position, the mental image of the situation undergoes transformations generating another meaning.

With "mental image", I refer to a mental construct that has property characteristics for "a picture"[84] or "a shot"[85]: the foreground and the background, image scale, focus and the like. This is a metaphorical conception when a mental image is not a picture or a shot in the mind but a mental dynamic structure with the properties of an image. Mental image transformations resemble operations with "an image frame": we can move the lens in different directions, zoom in or zoom out, focus on certain details of the scene and so on. "Image" in the term "mental image" also emphasizes the imagistic or sensory nature of this mental construct. It is formed on the basis of the experience we get from our interaction with the external world. It comes from sensory-perceptual mechanisms that include visual, as well as haptic, auditory, and vestibular systems.[86]

In my research, I am attempting to find a balance between the two methods – discursive and cognitive – on perspective interpretations, which should allow us to see each interpretation as a reflection of a speaker's view from a certain position in space: cognitive or discursive. The years of 1977 and 2011, being the temporal perspectives, represent that contextual frame for the memories of the big city life. My focus is on how the conceptualization of the city has changed with the shift in the discursive perspectives: what are the mental images and the cognitive operations that underlie the medial big city interpretations and what are the changes in mental viewpoints to produce another arrangement of the mental image of the city? In other words, the objective of the article is to research the reperspectivization of Big City; to compare the construal of mental images of city life and to describe the ways in which the mental image of Moscow, as well as the filmic one, have undergone transformations with the course of time.

On Reperspectivizing the Soviet:
The Big City Transformations

In basic terms, reperspectivization is a shift in a perspective that results in a different interpretation of a situation and in choosing different means of its portrayal.[87] On the discourse level, the point I am starting from is the shift in

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[84]   Людвиг Витгенштейн: *Философские работы: Часть I.* Москва, Гнозис, 1994, pp. 8-10.
[85]   Langacker: *Discourse in Cognitive Grammar*, p. 145; Langacker: *Cognitive Grammar*, p. 425.
[86]   Evans, V. / Green, M.: *Cognitive Linguistics. An Introduction*. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2006, pp. 178-179.
[87]   Aijmer, K.: "Interjections in a Contrastive Perspective." In: Weigan, E. (ed.): *Emotion in Dialogic Interaction*, Amsterdam, Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2004.

the historical period: from Soviet to post-Soviet. Beginning with the analysis of the medial discrepancies of the city life in the original and its remake, I am moving to the level of cognition in order to establish the shifts in the conceptual viewpoints that generate a different mental, as well as filmic image of the Big City.

The common conceptual property of the cities of 1977 and 2011 is the existence of boundary, exterior and interior, that is, at a certain level of abstraction, the image-schema involved in the metaphorical city interpretation is container. Image schema, the notion introduced in the book, *The Body in the Mind* by Mark Johnson,[88] is not a rich or detailed concept, but rather an abstract one consisting of a pattern emerging from repeated instances of embodied experience.[89] The image schema container results from our recurrent and ubiquitous experiences with containers, as revealed by this extract from Johnson's book by way of illustration, which describes the start of an ordinary day:

> You wake *out of* a deep sleep and peer *out from* beneath the covers *into* your room. You gradually emerge *out of* your stupor, pull yourself *out from* under the covers, climb *into* your robe, stretch *out* your limbs, and walk *in* a daze *out* of the bedroom and *into* the bathroom. You look *in* the mirror and see your face staring *out* at you. You reach *into* the medicine cabinet, take *out* the toothpaste, squeeze *out* some toothpaste, put the toothbrush *into* your mouth, brush your teeth *in* a hurry, and rinse *out* your mouth.[90]

> As this example reveals by the recurrent use of the expressions *in* and *out*, a great number of everyday objects and experiences are categorized as specific instances of the schematic concept container: not only obvious containers like bathroom cabinets and toothpaste tubes or less obvious 'containers' like bed-covers, clothing and rooms, but also states like sleep, stupor and daze.[91]

The crucial verbal evidence for the city to be construed as container in *Office Romance* and the remake *Office Romance. Our Time* is the usage of deictic

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p. 105; Linell, P.: "Perspectives, Implicitness and Recontextualization." In: Graumann / Kallmeyer (eds.): *Perspective and Perspectivation in Discourse*, p. 50; Thomsen, O. N.: *Dyirbal Ergativity and Embedding. A Functional-Pragmatic Approach*, Amsterdam, Philadelphia, John Benjamins, vol. 18, no. 2, 1994, pp. 411f.

[88]   See Johnson, M.: *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1987.

[89]   Green: *Cognitive Linguistics. An Introduction*, p. 179.

[90]   Johnson: *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*, p. 331, cited by Green: *Cognitive Linguistics. An Introduction*, p. 179.

[91]   Green: *Cognitive Linguistics. An Introduction*, p. 179.

phrases "in this city," "in Moscow", "in our city" that we encounter in character's speech in both films. If the schematic image of the city remains the same, at least as we can grasp it through the meaning of the verbal descriptions mentioned above, the constituents of this image are elaborated and specified differently, and the mental image of the city has been mentally transformed due to rearrangements in the mental view of the situation.

On the one hand, from the perspective of 1977, the imposition of the boundary on the city is construed verbally, as one can be inside and outside Moscow. On the other hand, this boundary defies visualization and definite definition, though its properties are specified. First of all, the city is conceptualized as a three-dimensional space, whose boundary is not deprived of widening: it is extending horizontally, as well as in the upward and downward directions. The city area is gradually widening by enclosing the nearest woodlands. This is verbally stated by Olga Ruzhova, an office worker of the statistics bureau where Novoseltsev works, when she is talking to Yuri Samokhvalov: "Do you remember how we took a trip to Kuntsevo and were kissing there? And now there is the city in place of that forest."

The city of 1977 is often observed from a very high visual point of view (*Figure 3*), with the help of extreme long shots, panning and tracking shots that move outward to a higher and more distant camera position. From these very high static viewpoints, and even with the combination of mobile scannings of the city, it is still impossible to visually cover the whole city at one time. To create the effect of the city infinitely growing upwards, low-level framing is used (*Figure 4*) when the top of the buildings avoids visual perception.

Figures 3 & 4: Moscow from a high and a low viewpoint.

Source: *Office Romance*, 1977.

While the conceptualizer cannot draw a definite borderline of the city, it is possible to establish and portray at least one exact place where the boundary is being crossed. The conceptual spatial entrance into the city of 1977 is Yaroslavsky railway terminal. Olga Ryzhova says: "I've got a separate apartment; it is outside the city, yet not far from the station." The boundary of the city opens its doors daily to numerous people who come to work and enter the container in the morning and leave it after the working day. This is visually portrayed in the movie when, in the opening scene, a train arrives in Moscow and empties its travelers onto the empty platform (*Figures 5, 6*).

Figures 5 & 6: The arrival of a suburban train in Moscow.

Source: *Office Romance*, 1977.

While the city boundary is open to working people from the outskirts, it metonymically becomes the barrier that extends to the borderline between the Soviet Union and other countries. This barrier may have occasional holes that open only for some. One of them is Yuri Grigoryevich Samokhvalov. He is the only character who had managed to go outside the country border and had been working in Geneva. Another character for whom rare holes in the boundary of the city are construed is secretary Verochka. She has the talent of cunning, curiosity and quick wit, and this helps her to find boundary holes. At the beginning of the film, Novoseltsev verbally presents Verochka in the following way: "This is Verochka. As all women she is curious, and as all secretaries she is womanly. She has got a secretary's salary but all foreign dress. How on earth can she do that? That's a mystery." The holes are characterized by indefinite time and indefinite and unusual places of appearing, the agent who opens them remains unknown. For instance, Lyudmila Kalugina expresses her indignation when she finds a "hole" in her

bureau: "In the ladies' bathroom someone has posted a notice 'Woman's tights are available for sale'."

The city of 2011 is still conceptualized as a container because the characters still describe themselves as being in the city, yet, they do not describe themselves as being out of it. The boundary of the city is not closed any longer from its territorial exterior and, moreover, it gains potential for extending to the global limits. Lyudmila Prokofievna Kalugina of 2011 is striving for the entrance into the international corporation of rating agencies - what she actually does at the end of the film. The visual evidence for the global city extension is found in the first shots of the film (*Figure 7*). This allusion to the Internet is de-bounding, at least in the virtual space. However, it can also be a metaphor for the de-bounding of the city territory, when the link substitutes the railway terminal of 1977 standing as the entrance into the city which we see by clicking on the button (*Figure 8*).

Figures 7 & 8: The successive opening shots of Office Romance. Our Time, *the link introduces the title of the film.*

Source: *Office Romance. Our Time* (2011).

Changes in the conceptual boundary of the city dramatically change the interior. The interior of both cities is divided into two functional zones: working and recreational, but the territory they occupy and their contents are different. The city of 1977 is constituted of two zones, when its center is busy with the crowd of working people (*Figure 9*) and the park area serves to perform the function of recreation (which it never does) (*Figure 10*), the only people who can be seen are street cleaners, for whom it is impossible to be at once out of this city zone and to work there (*Figure 11*).

The widening of the city boundary results in the relocation of its recreation zone which, in 2011, occupies the territory of Turkey where Samohvaloh brings the agency staff to celebrate his appointment. It no longer feels as if there is a border between the two countries and the flight to Turkey is as easy as traveling to a park using public transportation. Consequently, the crowd of people moves from the center to this recreation zone. The conceptual

enclosure of Turkey into the city is supported verbally by the lyrics of the song
"This Land Is Your Land" by Woody Guthrie.

Figures 9, 10 & 11: Working and recreational city zones.

Source: *Office Romance*, 1977.

The working people of 1977 represent a homogeneous crowd streaming
towards their working place. The same is true about the transport that is
moving in a homogeneous flow (*Figure 12*). The visual portrayal coordinates
with the verbal people's description by such lexical items as "herds", "the
audience", and "the stalls". On the conceptual level, this activates a non-
individuated mass observed from a distal viewpoint. This non-individuation
is also stressed in the opening song where the key word is "somebody".
Anatoly Yefremovich Novoseltsev provides the following description of
the city: "There are too many dwellers, too many comers, too many cars
in our city […]. There is jostling, crushing, queuing everywhere." Moreover,
Novoseltsev's presentation introduces one more feature to the city image,

together on a regular basis, the commuters and the dwellers fill up Moscow down to the limit. Actually, this limit becomes, literally, the absence of space in the working area amongst people. In this respect, we can remember Novoseltsev's self-presentation in the opening scene: "I live only on my salary, that is from pay to pay. In other words, I am twisting, I am dodging." At the same time, we see Novoseltsev on a full bus (*Figure 13*) and, at once, his verbal expression loses its figurative meaning. The characters are the integral part of the crowd and sometimes it is even difficult to grasp who the voice behind the camera is talking about as it is difficult to single out main characters from figures in the background (*Figure 14*).

Figures 12, 13 & 14: Representations of a crowd in 1977.

Source: *Office Romance*, 1977.

The life of the homogeneous crowd in 1977, most likely excluding their strictly planned working days as well as the invariability of the path they take to work, is governed by indeterminateness and absurdity. Novoseltsev

mentions in his description of the city: "everybody is hurrying somewhere, everybody is late for something". Consider this absurd situation with the break for lunch in the statistics bureau: it coincides with breaks in food stores and people have to hurry and manage doing their shopping instead of having lunch. To emphasize the absurdity of state establishments, Eldar Ryazanov created some signboards and put them next to the signboard "Statistics Bureau". These were *Спецшерсть* and *Управление внешних сношений*. In English, the first one is the coinage of "Special Wool" (something like "Spwool") and the second is "The Administration of Foreign Intercourse" that evokes sexual connotation. To fill the picture, Novoseltsev's description of the main point of his everyday destination – the statistics bureau he works at – ironically discloses the absurdity of the situation: "As everyone knows labor ennobles a human being. This is why people enjoy going to work. I, personally, go to work only because it ennobles me. If there was no statistics, we would not even suspect how well we work."

Figures 15 & 16: Representations of city emptiness and characters' individuation.

Source: *Office Romance. Our Time*, 2011.

The disclosure of city boundary results in almost complete emptiness of the city when the characters are highly individuated and often enter the frame as the only lonely figure against the city background (*Figure 15*). Even from multiple and simultaneous camera positions, when the people's pace is sped up artificially, very few people come into view (*Figure 16*). In 2011, the crowd moves to the recreation city zone in Turkey (*Figures 17 and 18*).

Figures 17 & 18: Representations of a crowd in 2011 (people at the beach and at a party)

Source: *Office Romance. Our Time*, 2011.

The people in the City of 2011 know exactly the aims of their work as they are involved in the corporate struggle developing strategies of ousting the weak from the city and entering the global corporation. This struggle turns into the struggle for survival in the center of the city. As billboards proclaim: to survive one should be "energetic" and "avoid stress". The metaphor that is

created to characterize people in the city is the metaphor of a shark: it can finish off a competitor without any pity and in this way becomes stronger.

Due to the barrier regime, once a person or a thing accidentally gets into the Moscow of 1977 from the exterior, they look like "foreign" objects and become the focus of everybody's attention. They are inspected in close-ups by a surprised eye (*Figure 19*) and attract attention due to their originality and/or brightness: even if they are in the visual background, they are still figures of perception (*Figure 20*). The unnaturalness of these objects is accentuated by the utterance of their names, the meanings of which are often unknown to interlocutors, and also by a character's verbal and non-verbal reactions on seeing them. The latter keeps "foreign" objects foregrounded in the conceptual frame, even if they are already out of sight. At Samohvalov's party, the focus of visitors' attention is the mobile. Upon noticing it, Lyudmila Prokofievna Kalugina demands Samohvalov's explanations: "What sort of thing is that?" The mobile also provokes Novoseltsev's non-verbal response: moving across the living-room he glances at the mobile and then stops and turns around to inspect it, his facial expression suggesting confusion and a lack of understanding of what he actually sees and why this thing is here, he even forgets that he is involved in the conversation with his director and just stops and stares at the unknown object (*Figure 21*).

Figures 19 & 20: "Foreign" objects as figures.

Source: *Office Romance*, 1977.

Secretary Verochka cannot be conceptualized in any way other than as a figure (*Figure 22*). In the opening scene, Verochka immediately stands out by how she is dressed, as well as by her actions: she steps out from the group to look for a tram and separates herself from the women at the tram stop. By

wearing foreign clothes, as well as by using borrowed terms in her speech and producing the unseen and the unheard, Verochka inevitably stands out against the homogeneous background of the Soviet crowd and provokes the reaction of being "defiant".

Figures 21 & 22: "Foreign" objects as figures.

Source: *Office Romance*, 1977.

As a result of barrier removal, foreign goods that inevitably stood out as figures of perception in the Moscow of 1977 become an integral part of post-Soviet background, where to single oneself out from the crowd means not to keep international standards. A bright example is Novoseltsev's motorcycle (*Figure 23*) that is foregrounded against the background of up-market cars that reach its homogeneity in the City of 2011 (*Figure24*).

Figures 23 & 24: Figure and background of 2011.

Source: *Office Romance. Our Time*, 2011.

In spite of the fact that the Moscow of 1977 has concrete walls, its interior is conceptualized as a transparent labyrinth, mainly with the help of glass, reflections and their combination (see *Figures 25, 26, 27 and 28*). Apart from certain situations concerning people of power, it is usually unknown who is observing.

Another technique of observing the city is to look down from a high point of view. While talking to Anatoly Novoseltsev, Lyudmila Kalugina goes out to the balcony (*Figure 29*) and the camera takes her subjective view from the height of the building to the center of the city below (*Figure 30*). At the same time, Novoseltsev says the phrase, "You are looking into the distance", concerning his faulty statistical report. The phrase in the context loses its indirect meaning and coordinates with Kalugina's way of looking at the city. This produces the additional meaning: Kalugina's look can be identified with the look of people at power, which is immortalized in numerous monuments of the Soviet period.
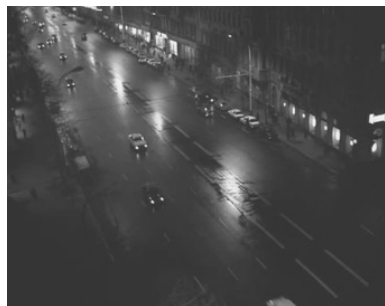
Figures 25, 26, 27 & 28: City transparency.

Source: *Office Romance*, 1977.

The City of 2011 is also transparent. In this Moscow it is possibly due to the introduction of new media in the interior (*Figures 31, 32*). As a result, the authorities become as transparent as their subordinates.

Figures 29 & 30: City high viewpoint observation.

Source: *Office Romance*, 1977.

Conclusion

Thus, a situation or a reality fragment is never empty; it is potentially open, at least, due to our different location in space and its perception. As soon as a situation is enframed, as soon as it comes into a subject's field of view, it is no longer free from the frame and a subject's viewpoint according to how he/she arranges the view. Focusing on the city superimposes, at least verbally, a certain schema of object conceptualization – container image schema. However, this object acquires specific meanings according to a subject's discursive position – Soviet or post-Soviet – that lays over one more frame on the situation and results in construing different mental images.

The reperspectivization of the Soviet leads to debounding, individuation, figure-ground reversal, redistribution of people and city zones. When the space enclosed in the city is concerned, the perspectival distance in the mental viewing arrangement has widened, having engulfed other spaces into big city. At the same time, when the people in the city center come into view, the transformation of the mental image takes the opposite direction, zooming in on separate individuals, though zooming out in the recreation zone of 2011. Thus, the city in the conceptual space becomes different from what it is in the films and on the map.

At a more general level, while the city of 1977 is still conceptualized against its territory and the territory of the country, the city of 2011 is construed more like a space without a definite territory due to its entry into virtuality. The city containers of 1977 and 2011, no matter what their boundary represents – a barrier with occasional openings or openness without barriers – are constructed as transparent ones, though the transparency is functionally different. In the film of 1977, the production of city transparency on the screen is the director's invention to figuratively convey the idea that each one of the crowd members is observed. In the city of 2011, transparency, in the literal sense of the word, becomes an integral part of city life; when not to hide in the crowd but to make oneself visible and individuated is a prerequisite for success.

Figures 31 & 32: New media in the City of 2011: the video surveillance at the entry of the rating agency and the message "Frump is coming" by a subordinate to a colleague via a social network.

Source: *Office Romance. Our Time*, 2011.

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Memory, desmemory and three Cuban films everybody remembers

The Cuban Revolution and its cultural politics after 1959 gave birth to one of the richest national film productions in Latin America. Today, there are about 316 cinematographic documentations,[92] and a huge number of educational films and newscasts of utmost importance, officially honored in 2009 by UNESCO with the inclusion of the *Noticiero ICAIC Latinoamericano* in the "Memory of the World" archive "Documentary Heritage of Humanity". Beyond that, Cuban film directors have produced 217 feature films since 1959, many of which are internationally renowned and appreciated. My article explores three of the most famous *largometrajes de ficción* ever made in Cuba: *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, 1968), *Fresa y chocolate* (Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, 1992) and *Alicia en el pueblo de Maravillas* (Daniel Díaz Torres, 1991) and the role of memory there within. The starting point of my discussion is the fact that these films were produced during crucial times of the Revolution. In the early years after 1959 and in the period following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the revolutionary government had to repel former concepts or foreign influences and enforce their ideological convictions, based on specific virtues, new rules of social, political, cultural life and last, but not least, a particular conception of the national past. Taking into account the importance of cultural productions for collective processes of social self (re-)definition, I will examine in what way these films, produced by film makers who were very conscious of the persuasive potential of the cinematographic media, (try to) affect the present time of their production by dealing with memories of the national past. After considering central memory theories and the relations between memory and the medium of film, I will outline the historical and aesthetic perspective of these films in order to reveal what they tell us about Cuban cultural and historical memory.

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[92] *Cf.* the filmography of ICAIC http://www.cubacine.cult.cu/sitios/filmo/index.htm [30.09.2015].

The mediality of memory

The examination of memory is nearly as old as Western civilization itself. It encompasses the time from antiquity to our immediate present and reaches from the invention of mnemotechnic by Simonides of Ceos (ca. 500 BC) and its revision by Quintilian (ca. 50 AC), to the concept of nation as memory based on Ernest Renan (end of 19th century), the social frameworks of memory by Maurice Halbwachs (1925), the Aby Warburg *Mnemosyne* project (1920s) of a collective picture archive of occidental culture and the model of the *lieux de mémoire* of Pierre Nora (1984-1992), for instance.[93] In the 1990s, the German philologist Jan Assmann boosted scientific reflections on the functioning of memory in society, proposing the difference between communicative and cultural memory.[94] Assmann being an Egyptologist, his theory focused primarily on the connection between memory and scripture. In 1999, his wife Aleida Assmann, a philologist of English Studies, investigated the changing of cultural memory up to date, considering scripture and picture as the media that constitute cultural memory. However, the study did not mention the possible role of film in this context.[95] Indeed, in German memory theory, very little interest has been taken in the question to what extent film can function as a memory storage shaping cultural and social identities. Thus, only in 2008, German philologists Astrid Erll and Stephanie Wodianka, noted the general research desideratum concerning the theory of memory in films. They aimed to face this lack with their compilation on film and memory and define "memory film" (*Erinnerungsfilm*) as a symbolic structure to be produced in social contexts. Their proposal to film analysis was to consider the questions of the way in which films present individual and collective memories, how they interpret processes of remembering and what could be the possible effects of the film on the memory culture of a society.[96] Apart from this convincing approach, Erll and Wodianka, emphasize the film's

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[93]   Renan, E.: *¿Qué es una Nación? Cartas a Strauss [1882]*, Madrid, Alianza, 1987; Halbwachs, M.: *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire [1925]*, Paris, Presses Universitaires, 1952; Warburg, A.: *Atlas Mnemosyne [1920s]*, Madrid, Ediciones Akal, 2010; Nora, P.: "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire." In: *Representations*, 26, 1989, pp. 7-25. For a general introduction *cf*. Erll, A. / Nünning, A. (eds.): *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2008.

[94]   *Cf*. Assmann, J.: *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, München, Beck, 1992.

[95]   *Cf*. Assmann, A.: *Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*, München, Beck, [4]2009.

[96]   *Cf*. Erll, A. / Wodianka, S. (eds.): *Film und kulturelle Erinnerung. Plurimediale Konstellationen*, Berlin / New York, De Gruyter, 2008, pp. 1-20, here pp. 5f.

unsuitability for saving our memory. Fictional film, they argue, is a medium bound to the here and now, and, as it often belongs to popular culture it does not primarily have the function of *storing* information but of *spreading* history images to a wide public.[97] This observation is rather surprising, yet the medium of film, regardless of its marketing ambitions and aesthetic quality, is already in its most material aspect storage of information and can thus be the base of memory in multiple ways. Undoubtedly, the nitrate film of the early years which is, from a certain stage onwards, in danger of being destroyed by spontaneous combustion, has only a limited life span. It is also true that, for a long time, film has not been as accessible as books, since its reception and reproduction demanded a high technological effort. Evidently, many films "may be forgotten already tomorrow"[98] and may be lost in a couple of years (as most of the books will be, too). Nevertheless, these problems of limited durability and accessibility have been minimized in recent years by technological development. Digital formats, television, and the Internet enable a broad – individual and collective – reception of film. Furthermore, the constant expansion of memory capacities of computer technologies facilitates the creation of public and private film archives.

In 2010, Gudedehus, Eichenberg and Welzer complain about the deficiency in the development of theory on film as medium of memory, which they characterize as 'late, slow and hardly interdisciplinary'. They mock German humanities for their 'thick-wittedness' to accept the importance of film for social memory practice and do not leave any doubt about the capacity of films to store and produce psychological and historical memory. Moreover, they consider film to be interlaced with other medial techniques and with collective rituals of consumption and remembrance in the 20th century.[99]

Yet, in 2004, the German historian Olaf Berg had already proposed a terminology for memory in film in a monograph. With recourse to Charles Peirce, Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, his compelling study reveals that film is a dispositive that stores memory as archive, trace and/or deduction. Firstly, film as being produced in a certain time is an *archive* – a material porter of the past, "an artifact of former times" that can give us (a certain) assurance about the past.[100] Secondly, film as *trace* refers to the fact that film

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[97]   *Ibid*., p. 4.

[98]   *Ibid*., pp. 4f.; my translation.

[99]   Gudehus, C. / Eichenberg, A. / Welzer, H.: "Film und Fernsehen." In: Gudehus, C. / Eichenberg, A. / Welzer, H.: *Gedächtnis und Erinnerung. Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch*, Stuttgart, Metzler, 2010, pp. 217-226.

[100] Berg, O.: *Film als historische Forschung: Geschichte in dialektischen Zeit-Bildern*, mpz-materialien № 9, Hamburg, 2004, pp. 33f.; my translation.

can deal with former times. Thirdly, film as *deduction* considers the interpretation of the past (and the presence) initiated by the moving pictures.[101]

Widening the focus and leaving the German perspective, we find convincing works that prove that film is one, if not *the* central memory medium in times of "post Gutenberg-Galaxy".[102] The historian Omer Bartov (born in Israel, teaching in the US) considers film to be the most important source of historical consciousness.[103] His American colleague, Alison Landsberg, argues that film has an even bigger impact than text. In films, memories are represented, selected, and modulated in a pluralistic manner, using textual, auditory, and visual elements. As we receive films with several senses, Landsberg argues that memory presented by mass media is not only connecting individual with collective memory, but also leaving its traces – "prosthetic memories" – in the human body:

> Prosthetic memories [...] emerge at the interface of individual and collective experience. [...] [T]hese memories, like an artificial limb, are actually worn on the body; they are sensuous memories produced by an experience of mass-mediated representations.[104]

The logical consequence is the warning of some critics who focus on the problems of the 'cineastic electronification of memory', as does John Urry, or even declare audiovisual media to be "history machines", as did Lindenberger.[105]

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[101] *Cf. ibid.*, pp. 33f.

[102] *Cf.* Bolz, N.: *Am Ende der Gutenberg-Galaxis*, München, Fink, 1995; and Harnad, S.: "Post-Gutenberg Galaxy: The Fourth Revolution in the Means of Production of Knowledge." In: *Public-Access Computer Systems Review*, 2, № 1, 1991, pp. 39-53.

[103] Bartov, O. (ed.): *The Holocaust: Origins, Implementation, Aftermath*, London, Routledge, 2000.

[104] Landsberg, A.: *Prosthetic Memory. The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2004, pp. 19f.

[105] Lindenberger, T.: "Vergangenes Hören und Sehen. Zeitgeschichte und ihre Herausforderung durch die audiovisuellen Medien." In: *Zeithistorische Forschungen / Studies in Contemporary History*, № 1, 2004, p. 6. http://www.zeithistorische-forschungen.de/1612 6041-Lindenberger-1-2004 [30.09.2015]: "Audiovisuelle Medien, insbesondere solche, die im Alltag der Unterhaltung dienen, sind Geschichtsmaschinen." However, Lindenberger shows in his well-balanced article the chances of audiovisually-mediated historical experience.

"El cine es un arte": the Cuban ICAIC, its objectives and its protagonists

Among the first actions of the victorious 'barbudos', those unshaved Cuban revolutionaries, was the foundation of a federal film institute. Under the programmatic motto "el cine es un arte", "film is art"[106] they established the *Instituto Cubano de arte e industria cinematográficos*, or short ICAIC, on March 24 in 1959. The ICAIC is conceived by law no. 169 as an institution with an important educational mandate: "The cinema has to function as an appeal to consciousness and has to contribute to eliminating ignorance, elucidating problems, [and] suggesting solutions."[107] Julio García Espinosa, one of the founding fathers of the ICAIC, in his programmatic writing on film, "Por un cine imperfecto" – "For an imperfect cinema" –, published in 1969,[108] contrasts the "imperfect Latin-American cinema" with the "self-sufficient and contemplative cinema" of the western productions and its colorful presentation of "ideas or concepts which we already possess". Imperfect cinema, instead, should be produced "in cooperation with sociologists, revolutionary leaders, psychologists, economists", etc., in order to offer "a cruel denunciation, […] a painful testimony" of social inequality and to achieve the "disappearance of the rigid division of labor and of a society divided into sectors and classes". Likewise, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea underlines in his concept "Dialéctica del espectador" / "The viewer's dialectic"[109] the potentials of social transformation that Latin-American film offers if intended as the opposite of the stardom-fixation and advertising industry of the "bourgeois commercial filmmaking": "Cinema can draw viewers closer to reality without giving up its condition of unreality, fiction, and other-reality."

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[106] The law no. 169 of the foundation of the ICAIC was published in 1959, March 2. *Cf.* the full text of the law and its preambles on the official site of the Fiscalía General de la República de Cuba: http://www.fgr.cu/decreto-ley-169 [30.09.2015].

[107] "El cine debe constituir un llamado a la conciencia y contribuir a liquidar la ignorancia, a dilucidar problemas, a formular soluciones y plantear, dramática y contemporáneamente, los grandes conflictos del hombre y la humanidad." http://www.fgr.cu/decreto-ley-169 [30.09.2015].

[108] All citations that follow are taken from the first English translation of the breaking article of Espinosa: García Espinosa, J.: "For an Imperfect Cinema [1979]." In: *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, № 20, 1979 / 2005, pp. 24-26. http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC20folder/ImperfectCinema.html [30.09.2015].

[109] All following examples are taken from the first English translation of Gutiérrez Alea, T.: "La dialéctica del espectador [1982]." In: *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, № 29, 1984 / 2005, pp. 18-21. http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC29folder/ViewersDialec1.html [30.09.2015].

Alea adds that

> film can also initiate in viewers […] a series of thinking processes, reasoning, judgments, ideas and thus a better comprehension of reality itself and a more adequate way of conducting themselves, of acting practically.

Hence, the Cuban proposal is to produce film that "pushes spectators toward a more profound understanding of reality". Daniel Díaz Torres, another great ICAIC filmmaker, highlights that, in its proposal of *cine imperfecto* and viewer's dialectic, cinema should focus on its own Latin-American environment, present critical analyses, and embark on aesthetic experiments. This would include a variety of perspectives, Collage film, non-linear plots, or the shaky images of a hand-held camera. In other words, as long as it does not drift towards uncritical cult, everything is allowed: intermedial references to Social Realism or Italian Neo-Realism, as well as intramedial references to influential filmmakers, such as Eisenstein, Buñuel, Truffaut, or Saura.[110] The Cuban filmmakers wanted to inform their audience about ethical, political, and historical issues, while providing a critical distance of the viewers to the medium of film. The goal was to establish a type of film that, as the German Romanist Peter B. Schumann states, "forces you to think, that provides mental stimulus", and that creates a "greater balance between […] abilities of emotion and those of reflection".[111] For that reason, movies about the history of film, production techniques, and about film analysis were produced, that were supposed to 'alphabetize' Cuban audiences in an audiovisual manner. This educational campaign was put into practice with the so-called *cinemóvil*, a mobile film screening team that travelled through Cuba and showed the ICAIC-productions in areas that did not have a cinema.[112] Thus, ICAIC (and other Latin-American filmmakers of the time) started their work with the ambitious purpose to liberate the oppressed film and the oppressed people, or, to say it in the words of Octavio Getino y Fernando Solanas to "free the third

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[110]   *Cf.* Cabezón Doty, C.: *Literatur und Film Lateinamerikas im intermedialen Dialog: Einführung in die Geschichte der verflochtenen Wechselbeziehungen zwischen Literatur und Film Lateinamerikas seit 1960*, Frankfurt a.M. [u.a.], Peter Lang, 2000, p. 174.

[111]   Schumann, P. B.: "Der kubanische Film im Kontext der Kulturpolitik." In: Ette, O. / Franzbach, M. (eds.): *Kuba heute. Politik, Wirtschaft, Kultur*, Frankfurt a.M., Vervuert, 2001, pp. 669-682, here p. 137.

[112]   For general information about the history of the cine-móvil, *cf.* Calderón González, J.: "A 50 años de la creación del Cine-Móvil ICAIC." In: *Cubarte*, 27.9.2011, http://www.cubarte. cult.cu/periodico/opinion/a-50-anos-de-la-creacion-del-cine-movil-icaic/20045.html [30.09.2015].

cinema of the third world".[113] In order to achieve these aims, Cuban film deals mostly with history: "Two central themes" as Julianne Burton notes, "run through all of Cuban cinema, fictional and documentary production alike – history and underdevelopment."[114]

The (Under)development of *memoria* after 1959

Hardly any movie would be more suitable to function as an example of how memory is staged in the new Latin-American film than *Memorias del subdesarrollo*, which was produced by the famous ICAIC director Tomás Gutiérrez Alea in 1968. *Memories of Underdevelopment* encapsulates everything that the ICAIC intended to achieve by its foundation. In both form and content, it challenges the commercial filmmaking of Hollywood; it is aesthetically and politically *cine imperfecto*. It is a film whose complex (memory) structure provokes the 'viewer's dialectic'. It is also a film that moves along the verge of the Revolution in its representations of the present and the past.

  Memorias del subdesarrollo tells the story of Sergio, a young author and educated heir of a furniture company. In the year 1961, Sergio is left alone in Havana while his parents and wife immigrate to Miami. Without any other occupation, he starts to be a *flaneur* and not only roves the streets of Havana, but also the national and personal past. The camera almost playfully puts us,

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[113] *Cf.* Getino, O. / Solanas, F.: "Apuntes y experiencias para el desarrollo de un cine de liberación en el tercer mundo [1969]." In: *Hojas de Cine. Testimonios y documentos del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano*, Vol 1: Centro y Sudamérica, México, Colección Cultura universitaria, pp. 29-62, my translation.

It was soon revealed that the critical faculty of the revolutionary government itself was limited. In 1961, already, after heated public debates concerning the censored ICAIC film *p.m.* (by Sabá Cabrera Infante, Orlando Jiménez Leal), Fidel Castro clearly signified to the Cuban intellectuals, that in the future only artistic works would be tolerated that followed the ideals of the revolution. He put this in the prominent *dictum*: "dentro de la Revolución, todo; contra de la Revolución, nada. [Inside the revolution everything, outside of revolution nothing.]" In: Castro, F.: "Discurso pronunciado por el Comandante Fidel Castro Ruz, Primer Ministro del Gobierno Revolucionario y Secretario del Purs, como conclusión de las reuniones con los intelectuales cubanos, efectuadas en la Biblioteca Nacional el 16, 23 y 30 de junio de 1961", http://www.cuba.cu/gobierno/discursos/1961/esp/f300661e.html [30.09. 2015]. Since then, Cuban art is captured in these co-ordinates and, as we see, as well memory-film is constantly evaluated if it lies within or beyond the ideas of the revolution (*cf.* Schumann: "Der kubanische Film im Kontext der Kulturpolitik").

[114] In her excellent article Burton gives a detailed and concise overview of the first two and a half decades of Cuban film after 1959, its projects and processes: Burton, J.: "Film and Revolution in Cuba: The First 25 Years." In: Martin, M. T. (ed.): *New Latin American Cinema*, Vol 2, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1997, pp. 123-142, here p. 128.

the viewers, in varying perspectives experiencing the protagonist and his surroundings, often in the *cinéma vérité*-style of the hand-held camera. On the one hand, Sergio is established as a smart, cultured, good-looking, intellectual, young man who takes a decidedly critical position towards the attitude of the saturated *bourgeoisie* and the crimes of the Batista era. As such, Sergio functions as a character with high identification potential for the leftist – *bourgeois* – audience. On the other hand – and from the point of view of the young Revolution – he combines many negative characteristics: our hero is an elitist, rich, indolent, self-absorbed, lecherous *voyeur* and seducer who lacks solidarity. Finally, he is far from being the "Hombre Nuevo", the "New Man" Che Guevara proposed for Cuban Revolution: Sergio is reluctant to take up arms when his country enters into the missile crisis. At the end of the movie, Sergio finds himself in a deep conflict with the laws of the Revolution and his own psyche.

The cinematography that enables the contradictive interpretations of the film[115] is based on the ingenious inversions of sense, produced by the camera play (which reaches from sharing Sergio's perspective and passing judgment *with* him, to looking at him the very next moment and passing judgment *on* him), the permanent contraposition of fictitious and historical (film) material and the crossing of both, reality and fiction, for instance by scenes of film production in the ICAIC studies or the voice-over comments of Sergio concerning the historical documentary scenes.[116] In addition to the existing readings of *Memorias*, it is produced by this to and fro of the individual memory of the protagonist and the historic documentaries, which (re)present the collective memory (for example the court scenes of the trials against Batista or against the invaders at the Bay of Pigs; original tapes of Fidel

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[115]   It is interesting to see how critics react to Sergio's characterization in the film: Michael Chanan underlines that "in almost all respects we're inclined to reject [him]" and points out that the film denies bourgeois identification with Sergio (Chanan, M.: *Cuban Cinema*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, 2004, p. 238). It is easier to follow Adam Sharman, who points out the ambivalent character of Sergio (and the film) and shows that "some of Sergio's criticisms of the Revolution […] belong to the film as a whole" (Sharman, A.: "The Indiscrete Charm of the Bourgeoisie, or, the Difficulty of Going beyond the Subject of the Nation: Gutiérrez Alea's Memorias del subdesarrollo." In: *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 84, № 5, 2007, pp. 645-660, here p. 647). For the most detailed juxtaposition of the divergent readings of the film *cf*. Schroeder, P. A.: *Tomás Gutiérrez Alea: The Dialectics of a Filmmaker*, New York, Routledge, 2002.

[116]   For further descriptions of this strategy, see Burton, J.: "Film and Revolution in Cuba: The First 25 Years." In: Martin, M. T. (ed.): *New Latin American Cinema*, Vol 2, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1997, pp. 123-142 and especially Schroeder: *Tomás Gutiérrez Alea*.

Castro's speeches; images of the mobilization of troops during the Cuba Crisis). As the intervals of cuts between the historical scenes from documentaries and Sergio's personal history accelerate, the initially clearly marked difference between fiction and reality, between individual and historical memory, becomes blurred. In this process, the film considers questions about facticity and reliability of memory, about reconstructability of the past, and about possibilities to represent and assess personal as well as collective history. *Memorias del subdesarrollo* reflects on these fundamental questions on a textual level, meaning Sergio's continuous voice-overs, and on a formal level, meaning cinematography and editing of the presented images. One message directed at the dialectically educated viewer is that the 'Truth' of past and presence is, after all, a question of perspective and of the alignment of text and image.

Finally, as Schroeder points out, *Memorias del subdesarrollo* is a film, which has no clear ideological message and which has caused contrary reactions. It was criticized in Cuba, in 1968, as subverting the Revolution. Nevertheless, in the USA it was understood as an obvious assault on the First World and its screening was prohibited in many states, while Richard Roud of the *New York Times* emphasizes the critical, but "eminently *fair*"[117] perspective on Revolution that the film offers.[118]

Indeed, even the title itself leaves ample room for interpretation: who is reporting here on whose under-development? – Is Sergio featured as the one looking back on the underdeveloped era of Batista's cruel dictatorship, or does the title refer to Sergio's retrospection on his own underdeveloped life and his failing relationships? At the same time, it may be the film itself that, in the late 1960s, looks back on the early period of the Cuban Revolution. But what would underdevelopment refer to in that context? Does it refer to the persistence of the narrow-minded bourgeoisie and the elitist *intelligentsia*? Or, conversely, is it a reference to the intellectually underdeveloped, young revolutionary society and the compulsive control of the new government, which will destroy Sergio's life? The film provides all these interpretative approaches. Only the fact that Sergio's emotional, social, and intellectual failure entails the failure of the entire pre-revolutionary system is unambiguous. Hence, the film illustrates that, alongside the protagonist, not

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[117] In Schroeder: *Tomás Gutiérrez Alea*, pp. 21f.
[118] Gutiérrez Alea referred to all interpretations of his film as revolutionary criticism, as "*mis*interpretation" (cit. in Davies, C.: "Recent Cuban Fiction Films: Identification, Interpretation, Disorder." In: *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 15, № 2, 1996, pp. 177-192, here p. 177).

only is the glossy reality of the privileged destroyed, but also their intellectual potential. At the end, as A. Schroeder postulates, when history and the collective prevail over individuality, this film does not leave us with a sense of triumph, but rather with a sense of loss. By Sergio´s exclusion, the arts, literature, and critical reflection could be soon separated from Cuban reality.[119]

Undeniably, *Memorias del subdesarrollo* evaded Cuban censorship as well, because Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, as a persecuted artist under Batista and founder of the ICAIC, was beyond any doubt when it came to his revolutionary sentiments. Yet, next to his many clearly ideologically positioned films, one can also find more examples of ambivalence. This is the case in *Los sobrevivientes* (1979), a film in which Alea again celebrates the memory of the sophisticated (educational) *bourgeoisie*. In reference to Buñuel's *Le charme discret de la bourgeoisie*, this film is about an upper-class Cuban family who, in 1959, retreated with their servants to their Cuban manor to sit out the end of the Revolution. But as the Revolution does not end, the feudal refuge turns into a prison. The spacious manor becomes a *huis clos* in which the family members fall more and more into a state of mental and physical decadence. *Los sobrevivientes*, on the one hand, once again parodies the pre-revolutionary upper-class and starts from a glamorous, yet unjust, past; but, on the other hand, by the end of the 1970s, this voluntary isolation of the family and the decay of both their luxurious property and their ideals reveal a criticism of the self-isolating and sometimes grotesque-acting Cuban Revolution itself.[120]

Memory and oblivion after 1989

The distorted image of the history of the Cuban Revolution as the history of a mentally and physically shattered society, which wastes away in a collective island-captivity, is brought up again in 1991. *Alicia en el Pueblo de Maravillas*, directed by Daniel Díaz Torres, portrays the story of Alicia, a young revolutionary woman who starts her service as a social worker in and with the "pueblo de Maravillas" ("pueblo de Maravillas" has the double sense

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[119]   *Cf*. Schroeder: *Tomás Gutiérrez Alea*.

[120]   This ambivalent attitude towards the colonial, respectively the dictatorial past, is present in many Cuban films that, at the same time, programmatically criticize the social injustices *and* celebrate Havana's splendor, based on inequality and exploitation. I am referring to films such as *Cecilia Valdés* (1981) and *Un hombre de éxito* (1986) by Humberto Solás; *La bella del Alhambra* (1989) by Enrique Pineda Barnet; *La edad de la peseta* (2007) by Pavel Giroud; *Los dioses rotos* (2008) by Ernesto Daranas.

of 'wondervillage' and 'wonderpeople'). Maravillas is a sanatorium where mentally disturbed patients – who had been committed to the hospital for having failed to be the socialist 'new man', 'el hombre nuevo' in the revolution society – live under the dictate of a psychiatrist whose rhetoric and gestures are reminiscent of those of the *máximo líder* of the revolution, Fidel Castro. Using literally black, i.e. scatological humour, the film presents a sharp critique of the many deficits of the Cuban Revolution, having reached the end of its third decade (the script was finished in 1988[121]), as there are supply bottlenecks, mismanagement of the construction industry, technical underdevelopment, an insufficient health system, a hollow cultural sector, and blind following as the main political attitude. Besides this, it uses various strategies of metaphor and metonymy to circumvent censorship, such as the fantastic hyperboles of the plot with its allusions to Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, the parody of Gothic elements and shocking effects, or the end, which reveals the entire story to be a nightmare of Alice, who had fallen asleep in the bus station waiting for her transport to Maravillas. But, neither the strategies of circumvention, nor the fact that this film was awarded the peace prize at the Berlinale Film Festival in 1991, could save it from prohibition in Cuba. *Alicia en el Pueblo de Maravillas* was banned from film theatres after four days "for squandering state resources and ridiculing the Cuban people at the most critical moment in their post-revolutionary history"[122] – and certainly above all because Alicia's solution to put an end to the collective madness consists in thrusting the tyrannical doctor into an abyss. The consequences for the filmmakers were more than severe: director Daniel Díaz Torres temporarily became the object of a public smear campaign, screen writer Jesús Díaz was declared – in *absentia* – a *persona non grata*, and the order to shut-down the ICAIC could scarcely be avoided.[123]

Returning to the question of memory, it is rather obvious that the plot of *Alicia en el pueblo de Maravillas* does not function as an explicit enactment of memory in the sense of the rediscovery of a historical past; it is not a "trace" of memory.[124] Yet it can be considered, first, as a "deduction", as an interpretation of the present and recent past of the Cuban Revolution,

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[121]   *Cf.* Chanan: *Cuban Cinema*, p. 459.
[122]   Davies: "Recent Cuban Fiction Films", p. 188. The prohibition, one of the few in Cuban Film history, was not complete: after 1991, the film has been occasionally shown to a selected audience (*cf.* Schumann: "Der kubanische Film im Kontext der Kulturpolitik", p. 677).
[123]   *Cf.* the detailed depiction of Chanan: *Cuban Cinema*, pp. 457ff.
[124]   *Cf.* Berg: *Film als historische Forschung*.

especially of its loathed aspects and, second, the film of Díaz Torres has the function of an "archive", being the embodiment of all that is banned from the revolution as an open critique or a negative memory. Thus, in Cuban film history, *Alicia* has become the *lieu de mémoire* for the revolution's intolerance and cultural censorship. The lesson to Daniel Díaz Torres and ICAIC had a binding effect: it is not until 2011 that we witness the re-appearance of such a fantastic ironical take on the ailing Cuban revolutionary society. In Alejandro Bruguera's film *Juan de los Muertos*, Havana has turned into a city controlled by zombies, which have to be killed by a group of dissidents in order to save Cuba. But, in contrast to Alicia, the zombie-elimination-expert – "Juan de los muertos" – refuses to release Cuba from its *máximo zombie*.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the Cuban Revolution lived through what was probably its most difficult time. The end of the Soviet Union caused an economic crisis of enormous extent that could only be contained by actions causing great inner contradictions: the legalization of the Dollar, the first privatizations of companies, the advancement of tourism, and the sufferance of prostitution and the black market. In this so-called special period in times of peace – the *período especial en tiempos de paz* – it seemed that the days of the revolution were finally coming to an end.[125] Yet the hopes for political transitions and ideological opening receded following the measures taken against *Alicia en el pueblo de Maravillas*. Nevertheless, like many times before in Cuban history, the government soon seemed to steer its culture politics in another direction. Already in 1993, in Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's high-gloss production *Fresa y chocolate* – a film that oscillates between the *genres* of comedy and melodrama – many taboos were broken at once. The film delineates the encounter between the homosexual artist Diego and David, a young, inexperienced, and initially homophobic revolutionary. Diego enlightens David about the *non-lieux de mémoire* of the revolution, referring to sexual discrimination, UMAP camps, the denial of prostitution, censorship, repression, and the banishment of opposition especially in the 1970s. In this sense, the film is, in the words of Catherine Davies, "[t]o paraphrase Freud, […] a nostalgic 'remembering, repeating and working through' of an immediate collective past".[126] Diego shows David an alternative to his political dogmatism, introducing the young revolutionary to the world and values of national art (e.g. the literature of Lezama Lima, the music of Benny

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[125]   Details of the consequences the end of USSR had for the Cuban film industry are provided by Chanan: *Cuban Cinema*, pp. 444ff.

[126]   Davies: "Recent Cuban Fiction Films", p. 179.

Moré, the syncretistic Cuban paintings and sculptures, etc.). While *Alicia,* from 1991, offered a radical model to overcome the crisis and renew the Cuban power structure, *Fresa y chocolate* debated gay rights and political reconcilement, as Paul Julian Smith and Enrico Mario Santí point out.[127] Calling for solidarity between homosexuals, artists, and the revolution-caste, the film argues that a moderate ideological opening can enable the revolution to continue. Although it does not offer further solutions (as Davies notes, we know nothing about the future of David, possibly being expelled from university and Diego living in exile), it makes a double proposal to confront the actual ideological problems: firstly, requesting dialogue and reconciliation of the orthodox revolutionary and the more liberal intellectual groups instead of drastic measures of thought control; and secondly, fortifying the repressed, cultural and historical memory to build up the national Cuban identity. Thus, in the terminology of Berg, the film is at once a "trace" (of the memory of the historical 'grey' decade of the 1970s), an "archive" (of the problematic situation of the early 1990s) and a "deduction" (as a meta-memory reflection in its drawing attention to the relevance of the suppression of a great part of Cuban memory for present conflicts).

Strawberry and chocolate, which was for the first time broadcast on Cuban television in 2008, had few consequences regarding the tolerance towards artists (censorship exists in varying degrees until today).[128] All the same, this film caused great social changes with respect to the inclusion of homosexuals. Since then, a visible homosexual scene with a new kind of self-conception has been established. Film's handling of memory in Cuba runs the risk of censorship, as the country's recent history is full of officially silenced *non-lieux de mémoire*. In testing the boundaries of '*dentro de la revolución*', the presented films used different strategies to represent loathed memory: firstly, the intellectual and aesthetic ambivalence in *Memorias del sub-desarrollo*; secondly, the metaphorical (too badly) hidden appeal for radical

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[127]   Smith, P. J.: *Vision Machines. Cinema, Literature and Sexuality in Spain and Cuba 1983-1993*, London, Verso, 1996; Santí, E. M.: "*Fresa y chocolate*: The Rhetoric of Cuban Reconciliation." In: *Modern Language Notes*, 113, 1998, pp. 407-425.

[128]   Santí's rather critical interpretation thus came true in the sense that Gutiérrez' film did not change the general attitude of the political system: "As a symptom of Cuba's special period, following the collapse of Real Socialism in Europe, *Fresa y chocolate* resorts to melodrama in order to represent the loss of the tragic vision that was the trademark of the epic struggle for anti-imperialist liberation during the early years of the Revolution. But in the urge to resacralize national identity, its storyline cannot help but be faithful to the melodramatic rhetoric it adopts, stopping short of being self-critical and ultimately pressing a moral universe that is very similar to the one it attempts to replace." In: Santí: "*Fresa y chocolate*: The Rhetoric of Cuban Reconciliation", p. 424.

change in *Alicia en el pueblo de Maravillas*; and finally, the romantic, humorous, sentimental call for less ideological strength and reconcilement in *Fresa y chocolate*. Since the making of *Fresa y chocolate,* two decades have gone by. Contrary (or according) to all expectations, the Cuban Revolution has survived. The ICAIC has remained productive, even though its productions have changed a great deal. The collaboration with international investors protects filmmakers from ideological intrusions and restraints within Cuba, but this also demands taking into account the taste of the international market. By now, former filmic experimentation and innovation have mostly given way to sleek productions. Nevertheless, the way in which Cuban film deals with memory *today*, is an interesting research question that remains to be explored and answered. The examination of Cuba's own history is rarely as explicitly prevalent as in *Lisanka* (2010), in which Díaz Torres reprocesses the Cuba Crisis (once more) in a humoristic manner. The vast majority of stories and plot-lines that have been written and filmed in the last couple of years are set in Cuba's present. However, the melancholic look at the past is almost ubiquitous in numerous productions. As most of the present films are set in the capital, it is the decaying Havana that recalls time and the Cuban memories of development and underdevelopment.

Filmography

Daranas, Ernesto: *Los dioses rotos*. Cuba 2008.

Díaz Torres, Daniel: *Alicia en el pueblo de Maravillas*. Cuba 1991.

Díaz Torres, Daniel: *Lisanka*. Cuba / Russia / Venezuela 2009.

Giroud, Pavel: *La edad de la peseta.* Cuba / España / Venezuela 2007.

Gutiérrez Alea, Tomás: *Memorias del subdesarrollo*. Cuba 1968.

Gutiérrez Alea, Tomás: *Los sobrevivientes*. Cuba 1979.

Gutiérrez Alea, Tomás / Tabio, Juan Carlos: *Fresa y chocolate*. Cuba / México / España 1993.

Pineda Barnet, Enrique: *La bella del Alhambra.* Cuba 1989.

Solás, Humberto: *Cecilia Valdés*. Cuba 1981.

Solás, Humberto: *Un hombre de éxito*. Cuba 1986.

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Smoke Signals: Creating Cultural Memory in Film

> *When we say memory*
> *What is meant?*
> *I remember a rez party house*
> *Called The 13th Step.*

> Seymour Polatkin, *The Business of Fancydancing*

Film is a powerful tool of cultural and political influence; it significantly influences what and how we think of ourselves and others. Furthermore, it helps construct the community's cultural memory and, at the same time, is an essential part of it. Although Native Americans have been a part of the moving pictures since the earliest days of cinematic endeavors, they had no access to this tool of forming national identity. It wasn't until the very end of the twentieth century, when the first, truly Native American film, *Smoke Signals*, was produced, directed, written and acted by Native Americans themselves. Until then, imagery of Native Americans in cinema was created solely by Hollywood. "Hollywood's Indian" was the primary source of information about American Indian nations and shaped the general public's understanding of them. Astrid Erll duly points out, "the shape of contemporary media societies gives rise to the assumption that – today perhaps more than ever – cultural memory is dependent on media technologies and the circulation of media products."[129] The 1998 film, *Smoke Signals,* marks a significant change in the portrayal of American Indians on the screen, as it started the age of Native Americans shaping their own image. The film had a tremendous effect on Native communities. However, before taking a closer look at the film and its influence on the shaping of pan-Indian cultural memory, it is important to answer Seymour Polatkin's question of what memory is and how the word "cultural" defines it.

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[129] Erll, A.: "Cultural Memory Studies: An Introduction." In: Erll, A. / Nünning, A. (eds.): *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, Berlin / New York, de Gruyter, 2008, pp. 1-15, here p. 9.

Cultural memory is closely connected with identity, which is constructed by acts of memory. National identity is tied with the way the nation sees its past and present, and manifests itself in the acts of cultural memory. Therefore, indigenous film executed by indigenous members conveys an indigenous point of view, which is an act of memory that reconstructs identity and shapes the larger social attitude. The notion of cultural memory is rather broad and vague for it may incorporate "media, practices, and structures as diverse as myth, monuments, historiography, ritual, conversational remembering, configurations of cultural knowledge, and neuronal networks."[130] Astrid Erll notes that the umbrella term of cultural memory helps us identify relationships between ancient myths, traditions, personal recollections of experiences and individual memory. As there is not one definition of cultural memory scholars agree with, Erll proposes that cultural memory is "the interplay of present and past in socio-cultural context" and culture comprises three aspects: social, material, and mental.[131] Cultural memory examines the ties between social relations, media and the mentality of a particular group. Such an approach gives us an opportunity to look at the film as a mirror reflecting societal tendencies and opinions, and also as a tool forming them. Film deals with cultural memory on two levels, as identified by Erll: 1) on the level of individual memory shaped within and influenced by socio-cultural contexts (the environment the person grows up in, people, places, media, books, conversations, etc.); 2) on the level of the symbolic order where films serve as a means to construct a shared past of a community or nation. The first level is explored within the film; the second level is the role the film plays in "telling the story" and its impact on society.

Hollywood has served as an influential tool in shaping the "memory" of the public about American Indians, both in the US and the world. Film was another means of cultural colonization. For decades, many films have portrayed specific images of the indigenous people that persist in the minds of both Native and non-Native audiences today. However, these images do not represent how Native American tribes perceive themselves. The images were often created from a political standpoint spreading a particular message and simultaneously fulfilling the demands of the public.[132] They are cultural stereotypes, which are representative of political trends and social relations be-

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130   *Ibid*., p. 1.
131   *Ibid*., p. 2.
132   See Rollins, P. / O'Connor, J. (eds.): *Hollywood's Indian: The Portrayal of the Native American in Film*, Lexington, University Press of Kentucky, 2003, 2011; Kilpatrick, J.: *Celluloid Indians*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1999.

tween cultures within the multinational country of the United States, which reflect in the mirror of mass media and mass culture. At the same time, they are misrepresentations of the culturally defined indigenous ways of thinking and come into conflict with the latter. Hollywood images of Native Americans are simulations; yet they are rather powerful. In order to be able to deconstruct them, "Native audiences need films that nourish Native individuals and communities" and help construct cultural memory with a Native viewpoint at its core.[133] Directed by Chris Eyre and written and co-produced by Sherman Alexie, *Smoke Signals* was the first attempt at an all-Native film, giving rise to Native cinema. Here, I will analyse individual remembering, group memory in the social context, identity, and narrative in *Smoke Signals* versus invented *Reel Injun* Hollywood traditions, and their interplay.[134] In order to do that, I will touch upon the stereotypes formed and spread by mainstream films and explore Native American film as a medium of exercising sovereignty in search of a way to tell Native American stories from a Native perspective. I will focus on *Smoke Signals* as a means of challenging popular culture, creating the new Native American story, and re-imagining Native identity through longing to reconstruct cultural memory.

Indians and Cinema: Shamans, Warriors, and Stoic Indians

> See, we only became Indians once the armed struggle was over in 1890. Before then we were Shoshone or Mohawk or Crow. […] The truth is that we didn't know a damn thing about being Indian. This information was missing from our Original Instructions. We had to figure it out as we went along. The new century beckoned. Telegraphs, telephones, movies – the building blocks of mass culture were in place, or being invented. […] Indians and Hollywood. We grew up together.
>
> Paul Chaat Smith (Comanche)[135]

Since its very beginnings, cinematography has taken an interest in Indians. Portraying Native American dances and ceremonies was a popular subject for silent films. The romance of the tragedy of the vanishing tribes that had such

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[133]   Cox, J. H.: "This Is What It Means To Say Reservation Cinema: Making Cinematic Indians in *Smoke Signals*." In: Berglund, J. / Roush, J. (eds.): *Sherman Alexie: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Salt Lake City, The University of Utah Press, 2010, pp. 74-94, here p. 77.

[134]   I am borrowing Neil Diamond's term from his film on history of Native Americans in Hollywood *Reel Injun: On the Trail of the Hollywood Indian*, Montréal, National Film Board of Canada, 2010.

[135]   Smith, P. C.: *Everything You Know about Indians Is Wrong*, Minneapolis, MN, USA, University of Minnesota Press, 2009, pp. 4f.

a tight connection to the land made Native American cultures a fascinating subject for later films. Until the end of the twentieth century, camera, Hollywood in particular, had shaped everything about American Indians. As Beverly Singer, a Santa Clara Pueblo film maker, duly points out, for the longest time only the whites were given the necessary support and recognition by society to tell Native American stories, even though they did not possess either the right or the necessary knowledge to tell such tales.[136] It has been assumed by the mainstream that Indians are not capable of creating anything worthy, neither literature nor film; they are nothing but ghosts of the uncivilized past. However, that is just one of many stereotypes of Native Americans that are alive and well today, even when the indigenous nations finally have an opportunity to make their voices heard. Jacquelyn Kilpatrick addresses this issue in *Celluloid Indians* where she stresses that stereotypes can be central to how the social groups are interpreted (including one's own social group), as stereotypes are concepts that evaluate the status of such groups.[137] Through juxtaposition of the western American hero and the savage Indian in the film, the American nation established its identity and dominance. As Paul Chaat Smith states with a touch of sarcasm in the epigraph, Hollywood stereotyped various tribes into one image of an Indian. Before, there were Crow, Choctaw, Shoshone, Iroquois, and many other tribes that were as different as the French, the Italian, and the German; the film industry created its own picture to be consumed by the public, pretending it knew better what being Indian actually meant.

Much has been said about the stereotypes perpetuated by Hollywood, yet it seems necessary to briefly mention them for the reader to have an understanding of what Native American film battles today. In the opening scene of *The Business of Fancydancing,* Sherman Alexie (in his first attempt as a director), places his protagonist, Seymour Polatkin (an American Indian poet), behind a book store window and has him staring at the passers-by who do not stop to wonder about the guy behind the glass, he is reading a poem on how to write a great American Indian novel:

> How to write the Great American Indian novel?
> This is how to write the Great American Indian novel.
> All of the Indians must have tragic features: tragic eyes, and arms.
> Their hands and fingers must be tragic when they reach for tragic food.
> The hero must be a half-breed, half white and half Indian, preferably

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[136]   Singer, B.: *Wiping the War Paint Off the Lens: Native American Film and Video*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2001, p. 2.

[137]   See Kilpatrick: *Celluloid Indians*.

from a horse culture. He should often weep alone.
If the hero is an Indian woman, she is beautiful. She must be slender
and in love with a white man. But if she loves an Indian man
then he must be a half-breed, preferably from a horse culture.
If the Indian woman loves a white man, then he has to be so white
that we can see the blue veins running through his skin like rivers.
When the Indian woman steps out of her dress, the white man gasps
at the endless beauty of her brown skin. She should be compared to nature:
brown hills, mountains, fertile valleys, dewy grass, wind, and clear water.
If she is compared to murky water, however, then she must have a secret.
Indians always have secrets, which are carefully and slowly revealed to everybody.
And Indians must see visions. White people can have the same visions
if they are in love with Indians. If a white person loves an Indian
then the white person is Indian by proximity. White people must carry
an Indian deep inside themselves. Those interior Indians are half-breeds
and obviously from horse cultures.
In the Great American Indian novel, when it is finally written,
all of the white people will be Indians and all of the Indians will be ghosts.[138]

With irony and sarcasm, the poem summarizes the stereotypes developed in literature about American Indians, but these stereotypes permeate film and mass culture as well. The Indian is depicted as a tragic half-breed from a horse culture (a Plains Indian), who has visions and is the embodiment of nature, full of secrets that are to be revealed to the white people so that they can eventually become better Indians than the ones that are disappearing. The three most widespread images of American Indians in the film are the following: a blood-thirsty savage, a noble savage, and a vanishing Indian; all of them are based on the notion of Indian people being classified as the "Other".[139] According to Louis Owens,

> [t]hese three expectations – savageness, nobility, and death (with none of the three mutually exclusive) – delineate neatly the role of the Indigenous Native in the Euro-American imagination, and they are expectations founded upon a meta-narrative that insists upon the mythic and tragic "otherness" of Native Americans. Above all, the media have always been careful not to portray the Indian as a living, viable inhabitant of contemporary America.[140]

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[138] Alexie, S. (dir.): *The Business of Fancydancing*, New York, Wellspring Media, 2003.
[139] Said, E.: *Orientalism*, New York, Vintage Books, 1994.
[140] Owens, L.: *Mixedblood Messages: Literature, Film, Family, Place*, Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1998, p. 117.

Kilpatrick explores similar ideas but also divides the stereotypes into the categories of mental, sexual, and spiritual: the images of primitive Indians in the film speak of their lesser intelligence and savage ways; their savagery is also expressed through their intense sexuality (as pointed out by Polatkin's poem); many westerns portray Indian spirituality as heathen, but at the same time inherently close to nature and earth, which creates the image of the noble savage.[141]

A Cree filmmaker, Neil Diamond, created a documentary, *Reel Injun,* which investigates the history and roots of the Hollywood stereotypes named by Owens and Kilpatrick.[142] According to the documentary, the noble Indian stereotype is the strongest one still in existence because of the mythological apparel that the cinema created around Indians, placing them in a magical land where everybody wants to be. This desire was intensified by the New Age movement, which focused much of its attention upon the mysticism of the indigenous beliefs. The New Age turned sacred ceremonies and traditions into commodities available to anyone, thus creating a tribe of "wannabes". Kevin Costner's award winning *Dances With Wolves* (1990) is one of the most notable examples of the noble Indian stereotype. Although at first glance it may seem as if the film focused on the American Indian tribe of Lakota, the narrative is in fact about the white male protagonist, who joins them for a period of time in order to acquire knowledge and wisdom, conveniently finds a white woman in the tribe to fall in love with, and then leaves the tribe to continue his journey. The tribe remains to face its destiny of the vanishing Indian. The film was preserved in the US National Film Registry in the category of "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant". Although it certainly has its merits as it employed some Native American actors as well as an indigenous language, American Indians do not have the leading parts, and the film itself still portrays the days gone by, the Romantic past that has no implications for the present. The white protagonist comes to the tribe to become an Indian and even a better one than the indigenous peoples themselves. Some of the Native critics point out the misrepresentations in the film: Dunbar, the protagonist, teaches the Lakota how to fight and defend themselves while the tribe has always taken pride in its warrior skills; the white woman who has been living with the tribe since childhood is portrayed as wild and unkempt while she would have dressed and behaved as the rest of the tribe. *Dances with Wolves* was not unique in its attitude to Indian fate; it followed the ideological and cinematic agenda.

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[141]   Kilpatrick: *Celluloid Indians*.
[142]   See Neil Diamond: *Reel Injun: On the Trail of the Hollywood Indian* (2010).

The blood-thirsty savage stereotype came with the American westerns. John Ford's 1939 *Stagecoach* served as the starting point of the persisting portrayal of Native Americans as blood-thirsty villains with John Wayne as the new American national hero. One of the most representative films of this stereotype is Ford's 1956 *The Searchers* starring John Wayne. It fully illuminated the hatred and violence of Wayne's character towards Native Americans. Ethan Edwards, the protagonist, spends seven years in search of his niece who was captured by the Comanches; his intention is to kill her, as she has been "ruined" by the Indians. One of the bright episodes, demonstrating disrespect towards the tribe, is the scene where Ethan and his fellows desecrate the grave of a buried Indian; Ethan shoots out the eyes of the corpse so he would not enter the spirit land. This film that propagated the idea that the only good Indian is a dead Indian was named the greatest American western of all time by the American Film Institute in 2008.

In both films discussed above, as well as in many others, the one permanent characteristic is the vanishing of the American Indian. As Louis Owens puts it, "there was an ever-present sense in [John Wayne's] films that the Indian did not count and was just a colorful residue of the past, with no stake in the world John Wayne was trying to construct."[143] The idea that the Indian would either completely assimilate or die out was cherished by the federal government for many years and incorporated itself into many federal Indian laws and policies. This notion was reflected in art as well as in film. Edward Curtis produced an extensive and unique collection of photographs, *The North American Indian,* at the beginning of the twentieth century. His work bears great aesthetic value, but cannot be considered historically correct. Supported by government funds, he in turn supported the government's idea of the vanishing Indian. His task was to portray the "true" Indians of the past, just as the public imagined them: whenever there was an object in the picture that belonged to the European culture and had been appropriated by Native Americans, he removed it from the picture; often he made his subjects dress in outfits recognizable to the public (headdresses, moccasins, buckskins), even if such did not belong to the culture of the nation he was photographing. Likewise, Native men in film were reduced to caricatures: they became all Plains Indians wearing a headdress and buckskin, from a horse culture and living in the desert. The title of the book Curtis published on traditions of indigenous people speaks for itself – *Indian Days of the Long Ago* (1915). Native Americans were considered incapable of change, therefore destined to remain in the romantic past and be replaced. They were to become a historical

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[143] Owens: *Mixedblood Messages*, p. 100.

artifact. Owens describes this as "America's five-hundred-year-long desire to become Indian, that unconscious but often articulated yearning to empty the space called Indian and reoccupy it."[144] Thus, we come across the most important issue: Indians in the film, as well as many literary and art works, were never portrayed as living, fully developed human beings with lives that fit into the common current picture of the world. Opposing this stereotypical portrayal in *Everything You Know About Indians is Wrong*, Paul Chaat Smith, a Comanche cultural critic, stresses, "contrary to what most people (Indians and non-Indians alike) now believe, our true history is one of constant change, technological innovation, and intense curiosity about the world. How else do you explain our instantaneous adaptation to horses, rifles, flour, and knives?"[145] Until the emergence of a Native cinema, this idea was repressed by cinematic images of old-fashioned "wild" Indians.

Among other stereotypes are portrayals of Native Americans as sidekicks (such as Tonto in the show *The Lone Ranger,* which first appeared on the radio in 1933 and was developed into a TV show running from 1949 to 1957), natural ecologists (such as Iron Eyes Cody who became an icon of everything good in American Indians in the United States and the world; the *Keep America Beautiful* 1971 commercial achieved great fame featuring Iron Eyes Cody, "the crying Indian," paddling a canoe to an industrial city and shedding a tear because of all the pollution he witnesses), and wise old chiefs and stoic warriors (characterized as possessing natural wisdom, lacking humor, speaking in a quaint manner). During the hippie movement, the American Indian became an allegory for all the oppressed people. In that period, as illustrated in *Reel Injun*, the hippie was a "groovy" Indian and an Indian was seen as a hippie. The hippie movement was assumed to have borrowed much from Native Americans, especially in terms of clothing. Even though that was not the case, many of the clothes hippies wore, such as headbands, for instance, were ascribed to Indians, too.

The stereotypes perpetuated by Hollywood and mass culture are detrimental not only to the general public's understanding of the indigenous nations of North America, but also to the Natives themselves. The influence of television is tremendous, especially with younger generations. Many film critics and Native American scholars recollect watching "cowboys and Indians" westerns, and associating with the cowboys, as Indians were the enemies and the bad guys. The idea that cowboys always win was instilled into many young minds in Native communities. Sherman Alexie admits having been

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144   *Ibid.*, p. 106.
145   Smith: *Everything You Know about Indians Is Wrong*, p. 106.

influenced by movies in his childhood and believing for a long time that cinematic Indians were real. Such vast influence could partially be explained by a lack of any other images of Native Americans and a great loss of culture and traditions in indigenous communities generated by many federal Indian policies. For instance, the boarding school era produced lost generations in Indian Country. American Indian children were taken away from their communities at an early age to white boarding schools where they were to learn various trades and assimilate into the white society. Often, they were not allowed to see their relatives or go home until they graduated. Unsanitary and often inhumane conditions caused the death of many children, but first and foremost, the boarding schools deprived the young generations of their culture. Children were made to wear school uniforms and cut their hair short; they were forbidden to speak their native languages and practice their tribal traditions. They were alienated from their communities and did not have a chance to learn about their culture from the elders. Meanwhile, elders were passing away, unable to pass on tribal knowledge to the youth. The tribes were deprived of performing acts of cultural memory, which caused its loss and eventual substitution with the complex of a victim and a longing for resurrection of culture. Sadly, Hollywood stereotypes often stepped into the place of Native cultural images of themselves. Amanda Cobb argues that

> unfortunately for Native Americans, fictional representations of Indians from a past century have become a litmus for 'authenticity' of contemporary Indian identity. […] [I]t also illustrates the true insidiousness of Hollywood images of Indians – these images are often internalized by the very people they objectify.[146]

Reviving and preserving cultures and languages are among the number one priorities of American Indian tribes today. Native cinema, in its turn, aims to rediscover the tribal image and perform acts of cultural memory. With storytelling being integral in many indigenous communities, film has finally become its new medium. Jennifer Meness insists that "film and video revive storytelling and restore [Native] foundation by helping Natives reconnect with relationships, traditions, beliefs, and feelings."[147] Zacharias Kunuk, director of *The Fast Runner*, a 2001 Canadian film written, directed and acted

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[146] Cobb, A.: "This Is What It Means to Say *Smoke Signals*: Native American Cultural Sovereignty." In: Rollins / O'Connor (eds.): *Hollywood's Indian: The Portrayal of the Native American in Film*, p. 216.

[147] Meness, J.: "*Smoke Signals* as Equipment for Living." In: Carstarphen, M. G. / Sanchez, J. P. (eds.): *American Indians and the Mass Media*, Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 2012, pp. 94-112, here p. 95.

in Inuktitut, regards film as a medium of talking back. Indigenous voices in the film are means of cultural empowerment.

Smoke Signals as an Act of Cultural Memory

In the light of the patterns and the stereotypes widespread in Hollywood, *Smoke Signals* (1998) was a breakthrough, which started a golden age in Native American cinematography. It was an achievement because it existed, as pointed out by Amanda Cobb, despite colonization and because, as Ojibwe film critic, Jesse Wente, observes it was "not about what occurred 120 years ago. It was a movie about Nativeness now."[148] It was the first feature film produced, written, and directed by Native Americans starring indigenous actors in leading roles. Sherman Alexie, the screenwriter and co-producer of the film, and a well-known Native American author, had to fight Hollywood in order to maintain the original intent and idea of the movie. Jennifer Meness suggests that, "Alexie's successful stand against Hollywood's attempt to control his film was the first step toward reclaiming [Native] stories, [Native] voice, [Native] cultures, and [Native] people from mainstream exploitation."[149] Alexie's film tries to mold new cultural memory and exercise sovereignty through media.

As the first Native American feature film, *Smoke Signals* carried the burden of having to be a commercial success, winning over not only Native viewers, but also a larger audience. It is a road-trip/buddy movie, a format that is well recognizable by the viewer and loved in Hollywood. Sherman Alexie admits in one of his interviews that the film "is very much a Western-structured, three-act, typical movie."[150] However, the trick of the filmmaker is to "challenge popular culture by creating popular culture."[151] *Smoke Signals* employs the tools of the mainstream, in order to subvert the mainstream's stereotypes. For the Native viewer, the film needed to break with the Hollywood Indian stereotypes that have real social and political consequences for the tribes. Amanda Cobb points out that, unfortunately, politicians (including congressmen and senators), like the general American public, are greatly influenced by Hollywood films' portrayal of American Indians. She stresses that, although feature films should not be the primary source of information, they still are and still have an influence on policymakers. Therefore, the front

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[148] Diamond: *Reel Injun*.

[149] Meness: "*Smoke Signals* as Equipment for Living," p. 95.

[150] McDonald, C.: "An Interview with Sherman Alexie." In: *Multicultural Review,* Vol. 11, Issue 4, December 2002, pp. 48-58, here p. 49.

[151] Cobb: "This Is What It Means to Say *Smoke Signals*," p. 207.

stage of the movie is occupied by the universal theme of father/son reconciliation known to all nations and times, but Eyre and Alexie brought the complex subtext of Indian stereotypes through the backdoor and scattered it all over the film.

This film is about the journey of two young male protagonists from the Coeur d'Alene Indian reservation travelling to Phoenix, Arizona. Victor Joseph is going to pick up the ashes of his recently deceased father Arnold Joseph who abandoned the family many years ago; Thomas-Builds-the-Fire accompanies him on this trip and is initially not a welcome co-traveler. The two characters seem to have nothing in common. Through juxtaposition of Thomas and Victor, the film explores the theme of contemporary Native Americanness in the light of two different personalities. Victor is a representative of the Indian warrior stereotype and Thomas tends towards the shaman/storyteller. Victor is tough and angry with his father who alienated himself; Thomas is hopeful, optimistic, and somewhat nerdy. The connection between these characters is established by memories of Arnold and shared episodes in their childhood past, even though their recollections are often quite different. At the same time, Victor's trip is an identity quest to come to terms with his past.

Thomas performs the important role of the storyteller and narrator in the film. It is an American Indian telling a story about American Indians. He is the voice of his tribe and presents the Native American tradition of storytelling, which is an integral part of oral histories of the tribes. Beverly Singer stresses that "oral tradition is fundamental to understanding Native film and video and how [Native people] experience truth, impart knowledge, share information, and laugh. Traditional American Indian storytelling practices and oral histories are a key source of [Native] recovery of [indigenous] authentic identity."[152] In Native communities, storytelling played the role of cultural memory; it passed knowledge from one generation to another. Many identified themselves through stories. The film with several layers of stories recreates this process: "at certain points [Thomas] is telling the story about himself telling the story about somebody else telling a story."[153] Therefore, as Cobb suggests, *Smoke Signals* is a story about stories, and stories within a story. And yet, Thomas as storyteller is much different from Hollywood depictions. His tales are not of the shamanic content; they are not fictionalized stories of the days gone by, but contemporary narratives rooted in the reservation that

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[152] Singer: *Wiping the War Paint Off the Lens: Native American Film and Video*, p. 3.
[153] West, D. and West, J. M.: "Sending Cinematic Smoke Signals: An Interview with Sherman Alexie." In: *Cineaste,* Vol. 23, 4, 1998, pp. 28-31.

touch the everyday lives of its people. As payment for a ride to the bus station, for example, he offers a story about Arnold Joseph as a hippie protesting against the Vietnam war, when he beat a National Guard private and got arrested: "First, they charged him with attempted murder, but they plea-bargained that down to assault with a deadly weapon, and then they plea-bargained that down to being Indian in the twentieth century, for which he got two years at Walla Walla."[154] This episode, on the one hand, is clearly an anecdote, but on the other hand, it is an act of remembering. As one of the characters of the film says, "it's a fine example of the oral tradition." It represents the tradition of storytelling from the Native point of view, but also shows great deviation from Hollywood's stereotypical storytelling as the story is about near past familiar to all its receivers involving humor and irony, which are coping mechanisms in Alexie's work. It exemplifies the characters' understanding of stereotypes and social relations. James Cox argues that "Alexie's focus on Thomas Builds-the-Fire's role contributes to a Native cinematic presence that is communally informed, in this case, by the memory and imagination of the community's storyteller."[155] The tribe's stories and individual memories tie in with a collective narrative in Thomas's character taking shape of a collective memory.

The narration in the film heavily relies on flashbacks, which are frequently incorporated into the film in the form of stories told by Thomas. These flashbacks are acts of memory for Thomas and Victor. However, they are so different that it becomes hard for the viewer to tell where the truth lies. The film explores the issue of individual memory of the past. As Astrid Erll points out, past is not a given. It has to be constructed and reconstructed. Therefore, individual memories of the same events can vary to a great extent depending on the circumstances. The past can assume different quality and meaning: *how* the events are remembered is as important as *what* is remembered. The history of American Indian-federal government relations is a bright example of how differently events can be perceived and remembered. In fact, the Native nations and the federal government hold an entirely different perspective on the five hundred years of colonization. We also see conflict with different perspectives in *Smoke Signals*. Victor and Thomas-Builds-the-Fire have varying memories of Victor's father and there is no clear division between truth and lies. Both Victor's and Thomas's versions of the past are subjective, resulting in them being unreliable, but not necessarily untrue. Suzy Song,

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[154]   Chris Eyre: *Smoke Signals* (1998), ShadowCatcher Entertainment, Seattle, Welb Film Pursuits Ltd.; distributed by Miramax Films, New York / Los Angeles.

[155]   Cox: "This Is What It Means To Say Reservation Cinema," p. 75.

Arnold's friend, provides yet another set of memories of Arnold to share. A combination of all three sets paints a bigger picture of the past, which assists in dealing with the present. It is irrelevant, if this past is entirely reliable in all its details. *Smoke Signals* creates an effect of the past and the present being merged together into one. "By means of framing effects, match cuts, and flashbacks, the film is in line with the Native American sense of time as circular rather than linear."[156] An episode can start in the present and swiftly move into a similar event in the past without explanations or transitions: one of the characters simply opens the door and walks through it into a different time or looks into a mirror and sees a younger version of himself. For example, in the store where Thomas offers Victor to help pay for the trip to Arizona in exchange for being Victor's companion, Victor walks out the door and turns into a little boy. Before the door slams shut, we catch a glimpse of grown-up Thomas watching Victor leave; and the story continues with a childhood memory. In his interview about *Smoke Signals*, Sherman Alexie explains that he wanted to play with the notion of time, to create a place where "the past, present, and future are all the same, that circular sense of time which plays itself out in the seamless transitions from past to present."[157] Everything is interwoven. The film stresses the importance of knowing and understanding the past to be able to cope with the present. Thomas sees the past as a resource of wisdom and power. Victor, on the other hand, understands the past as defeat and experiences what Robert Desjarlait refers to as a historical trauma response:

> Descendants of people who have suffered genocide not only identify with the past, but also emotionally re-experience it in the present. Thus, as a result of their loss as protectors and providers, Indian men in succeeding generations were affected with emotional pain, anger, and powerlessness.[158]

Victor feels anger towards the past and his estranged father who failed to provide for and protect his family (later in the film, we find out that the same feelings drove Arnold away from the reservation and family. He saved Thomas from a fire in which his parents died, but Arnold also caused this fire. Guilt and the inability to perform traditional roles broke Arnold's character). This feeling of anger can be healed by the re-creating of memories and reconciling

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[156] Feier, J.: *We Never Hunted Buffalo: The Emergence of Native American Cinema*, Berlin, London, Lit., 2011, p. 26.

[157] West and West: "Sending Cinematic Smoke Signals," pp. 28ff.

[158] Desjarlait, R.: "Into the Crucible: Sexual and Physical Abuse in Indian Country." In: *The Circle: News from an American Indian Perspective*, September 30, 2001, p. 12.

with the past, in order to be able to make progress in the present. As Alexie states, "sometimes to go forward you have to drive in reverse."[159] The film also presents a visual metaphor for this principle, which on the one hand can be read as a Native inside joke, but on the other hand, as a representation of the time concept. Victor and Thomas hitch a ride with two young women, Thelma and Lucy, who drive their car in reverse. As Singer urges, you have to trust the old ways and learn from them, in order to be able to change and advance.

Issues of identity and race heavily influence the lives of Alexie's characters. The portraits that Alexie paints of Native Americans troubles many American Indian critics and scholars; he is often accused of perpetuating negative stereotypes of broken drunk Indians. Indeed, many of his characters are impoverished marginalized people with alcohol and domestic violence troubles, which make them easy to be misread as stereotypical. However, Alexie's fiction is rooted deeply in his own experiences on the Spokane Indian reservation growing up in a broken family affected by alcoholism. Such "negative" characters appear to address social problems and call for a change in the community itself. As Daniel Grassian points out,

> it is not Alexie's intention to portray reservation Indians as helpless, poverty-stricken alcoholics. […] Rather, Alexie portrays reservation Indians as battered but resilient survivors of an unacknowledged American genocide, who continually struggle against the culture that stripped them of property, pride, and their indigenous culture.[160]

Victor and Thomas are exactly the kind of Indians Grassian describes. Although it seems they themselves are victims of Hollywood's Indian stereotype, they are actively aware of the latter. In one of the scenes, Victor accuses Thomas of having seen *Dances with Wolves* too many times and picking up too much from this film. He criticizes Thomas for "always trying to sound like some damn medicine man or something."[161] Victor offers Thomas to teach him how to be a real Indian and proceeds to instruct:

> First of all, quit grinning like an idiot. Indians ain't supposed to smile like that. Get stoic. […] You got to look mean or people won't respect you. White people

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[159]   As cited in West and West: "Sending Cinematic Smoke Signals," pp. 28ff.

[160]   Grassian, D.: *Understanding Sherman Alexie*, Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, 2005, p. 16.

[161]   Eyre: *Smoke Signals*.

will run all over you if you don't look mean. You got to look like you just got back from killing a buffalo. […] Thomas, you got to look like a warrior.[162]

On the one hand, this episode shows how influential film representations can be on the shaping of American Indian identity. On the other hand, it is a tongue-in-cheek scene. Victor at first accuses Thomas of following the wise shaman stereotype and then teaches him a stoic Indian stereotype. However, none of the characters follow the stereotypes in real life. As discussed earlier, Thomas is a storyteller different from the Hollywood ones, and he is not able to be a stoic Indian as he is kind and smiles all the time. Alexie explains, "Thomas explodes the myth and stereotype about the huge, stoic, warrior Indian. He is the exact opposite of what people have come to expect – the idea of an Indian geek just doesn't happen." He is closer to an Indian grandmother image than a stoic warrior (The actor Evan Adams admitted to the director that he was playing his grandmother). As West suggests, Victor is a warrior, but he is not the stoic and silent type. In the scene where two cowboys take Victor and Thomas's seats on the bus and the protagonists are forced to retreat, Thomas claims that cowboys always win, but Victor argues the opposite. Instead of silently accepting defeat in the battle for seats, he fights back with humor:

> Victor: You know in all those movies, you never saw John Wayne's teeth. Not once. I think there is something wrong when you don't see a guy's teeth.
> (*Victor taps on the seat and begins singing in the "49" style*.)
> John Wayne's teeth, hey-ya
> John Wayne's teeth, hey-ya
> Hey ya, hey ya hey
> Thomas: (Thomas joins in, both are singing)
> John Wayne's teeth, hey-ya
> John Wayne's teeth, hey-ya
> Hey ya, hey ya hey
> Are they false, are they real?
> Are they plastic, are they steel?
> Hey ya, hey ya hey
> Whoop![163]

Through the song, Victor gains victory over the stereotype by ridiculing the national hero of American westerns and making everyone on the bus feel

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[162]   *Ibid*.
[163]   *Ibid*.

uncomfortable. He counts coup in a traditional way by defeating the enemy without physically harming him, and reclaims the bus as Native American cultural space.

Humor is an essential part of Sherman Alexie's work. In one of his interviews, Alexie admits that "humor is the most effective political tool out there, because people will listen to anything, if they're laughing." He goes on to say:

> I always want to be on the edge of offending somebody, of challenging one notion or another, and never being comfortable not only with myself, or with my own politics or with my character's politics, or their lives, but with everybody else's. Humor is really just about questioning the status quo, that's all it is.[164]

With the help of humor, the stereotype subtext is only covertly political; this makes the film a "guilt-free experience" for the Euro-American audience, still not failing to bring the stereotypes to the public's attention.[165] At the same time, the film exposes Indian humor, debunking the stereotype of the stoic Indian even further. Humor is an essential part of culture, and Native Americans love to laugh. Alexie incorporates many entertaining episodes in the film, but some of them are in-jokes as well, something he refers to as "Indian trapdoors:" the general audience will think the jokes are funny, but they are culturally specific and, therefore, only the native audience will fully understand them and laugh. Alexie says, "an Indian will walk over them and fall in, but a non-Indian will keep on walking."[166] This is one of the techniques Alexie uses to create a complex, fully developed set of characters, which in their turn re-create a certain culture and bring it to the viewer. However, it is the Native American population that will forge a special connection with the film. Meness suggests that "joking about what would otherwise be sensitive topics becomes a way to defuse the tension as well as a way of remembering a shared past. Symbolic use of humor and sharing "in-group" humor […] satisfies the human need to feel connected."[167] The film is full of "Indianness". Cox suggests that the characters often remind themselves, each other and the audience that they are Indian, perhaps because they do not resemble those Hollywood Injuns. The tribal radio DJ in one of the opening scenes says "it's a good day to be indigenous," and whenever he announces the time, he stresses

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[164]   West and West: "Sending Cinematic Smoke Signals," pp. 28ff.
[165]   Cobb: "This Is What It Means to Say *Smoke Signals*," p. 228.
[166]   West and West: "Sending Cinematic Smoke Signals," pp. 28ff.
[167]   Meness: "*Smoke Signals* as Equipment for Living," p. 100.

it is Indian time.[168] In this manner, the film creates strong ties among Native viewers and acts as communal remembering creating cultural memory.

Smoke Signals touches upon many issues common to Native American tribes. Hence, the Native viewers feel they understand the characters and situations portrayed by the film; they can relate to them or identify with them. Jennifer Meness calls *Smoke Signals* equipment for living, because the film "fill[s] the void and create[s] a connection with Native viewers through familiar scenes of "home" on the reservation and universally recognizable characters."[169] She argues:

> Although individually we maintain rich cultures and distinct tribal identities, we became the generic, collective "Native American" through these shared experiences as a result of U.S. policy. […] Shared conditions, experiences, and situations create a collective consciousness. As cultures continually grew, changed and adapted, a pan-Indian culture emerged. Self-recognition as collective Native Americans gave rise to intertribal traditions. […] It is this pan-Indian collectiveness and the desire to connect with our own race that establishes *Smoke Signals* as equipment for living for Native people.[170]

She stresses the importance of the film's function as equipment for living, because it may provide the viewers symbolic closure for certain issues and experiences in their own lives through resolution of the characters' problems in the film. Both the characters and the audience strive for personal resolution as relief for their grievances, a way to make sense of the past, reconcile it with the present, and create a better future. According to the uses and gratifications theory, people fulfill their needs through media and find messages in it that are applicable to their personal use. In this case, the message is the one of "survivance".[171] This may account for *Smoke Signals´s* success with the Native audience, as well as the fact that it gave the people starving for an appropriate image of themselves, a film based on indigenous cosmology. For Native American people, representations in media matter both for their personal identity and for defining relationships with others. According to Meness the characters Thomas and Victor were internalized by the pan-Indian culture to shape their identities just like Thomas and Victor internalized stereotypical

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[168]   Eyre: *Smoke Signals*.

[169]   *Ibid.*, p. 94.

[170]   *Ibid.*, p. 96.

[171]   "Survivance" is a complex term coined by Gerald Vizenor which represents not mere surviva,l but active sense of presence and resistance of Native Americans to colonization and forced absence. For further reading on *survivance* see Vizenor, G. (ed.): *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2008.

portrayals of Indians as medicine men/storytellers and stoic warriors to define their identities. She also observes the imitating and mimicking of Thomas and Victor that spread in Indian Country after the film's success:

> Some spoke with more stories and analogies like seer/storyteller Thomas; others acted more like the hardened, bad-ass Victor. The expression "Enit?" became so popular in Indian Country that I remember hearing it used to replace a similar regional or tribal expression. At times I would call this adopted expression to another Native friend's attention by teasing, "You're Mohawk, don't you say 'unh?' or I'd gently remind a Navajo friend that the Navajo word is "nah?".[172]

The influence of *Smoke Signals* on tribal viewers is undeniable; indigenous members of different tribes are able to connect through the story told in the movie. The phenomenon described by Meness is the formation of pan-Indian cultural memory under the influence of indigenous film. It is an act of self-definition and an exercise of cultural sovereignty, which includes the power to determine how a community of people is represented in various media. As Singer argues, what matters is the ability to tell stories in whatever medium and manner American Indians choose, as that is an independent act of cultural remembering. Alexie's work is a blend of pop culture, to appeal to a wider audience; Indian spirituality, to re-create the image of Indianness on his own terms; and reservation life with its poverty, despair, alcoholism, hope, and stories. This blend creates a means of cultural survival, survivance, and a way to battle stereotypes of American mass culture. It gives indigenous consciousness an opportunity to emerge in fully-fledged three-dimensional indigenous characters that recollect the common past familiar in Indian Country, find peace with the present, and a way into the future. Thomas Builds-the-Fire noted, "The only thing more pathetic than Indians on TV is Indians watching Indians on TV." Not anymore.

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[172] Meness: "*Smoke Signals* as Equipment for Living," p. 107.

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Strategies of Memory in *Obabakoak* by Bernardo Atxaga and *Obaba* by Montxo Armendáriz

Today's Spanish culture is obsessed with memory. In many cases, it is inseparably connected with the traumatic experiences of the past (wars, revolutions, repressions or personal losses, and so on). Fiona Schouten states that many scholars "openly claim that the country needs to work through the past" to get over its trauma.[173] What is more, it is frequently assumed that cultural products and works of art – particularly literature – have a function to fulfill in this process: they need to "address the forgotten and dig up the silenced past."[174] However, the past is not necessarily traumatic. It can be a forgotten, legendary world of symbolic representations, fantastic and magic, which are used as constituent elements of national identities and which are being destroyed by the new globalized society. It would be a tragedy if those collective memories were lost. That is why culture and works of art seek ways of rediscovering and preserving them.

The comparative study of Bernardo Atxaga's famous book *Obabakoak* and its screen adaptation *Obaba* by Montxo Armendáriz has a special meaning in the above context. Both the novelist and the film director are intellectuals deeply involved in safeguarding the Basque traumatic and mythical past, and rethinking it, in order to suggest a new conception of Basque national identity as an open, inclusive project. The strategies of memory for achieving this goal were defined in the novel by Bernardo Atxaga and then translated by Montxo Armendáriz into the cinemato-graphic idiom. Thus, I start the paper with the place of *Obabakoak* in the contemporary Spanish nation-building process and in the flow of novels, memoirs, movies, television programs, and exhibits about the past, which scholars define as 'memory boom',[175] then I will focus on the mechanisms of

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[173] Schouten, F.: "Spain, the Traumatised Patient: Memory Scholars, their Objects, and the Discourse of Psychoanalysis", 2009, p. 2. http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/02/schouten-paper.pdf [30.09.2015].

[174] *Ibid*.

[175] *Ibid*., p. 1.

remembering and forgetting, on the peculiarities of strategies of the individual and collective memories in *Obabakoak,* and in the final part, I will concentrate on the strategies of memory in the film.

When speaking about the place of *Obabakoak* in the contemporary Spanish nation-building process, it should be emphasized that the general spirit of the novel is rather different from other books by the same author and from what is produced by other writers of the 'memory boom'. Published in 1988, at the beginning of 'the boom', *Obabakoak* stands apart as it is much less concerned with the traumatic experience of the Basque nation caused by the repressions during the Civil War and Francoist period of the Spanish history than with the negative consequences of the Basque cultural parochialism, on the one hand, and with the issues of creating a unique literary idiom to express the magic vision of the world produced by Basque isolation, on the other hand.

The metaphor of "the traumatised patient" to whom Fiona Schouten compares Spain can also be applied to Obaba, but by excluding the civil war and post-war repressions, Bernardo Atxaga totally rethinks the concept of trauma. For him, the everyday life of a provincial town of a small xenophobic society, which wipes out individuality and refuses to recognize the Other, is no less traumatic than the Holocaust. Bernardo Atxaga is critical of his country-fellows. The examples of humiliating treatment of others can be easily found in *Obabakoak.* Among them are the life stories of strangers who came to Obaba from the outside. This is the case with the father of Esteban Werfell, considerede as a devil in Obaba, because he does not go to church and does not follow the rules of the local community. The young teacher feels abandoned and excluded. Those who come from Obaba, but are different for some reason are also treated as enemies. One of these is Javier, "born on the wrong side of the blanket" (*hijo de las zarzas*). Another one is Ismael, who is dedicated to lizards which makes him the incarnation of the devil in the eyes of the narrator. There are many other examples of traumatic experiences caused by Obaba's cruel indifference or just life circumstances in a closed town, lost in the mountains, for instance when Katarina's happiness is completely destroyed as her father has to sell a horse named Kent to a slaughterhouse in Hamburg. In other parts of the book, the reader can find images of marginalized characters. The most impressive one is a dwarf, an insane literature professor from Madrid, who lives in solitude in Villamediana. "The emphasis on marginalized social elements in *Obabakoak* stresses the problematic character of the essentialist definition of cultural

identity",[176] states Néstor E. Rodríguez. The conclusion is completely true as the images of the unhappy strangers and marginalized characters symbolize an atmosphere of hostility, which splits the Basque nation from inside and creates difficulties in communication with the open world.

Another factor determining the specific place of *Obabakoak* in the flow of the contemporary Spanish memory literature is the priority given by the novelist to the problem of modernization of the Basque literature. In Bernardo Atxaga's opinion, Basque national identity cannot exist without the literary idiom that has accumulated the cultural practices of previous epochs. Bernardo Atxaga tries to invent a new type of powerful and flexible system of symbolic representations based on Basque collective memories:

> The imaginary geography of Obaba was born of Basque legends and an oral tradition that opened a door to an ancient world, a world that had already disappeared and in which memory was a living and natural form of transmission, the identifying mark of a community.[177]

According to the writer, this world must not only be preserved, but described as a new myth in which readers outside of Obaba will recognize themselves and with which they will fall in love. The memories of Obaba have to be rewritten as a universal narrative of postmodernity and, as a result, the small Basque town is transformed into the "global village"[178]:

> These days nothing can be said to be peculiar to one place or person. The world is everywhere and Euskal Herria is no longer just Euskal Herria – as Celso Emilio Ferreiro would have said – ´the place where the world takes the name of Euskal Herria'.[179]

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[176] "El énfasis constante en los elementos sociales marginales en Obabakoak contribuye a subrayar el carácter problemático de una definición esencialista de la identidad cultural." [English translation of all Spanish quotes by O.P.] In: Rodríguez, N. E.: "La palabra está en otra parte: Escritura e identidad en 'Obabakoak'." In: *Revista Hispánica Moderna*, Año 54, No. 1, 2001, pp. 176-190, here p. 188.

[177] Olaziregi, M. J.: "Mapping the Nation in the Contemporary Basque Literature." In: *ASJU*, XLII-1, 2008, pp. 387-398, here p. 392.

[178] Martín, A.: "Modulations of the Basque voice: an interview with Bernardo Atxaga." In: *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2000, pp. 193204.

[179] Atxaga, B.: *Obabakoak*, [Transl. from Spanish by Margaret Jull Costa], London, Vintage Books, 2007, p. 324.
"No hay, hoy en día, nada que sea estrictamente particular. El mundo está en todas partes, y Euskal Herria, ya no es solamente Euskal Herria, sino – como habría dicho Celso Emilio Ferreiro – el lugar donde el mundo toma el nombre de Euskal Herria." Atxaga, B.: *Obabakoak*, Madrid, Alfaguara, 2007, p. 371.

In the novel, this intention is articulated in the uncle from Montevideo's speech in defense of plagiarism. As Rodríguez points out, "plagiarism" here means the total renovation of the Basque cultural consciousness through its immersion into universal artistic idioms, into global intertextuality that has to put an end to the Basque cultural parochialism, but does not destroy the Basque cultural mythology. In *Obabakoak,* Bernardo Atxaga does not cease to be a 'nationalist' writer although he neither proclaims any political programs nor supports any ideological platforms.[180] His "nationalism" consists in the attempt to put the idiom of Basque literature on a qualitatively new level so that the Basque authors can have at their disposal all the ideological and artistic tools of postmodernism.

So, the world of Obaba, its "people and things"[181] in the novel by Bernardo Atxaga, is constructed by means of two approaches which at first glance may seem incompatible:

1. the writer produces an honest (I would say cruel) critical picture of his country as a space of hatred and xenophobia, which expels the strangers and annihilates the individualities of the local inhabitants and
2. by inventing a new literary idiom that transforms his homeland into a magic postmodern global world.

These two approaches are incorporated in the strategies of memory in the text, particularly, in the structure, forms and modes of remembering and forgetting in *Obabakoak*. First of all, they are reflected on the level of "what" is remembered. All the memories in *Obabakoak* can be divided into several layers according to the place where the novellas are set. From the geographical viewpoint, they accumulate the experience of many territories from different continents:

1. memories of the past of Obaba's people: the first part of the book *Infancias,* "Jóvenes y Verdes", "Método para plagiar", "X e Y", "La antorcha" from the third part *En busca de la última palabra*;
2. the cultural 'memories' connected with history of the Basque Country and its literature: the imagined conversation with Axular, which takes place in the dream of the uncle from Montevideo;
3. Bernardo Atxaga's autobiographical reflections on his attempts to find his own way as a writer: *A modo de autobiografía*;
4. the account about the narrator's stay in Villamediana, Castile;

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180   Rodríguez: "La palabra está en otra parte."
181   Atxaga: *Obabakoak* [Transl.].

5. the traumatic memories of marginalized characters who live in Germany: "Hans Menscher", "Klaus Hahn", "Margarete y Heinrich, gemelos";
6. a quasi-historical short story about the misadventures of a soldier in medieval France: "Yo, Jean Baptiste Hargours";
7. the "exotic" Latin American and oriental (Arabic and Chinese) personal and historical memories, anecdotes and fables: "El criado del rico mercader", "De soltera, Laura Sligo", "Wei Lie Deshang".

Thus, the memories in the book are far from being limited to Obaba. In other words, Obaba becomes a part of the global world in which all people face more or less the same problems: they are traumatized by misunderstanding and exclusion from life. The involvement of Obaba in the process of global communication is emphasized by a complicated system of narrators – those who preserve and tell the memories in the novel. Among them one can find Basques and other Spaniards, an Indiano uncle from Montevideo, a representative of the Anglo-Saxon world, Mr. Smith speaking in Spanglish, Germans, and so on. The house of the uncle from Montevideo, where writers gather to read their short stories, resembles a cosmopolitan milieu of a literary club. In such a way, Bernardo Atxaga demonstrates that the transformation of Obaba from a claustrophobic environment to an open cultural space has already happened. The multicultural team of storytellers brings the inter-national memories to the small Basque place, making it a centre of the universe.

> When creating Basque literature Atxaga inverts values and suggests that Basque literature should not limit itself to the Basque tradition but that it should open to other traditions, it should demonstrate that the periphery is open, is universal.[182]

The shift towards universal values determines the approach towards the processes of remembering and forgetting in *Obabakoak*. Bernardo Atxaga treats the subject as a cognitive or psychological problem typical of all in-dividuals. There is more evidence of Bernardo Atxaga's intention to write a book about Obaba as a universal model of human existence and not only as an exclusively "national" narrative. One of the difficulties considered in the

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[182] "Atxaga, al hacer literatura vasca, invierte los valores y, al proponer que la literatura vasca no se haga solo sobre la base de la tradición vasca sino que se abra a otras tradiciones, muestra que la periferia es lo abierto, lo universal." Gabikagojeaskoa, L.: "*Obabakoak* vs. *Obaba*." In: *Letras Hispanas: Revista de literatura y de cultura*, Vol. 6, № 2, 2009, pp. 90-100, here p. 92,
http://www.modlang.txstate.edu/letrashispanas/previousvolumes/vol6-2/contentParagraph/0/content_files/file6/Obabakoak.pdf [30.09.2015].

book is how much information should be kept in consciousness, or deleted from it. This dilemma turns out to be such a challenge for some individuals that the impossibility of solving it can provoke depression, frustration or even insanity. In Bernardo Atxaga's novel, this becomes a recurrent motif. It appears for the first time in the novella "Esteban Werfell". In his diary, the protagonist compares life to a river. By means of this metaphor, he wants to say that life acquires meaning only if it is taken as a whole, with all its "significant" and "insignificant" events, and not as divided into smaller periods, incidents, or accidents. Memory functions almost in the opposite way:

> Like all good witnesses, memory takes pleasure in the concrete, in selected details. If I had to compare it with anything, I'd say it was like an eye.[183]

Memory cannot provide a coherent picture of the past as

> it disregards the ordinary and instead seeks out remarkable days, intense moments; in my own case it forgets everyday life, instead seeking the light, the significant days, the intense moments. Seeking, as in my case, it seeks out one far-off afternoon of my life.[184]

The same idea is developed on the introductory pages of *Nueve palabras en honor del pueblo Villamediana* illustrating two opposite examples of victims of memory. I would like to stress again that they are victims of "abstract memories": the readers do not know what they try to remember or forget. The first case presents an insane stranger who came to the house of the narrator's uncle and aunt, where he stayed when he was a boy of nine. The reason for the newcomer's insanity is that the person remembers too many things ("The trouble with him is that he remembers too much"[185]). Quite the opposite occurence can be observed when the narrator visits the psychiatric asylum to see his old friend who lost his memory and feels scared. The director of the psychiatric hospital compares memory to a dam which "irrigates and gives life to our whole spirit the spirit", and stresses that for efficient functioning it needs overflow channels to get rid of the surplus water, otherwise it will burst its banks. On the other hand, says the narrator, "once it's emptied out, it will

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[183]   Atxaga: *Obabakoak* [Transl.], p. 6.
         "Como a buen testigo, a la memoria le agrada lo concreto, le agrada seleccionar. Por compararla con algo, yo diría que actá como un ojo." Atxaga: *Obabakoak*, p. 13.

[184]   Atxaga: *Obabakoak* [Transl.], p. 7.
         "Olvida los díascorrientes; busca, en cambio, la luz, los días señalados, los momentos intensos; busca, como en mi caso, una remota tarde de mi vida." Atxaga: *Obabakoak*, p. 13.

[185]   Atxaga: *Obabakoak* [Transl.], p. 92.

dry up forever."[186] Thus, the most dangerous and difficult aspect about memory is to learn how to find a safe ratio between what is to be remembered and what is to be forgotten. The narrator's case is reminiscent of that of Esteban Werfell: his consciousness deletes most of the information, only saving some glimpses, and, as a result, his past is reduced to a few images. The narrator cannot imagine his own previous experience in its totality as a "neatly constructed landscape" (*un paisaje bien construido*).[187] It is always seen as an empty space where some scattered islands emerge. To the question, "How much should you remember?", the director answers ironically, "neither too much nor too little".

The other universal mnemonic problem presented in the novel is the impossibility of defining collective memories. "Memory, like the heart, is a bit antiquated – says the director of the psychiatric hospital –. It pays little heed to logic."[188] This sentence is equally true for all types of memories, but has a special meaning when Bernardo Atxaga speaks about collective remembrance. Its essence can be described as an intuitive and sensual aura, which constitutes the emotional core of the Obabakoak people. As a spatial phenomenon, Obaba is an example of the "the invented *lieux de mémoire*", recalling Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County, Rulfo's Comala or Marquéz's Macondo, which were created as chronotopes of collective or social memories.

> Very much like Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha or Rulfo's Comala, the descriptions of Obaba speak about a lived-in geography, a geography which is far from topological accuracy and is used as a narrative excuse to tell about the ancient world ruled not by the logic of cause and effect connections, but by magic laws. The events in Obaba are determined by the opposition between Nature and Culture and in reality this imagined geography corresponds to the pre-modern world, where words like "depression" or "schizophrenia" do not exist and people communicate with animals when they need to get explanations of phenomena beyond their understanding.[189]

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[186]   Atxaga: *Obabakoak* [Transl.], p. 95.
"- Yo creo que la memoria es como una presa... Le da vida a todo nuestro espíritu, lo irriga. Pero igual que la presa, necesita de unos aliviaderos para no desbordarse. Porque si se desborda o revienta destroza todo lo que encuentra en su paso.- Y por otra parte una vez que se vacía se queda seca." Atxaga: *Obabakoak*, pp. 109-110.

[187]   Atxaga: *Obabakoak* [Transl.], p. 95; Atxaga: *Obabakoak*, p. 110.

[188]   Atxaga: *Obabakoak* [Transl.], p. 96.
"La memoria, ¿cómo le diría? Sí, es un poco arcaica, como el corazón. No hace demasiado caso a la lógica." Atxaga: *Obabakoak*, p. 110.

[189]   "Como en Yoknapatawta faulkneriano o el Comala de Rulfo, las descripciones de Obaba hablan de una geografía vivida, una geografía que se aleja de cualquier exactitud topológica y sirve de excusa narrativa para transmitir un mundo antiguo en el que no rige la causalidad lógica sino la mágica. La oposición entre Naturaleza y Cultura es la que condiciona el

Events of political history enter into those memories as a background without being accorded primary importance. In *Obabakoak,* the Basque history of the 20th century, especially the Civil War and the tragic post-war period, are presented not as facts or events but as a general painful atmosphere, an unfavorable context to which the Obaba people have to adjust their lives while paying an extraordinarily high price. In Obaba, as in other "invented *lieux de mémoire*", the collective memories are organized as an "intrahistorical" flow of everyday incidents affecting the reader like magic: the process of remembering the episodes of the books fascinates, disturbs, or even irritates and, at the same time, changes the consciousness completely. As in many other literary and cultural texts of magical realism, the very special spirit of Obaba resists verbalization but, once discovered, can never be forgotten. Its slow melancholic pace of life, the eternal return of time, the absence of official history and the priority given to emotional aspects of the human existence in the end overwhelm with enigmatic beauty and reshape all the mechanisms of remembering and forgetting. As a result, the reader becomes obsessed with Obaba.

The obsessive character of collective memories is symbolized in the novel by the image of the lizard, which, according to legend, can get into the head through the ears, eat the brain, and make people insane. The narrator recollects this legend when he sees Ismael with a lizard and their other classmates in a picture taken many decades before. Understanding the absurdity of the popular beliefs, the narrator, nevertheless, starts researching as to whether lizards can really penetrate human brains. In spite of common sense, of Ismael's evidence that this cannot be true, of his uncle's jokes, and of his friend's skepticism, the narrator, after spending a night in the barn where the lizards are kept, feels that his eardrum is damaged, that he is becoming deaf, and is suffering from mental pathology.

It makes sense to stress the universal meaning of the image of the lizard. On the one hand, it is always taken as something threatening, scary and disgusting in all cultures of the world as it is connected with the global chthonic underworld mythology. On the other hand, it is a symbol of

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devenir de los acontecimientos en Obaba, y en realidad, esta geografía imaginaria se corresponde a un mundo pre-moderno, donde no existen palabras como 'depresión' o 'esquizofrenia' y se recurre a los animales para explicar acontecimientos incomprensibles para sus habitantes." Olaziregi, M. J.: "La recepción de la obra literaria de Bernardo Atxaga." In: *Revista de lenguas y literaturas catalana, gallega y vasca*, UNED, № 6, 1998-1999, pp. 307-322, here p. 309,
http://e-spacio.uned.es/fez/eserv.php?pid=bibliuned:Llcgv-0FB88C79-BC20-7391-A1A2-0AE13A64D7F0&dsID=La_Recep.pdf [30.09.2015].

marginalized and repressed identities, like the Basque one. Such an interpretation is suggested by the illustration from *Alice in the Wonderland,* which the uncle and the narrator examine: the March Hare and the Dormouse make Bill, the little lizard, taste brandy against his will ("X e Y", p. 353). Moreover, the image of the lizard can produce unlimited semantic associations through intertextual links with world culture and perfectly fits to express Bernardo Atxaga's vision of the Basque country as the two-faced Janus: as a closed "cold" provincial world repressing the strangers for being different and as a magic mythological space with its unforgettable, melancholic beauty. Any obsessive idea or feeling acts like the lizard. It penetrates the brain through the ears, as a piece of news or a rumor, settles down there and reorganizes the cognitive processes around itself.

The tendency of "silencing" the civil war and the repression of memories, the critical treatment of the Basque xenophobia as an evidence of cultural parochialism, the search for a new postmodernist literary idiom and the interest in difficulties of remembering and forgetting that are typical of all individuals, raise the question of how, in *Obabakoak,* the problem of the relation between memory and modernity is solved. In her paper, "Memory and Modernity in Democratic Spain: The Difficulty of Coming to Terms with the Spanish Civil War", J. Labanyi (2007) proves that this question is of vital importance for the future of Spanish society. The scholar states that the projects of modernity based on the global establishment of capitalism assume that "modernity requires a rupture with the past. The notion of progress, central to the liberal philosophy which has underpinned modernity, was based on the idea of a necessary rupture with a stable order based on birthright, in favor of a new mobility based on merit, incarnated in the 'self-made man' who was able, through his own efforts, to break with his origins and create new wealth."[190] J. Labanyi disagrees with this principle and tries to suggest another understanding of modernity – "in terms not of capital modernization but of attitudes towards the relation of present to past."[191] Such an approach aims at

> elaborating a conception of modernity that, while it accepts the importance of moving on and continues to believe in the possibility of creating a better future, is also respectful of the need to acknowledge the past.[192]

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[190]   Labanyi, J.: "Memory and Modernity in Democratic Spain: The Difficulty of Coming to Terms with the Spanish Civil War." In: *Poetics Today*, 28/1, 2007, pp. 89-116, here p. 91.

[191]   *Ibid*.

[192]   *Ibid*.

The understanding of modernity suggested by J. Labanyi makes all "pacts of oblivion" impossible and stresses the dangers of those pacts, as the past never disappears from the lives of individuals and expresses itself in the form of injuries, which global capitalism is not able to heal.

The conception of modernity, or ways of modernization of the Basque culture suggested in *Obabakoak,* is a kind of utopia very close to the solution of Labanyi, as it postulates the total renovation of Basque literary and cultural identity without implementation of the newest technological achievements of global capitalism. Bernardo Atxaga speaks about Obaba as a "global village" in terms of a space open to all contemporary cultural practices. However, it does not mean any rupture with the past. On the contrary, the past must be remembered and scrutinized, in order to diagnose the reasons that prevent the Basque Country from constructing a successful project for the future. Moreover, the Basque past in the novel is not only a reservoir of envies and hatred, but a magic magnetizing world that enchants the reader with its melancholic beauty. It provides the narrator, Bernardo Atxaga, himself, with the strength to become a super-man and a super-writer, the Mother Goose, "the image of the supreme being since she knows how to live on land and sea and in the air."[193]

In 2005, a Basque film director Montxo Armendáriz made the film *Obaba,* based on Bernardo Atxaga's novel. In the paper, "De tal palo, tal astilla: la huella de la memoria en *Obabakoak* y su adaptación cinema-tográfica, *Obaba*", dedicated to provide a comparison of *Obabakaok* and *Obaba*, Jennifer Carolina Gómez Menjivar states that in spite of being two different artistic projects, both the book and the film coincide in

> their predilection for redemption of memories in the rural towns of the North of Spain. They do not create the romantic image of the Basque Country and Navarra nor speak about the melancholic circumstances during the dictatorship. On the contrary, both *Obabakoak* and *Obaba* investigate the trace of memory in the contemporary cultural production and highlight, how the magic power of the written word, a mirror of the day before yesterday, and the visual image, the artistic tool of today, is used to safeguard the contribution of the people of the Basque Country and Navarre to the Spanish culture.[194]

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[193]   Martín: "Modulations of the Basque voice", p. 195.
[194]   "*Obabakoak* y *Obaba* son dos distintos proyectos artísticos que, sin embargo, coinciden en su predilección por el rescate de la memoria en los pueblos rurales del norte de España. No se pinta una imagen romántica del País Vasco y Navarra ni se destaca su melancólica condición a lo largo de la dictadura. Al contrario, *Obabakoak* y *Obaba* indagan la huella de la memoria en la producción cultural contemporánea y ponen en relieve el poder mágico de

In Jennifer Carolina Gómez Menjivar's opinion, both projects even have pedagogical dimensions. In *Obabakoak,* Bernardo Atxaga does his best to show "the unique historical memory of the Basque town without being trapped by nationalism and by inscribing this culture into the global panorama", while *Obaba* "deconstructs the urban prejudice against rural areas."[195] In order to accomplish these intentions, Bernardo Atxaga and Montxo Armendáriz had to solve an extremely difficult task – inventing the idioms, literary and cinematographic, which would be able to convert "the forgotten Guipúzcoa" of the chroniclers of the 19th century today […] into the "Reign of Obaba."[196]

Lulú Gabikagojeaskoa in her paper "Obabakoak vs. Obaba" also stresses that in spite of all the differences in the plot, the film "does not deform the environment" or "the undefined virtual reality."[197]

> The film was very well received both by euskaldun audiences and by the writer, who confessed that in order to bring *Obabakoak* to the screen, it was necessary to find "an individual with whom I would be in emotional harmony and Montxo whom, since I saw *Tasio*, I have always taken as someone very close to my universe.[198]

However, Lulú Gabikagojeaskoa concentrates on the differences between the two works of art. In her opinion, the main objective of Bernardo Atxaga was to write a book about the search for Basque literary identity and for a new postmodern idiom. It explains all the problems that *Obabakoak* causes to

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la palabra escrita, espejo del anteayer e imagen visual de nuestros días, para salvaguardar el aporte de los pueblos vascos y navarros al patrimonio cultural español." Gómez Menjivar, J. C.: "De tal palo, tal astilla: la huella de la memoria en *Obabakoak* y su adaptación cinematográfica, *Obaba*." In: *Divergencias. Revista de estudios lingüísticos y literarios*. Volumen 7, número 2, 2009, pp. 13-22, here p. 13.

[195] "[...] es una labor pedagógica en la medida que se empeña por rescatar la memoria histórica de pueblos vascos sin caer en las trampas del nacionalismo al conectar esa cultura con el panorama global. *Obaba*, adaptación de los aspectos ideológicos del texto literario, desconstruye los prejuicios urbanos de los pueblos rurales." *Ibid*., pp. 21-22.

[196] "La continuidad de valores ideológicos aseguran que aquella melancólica "Guipúzcoa olvidada" de los cronistas forasteros del siglo XIX se convierta, en manos de Bernardo Atxaga y Montxo Armendáriz en la época contemporánea, en el 'Reino de Obaba'." *Ibid*., p. 14.

[197] "[...] no deforme el ambiente o 'infinito virtual'." Gabikagojeaskoa: "*Obabakoak* vs. *Obaba*", p. 99.

[198] "La película fue bien recibida tanto por el público euskaldun en general como por el escritor, quien afirmó que para llevar al cine *Obabakoak* necesitaba: 'un hombre con el que me sintiera en concordancia y a Montxo, desde que ví *Tasio*, lo percibí como alguien muy próximo a mi universo'." *Ibid*., p. 96.

anyone trying to define the genre of his book or its style. It is a metafictional text concerned with the issue of narrative techniques. *Obaba* is a film about a place. It is hardly possible to translate the intertextuality of the novel into the cinematographic idiom. The film sacrifices the metafictional dimension of the book because

> its objective is to present a fantastic world of Obaba, the imagined space of a narration; it is done as if the filmmaker would like to show the difference between the city and the countryside. Obaba seduces the student-protagonist, maybe, because one of the lizards of Ismael penetrated her brain and ate it the same way it had happened to Albino María or because the life of Obaba is more real than the life in the city or it is highly possible that the love is more real as Miguel becomes her guide both in Obaba and in love. […] The book *Obabakoak* invites us to to think about the literary issues like the eternal question, why is it necessary to write and, in this particular case, to create a mode of contemporary writing in Euskera? [...] The film by Armendáriz, in its turn, emphasizing the mythical character of Obaba also moves us the primitive landscape, where the time and the space are not yet synchronized, which is the distinguishing feature of each foundational scenery.[199]

The differences between the artistic intentions in *Obabakoak* and *Obaba* are reflected in the strategies of memory in the film. Being more concentrated on the Basque space and mythology, the film director makes the world narrower and deletes the signs of the cosmopolitan environment in Bernardo Atxaga's book: in the film there is no uncle from Montevideo with his international friends; the German element is reduced to one story about Esteban Werfell; Klaus Hahn becomes Lucas Pellot, one of the classmates from the group picture; the legend about the lizard dominates the whole plot; the old-fashioned, typically Basque elements are added (envies and hatred among the Basques – Cain's legacy); oral memories of the town, which the protagonist

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[199] "[...] ya que su objetivo es presentarnos el mundo fantástico de Obaba, esto es, el espacio imaginario de una narración; es como si se mostrara la diferencia entre la ciudad y el campo. Obaba seduce a la estudiante-protagonista tal vez porque uno de los lagartos de Ismael le entró y le comió el cerebro al igual que a Albino María, o porque la vida en Obaba es más real que la vida en la ciudad o tal vez el amor, ya que Miguel se convierte en su guía tanto de Obaba como del amo. [...] el libro *Obabakoak*, nos invita a hacer una reflexión literaria sobre cuestiones de tipo universal como la necesidad de escribir y en este caso concreto, la de crear una escritura moderna en euskera. [...] La película de Armendáriz, por su parte, al poner en el primer plano el carácter mítico de Obaba, nos traslada también a un escenario primigenio, donde el tiempo y el espacio no están del todo sincronizados, que es precisamente la marca de todo escenario fundacional." *Ibid*., p. 98.

shoots at the end of the film; the love story between Lurdis and Miguel, and so on. Briefly, Obaba is not a "global village" anymore; it is a typical Spanish *pueblecito* with its highly intensive internal life.

The entire film focuses on the impact of collective memory on the consciousness of the stranger Lurdis Santís, a contemporary young woman. She takes the place of the narrator, one of the Obaba people living for a long time outside the world of his childhood. The main tool used by Lurdis is, not writing a book, but shooting a film which she has to produce as a part of her study program. When learning about the people of Obaba, she records stories of individuals presented through the cinematic idiom, which changes her vision of herself and the world as a whole. Obaba influences her so much that she decides to stay there for good. It is memories of the place, which pull her in so tightly that she decides not to return to the world whence she came.

To emphasize the seductive potential of collective memories, Montxo Armedáriz makes a film about shooting another film. The metafictional novel *Obabakoak* also treats the processes of remembering and forgetting as the only part of the writer´s intention. *Obaba* is a meta-cinematic text about memories *per se;* that is why it integrates a wide spectrum of strategies of visualizing the intersection of the past and the present. The whole movie *Obaba* can be seen as a piece of art that represents the strategies used by cinema to store and restore memories. I will attempt to summarize them briefly. First of all, I would like to focus on the functions of camera and shooting for preserving memories in the film.

1. The camera as a research and journalistic tool.

The starting point for Lurdis's research is an old picture, which hangs on the wall of Ismael's hostel. Ir depicts schoolchildren from the local school. The camera records interviews with those people who were in the picture and who are still alive or have not left Obaba. They tell three stories: about the teacher (Merche), about Lucas Pellot (Ismael) and about Klaus and Esteban Werfell (Esteban Werfell and Miguel's mother). The camera draws attention to the images of old things, books, pieces of furniture, and rooms. The film combines elements of fiction and docu-mentary aesthetics. For instance, the story about the teacher starts with episodes showing Merche. They are shot with an amateur camera. This method is used in many other parts of the film and becomes dominant in the final part of the movie. It coincides with Lurdis's decision to stay in Obaba, in order to record stories of all inhabitants, both old and young. In such a way, the camera unites generations and forges a community.

2. The camera as a diary and confessor.

As many film creators, Lurdis uses the camera as a working diary. She records her voice, indicates location, dates, time and other pieces of information, which can help her when editing the film. The camera is also a kind of confessor for Lurdis. The film starts with her talking to the camera and recording herself. She talks about what happened to her in Obaba: "My name is Lurdis Santís. I am 23 years old and until recently I was a normal person."(00:00:50). Thus, the camera becomes a mirror, in which the heroine can see the gradual transformations of her "self" caused by her penetration into memories of Obaba.

3. The camera as a source of mythical reality, which reconstructs the past.

The approach towards showing the past, which is used in the novel and film, can also be described as intrahistorical. However, cinema as a visual art provides the film director with resources, more powerful than the book, for reproducing the aura of things. The memories of Obaba are full of emotions, impressions, and melancholy caused by boredom, separation, hostility, humiliation, and paradoxical love for Obaba, this land of hatred and exclusion. This atmosphere presented in the film is much more concentrated than in the novel. For shooting, Montxo Armendáriz chooses a typical Basque town (in the Valle del Roncal, in the Pyrenees in Navarre). It is an authentic landscape with a fantastic, seductive visual potential. The camera shows the old buildings that preserve historical memory. They have not changed for decades. That is why Lurdis gets an opportunity to live through the tragedies that happened to the Obaba people many years before. The school attended by her and Merche is left untouched, as is Klaus Werfell's house. The film can be considered as a visual museum of Basque everyday life, giving the young woman from the contemporary Spain a chance to restore the past. In this sense, the observations made by Jennifer Carolina Gómez Menjivar are completely true.

Montxo Armendáriz, following Unamuno, articulates the idea of the eternal return of some basic national feelings playing a crucial part in Basque history. Envy, in particular, is a driving factor of relations among people in Obaba. This motif is also present in *Obabakoak,* but plays a noticibly less important role. In the film, it becomes one the most decisive factors of the past that influences human lives in the present. Begoña says that Ismael put a lizard into Tomas's ear, because the former had envied the latter's success at school (in the novel, nothing is said about envy among boys in their childhood). Ismael envies Manuel and spreads rumors about sexual relations of the latter

with the teacher (these details also being absent in *Obabakoak*). Lucas Pellot pushes his sister into the river because she accuses him of being envious of someone. Begoña burns the barn with the lizards because, many years before, Ismael had refused to give her a ride to the cinema on his bike as he was in love with Merche – the old envy of one woman for another bursts out in an act of revenge.

Those three functions of the camera in the film are connected with narrative techniques used by Montxo Armendáriz. There are at least *three types of narrators*:

1. the omniscient author-director, who talks about events in a realistic way, in other words "objectively", and shows secret details, "true" feelings and motivations of the characters, which cannot be known to Lurdis or other people of Obaba;
2. the protagonist Lurdis Santís, who confesses in front of the camera, reveals her spiritual transformations and comments on the events in the voice-over; she is also an interviewer;
3. the secondary characters from Obaba who tell stories of their former classmates.

The soundtrack can also be considered an independent narrator, as music comments on the events and creates a melancholic mood. In comparison to the novel, the configuration of narrators is considerably transformed. In *Obabakoak,* the omniscient author-narrator is absent; the narrator calls himself a transcriber. In the final chapter Bernardo Atxaga himself appears with his spiritual "autobiography", but in any case his voice is not dominating – it is one of the voices possibly transcribed by the narrator or inserted by the writer in the Castilian language edition. The narrator cannot be considered a protagonist because he only appears from time to time in the third part of the book. The comparison of the configuration of narrators in the novel and the film can be continued, but what has been discussed is enough to demonstrate a contrast: in *Obaba* a combination of narrative perspectives and modes of narration help reveal the impact of the collective memories on the individual, while in *Obabakoak* they are part of a sophisticated literary game.

Narrative time in the film is also organized, in order to demonstrate the influence of the collective memories on Lurdis's consciousness. In the novel, each novella deals with separate events set in the past. The "main plot" about the lizard is based on the linear time model, although its ending is delayed by stories told by different narrators. The film also has one "main plot" in the present time, interrupted by several subplots (personal stories of the Obaba people) set in the past. The main plot in the film starts from the end – from

the moment when the transformation of Lurdis is completed, while in the book the "mystery of the lizard" is discovered at the very end. In general, the narrative time in the film is directed from the present to the past, but both time layers are intermingled and penetrate each other. Simultaneously, the narrative time in the film combines linear and cyclical approaches as, in the lives of the characters, the same plot is repeated – they are stories of strangers who are expelled from Obaba for being different – for being the Other. The people are dissolved in the flow of everyday events and the memories about it are structured as flashbacks telling the viewer about the events. This method is used by the film director to emphasize the idea that history is unchangeable. At the same time, history is shown in the film as a contradictory and heteroglossic process. All voices can be clearly heard, which means the Basque memories are presented, not as a monolithic discourse, but as a complicated and paradoxical narration. Such a sophisticated system of using camera and narrative techniques creates an effect of multidimensional penetration of Obaba's memory into both Lurdis's and the viewers' minds.

In the film, special attention is paid to novellas, which can be interpreted as adaptations of Bernardo Atxaga´s short stories. These stories deal with the lives of the characters that are remembered in Obaba. The first novella is about a school teacher, the most beautiful, and the unhappiest woman in the town. It is filled with sadness and melancholy. The narrator of the story is called Merche. The teacher is dreaming of her best friend whom she met at a resort and from whom she is waiting for letters which never arrive (in the book she receives them). On the other hand, it is a story about the terrible power of sex and about the unbearable desire of being loved. The tragic atmosphere of the story is intensified by an accident: during a walk with the children, Lucas Pellot pushes his sister Marga into the river. Obaba is presented as a closed claustrophobic world full of envy and hatred towards the Other. Compared to the novel, the plot is changed. In Bernardo Atxaga's case, the text is open-ended and the teacher is going to meet her friend. In the movie, the teacher runs away from Obaba to the mountains, with Manuel.

The next novella, told by Ismael, is about Lucas Pellot. It is a transformed story of Klaus Hahn. Lucas, who blackmailed a banker for money, hears the voice of his sister, who drowned in the river (killed by him) many years before. She is talking to him while he is trying to enjoy expensive clothes and good food. The guilt he feels about his sister, his fear of being punished, his lacking skills of spending money, and his embarrassment of the poor person who, for the first time, possesses a huge fortune – all those reasons predetermine his nervous behavior. The voice of the murdered sister accuses him of his crime and provokes his schizophrenia. In despair, Lucas fires a gun at

his own reflection in the mirror. He is arrested and placed in a psychiatric hospital. This marks the beginning of the exodus of people from Obaba; Ismael finishes his story.

The last novella is about Klaus and Esteban Werfell. Esteban himself starts telling it when Lurdis visits him in Madrid and it is finished by Miguel's mother, the lady who brings flowers to Klaus's tomb (another detail absent in the novel). Here again, the xenophobic spirit of Obaba prevails. In general, the story coincides with the novella in the book. The whole story about Maria Vokel is invented by Esteban's father to motivate his son to leave the world of Obaba. The three novellas, despite all the differences in the plots and circumstances, are similar in terms of one feature – they are narrations of those who escape. They grow out of traumatic experiences.

In this respect, the story of Lurdis provides a striking contrast to what is told in the novellas. Miguel, Lurdis's boyfriend, does not want to leave Obaba. While all other Obaba people try to leave the town, he is happy in this gloomy place. Lurdis also acts in a strange way – she never comes back to her own world outside Obaba and not only stays in Obaba, but becomes its chronicler. The voices telling Miguel's or Lurdis's stories concur in one key idea – the traumatic pain of the past can be healed with love. Only love can lead the way to happiness through the labyrinth of the hostile memories..

A few words must be said about *genre conventions* in their relation to the problem of memory in *Obaba*. To some extent, the film can be defined as a thriller or horror movie. It opens with an episode when Lurdis is driving to Obaba through the night on a mountain road. The camera is fixed on the level of the driver's eyes so that the spectators' vision is limited by what can be seen through the windshield of the car in the darkness. Then the camera shows Lurdis's face. Tragic, melancholy music sounds as a prophesy of the painful sufferings which the heroine will have to feel when learning about Obaba. From the woods, a strange man steps out. It is Ismael with a lizard in his hand. The girl asks him if the road leads to Obaba and how far the town is. "Eighty-seven bends", he answers. The curvy road lost in the darkness, with a stranger looking like a villain, makes the spectators think about many horror movies about poor girls trapped and tortured in some terrible places by repulsive men.

The lizard, as a key symbol for the whole adventure, is easily inscribed in the poetics of the horror movie. The reptile is definitely connected with the forces of evil and possesses huge mysterious power. Each time lizards appear on the screen, the spectators hear horrifying music. The barn, where Ismael keeps lizards, smells horrid (although he calls this place a sanatorium). Ismael himself, with his strange non-Spanish and non-Basque name, resembles a

wicked, oriental wizard, a trickster who possesses knowledge of magic. He is an ecologist, saving and protecting lizards, but some people in Obaba, and first of all Begoña, accuse him of being a magician. Lurdis is really trapped in the movie. She enters the barn of the lizards out of curiosity. Tomás (Albino María from the novel, half deaf and insane) helps Ismael lock the barn from the outside and the girl has to spend the whole night alone in the company of lizards (in *Obabakoak* it is Ismael himself who locks the narrator in the barn). She experiences a thrilling horror and turns the camera on in order not to feel abandoned, and to hear some noise. Tired and frustrated, she falls asleep. Later, when looking through her recordings, she sees a lizard trying to get into her ear but, as she falls down out of the frame, she never knows whether the lizard entered her brain and ate it. She goes to hospital where her doctor informs her of her eardrum being damaged.

The conventions of the horror genre used in the film are absolutely appropriate as a background for the story about obsessive memories changing the life of a young woman. The main subject of *Obaba* is learning about the social and psychological traumas that exist in the memories of Obaba people. When talking about the past, Merche, Ismael, and Esteban discover the fatal constant features of the area, of the landscape, of the human behavior that converts the town into a zone of alienation in the cold and tragic world. As a matter of fact, the memories of each of the three characters are nightmares; they are visions of fear, hatred and pain. By telling their stories, the narrators are trying to understand the reasons for their traumatic experiences, and cure their wounds that way. The trip to the depths of memory is not an easy task. It is a descent to Hell that purifies the consciousness of the heroine.

At the same time, *Obaba* is an idyllic horror. In contrast to Bernardo Atxaga's stories, which have open endings, the film's characters either manage to escape from Obaba or are punished (like Lucas). The final episodes are full of joy and even happiness. This radical shift in the emotional atmosphere of the movie can be illustrated by the transformation of the motif of counting in comparison to the novel. The characters of the novellas, and Lurdis, count things – steps, bends, and beans – but do so in different ways. The teacher, Lucas and Esteban count in order to speed up the monotonous flow of time. Lurdis counts to enjoy the fullness of life. If, at the beginning of the movie, counting the turns symbolizes the curvy way to the darker sides of human memories, at the end it means the reconciliation of the past and the present. In the end, Lurdis records interviews with the Obaba people and gives each cassette its unique number to ensure that the voices of individuals will be saved. They become memory – not the traumatic memory of envy, but radiant luminous memories of spiritual equilibrium and love.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that *Obaba* also tries to solve the problem concerning the relation of memory to modernity, which Labanyi speaks about, but the solution is rather different from what Bernardo Atxaga suggests. While the novelist seeks ways of renovating Basque cultural identity through returning to the magic world of the past and through "retelling" it using postmodernist idioms, the film-maker moves in the opposite direction: his protagonist tries to run away from the modern / post-modern world, in order to find happiness in the archaic time and space of Obaba. Her project is anti-modern in the sense that it is based on another pact of oblivion – forgetting about the contemporary world with its conflicts and ruptures. Thus, the comparative study of *Obabakoak* and *Obaba* proves that the novel and the film treat the strategies of memories in different ways. Both the novelist and the film director are aware of the fact that losing the past will have fatal consequences for the world. While one of them takes the pre-modern past of Obaba as a starting point and a prerequisite for moving to the future, the other one sees it as a sort of escapism, an option becoming more and more popular in the epoch of the post-post.

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Towards an Intercultural Memory?
World War II and Franco-German Rapprochement in French and German Cinema of the 1950s

Since the immediate post war period, forming and interpreting the memory of the traumatic experience of World War II has been one of the key issues of cinema in France and Germany. The very first post war productions i.e. René Clement's *La bataille du rail* (1946) in France and Wolfgang Staudte's *Die Mörder sind unter uns* (1946), had already dealt with the questions of how to remember the past and how to reconcile the different types of memory between *résistants* and *collaborateurs*, victims and perpetrators, Jews and other Germans etc. Presenting a number of emblematic films about this period and highlighting the evolution of the dominating discourse on memory in the 1950s and 1960s, my paper will focus on traces of an intercultural Franco-German memory in this corpus. I will therefore analyze some films which challenge the national memories, as for instance Denys de la Patellière's *Taxi pour Tobrouk* (1960), and investigate their reception in both countries.[200]

Franco-German relations are often regarded as an evolution from irrevocable antagonisms, conflicts and distrust over a process of mutual approachment towards a period of a rather close and trusting relationship, making them unconditional partners in many different spheres, ranging from political and economical to cultural relations. In brief, the relationship between the two nations has evolved from traditional enmity ("Erbfeindschaft") towards inseparable friendship ("Erbfreundschaft"). However, the history of antagonisms, hostility, hatred and conflicts between both nations obstructs the view on

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[200] This is a revised version of a paper first published in German: "Alte Gespenster und neue Zeiten: Afrika als dritter Raum für interkulturelle Kommunikation im Kriegsfilm der 1950er und 1960er Jahre." In: Deshoulières, V. / Lüsebrink, H.-J. / Vatter, C. (eds.): *Europa zwischen Text und Ort / Interkulturalität in Kriegszeiten (1914-1954); L'Europe entre Texte et Lieu / Interculturalités en temps de guerre (1914-1954)*. Bielefeld: Transcript, 2013 (=Frankreich-Forum 12 (2012), pp. 213-233.

constructive perspectives of mutual contact even in times of harsh crises. Far from glossing over the cruelties, losses and crimes which occurred in periods of war and conflicts, recent research suggests taking a closer look at potential areas of contact and chances for building relationships during periods of confrontation, e.g. the time of the occupation after World War II, which could be understood as a seed for closer relations in the future. The Franco-German rapprochement and the numerous initiatives in civil society were by no means sudden phenomena that only emerged with the 1963 Elysée treaty. Moreover, they are profoundly marked by prior contacts during times of war and occupation as well as by personal experiences of many protagonists who had lived through these difficult periods of conflict.[201]

Similarly, cultural media, such as literature and film, have contributed from the very first productions after World War II to the reflection on the mutual perception and to the development of the Franco-German relations. As media of collective memory and remembrance,[202] the cinematographic mise-en-scene of intercultural communication and understanding in times of war bears a potential to bemuse or rattle the public and the critics, which is illustrated in Jean Renoir's 1937 classic *La Grande Illusion*. This masterpiece on the subject of French officers plotting their escape from German captivity during World War I was struck by censorship from both sides, i.e. the French and the Germans. While the French perceived the representation of the German characters as too positive, their German counterparts were offended by the film's general pacifistic tenor. As the close relationship between the aristocratic protagonists Major von Rauffenstein (Erich von Stroheim) and

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[201]   *Cf.* e.g. Defrance, C. / Kißener, M. / Nordblom, P. (eds.): *Wege der Verständigung zwischen Deutschen und Franzosen nach 1945. Zivilgesellschaftliche Annäherungen*, Tübingen: Narr, 2010 (éditions lendemains 7); Oster, P. / Lüsebrink, H.-J. (eds.): *Am Wendepunkt. Deutschland und Frankreich um 1945 – zur Dynamik eines 'transnationalen' kulturellen Feldes / Dynamiques d'un champ culturel 'transnational' – L'Allemagne et la France vers 1945*, Bielefeld: transcript, 2008 (Frankreich-Forum. Jahrbuch des Frankreichzentrums der Universität des Saarlandes 7 (2006/2007)); about french women's and german occupants' children see also Picaper, J.-P. / Norz, L.: *Enfants maudits. Ils sont 200.000. On les appelait les "enfants de Boches"*, Paris: Editions des Syrtes, 2004; about black G.I.'s children in post-war Germany *cf.* Lemke Muniz de Faria, Y.-C.: *Zwischen Fürsorge und Ausgrenzung. Afrodeutsche "Besatzungskinder" im Nachkriegsdeutschland*, Berlin: Metropol, 2002 (Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung der Technischen Universität Berlin, Reihe Dokumente, Texte, Materialien 43).

[202]   *Cf.* Erll, A. / Nünning, A. (eds.): *Medien des kollektiven Gedächtnisses. Historizität – Konstruktivität – Kulturspezifität*, Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 2004 (Media and Cultural Memory / Medien und kulturelle Erinnerung 1); Erll, A.: *Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen: Eine Einführung*, Stuttgart, Weimar: Metzler, 2011.

Capitaine de Boeldieu (Pierre Fresnay) or the love story between the French soldier Maréchal (Jean Gabin) and the German farmer Elsa (Dita Parlo) illustrate, *La Grande Illusion* overcomes not only national oppositions, but also social or class differences which is exemplified by the French prisoners' escape from German captivity through a collectively dug tunnel. The film thus evades any unambiguous ideological interpretation.[203]

This paper will examine the way in which Franco-German intercultural relations during World War II were represented in the war movies of the 1950s. The analyzed films all opted for the African continent as backdrop for their stories, as this theatre of war appears to constitute a privileged place, in the sense of a third space, to test and stage intercultural understanding and rapprochement between the former enemies. By the same token, the geographical distance allowed to perpetuate or reactivate the myths and heroes of the Nazi years. In a first step, I will present the cinematographic context of the period to provide a more detailed location of the two analyzed productions, i.e. Alfred Weidenmann's *Der Stern von Afrika* (1957) and Denys de la Patellière's *Un Taxi pour Tobrouk* (1960), a Franco-German-Spanish co-production. Both films make use of the North African Campaign and the specific characteristics of the North African desert in a diametrically opposed manner. They hence create an open cinematographic discursive space capable of both, perpetuating the old and imagining the new, a dynamical 'third space' of opportunities. On the one hand, the African setting thus serves as a projection screen that allows almost a complete negation of the intercultural dimension of war and takes up an ethnocentric perspective by erasing all cruelties and war crimes; on the other hand, the African desert is a prerequisite for staging intercultural rapprochement, mutual cooperation and understanding. In doing so, it comments on emerging political and societal developments such as the European integration and Franco-German cooperation, and suggests the construction of an intercultural memory based on shared experiences during the war.

"Good soldiers" and "bad Nazis" – films on World War II in the Federal Republic in the 1950s and 1960s

The war occupies an important place in the West German film production from the immediate post-war until the 1970s. War movies were regularly found among the top box office hits. Between 1945 and 1960 alone,

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[203] *Cf.* Prümm, K.: "Die große Illusion", in: Koebner, T. (ed.): *Filmklassiker*, vol. 1: *1913–1946*, Stuttgart: Reclam, 1995, pp. 359–363.

researchers counted at least 275 German films on the subject of World War II.[204] This great contemporary interest in the topic may well be due to people's need to deal with their experienced and remembered past and to give it a place in the public sphere. As productions on the subject of the war years also ranked among the most successful movies of the period internationally, their popularity appears to be a transnational, generational phenomenon, rather than a German particularity.[205] A specific manifestation, however, lies in the dilemma constituted by the discourse of victimization, namely a transnationally shared, to a large extent consensual ideology that could also be represented in films,[206] the celebration of Nazi heroism could not be displayed openly. This represents a harsh rupture in the collective memory of popular culture, especially for the generation that had grown up with popular (Nazi and war) heroes, created by Nazi propaganda and widely presented in the contemporary mass media of the time. These childhood heroes had suddenly become discredited and could no longer be celebrated, as the role of the former war heroes now had to be reassessed between that of criminals on the one hand and that of potential victims on the other hand. The immense contemporary interest in or longing for seemingly honest heroes and ambivalent leaders has been analyzed by scholars such as Peter Reichel who identifies the motivations behind the Germans' self-image of victimization ("Opferselbstbild") and the myth of a "clean Wehrmacht".[207] A paradigmatic example of such an ambivalent leader persona is provided by Air Force general Harras, whose character is played by Curd Jürgens in Helmut Käutner's film *Des Teufels General* ("The Devil's General", 1955) based on Carl Zuckmayer's

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[204]   *Cf.* Faulstich, W.: *Filmgeschichte*, Paderborn: Fink, 2005, pp. 138f. According to Hickethier, there were up to 600 military and war movies produced in the 1950s (Hickethier, K.: "Krieg im Film – nicht nur ein Genre", in: *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik*, 19, 75/1989, pp. 39-53.

[205]   In France, the foundation of the 5th Republic and de Gaulle's presidency in 1958 led to an important rise of films dealing with the period of World War II and the German occupation of France 1940-1944. Whereas for the period from 1950 to 1958 only 20 films on the war years were made, three times more productions (64) were counted under de Gaulle's presidency, more than half of them during the years 1958-1962.

[206]   See in this context the efforts to organize commemoration ceremonies on soldier cemeteries as in the famous encounter between Helmut Kohl and François Mitterrand in Verdun in 1984 or Kohl's and Reagan's visit on the Bitburg cemetery 1985, a ceremony whose symbolic purpose of conciliation failed because of members of the Waffen-SS buried at the same place.

[207]   Reichel, P.: *Erfundene Erinnerung. Weltkrieg und Judenmord in Film und Theater*, München, Wien: Hanser, 2004, esp. pp. 37-41. See also Venohr's chapter in this book.

successful eponymic 1945 play.[208] The German cinema of the 1950s and 1960s constituted a space for imagining and representing those heroic characters and therefore allowed the public to (re-)connect with the Nazi years and commemorate their "heroes".

The confrontations between the Axis powers, Germany and Italy, and the allied forces in Northern Africa between 1940 and 1943 are particularly noteworthy in this context. From the early 1950s the so-called North African Campaign under Erwin Rommel's command and the myth connected to it were used as a projection screen for war heroism and racist prejudices. This myth which is closely linked to the ambivalent general Erwin Rommel and in parts still perpetuated today,[209] most probably owes its power to the great geographical and cultural distance of this battlefield less likely tied to the German civil society's own suffering, the Nazi war crimes or the shoah. Using the war in Northern Africa as a setting for films or literature enabled a further connection to colonial or exotic patterns of perception. This is markedly exemplified by adventure fiction in literature or film.

The North African Campaign and Generalfeldmarschall Erwin Rommel had their first appearance on the cinematographic screens even before the end of the war: In Billy Wilder's *Five Graves to Cairo* (1943), Rommel was played by Erich von Stroheim who just like Wilder was living in exile in the United States. This early example can already be regarded as an attempt to distinguish between the despicable Nazis and other Germans, amongst them military leaders such as Rommel.[210] This representation cannot only be attributed to Wilder's German roots, but is mainly due to Erich von Stroheim´s interpretation of his character, which does not yield to the temptation of a

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[208]   The Harras character is based on the air force colonel general Ernst Udet who committed suicide in 1941. For Käutner's film see also Vatter, C.: *Gedächtnismedium Film. Holocaust und Kollaboration in deutschen und französischen Spielfilmen seit 1945*, Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2009 (Saarbrücker Beiträge zur vergleichenden Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaft 42), pp. 116-133.

[209]   In 2012, the costly TV movie *Rommel* (directed by Niki Stein) was broadcast on Germany's public channel ARD and led to an extensive public discussion. The film was accompagnied by an instructive website (http://www.swr.de/rommel (30.09.2015)) that was supposed to document the recent historical research's view on Rommel. See also the news magazine´s *Der Spiegel* cover story "Mythos Erwin Rommel – Des Teufels Feldmarschall" alluding to Käutner's film title (Der Spiegel, 44/2012). For further information on the Rommel myth refer to Lemay, B.: *Erwin Rommel*, [Paris]: Perrin, 2009.

[210]   *Cf.* Nacache, J.: "Le Renard du désert: Rommel à Hollywood", in: *Témoigner: entre histoire et mémoire / Geteugen. Tussen geschiedenis en gedachtenis. Revue pluridisciplinaire de la Fondation Auschwitz / Multidisciplinair tijdschrift van de Auschwitz Stichting* 103 (avril–juin 2009), pp. 27–40, here p. 29.

propagandistic caricature, but is rather reminiscent of his famous role as the German officer von Rauffenstein in Jean Renoir´s *La Grande Illusion* (1937). *Five Graves to Cairo* can also be placed within the tradition of popular movies like *Pépé le Moko* (Julien Duvivier, 1936) which established Northern Africa as an exotic setting for adventures staged in a colonial aesthetic. Wilder's film furthermore refers to the plot of a stage play by Lajos Biro, set during World War I, which has served as subject in several Hollywood adaptations, e.g. *Hotel Imperial* (1927).[211]

With regards to the cinematographic memory culture since the 1950s, *The Desert Fox* (1951), represents the most influential and important adaptation of Erwin Rommel and the North African Campaign. This internationally acclaimed biopic directed by Henry Hathaway, which saw British actor James Mason playing the role of the German field marshal, portrays Rommel's last years before the Nazi regime drove him into suicide in 1944. The field marshal is depicted as a character that is torn between duty and conscience, oscillating between the role of a strategic military leader and that of a loving family father. Hathaway's *Desert Fox* thus offers the spectators a wide range of identification possibilities and established a model that was adopted by numerous other movies, such as *08/15* (Paul May, 1954), *Rommel ruft Kairo* (Wolfgang Schleif, 1958) or *Der Arzt von Stalingrad* (Géza von Radványi, 1958). All of these films distinguish between "good soldiers" and "evil Nazi leaders" and portray death as the only option for the hero to keep his conscience clear.[212] Even though *The Desert Fox* became a model for many subsequent productions, Rommel is undoubtedly marked as "enemy" in Hathaway's films – unlike in many later adaptations.[213]

The image of an honest hero who is exploited or "seduced" by the Nazi regime forged by Hathaway's film and perpetuated by numerous other productions, cannot exclusively be ascribed to the psychological factors and needs of the war generations. Moreover, the cinema of this era was strongly influenced by the contemporary political context, as will be illustrated by the second example discussed in this paper, namely *Taxi to Tobruk*. In the given context, the creation of the Eastern and Western Blocs in the Cold War and the anti-Communism movement in the 1950s both led to significant ideological demarcations. These events furthermore heightened Western Germany´s

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[211]   *Cf.* Nacache: "Le Renard du désert".

[212]   *Cf.* more detailed Vatter: *Gedächtnismedium Film*, pp. 105ff.

[213]   *Cf.* Reimer, R. C. / Reimer, C. J.: *Nazi-retro Film. How German Narrative Cinema Remembers the Past*, New York: Twayne / Toronto: Maxwell Macmillan Canada / New York: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1992, pp. 56f.

need for integration into the NATO as well as strong cooperation with its Western partners, so that a positive representation of heroic German characters became possible – or maybe even desirable – in US movie productions.[214]

In the following part I will examine two Western German movies from the late 1950s, Alfred Weidemann's *Der Stern von Afrika* (*The Star of Africa*, 1957) and the German-French-Spanish co-production *Taxi nach Tobruk / Un Taxi pour Tobrouk* (*Taxi to Tobruk*, 1959/60) directed by Frenchman Denys de la Patellière. My analysis will illustrate the double function of the African space in this context. Africa serves as a space for the continuation of Nazi hero worship on the one hand; but may also open up a "third space" for testing and imagining intercultural cooperation between the French and the Germans and therefore reflect the beginning of European integration.

Phantoms from the past:
Alfred Weidenmann's *The Star of Africa* (1957)

Der Stern von Afrika, Alfred Weidenmann's popular war movie released in 1957, is based on the life of the famous fighter pilot Hans Joachim 'Jochen' Marseille. Due to his exceptional piloting skills and the vast number of successful hits against jets of the Allies' air force, Marseille was hyped and celebrated as a public hero by the NS propaganda machinery. The movie set a remarkable box office record and its leading actors Joachim Hansen (Marseille), Marianne Koch (Brigitte) and Hans-Jörg Felmy (Robert Franke) all became stars of Western German film- and TV screens. *Der Stern von Afrika* presents Jochen Marseille's rise from a young rebel and extremely gifted officer cadet in training to a highly decorated fighter pilot, who after spending some time in France is sent to Africa, where he achieves his major successes, but will also end up losing his life. In the commercial trailer the following words were uttered against dramatic background music to announce the movie: "Der Krieg mit all seinen Schrecken. Mit schonungsloser Offenheit gezeigt."[215] Nonetheless, *Der Stern von Afrika* is by no means a shattering anti-war movie, but can rather be classified as an action-filled

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[214]   However, the generally rather positive representation of the Rommel character in *The Desert Fox* did not receive unanimous consent as the correction of this image in *The Desert Rats* illustrates. This 1953 movie by Robert Wise can be regarded as a sequel to *The Desert Fox* starring also James Mason in the role of Erwin Rommel. The character appears as less amicable now, among other things because of his strong German accent.

[215]   "The war with all its terror. Shown with merciless openness." (transl. C.V.). *Der Stern von Afrika*, Trailer, additional material on Weidenmann, A.: *Der Stern von Afrika* [1957], DVD, Kinowelt, 2005.

adventure film about daredevil flying heroes, and is thus a far cry from the NS regime and its ideology. Jochen Marseille, for instance, received high military decorations from Hitler and Mussolini in person; however, Weidenmann's film never depicts him together with high-ranking representatives of the respective regimes. Instead Marseille is always portrayed either immediately before or after the ceremonies, surrounded by his family or celebrated as an idol by the public or his comrades. Even in scenes set in Berlin, NS-symbols such as swastikas, flags or NSDAP party insignia are nowhere to be seen.

However, there are some scenes where doubts about the war are expressed. His girlfriend Brigitte, for instance, tries to motivate Marseille to desert during a trip to Italy, but her actions stem from her concern for a common future rather than political or humanistic convictions. The sense of war is also challenged by other events, e.g. casualties among Marseille's close comrades or the death of Sergeant Klein during his very first flight. Regardless of this, Marseille's sense of duty and the lighthearted mood of the troops remain virtually untouched. An exotic setting with palm trees surrounded by sand dunes in the North African desert contributes to the film's approach of telling a story about heroism, which is isolated from most other contemporary developments. This impression is reinforced in the very first frames of *Der Stern von Afrika*. Here, an insert which announces "Berlin 1939", a date that – at least nowadays – evokes associations with the start of the war and the suffering and cruelties it brought about, is followed by light-hearted and cheerful music. On the visual level, we witness lively street scenes from Berlin and soldiers singing merrily on their way into the barracks. This sets the tone for most of the movie which ends, however, on a rather different note: The protagonist dies in a plane crash and the off-commentary states: "Hans-Joachim Marseille starb mit 23 Jahren als einer von Millionen junger Menschen, die heute noch leben könnten."[216] The ending stands in stark contrast to the mood of the action movie witnessed before. Classifying *Der Stern von Afrika* as a shattering anti-war movie would rather serve as an alibi, which is reflected in the film's ambiguous reception in the late 1950s. Despite its success with the general public, many critics were more reluctant as the following quotes reveal:

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[216]   "Hans-Joachim Marseille died at the age of 23 as one of millions of young men who could still be alive.", 1:39:08.

> Marseille tritt wie ein strahlender Draufgänger von wohlberechneter soldatischer Eleganz in den Kreis seiner Kameraden, die gleich ihm Elite spielen: Vorbildklischees, die nicht ganz ungefährlich sind.[217]

> Ein paar Sätze gestrichen, und dieser "Stern von Afrika" hätte getrost vor 15 Jahren als "staatspolitisch wertvoller" Goebbels-Film laufen können.[218]

> Was an diesem Film so bedenklich ist und so unwahr ist, ist der Umstand, dass nie die dunkle Seite des Krieges, nie der verbrecherische Anlass der Sache, nie die verwerflichen Ideale gezeigt werden oder nur angedeutet, für die diese jungen Männer da in die Luft gehen und das Leben in Saus und Braus leben.[219]

Klaus Hebecker, a renowned critic, and Friedrich Luft, a popular RIAS journalist who explicitly points to the problematic aspects of *Der Stern von Afrika*, can be found among those critical voices. Undoubtedly, the political events that occurred around the film's production time, also account for its celebration of the "old heroes" and lack of critical distance. The film was released in Western German theaters in August 1957, just a few months after the first conscripted recruits had commenced their military service in the Bundeswehr – a development met with scepticism, particularly among those holding leftist beliefs.

Yet, the film attained broad public success and the young protagonist actors were all able to pursue long lasting careers in the film industry. The choice of the African continent as a far-away battlefield that was relatively spared from Nazi crimes, casualties and civil suffering, is in line with the tradition of NS-propaganda that also used Northern Africa to feature honest daredevils and adventurers who held up traditional soldierly virtues. The African desert as a seemingly empty space favored an inner German perspective

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[217] "Marseille steps as a radiant daredevil of well calculated soldatic elegance among his comrades who – all like him – play the elite: clichés of role models that are far from being harmless." (transl. C.V.). *Filmdienst* 34/1957, quoted from "Im Kreuzfeuer der Kritik", additional material on the DVD *Der Stern von Afrika*, Kinowelt, 2005.

[218] "Delete just a few sentences and this 'Stern von Afrika' could have been shown 15 years ago as a 'stately praised' Goebbels-movie." (transl. C.V.). Klaus Hebecker in *Film-Telegramm*, quoted from "Im Kreuzfeuer der Kritik", additional material on the DVD *Der Stern von Afrika*.

[219] "This film is so alarming and wrong because it never shows or at least alludes to the dark side of the war, never its criminal cause, never the reprehensible ideals that make these young men go into the air and live their luxurious life." (transl. C.V.). Friedrich Luft in *Stimme der Kritik* (RIAS), "Im Kreuzfeuer der Kritik", additional material on the DVD *Der Stern von Afrika*.

neglecting other voices. Those "others" are barely mentioned nor are they given a voice; the enemy stays mostly abstract and exemplifies a kind of competition about the largest number of "hits".

This dominant perspective is further reinforced by the representation of Africa as a mere staged scenery, almost completely stripped of its indigenous population. The few scenes depicting Africans, are without exception characterized by exotistic and colonial patterns of perception and therefore equally marked by the persistence of an "old" mind-set. Two examples are particularly noteworthy to underscore this point, i.e. an Arabic bazaar scene and the secondary character Mathias acted by Roberto Blanco, who then made his very first on-screen appearance and later was to become a popular entertainer and singer. The short bazaar scene (0:30:50-0:31:09) displays a group of North Africans representing an exotizing background with costumes, camels and veiled women. As the camera follows a German soldier walking through this scenery, a "typical" bargaining situation is captured in the background. The soldier passes by a veiled woman who holds the reins of a camel: he stops, takes a step back to look at the woman again and continues his way, while rolling his eyes in lust, sighing and sipping on two glasses of beer. In this instance, the locals merely serve as decoration; the gender perspective even amplifies the cultural hierarchies established in this scene.

In the given context, the character played by Roberto Blanco is portrayed in an extremely stereotyped and racist manner. Mathias, the sole black character in Weidenmann's movie, is a servant and helper in Jochen Marseille's squadron. The following two scenes illustrate in an extremely drastic way how colonialistic and exotistic discourses are perpetuated in this film. During a party,[220] the soldiers animate Mathias to entertain them with a dance that is to take up almost the entire scene.[221] Encouraged by the soldiers´ shouting and laughing, Mathias steps onto an improvised stage – partly on his own accord, partly because he is pushed by the others, one of whom tears off Mathias' shirt. Clapping his hands until everybody joins him, Mathias animates the others to swing their bodies to the rhythm of the music while he is seen dancing alone frenetically and with sweeping gestures in the middle of the crowd. One of the soldiers, playing the drum on an old barrel, comments on the scene by laughing: "Guckt euch den an! Der Junge ist großartig. Was der wohl kostet? Den nehm' ich sofort mit!"[222] Besides the obvious objectivation of

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[220]   0:40:30–0:41:51.

[221]   From 0:40:58.

[222]   "Look at him! This boy is great. How much may he cost? I take him at once!" Der Stern von Afrika, 0:41:27–0:41:32.

Mathias as a "toy" for entertainment, the visually explicit emphasis on his corporality is moreover highlighted. This is cinematographically achieved in two ways: firstly, by the soldier's tearing off Mathias' shirt; and secondly by the rapidly changing frames during the dance. The camera repeatedly focuses on Mathias' bare feet in a close-up shot and his vibrating, sweating upper body in a medium close-up.

A second scene confirms this disdainful representation of the only black character. After receiving an official distinction, Jochen Marseille is celebrated by his comrades upon his return. When he arrives at their tent, they "jokingly" offer him the black servant Mathias as a "gift":

> Ein Geschenk der 3. Staffel sozusagen an Jochen Marseille. […] Na? Von heute ab Ihr ergebener Diener. Mathias, als persönliches Eigentum von Leutnant Marseille kannst du es dir leisten, von heute an etwas lässiger zu grüßen. So! Er [Mathias] macht alles. Kocht, wäscht, mixt jedes Getränk und bringt Leben in die Bude. Los, Mathias![223]

The scene concludes with one of the soldiers switching on the record player and Mathias yet again dancing frenetically with a big grin on his face.

As these examples from Alfred Weidenmann's *Der Stern von Afrika* reveal, Africa here serves on two accounts as a space for enabling and envisioning "old" ideas and for conjuring the phantoms of the Nazi past. Firstly, it allows the celebration of soldierly heroism in a daredevil way through Hans-Joachim Marseille's continued veneration by the NS propaganda. Secondly, it represents the African continent and its inhabitants from a colonialistic perspective. The German post-war cinema, however, did not only use the African setting for the purpose of representing "old war heroes" and continuing colonial patterns of perception; but also to open new perspectives for mutual rapprochement and intercultural communication between France and Germany, as is shown in Denys de la Patellière's 1960 film *Un Taxi pour Tobrouk / Taxi nach Tobruk*.

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[223]   "A present from the 3rd squadron to Jochen Marseille. […] So? From now on your humble servant. Mathias, as lieutenant Marseille's personal property you can now afford to greet in a more casual way. Just like this! He [Mathias] will do anything. Cooking, doing the laundry, mixing any drink – and entertaining. Go on, Mathias!" (transl. C.V.), 0:44:48–0:45:25.

New Times: Intercultural Communication and Franco-German Rapprochement in *Un Taxi pour Tobrouk / Taxi nach Tobruk* (Denys de la Patellière, 1960)

Un Taxi pour Tobrouk by French director Denys de la Patellière, a German-French-Spanish co-production based on the eponymous novel by René Havard, was a huge box office hit both in Germany and in France where it attracted more than 5 million spectators and was awarded the Grand Prix du Cinéma Français as best feature film of the year in 1961. The plot takes place in October 1942 and is set in the Libyan desert occupied by the German army. It tells the story of a command of the Forces Françaises Libres (FFL) whose commander was killed during a sabotage mission behind enemy lines. The surviving four men wander through the hostile desert in an attempt to return to their base camp. As they manage to descend on a German patrol, they capture a German officer, Hauptmann Ludwig von Stegel (Hardy Krüger) and continue their way towards the allied lines with the German's jeep. The difficult trip through the inhospitable environment requires cooperation and can only succeed if mutual animosities, prejudices and distrust are overcome. In a joint effort they are not only able to surmount the dangers of the desert including floating sands and a mine field, but also grow closer on a personal level. The antagonism, hatred and enmity initially felt turns into mutual consideration and respect or even friendship. But just upon reaching their destination El Alamein and deciding on whether von Stegel is to be liberated or taken prisoner of war, the group is hit by an allied artillery shell, an attack which only the brigadier Théo 'Dudu' Dumas (Lino Ventura) survives.

The intercultural encounter between the four French FFL members and the German officer von Stegel constitutes the central theme in *Taxi to Tobruk*. The film attempts to explore the possibilities of intercultural rapprochement and mutual trust even under the most adverse circumstances i.e. the enemy camps during World War II. It presents a story that puts universal humanistic values over national affiliation and thus needs to be regarded in the contemporary political context of its production time which was marked by Franco-German cooperation and European integration, e.g. the foundation of the European Communities with the Treaty of Rome (1957), the Franco-German cooperation for the reintegration of the Saarland into the Federal Republic in 1957, the foundation of the Bundeswehr (1955). Closer Franco-German relations both on the civic and political level were furthermore supported by more formal structures through the Treaty of Elysée (1963). In France, it was especially the Algerian War (1954-56) which attributed great actuality to *Taxi to Tobruk*. The following part will examine the structure of the film as well as

the constellation of its characters. This analysis will establish how Denys de la Patellière imagines intercultural communication in the Franco-German context, especially through the scenery of the African desert which serves as a third space for inventing and probing something new.

Taxi to Tobruk is framed by a background story starting with the presentation of the main characters in 1941 and ends with the French troops' parade on the Champs-Elysées in Paris following the Libération. The internal plot of the journey through the desert comprises merely four days and four nights in October 1942.

In the opening sequence of the film, the five protagonists are portrayed in a parallel editing.[224] It begins on Christmas Eve 1941, a symbolic date which stands in stark contrast to the war in the desert. All characters are shown in short scenes of approximately 30 seconds during the farewell from their families or their former lives before taking up arms and leaving for the war. First, the professional officer Ludwig von Stegel, played by Hardy Krüger who earned international notoriety in a number of similar roles, is pictured in a wealthy environment surrounded by abundant Christmas decorations, as he says goodbye to his wife and children. The next protagonists presented are brigadier Théo 'Dudu' Dumas[225] (Lino Ventura), a former boxing champion who joined the FFL via England, François Gensac (Maurice Biraud), a young intellectual, bidding farewell to his grandmother to fight for the liberation of France – a commitment made out of a certain ennui as well as a protest against his collaborating father;[226] Samuel Goldmann (Charles Aznavour), a Jewish medical student from Alsace fleeing persecution by the Nazis; and finally Jean Ramirez (Germán Cobos), a hotheaded prison escapee. These different characters are not only connected by means of the parallel editing, but also through music and a dissolving transition between the scenes.[227] Even before the characters encounter each other in the desert, they are firmly tied together in cinematographic terms and presented on the same level. This

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[224]   Denys: Un Taxi pour Tobruk. F/D/E, 1961, 0:00:25–0:02:48.

[225]   The character's name alludes to the famous writer Alexandre Dumas and evokes associations with his renowned adventure novels and heroes.

[226]   See for example the following statements by Gensac: "Mon père est à Vichy. C'est un homme qui a l'égalité dans le sang. Si les Chinois déparquaient, il se ferait mandarin… Si les Nègres prenaient le pouvoir, il se mettrait un os dans le nez… Si les Grecs arrivaient, il se ferait…" ("My father is in Vichy. He's a man with equality in the blood. If the Chinese invaded, he would turn into a mandarin. If the Negroes were in power, he would stick a bone in his nose… If the Greeks arrived, he…")

[227]   The transition from Samuel Goldmann to Jean Ramirez merits special attention: the image of Ramirez' cell and the barred windows dissolves on the Jew's face representing him as a prisoner in need of escape, too. (*cf.* 0:02:15).

exposition is followed by a leap in time catapulting us to the vastness of the Libyan desert.

The contrast between the opening sequence and the internal plot is visually emphasized by the fact that the presentation of the protagonists occurs in closed spaces, mainly indoors, and at night underlined by a rather dark lighting, making the desert sand and the wide sunny sky appear even more impressive. The characters are repeatedly captured in long shots, visually lost among the sand dunes,[228] so that they appear to be left to themselves and thrown back into their small, close community time and again. Thus, the desert forms – despite its wideness and openness – a kind of reversed *huis clos* which the protagonists try in vain to escape from in order to return to the comfort of their respective homes. That way, the desert becomes a space for enabling intercultural rapprochement and communication between the French and their German prisoner.

The analysis of *Taxi to Tobruk*'s plot reveals a development from initial mistrust, suspicion and confrontation between two wartime enemy parties to a gradual approaching of the opponents, eventually resulting in a cooperation which is marked by trust and mutual understanding. The hostile environment of the desert and its challenges propel this evolution. At first, the four French fighters are unsure as to what to do with their prisoner. After all, they are a rather motley bunch of men, all of whom are driven by entirely different motivations for their entry into the *Résistance* – ranging from political ideals and communist commitment to a sense of duty or even love for adventure. Especially after the loss of their leader does this diversity result in great dissension. The representation of this wide range of characters may have facilitated the identification with them in contemporary French society. Two years after de Gaulle's rise to power, the resistance movement constituted a major pattern of France's collective identification.[229] In Denys de la Patellière´s film, this political and social diversity allows to consider multiple options of how to treat the German officer – ranging from execution to a fair treatment as a prisoner of war in accordance with the 1929 Geneva Convention. Samual Goldmann, the Alsatian medical student, is initially designated as interpreter to discuss the situation with von Stegel; but the latter quickly reveals that his family's social standing accounts for him being fluent in French – an important prerequisite for the subsequent rapprochement.

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[228]   E.g. 0:33:21; 0:55;43; 1:00:37; 1:09:20; 1:21:22.

[229]   The French historian Henry Rousso describes this period as the time of the consolidation of the collective myth of *résistancialisme. Cf.* Rousso: *Le Syndrome de Vichy. De 1944 à nos jours*, Paris: Seuil, ²1990.

Hauptmann von Stegel's positive character representation, however, is not only owed to his language and intercultural skills. Other traits such as his honesty and professionalism as an honorable officer to whom any close identification with Nazi ideology seems inconceivable, are reminiscent of James Mason's Rommel in *The Desert Fox*, an impression that is further reinforced by external attributes, e.g. the Iron Cross attached to his uniform's collar or the typical dust goggles. Hardy Krüger's character corresponds thus to the prototypical, dominant image of the apparently honest German heroes commonly portrayed in contemporary war films.

Following the Franco-German encounter and the decision to take the prisoner on the journey, the next step of the film's plot underlines that Hauptmann von Stegel's experience and professional skills are indispensable for survival in the desert: He warns the others about the quicksand and shares his knowledge of how to evade it. In the same scene, von Stegel's leadership competencies are revealed: He suddenly commands "Halt!", uniting the French in a circle around him to discuss what to do. This picture exemplifies the French FFL members' dependence on the German officer.[230] This newly established trust contributes to a further strengthening of a sense of community which is symbolized by the soldiers´ sharing of their drinking water.[231] As they run out of fuel, however, 'Dudu' does not hesitate to knock von Stegel out, so that the group, disguised as German soldiers, can enter a German camp and get some fuel without being discovered.

Nonetheless, the German prisoner is always alert, seeking out opportunities to escape. This becomes evident when he manages to seize the jeep that had been stuck in the sand. Although he drives away with the vehicle at first, von Stegel soon returns because he refuses to abandon the French and leave them to their fate. This constitutes one of *Taxi to Tobruk*'s key scenes: Ludwig von Stegel takes his former captors as prisoners, thus reversing the roles and establishing, from then on, a relationship on equal footing. This reversed situation is resolved by the Frenchmen's refusal of collaboration. Despite being menaced with arms, they decide to simply wait for the German Hauptmann to fall asleep. After the dissolution of this stalemate which von Stegel comments on with a clandestine grin, both parties appear to have found a common ground for further cooperation[232] evolving into almost cordial ties of friendship in the course of the ensuing peripety of the film.

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[230]   *Cf.* 0:33:43–0:34:12.
[231]   *Cf.* e.g. 0:38:20-0:40:10.
[232]   *Cf.* 1:05:23–1:05:34.

The greatest challenge of their journey through the hostile desert consists in the crossing of a mine field which cannot be circumnavigated. Only close co-operation and confidence in each other will guide them through the danger zone. Ludwig von Stegel saves Dumas' life when he prevents him from stepping on a mine. This proof of trust and their shared concern about Gensac who is badly injured in this volatile situation, seal the common Franco-German destiny in the Libyan desert. National differences between the former enemies are overcome, likewise on the visual level: all of the soldiers take off their uniform shirts and face each other in equal humanity without displaying visible national symbols. They are no longer represented as soldiers of opposed camps, but rather as simple men sharing the same hopes and fears. These commonalities are also expressed in the following scene: having found some snails, they share this feast and the memory of having eaten them at a Parisian restaurant. The relaxed atmosphere animates them to engage in free and easy conversation and open discussions highlighting their common disdain for the war as is illustrated in the following dialogue between Goldmann, von Stegel and Gensac:

> Goldmann: A mon avis, dans la guerre, il y a une chose attractive: c'est le défilé de la victoire. L'emmerdant, c'est tout ce qui se passe avant. Il faudrait toucher sa prime d'engagement et défiler tout de suite. Avant que ça se gâte…
> […]
> Von Stegel: Je peux vous poser une question? […] Si vous n'aimez pas la guerre, pourquoi signez-vous des alliances militaires avec des pays qui sont en guerre tous les 20 ans? Signez plutôt avec la Suisse ou le Luxembourg.
> Gensac: Mon cher Ludwig, vous connaissez mal les Français. Nous avons le complexe de la liberté, ça date de quatre-vingt-neuf. Nous avons égorgé la moitié de l'Europe au nom de ce principe. Depuis que Napoléon a écrasé la Pologne, nous ne supportons pas que quiconque le fasse à notre place. Nous aurions l'impression d'être frustrés.[233]

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[233] "Goldmann: In my opinion, there is one appealing thing about the war: the parade of victory. But what is awkward, is all that happens before. You should get your enrollment prime and parade immediately. Before it goes bad… […] – Von Stegel: May I ask you a question? […] If you don't like the war why do you sign military alliances with countries going to war every 20 years? Sign rather with Switzerland or Luxembourg. – Gensac: My dear Ludwig, you don't know the French well. We have had the liberty complex since 1789. We have cut the throats of half of Europe in the name of this principle. Since Napoleon has crushed down Poland, we cannot bear anybody doing it in our place. We would feel frustrated." (transl. C.V.), 1:06:00-1:06:33.

The second part of this quote provides a good example of the witty dialogues that the famous scriptwriter Michel Audiard has often been praised for and illustrates the joking mood of their conversation expressing the trustful *complicité*, a common ground for understanding, they have established. The film's strategy to bridge the Franco-German antagonisms by portraying the protagonists getting to know each other and discovering shared values and common humaneness becomes evident in the following quote shortly before the end of their journey:

> Dumas: Tu sais qu'il est bien ce mec là?
> Goldmann: Bien sûr qu'il est bien. Qu'est-ce que tu veux que j'y fasse?
> Gensac: C'est toi [i.e. Gensac] qui avait raison. A la guerre, on devrait toujours tuer les gens avant de les connaître.[234]

This plaidoyer against war and for humanity scriptwriter Audiard placed into Gensac's sarcastic remark, sets the tone for the film's ending: As they finally approach the Allied forces' lines, their affiliation cannot be clearly identified anymore – they are driving a German vehicle and some of the soldiers are wearing parts of a Wehrmacht uniform which is why they are attacked by friendly fire just before reaching their destination. A British grenade hits the car and Dumas is the only one to survive the attack. The Franco-German reconciliation comes to an abrupt end as senseless deaths on both sides shock the audience. The very last scene closes the circle to the exposition which focusses on the protagonists' lives before going to war. It takes us to the victory parade on the Champs-Elysées in liberated Paris. Théo Dumas is in the middle of the jubilating crowd, remembering his dead comrades. Engrossed in thought, Dumas forgets to take off his hat and, as a bystander comments disapprovingly, apologizes by claiming that his thoughts had been elsewhere. These last minutes of the film underline the key message of *Taxi to Tobruk*: Humanity and shared, universal values as well as common suffering and the self-image as victims of the atrocities of war constitute the central elements of the Franco-German rapprochement and reconciliation.

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[234] Dumas: He's a good guy, you know. - Goldmann: Of course he is. But what can I do about it? - Gensac: You [i.e. Gensac] were right. In the war, you should always kill the people before getting to know them. (transl. C.V.), 1:10:46-1:11:02.
  In this context, Samuel Goldmann's critical comment merits to be mentioned: "C'est pourquoi, si vous le permettez, je ferai le tri des bons et des mauvais Allemands un peu plus tard à tête repose." ("That is why, if you allow, I will sort out the good and the bad Germans a bit later with a clearer head."; 1:23:22-1:23:33, transl. C.V.).

Remarkably the film's producers deemed the described ending as unacceptable for the German public.[235] Therefore, an alternative ending was filmed, replacing the victory parade in Paris by a scene depicting von Stegel´s mourning widow with her son who is shown a photograph of his late father. The picture is placed in a row with a portrait of the great-grandfather who had died in the 1870/71 Franco-Prussian war and that of the grandfather killed in World War I. As Ludwig von Stegel's son is playing with a toy rifle, his mother takes it off him before throwing it into the flames of the fireplace.[236] This version narrows down the film's meaning to a more national German perspective – in all likelihood the widow would have been oblivious to the circumstances leading to her husband's death. A joint intercultural remembrance including the French victims, as in Dumas' case in the French version, would therefore have been rendered impossible. Yet, this new gooey ending intended for the German public did not meet the distributor's expectations, which is why a copy of the French version was ordered for the German premiere instead. The copy not having arrived on time, the perturbed public were left with the images of the car explosion and the presumed death of all the protagonists.

As this anecdote concerning the different endings reveals, the film's subject and message were still perceived as rather controversial, particularly in the German context, and the producers tried hard to present the Franco-German rapprochement with great caution and care. The African continent and the desert provide ideal conditions to fulfil the requirements for such an enterprise. This setting allowed to stay in line with former traditions and to present the story of a Franco-German intercultural rapprochement during World War II on seemingly "neutral" territory, free from the painful confrontations that had ravaged the European continent.

Africa as a third space of intercultural communication and Franco-German rapprochement

The specific geographic properties of the North African desert as well as the associations, representations and cultural patterns of perceptions linked to it can be construed using the concept of third space which was developed in the context of post-structuralist and postmodern approaches, particularly in postcolonial theory. It is influenced by numerous disciplinary perspectives –

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[235]   *Cf.*, also for the following, [author unknown]: Wie Bolle, in: *Der Spiegel*, 24.05.1961, p. 92, see also http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-43364233.html (30.09.2015).

[236]   *Cf.* [author unknown]: Wie Bolle.

Michel Foucault's reflections on *hétérotopie*, sociological approaches of tertiality,[237] but also Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens* (1956), just to name a few– and was primarily developed by Homi Bhabha, the most famous proponent of this current, who has chiefly popularised the concept. According to Bhabha, third space can be understood as an intermediate space that can unfold in intercultural interactions and that temporarily suspends binary oppositions as illustrated on the example of a staircase:

> The stairwell as liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white. The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy.[238]

These ideas which can only be discussed briefly in this context, have made their way into the German-speaking intercultural research in two different currents: on the one hand through approaches relying mainly on linguistics, having coined concepts such as "intercultures" (Jürgen Bolten) or "discursive intercultures" (Bernd Müller-Jacquier) which emphasize the dynamic and constructive character of culture and perceive interculturality as a process of negotiating meaning, understanding and mutual perceptions.[239] Their ideas about an active formation and creation of difference and hybridization processes draw on postcolonial theory.

On the other hand, the concept of third space is regarded in a less metaphorical sense by some scholars in the field of intercultural communication and cultural studies. To them, third space (also) describes a physical space, a room enabling intercultural understanding that can serve as a prerequisite for successful intercultural interaction. Scholars such as Klaus Dirscherl have attempted to identify constitutive elements and strategies of the third

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[237] *Cf.* e.g. Bedorf, T. / Fischer, J. / Lindemann, G. (eds.): *Theorien des Dritten. Innovationen in Soziologie und Sozialphilosophie*, München: Fink, 2010 (Übergänge 58).

[238] Bhabha, H. K.: *The Location of Culture*, London, New York: Routledge, 1994, p. 5. *Cf.* also Rutherford, J.: "The Third Space. Interview with Homi Bhabha", in: id. (ed.): *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990, pp. 207–221.

[239] *Cf.* Rathje, S.: "Der Kulturbegriff: Ein anwendungsorientierter Vorschlag zur Generalüberholung", in: Moosmüller, A. (ed.): *Konzepte kultureller Differenz*, Münster [u. a.]: Waxmann, 2009 (Münchener Beiträge zur interkulturellen Kommunikation 22), pp. 83–106.

space, which may help to facilitate intercultural communication.[240] He refers to characteristics like openness, flat hierarchies, 'as if'-communication and play as well as any kind of movement, change or emotionality all of which can be found in Denys de la Patellière's *Taxi to Tobruk*.

The first element to be mentioned here is the desert as the space of action. It is often presented by means of wide shots on a vast landscape of seemingly endless sand dunes, open and 'empty'; as an unmarked, 'neutral' territory which is foreign, strange and hostile to all of the protagonists. As they lose contact with their troops, the norms, rules and habits of their respective professional and national cultures become less important and binding; instead they are replaced by the constant necessity to re-negotiate rules and manners in order to cope with the new situation in a hostile, unknown environment. This is revealed in the discussions about the relationship between the (German) prisoner and the French characters in *Taxi to Tobruk*. A third space is further characterized by the mobilization of different affiliations and roles that are tested and strategically used in communication. Following the development of the cooperation, categories of nationality and culture lose significance and are substituted with alternatives such as attacker / victim, common soldier / officer, gender, etc. The trip through the desert is accompanied by humor and jokes as well as 'as if'-communication which are used as productive strategies of cooperation. The French leader 'Dudu' for instance repeatedly asks his German prisoner what he would do in his place ("Et vous, qu'est-ce que vous feriez à ma place?"). This allows 'Dudu' to test the change of roles as well as the reversal of the established relations and hierarchies. Other scenes, such as the depiction of the French FFL members being disguised as German soldiers in order to cross a German camp and the symbolic display of human equality after the soldiers not only take off their shirts but consequently also their national attributes, are equally noteworthy in this context. Finally, the central role of emotions and the subsequent opening of the characters revealing intimate feelings and attitudes as well as the general openness and the potentially futile odyssey through the never-changing scenery constitute further characteristics of a third space.

Alfred Weidenmann's *Der Stern von Afrika* certainly does not refer to an open third space and perspectives of intercultural rapprochement to the same extent as *Taxi to Tobruk*. Nonetheless, it is only the North African desert

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[240]   *Cf.* Dirscherl, K.: "Der dritte Raum als Konzept der interkulturellen Kommunikation. Theorie und Vorschläge für die Praxis", in: Bolten, J. (ed.): *Interkulturelles Handeln in der Wirtschaft. Positionen, Modelle, Perspektiven, Projekte*, Sternenfels: Wissenschaft und Praxis, 2004 (Schriftenreihe interkulturelle Wirtschaftskommunikation 9), pp. 12–24.

which allows to create a space for the representation of heroism and ideological standpoints in the portrayed way. The ethnocentric perspective of Weidenmann's film and the static identity concepts of its protagonists who are primarily categorized by nationality, affiliation to the Wehrmacht, race and gender can only be represented in such a blunt and undifferentiated way due to the film's setting being outside the European continent and therefore (seemingly) far from the physical and psychological traces of memory of war. Regarding the overall conception of space, the vastness and openness of the desert in *Der Stern von Afrika* stands in stark contrast to the confined spaces depicted in the film: tents and rooms where the soldiers live, the cockpit of their planes, but also the scenes taking place in Europe. The film thus creates an interplay between openness and closeness frequently allowing the protagonists possibilities to retreat from uncertainty to ascertain themselves – a viewpoint which is not offered in *Taxi to Tobruk*.

However, the perspectives of a potential hybridization in *Taxi to Tobruk* outlined by Homi Bhaba's conceptualization of third space are brutally ruined by the tragic ending of the movie. If Dumas' remembrance at the military parade in Paris is to be understood as an appeal, Denys de la Patellière's film holds the public accountable for an intercultural rapprochement and the creation of a intercultural memory – in line with the process of the Franco-German cooperation which had started in the 1950s. Compared to other films, this production about the war in Africa constituted a perfect space for envisaging and testing this rapprochement in a more open and obvious way.

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Remarks on the "Wehrmacht myth" in West German war films since 1945

An international debate: The film *Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter (Our Mothers, our Fathers)*

For a historian, bound by the rules of objective research, it can be astonishing how a fictional film with a historical background can lead to international tensions. Yet, this is exactly what happened in spring 2013, when a German TV-channel broadcast *Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter*, a film about the lives of five young Germans during the Second World War.[241] This film provoked immense protests in Poland and Russia, and even led to an exchange of diplomatic cables between the governments of Germany, Russia and Poland.

Older works such as *Katyn*[242], by the Polish director Andrzej Wajda, or the TV series *Holocaust*[243], certainly had (apart from the intention of presenting historical facts about execrable historical events to an international audience) aimed at triggering political discourses. However, this was surely not intended by *Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter*. If the producers had really aimed at sparking an international debate on how to deal with historical events in a correct manner, they would have begun with unsuitable (historical) topics, resulting in nothing more than an insubstantial film. The scenes that have provoked storms of indignation in Russia and Poland, such as putatively radical anti-Semitic positions of members of the Polish Liberation Army, the crude murder of defenceless wounded German soldiers and a Ukrainian nurse, in German services, by soldiers of the Soviet Red Army during the occupation of an abandoned German military hospital, are merely shown in a spotlight and remain thematically unexplained in the film. Therefore, they cannot be marked as explicit provocations. There is a consensus between historians all

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[241] http://umuv.zdf.de/Unsere-Mütter-unsere-Väter/Unsere-Mütter-unsere-Väter-26223848.html [30.09.2015].

[242] Poland 2007 (Director: Andrzej Wajda, Screenplay: Andrzej Wajda, Wladyslaw Pasikowski, Przemyslaw Nowakowski).

[243] USA 1978 (Director: Marvin J. Chomsky, Screenplay: Gerald Green).

over the world about the existence of anti-Semitic positions in wide parts of eastern Europe during the first half of the 20th century; those phenomena are under critical scrutiny (particularly in Poland) and subject to further historical research. The war crimes committed by soldiers of the Soviet Red Army against German soldiers and German civilians undoubtedly represent an important topic of scholarly research.[244] However, these crimes have to be regarded mostly as actions which are tied to the logic of modern warfare. War crimes against civilians occur in basically every war, consequently, also during the Second World War. They were committed by almost every party in the war. Besides, the historians in the expert advisory group that accompanied the film can hardly be held responsible for having carried out revisionist ideas, be it consciously or unconsciously. These experts did not foresee the outrage caused by *Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter* in parts of Eastern Europe, arguably because the film had originally been produced for a German audience. On the film's explanatory homepage, the broadcasting company claims that its motivation for producing and broadcasting the film was to open a dialogue between veterans of the former German "Wehrmacht" and their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. This window would have closed in the near future. "The three parts of *Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter* should be an occasion to question, to intensify the dialogue."[245] Given the validity of this (and there is no reason not to do this), it is astonishing that the film and its presented characters only focused on the German perspective. Yet, the broadcasting company, Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (ZDF), claimed to have intended to tell contemporary history in a modern way, which certainly would have included an international perspective on the topics in the film. In fact, the film had already been sold by the ZDF to 60 countries worldwide before it was aired on German television. This raises the question whether or not producers and historians were generally aware of the possible political or historical interpretations in non-German countries, particularly in Poland or Russia. In the end, the international discussions concerning the film underlined the producers' intercultural negligence, but they did not suggest any political intentions.

However, another aspect has hardly attracted any attention in the public debate. This film, according to the thesis presented in this paper, refers once

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[244] See also Frieser, K.-H.: "Das Menetekel von Nemmersdorf." In: Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt (ed.): *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg,* vol. 8, Die Ostfront 1943/44, Der Krieg im Osten und an den Nebenfronten, Munich, 2007, pp. 619-622.

[245] http://www.zdf.de/Unsere-Mütter-unsere-Väter/Zeitgeschichte-zeitgemäß-erzählt-26275822.html [30.09.2015].

again to a myth about the German armed forces in the Second World War, the so called "Wehrmacht". This myth has been particularly powerful in (western) Germany. Its roots date back to the period of German National Socialism itself and are still vivid in our days. The myth tells the story of a "rather clean Wehrmacht", created by former soldiers during the period of integrating the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). It was adapted by media and is still referred to today, predominantly in films. This myth has been deeply entrenched in German commemoration. It is still present in wide parts of German society. At the core of this myth lies the assertion that most soldiers of the Wehrmacht neither promoted nor supported national-socialist politics. This paper demonstrates that, besides other influences, the medium "film" plays a key part in the creation and entrenchment of this myth in modern society.[246]

Henceforth, the following considerations and representations are limited to the genre "war film" or "combat film" in the narrower sense. The object of the analysis is the fictional, inaccurate picture of German soldiers and their conduct during the Second World War. In addition, the question to what extent German post-war war films contributed to the creation of the "Wehrmacht myth" is to be investigated. This will be a factor in the discussion of this particular German myth, which lives on despite unequivocal disproof. The analysis limits itself to the cinematic interpretation of the role that German "Wehrmacht" soldiers have played during the Second World War in West German combat films since 1945.[247] The analysis addresses the medium "film" in the context of the Second World War, the characters in the films and the qualities ascribed to them. In addition, the representation of further characters and contexts has to be renounced, as this would go beyond the scope of this paper. After some considerations about the actual novelty of *Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter*, I will discuss, theoretically, the "Wehrmacht myth in films". Following that, I will illustrate how the myth was established in West German war films after the Second World War. At the end of the paper, I will return to *Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter,* in order to show how this film upholds the Wehrmacht myth in our days.

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[246]   For the discussions about the reminiscent culture in Germany in view of the time of the national socialism in detail: Reichel, P.: *Politik mit der Erinnerung, Gedächtnisorte im Streit um die nationalsozialistische Vergangenheit.* Frankfurt/Main, 1999.

[247]   On the contribution of movies to the culture of remembrance in West Germany since the 50s see Bösch, F.: "Film, NS-Vergangenheit und Geschichtswissenschaft." In: Bracher, K. D. / Schwarz, H.-P. / Möller, H. (eds.): *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte,* Jahrgang 55, Heft 1, Munich-Berlin, 2007, pp. 1-32.

Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter: a methodical change in paradigm?

The analysis starts with the putative theoretical innovations of *Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter*. The film was celebrated by critics as a paradigm change in the representation and mediation of history. From now on, there would be space for interpreting history by accessing the contemporary perspective of the individual, overcoming the abstract approach to past events. With regards to our context, this means that the phenomenon "war" could be approached as a somehow specific "event" in the lives of individual soldiers. However, the access to war as an "experience" in the film *Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter* is not new; it was simply applied for the first time in a *German-speaking production*, by using the individual micro-perspective to describe the presumably "real" experience of the Second World War from the immediate perspective of *German soldiers.* Indeed, the attempt to describe war and combat experiences with all its physical and psychic effects by a tough audio-visual presentation from an individual point of view is not at all a new paradigm in films. Gerhard Paul appropriately states that since the end of the 1990s "[…] a new wave of combat films [sloshes] around the globe".[248] Telling the story of a single soldier and his experience in combat had its breakthrough with the worldwide box-office hit *Saving Private Ryan,* by Steven Spielberg.[249] This film was a modern attempt to describe soldiers' combat experiences in an atmospherically dense manner. Particularly in the beginning sequence of *Saving Private Ryan* combat was presented more vividly than ever before. No film had ever portrayed the horrible dying of American infantrymen at "Omaha Beach", during the invasion of allied troops in Normandy on June 6, 1944, this impressively and "close" to reality. However, the events were not shown in their connection to higher historical streams, but reflected mostly the putatively "real war experience" of individual soldiers. *Saving Private Ryan* tried to release the spectator from the distant perspective, enabling new forms of expression in modern cinema. Gerhard Paul describes this development as a cinematic representation of the "border experience of awareness and subjectivity".[250] *Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter* has to be regarded in this context. This film therefore belongs to the "new war film era" which emerged in the 1990s. It also strengthens the trend to disconnect war films from the

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248 Paul, G.*:* "Krieg und Film im 20. Jahrhundert, Historische Skizze und methodologische Überlegungen." In: Chiari, B. / Rogg, M. / Schmidt, W. (eds.): *Krieg und Militär im Film des 20. Jahrhunderts,* München, 2003, pp. 3-76, here p. 57. [translation: V.V.]

249 USA 1997 (Screenplay: Robert Rodat, Director: Steven Spielberg).

250 See footnote 246.

conventional connection to historical-political contexts. It detaches the phe-
nomenon "war" from the greater context. Instead, more consideration is given
to combat as a subjective experience on an individual level. This can un-
doubtedly be interpreted as a change in perspective. However, it is question-
able whether it also represents progress; besides, the idea of focusing on the
historical subject and its experiences in the reference framework "war" has al-
ready existed in other films on the subject of "war" since the mid-1930s and
is not exactly new in film history either.

The myth of the "Honest Soldier of the Wehrmacht"

Despite the claim of the producers of *Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter*, to give
fictional characters a chance to express war experience - on behalf of the
German War Generation in particular – two of the five main characters in the
film are emblematic of the myth of Wehrmacht soldiers, courageously
fighting and sacrificing themselves. These two characters display essential
elements of the "upright" soldier in their part of the plot. Accordingly, the
concept of the "Wehrmacht myth" will be used in the following analysis,
since the image of German "Wehrmacht" soldiers, and especially that of
German "Wehrmacht" officers, is still widespread with all essential elements
of a myth in present German war films.[251]

What is a "myth"? In a common sense, the concept of "myth" usually re-
fers to dealing with a famous or popular person or occurrence.[252] Conversely,
the academic concept of "myth" refers to a meaning-conferring story which
tries to explain unknown or hardly explicable facts simply by the use of sup-
posedly known facts. Mythogenesis takes place when subjectively spectacu-
lar, non-everyday events occur and are reported in terms of selective interpre-
tation, while stressing certain bygones excessively and neglecting others. In
doing so, a myth delineates a virtual reference framework, but without check-
ing its core for the underlying truth. A myth therefore underlies a grid of apri-
oristic, not empirically verified, premises. Myths are spread in many contexts
such as religion, nature, death, resurrection, politics etc. In our context, the

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[251]   On the debate of creation and function of the "Wehrmacht myth" in films and on stage see
        Reichel, P.: *Die erfundene Wirklichkeit. Weltkrieg und Judenmord in Film und Theater.*
        Munich, 2004. A very elusive intercultural and comparatist perspective on the media film as
        a place for cultural remembrance is applied by Christoph Vatter in his analysis of cineastic
        work on collaboration and Holocaust in French and German films since 1945. See Vatter,
        C.: *Gedächtnismedium Film: Holocaust und Kollaboration in deutschen und französischen
        Spielfilmen seit 1945*. Würzburg, 2009.
[252]   For example "Tutanchamun myth" or "Stalingrad myth".

"Wehrmacht myth" can only be regarded as political myth, even if in isolated cases, especially on the level of narration, the political "Wehrmacht myth" undeniably shows similarities to religious myths, in particular to sacrificial myths. As a political myth, the "Wehrmacht myth" is a story about occurrences of the past explaining these occurrences to today's audience. The picture drawn in films concerning the "Wehrmacht" is, in any case, a selective and numb interpretation and therefore typical of a historical-political myth. Particular historical aspects are overemphasized, others neglected. In addition, historical circumstances are not interpreted according to certain academic insight. A "mythical" version of the past is originated and historical facts are only considered to the extent that they fit the myth. Herfried Münkler identified three necessary and essential elements for a myth to unfold its full active strength in his book "The Germans and their Myths".[253] These are the *narrative variation*, the *iconographic compression* and the *ritualized staging* of a myth. Narrative variation denotes that myths not only remain rigid, but also become enlarged and recast and receive new interpretation. Those variations of a myth are usually new interpretations in a political sense. Iconographic compression primarily refers to visualisation. In relation to the respective myth, the culture of remembering becomes enlarged not only by establishing monuments and buildings, but also by creating films, visualizing the myth. They bring the myth to a visual representation and influence the new iterations of a myth. Films and other visualisations of a myth serve the purpose of a steady illustration and continuation. However, the ritual staging of myths manifests itself mostly in the form of parties, celebrations, anniversaries or military parades. The culture of remembrance forms the basis of the ritual staging, which aims at attesting gratitude and moral commitment to specific people or groups in a political context. Thus, we can see particular films as means of a ritual staging of myths. In the case of the "Wehrmacht myth", an empiric analysis of West German films on the topic of "war" or "combat" clearly suggests the ritual staging of the myth. Given the multitude of films on the topic, there is no indication that the subject "Wehrmacht" will not be used as a topic in future German features. The trend is towards the opposite direction. But, in which sense did West German "war" and "combat" films create a myth concerning the "Wehrmacht"? Post-war war films in West Germany have drawn a picture of the "Wehrmacht" soldier, which was inspiring for German post-war society. By separating the prototypical "Wehrmacht soldier" from National Socialism, millions of survivors of war and captivity were exculpated from the joint guilt of the Holocaust in German movie theatres.

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[253]   Münkler, H.: *Die Deutschen und ihre Mythen*. Leipzig, 2008.

The cinematic picture of the pure and clean "Wehrmacht" also helped avoid intensive and unpleasant questioning by younger generations about what had happened during the war. Films answered such questions before they were even raised, and did so in a particularly biased fashion. The genocide-character of the Second World War remained hidden in films. The soldiers' roles were transfigured from culprits into patterns of misled victims, fighting bravely for a "true" and "upright" Germany. Inexplicable or unbearable facts were crudely simplified or ignored. Ambivalent circumstances were blurred by explanation patterns with distinctly positive connotations. In films, a wide-spread exculpation of the German "Wehrmacht" took place, a phenomenon which – with some exceptions –still continues today. The exculpation allowed the reintegration of former soldiers into the West German post-war society. It also facilitated the creation of the new West German army ("Bundeswehr") in 1955 by providing a stock of soldiers untainted by the atrocities of the Second World War. The prolongation of the notion of a "clean Wehrmacht" is still a prominent idea in German society because it makes it easier for policymakers and other (especially conservative) social groups to link the "Bundeswehr" to military traditions of a supposedly "pure Wehrmacht". The notion of noble-minded actions, honourable fights and the selfless sacrifices of "Wehrmacht" soldiers are the result of a selective interpretation process of the past. Yet, it does not comply with the results of historical research. While it can be as-sumed that some soldiers in the Wehrmacht did not share or support the offi-cial ideology of the Nazi regime, current research suggests an in-depth exam-ination of the role of the "Wehrmacht" in German films. The notion of the "Wehrmacht" as a mostly apolitical military organisation is not sustainable from an academic point of view. Especially, the latest studies conducted by Sönke Neitzel and Harald Welzer on war experiences of German soldiers dur-ing the Second World War demonstrate that mental structures, mental refer-ence frameworks, scopes of experience and settings of the "Wehrmacht" sol-diers were highly complex. In particular, soldiers were not forced into unquestioning obedience against their superiors.[254] This complicated reality is widely ignored in German war films in favor of the "Wehrmacht myth". As a result, the core of the "Wehrmacht myth" remains widely unchallenged.

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[254]   Neitzel, S.: *Abgehört. Deutsche Generäle in britischer Kriegsgefangenschaft 1942 – 1945.* Berlin, 2007; idem / Welzer, H.: *Soldaten. Protokolle vom Kämpfen, Töten und Sterben.* Frankfurt/Main, 2011.

The "Wehrmacht myth" in (West) German war film
in the post-war years

Starting in the mid-1950s, a great increase in combat films is noticeable. According to Werner Jungblodt, 244 war movies were released in German cinemas between 1951 and 1959.[255] Given that the war had ended only a decade before, this number appears surprisingly high. Especially in the young Federal Republic of Germany, the number of war film productions virtually sky-rocketed during the 1950s. The share of German Federal war films among all new releases rose from 7% (1952) to 50% (1956).[256] The contents of these productions were even more astonishing. Despite the immense crimes against humanity, the devastation of large parts of Europe and more than 55 million casualties, none of those films could be described as anti-war films. Indeed, directly after the end of the war – between 1946 and 1948 – only a very scarce number of films dealing with German war crimes were produced, for instance "*Die Mörder sind unter uns (The Murderers Are Among Us)*"[257] and *In jenen Tagen (During Those Days).*[258]

"*Die Mörder sind unter uns*" is set in post-war Berlin. It is about a former German medical officer who plans an act of vigilantism, aiming to hold his former superior accountable for war crimes against Russian civilians during the Second World War. Only by intervention of his female partner is he dissuaded from carrying out his plan at the very last minute, and the war criminal is handed over to the authorities. This film is a description of the physically and psychologically disabled and their struggle to survive in damaged Germany, rather than a confrontation with the war crimes of the "Wehrmacht" itself.

In jenen Tagen links the destinies of seven Germans, between 1933 and 1945, by means of the story about a car, which has some kind of connection to each protagonist. In episodic chapters, the living and dying of the characters is narrated, with Nazi dictatorship and war forming the background of the plot. The description of crimes against humanity, or the display of perverted German warfare itself, is limited to what happened to German citizens during

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[255]   Wegmann, W.: *Der Westdeutsche Kriegsfilm der Fünfziger Jahre*. Köln, 1980, p. 111.

[256]   Limburg, G.: "Fliegen und Abschießen – Ja, was soll ich denn anderes denken? Der Stern von Afrika und der bundesdeutsche Nachkriegs-Kriegsfilm." In: Marsiske, H.-A. (ed.): *Zeitmaschine Kino. Darstellungen von Geschichte im Film.* Marburg, 1992, pp. 116-125, here p. 117.

[257]   Germany 1946 (Screenplay: Wolfgang Staudte, Director: Wolfgang Staudte)

[258]   Germany 1947 (Screenplay: Helmut Käutner, Ernst Schnabel, Director: Helmut Käutner).

the war. Nevertheless, a direct discussion about war crimes, or an explicit criticism of the system of order and obedience, is avoided in both films.

The changed geopolitical situation and the beginning of the cold war in the 1950s facilitated the breakthrough of West German war films. In particular, the admission of the Federal Republic of Germany to NATO and the inception of the German armed forces ("Bundeswehr") in 1955 mark the boom of the West German war film. From now on, war and military constantly appeared as central topics in West German movies, with combat films ranking among the most successful films in the cinemas of West Germany.

With the extension of the supply of war and combat films in West Germany, the myth of the "Wehrmacht" soldier as a hero also found its way into the medium of film. For the purpose of the West Germany rearmament, Hitler's "Wehrmacht" was rehabilitated in the cinemas. The demand for cinematic review of their own past was vast in West German cinemas. The first commercial climax was reached with the film-trilogy *08/15* from 1952 until 1955.[259] The films attracted between 15 and 20 million visitors to the movie theatres. Based on a novel of Hans Hellmut Kirst, the film presented the career of a platoon of German soldiers during World War II (from the instruction in the barracks to the end at the Western Front in 1945). The three films emphasized the barbarous drill and exposed incompetent supervisors and evil SS-men, who represented the dark side of the German warfare. However, they also described war as a natural disaster and as the place of moral probation for the individual, stressing the attitude of adventure. None of the *08/15* films contained any reference to the reality of war, especially the war of extermination in the Soviet Union during the German occupation. In total, these films *08/15* were emblematic for the subsequent image of German soldiers in post-war combat films in West Germany. The image portrayed the excellent military qualification of an, at least, apolitical generation of soldiers, abused by politicians or supervisors. The films mainly focused on the experience of comradeship and responsibility in a military community. For instance, the typical combat troop officer was described as a sensible, circumspect, courageous and honourable superior, leading his platoon with high moral standards. There was a clear demarcation between this ideal of a combat troop officer, on the one hand, and unscrupulous staff officers and officers behind the front lines, on the other hand. These films thus presented the profile of the ideal German, who feels caught between loyalty and responsibility towards his companions, and duty, obligation and obedience towards his own superior and the condemnable Nazi system. Furthermore, the type of combat troop

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[259]   Germany 1952-1955 (Screenplay: Hans von Salomon, Director: Paul May).

officer in the films was depicted in his willingness to make sacrifices for his nation (not a national-socialist, but the embodiment of "good" Germany) and as a man who accepted his fate without losing his dignity as an officer. In none of these films, was the system of militarism criticized, only its worst repercussions were denounced. The prototype of the German officer who draws on the ideal of honourable Prussian officers, with their sense for duty, honour and loyalty towards their nation, had its origin in "08/15" and has remained a principle theme in West German combat films until today. Numerous productions have subsequently originated, portraying again and again, and almost without exception, the picture of an honourable and dutifully fighting "Wehrmacht".

This synthetic image, by no means coherent with historical reality, fulfilled several important functions in West German post-war society. Firstly, it legitimised the integration of thousands of veteran officers of the former "Wehrmacht" into the "Bundeswehr". A pure mentality was ascribed to them in order to avoid criticism of their conduct during the war. Secondly, a whole generation of soldiers was virtually exonerated from the accusation of any involvement in the crimes of National-Socialism. Thus, it is not surprising that almost every early West German combat film lacks references to the murderous character of the National-Socialistic system. Thirdly, West German combat films of the 1950s and 1960s sharply distinguished between nation and regime, and also between Nazi leaders and the common people. This approach elegantly rejected the thesis of a German collective guilt for crimes against humanity in favor of individual heroism. Finally, the portrait of the courageous soldier, standing in more or less mute opposition to the regime that abused him, provided an opportunity for West Germans – in particular "Bundeswehr" soldiers – to disassociate themselves sharply from the "Third Reich" as well as from the type of political officer of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) "Volksarmee". This way, the foundation of the "Bundeswehr" in the young Federal Republic of Germany, including the recruitment of hundreds of former "Wehrmacht" generals and other officers, was given sufficient political legitimation. The image of the "pure Wehrmacht", and the subsequent exculpation of millions of men as in West German war movies, was a significant contribution to the stabilisation of West German society and, consequently, the economic boom in the young FRG.

The aforementioned prototype of a platoon-officer was presented in West German war films as the epitome of putative German virtues and German masculinity – reminiscent of some kind of star cult, similar to that of propaganda films of the "Third Reich". This can be illustrated by two extremely successful films from 1954, *Des Teufels General (The Devil's General)* by

Helmut Käutner (based on a stageplay by Carl Zuckmayer), and *Canaris*.
Both films featured a star cast that was considerable for a German war film,
partly with actors who had already performed in Goebbels propaganda ma-
chinery during the "Third Reich". In *Canaris*, the actor O.E. Hasse plays the
eponymous hero, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris (1883-1945)[260], an intellectual
expert of warfare in his function as the head of the German counter-
intelligence service. At the beginning of the film, Canaris is portrayed as
widely apolitical and extremely successful in the service for his nation. How-
ever, later, in the face of Nazi injustice, Canaris cannot ignore his conscience
and goes more and more into resistance against the Nazi regime. He changes
from a dutiful officer into an opponent of the Nazis. At the end of the film, in
accordance with historical facts, Canaris stands alone and is sentenced to
death. The film expounds the highly contradictory person Canaris as an ex-
ceptionally honourable man, bending the historical truth. This transformation
allowed the German film audience to identify itself with Canaris. Moreover,
the film *Canaris* – as with most of the subsequent combat films – had an edu-
cational aspect which again relates to the "Wehrmacht myth". In the film, we
can find essential elements of the "Wehrmacht myth". Canaris is aware of the
crude Nazi politics and draws his own consequences by going into a sort of
internal resistance. In the frame of the "Wehrmacht myth", this is admissible
as long as Canaris fulfils his duties as an officer. However, as soon as he steps
across the red line from internal resistance to open refusal, or even rebellion,
Canaris is doomed. This demonstrates a pivotal aspect of the "Wehrmacht
myth". The myth defines normative borders in which a German soldier had to
act. Crossing these borders will be sanctioned, mostly by penalty of death.
This can be seen as a contradiction because, in the frame of the myth, indi-
vidual conscience is allowed, and to some extent admired, but the individual
is not allowed to draw consequences actively, if personal views are in conflict
with external (political or military) putative duties. In other words: when in-
dividual conscience and obedience of a (German) soldier are in conflict, the
myth rates obedience higher than individual conscience. Questioning this hi-
erarchy, or even escaping from the system of order and obedience, leads to
punishment. Communicating this message to the audience was surely one of
the main concerns of the film *Canaris*.

   Arguably, a second concern was to demonstrate the limited options of
German soldiers in the face of the Nazi dictatorship. This was again an ele-
ment in the exculpation of the German war generation. By referring to the

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[260]   Further information concerning Admiral Wilhelm Canaris: Mueller, M.: *Canaris: Hitlers
        Abwehrchef,* Berlin, 2008.

myth depicted in films, the former soldiers were able to justify their behaviour during the war by claiming: "Look, that's how it was. Look how our hands were tied. We did not have the chance to resist the Nazis without risking our lives." Historical research proves the opposite in large parts. Indeed, there was a grey area in which resistance and refusal were possible for members of the German armed forces without the risk of death penalty. Several German soldiers used their position to refuse orders, to resist or to help victims.[261] The myth defends its core tenaciously against historical facts, until the present, as we will see. We should look at another film with other attitudes of the myth. In 1954, a film was made with the actor Curd Jürgens in the role of general Harras in the *Des Teufels General*. Jürgens, who can still be regarded as a perfect example of German masculinity, embodied the battle-tested hero of the First World War in an exemplary fashion. General Harras is depicted as a straightforward character, worldly and professional in his work, but in opposition to the national-socialist system which he faces with biting irony and mockery. When General Harras is requested to turn his close friend over to the Gestapo for being a member of the resistance, he becomes conscious of his entanglement with the "devil" (i.e. the Nazis), and his powerlessness to escape the Nazi system. He chooses the "honourable" suicide. The figure of the Air Force general, Harras, draws on the historical person of Ernst Udet who was a famous flying ace during World War I. Being a friend of Hermann Göring, he was compounded with the Nazi leaders without being a follower of the political system. Udet was promoted by the Nazis until he got up to the creek of politics. He became an alcoholic and, in 1941, committed suicide in Berlin. Similar to Canaris, Ernst Udet is a controversial research topic until this day. Both displayed anti-Semitism and loyalty to leading Nazis, as well as opposition to, and refusal of, national-socialism.

On the one hand, it is remarkable how steadily the "Wehrmacht myth" was presented in both films. The two main characters are admirable persons, role models for uprightness, and both their lives end in tragic circumstances. But, in frames of the myth, both figures made the inexcusable mistake of rebelling against the system of order and obedience. On the other hand, and contrary to *"Canaris"*, one main attitude of the myth is emphasized more in *"Des Teufels General":* the idea of friendship and comradery between soldiers, neglecting differences in rank. In the end, Harras died so that his friend could live on. Harras sacrificed himself for the sake of friendship. However,

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[261] See Wette, W. (ed.): *Retter in Uniform. Handlungsspielräume im Vernichtungskrieg der Wehrmacht.* Frankfurt, 2002; idem (ed.): *Zivilcourage. Empörte, Helfer und Retter aus Wehrmacht, Polizei und SS.* Frankfurt, 2003.

both films have turned the described personalities of the "Third Reich" into integration figures.

In 1956, the film *Der Stern von Afrika (The Star of Africa)* takes this one step further and draws on the former Nazi films in terms of form and content. This film is about the career of Hans Joachim Marseille, one of the most successful German pilots during the war. Marseille is portrayed as a young sportsman, and warfare in the air is more a match between pure players than a fight to the death. The camera gives the impression of war as a fair and elegant contest between the Royal Air Force and the German Luftwaffe. Marseille's death is depicted as a sacrifice for his comrades and the nation – but not as a senseless sacrifice for Nazi ideology. In *Der Stern von Afrika*, the "Myth Wehrmacht" was enlarged on the battlefield as an event, as the arena for men to prove themselves, and war as the incarnation of loyalty between comrades.

After these three films were released, the "Wehrmacht myth" reached its climax. From now on, the myth was ritualised and varied only to small degrees in subsequent films.

In 1959, Frank Wisbar produced *Hunde, wollt ihr ewig leben? (Dogs, do you want to live forever?)*[262], a film dealing with the battle of Stalingrad. It was based on a novel by Fritz Wöss. The film used original footage in order to reinforce the authentic character of the fictional plot. In the film, the main character is a young artillery lieutenant named Wisse, strongly influenced by Nazi ideology. In autumn 1942, Wisse is deployed as a liaison officer to the Romanian brothers-in-arms in Stalingrad. The German troops have at that time captured large parts of the city, but at great cost. In the course of the battle they are surrounded by the Red Army. Some of the enlisted men realize that they do not stand a chance against the enemy. However, due to orders from their leaders, most German soldiers under the German chief-in-command General Paulus believe in victory. When the military situation is deteriorating dramatically, Wisse recognizes the futility of the war and increasingly rejects the Nazi ideology. In the freezing cold, with almost no ammunition and food, he fights on for his comrades and the survival of the German Sixth Army. At the end of the battle, and in spite of being captured by the Soviet Red Army, Wisse takes responsibility for the remaining soldiers of his platoon and goes into captivity with them. In the film, most of the soldiers and commanders are again portrayed as honest soldiers. 15 of 17 characters are officers who behave responsibly, taking care of the lives of their

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[262] Germany 1959 (Screenplay: Frank Dimen, Heinz Schröter, Frank Wisbar, Dircetor: Frank Wisbar).

subordinates. Field Marshall Paulus is depicted as a non-political officer who only tries to solve a military crisis by using his military acumen. However, he is powerless against the circumstances he was driven into by unscrupulous Nazi leadership, especially by Hitler. Even in this film, which focuses on the dramatic events during the battle of Stalingrad 1942/43 and the senseless killing of hundreds of thousands of German and Soviet soldiers, the "Myth Wehrmacht" stresses the idea of duty and the soldiers' willingness to make sacrifices for the German nation.

In the same year, a film was released which illustrates the futility of war by telling the story of the destiny of seven 16-year-old schoolboys. *Die Brücke (The Bridge)* is about German schoolboys in a little village at the Western Front who were conscripted into military service only weeks before the end of the war. They are given the order to defend a bridge without any military significance against the advancing US Army. With only one exception, all schoolboys lose their lives while defending the bridge against experienced American GIs. The fight scenes shown in the film surpassed previous representations in terms of urgency and realism by far. When *Die Brücke* was released, the reviews by critics were positive in an unprecedented way, as the film clearly differed from the formerly prevailing military comedies and films, giving the war an aura of mystery. *Die Brücke* was intended to be an anti-war film. It was supposed to make the audience think about wrong heroism and dismantle the notion of the honourable heroic death. However, this aim was missed to a great extent because it was misunderstood by large parts of the audience as a confirmation of the importance of courage and duty, which was obviously deemed more important than death. The supposed heroism of the young soldiers was frequently welcomed by the audience. In particular, young German viewers showed unexpected behaviour by applauding the destruction of an American tank or the atrocious death of a US soldier. Until today, film critics and media scientists argue why *Die Brücke* failed to achieve its intended reception as an anti-war-film. A possible explanation could be that the expectations of the audience were strongly influenced by earlier films which had laid the foundations for the "Wehrmacht myth".

At the end of the 1950s, the so-called first wave of war movies subsided in West German cinemas. The "Wehrmacht myth" was hardened by its mobilisation in those combat films. In the middle of the 1970s, the next wave of war movies reached the German movie theatres. Producers and directors claimed to depict war events more authentically and closer to reality than ever before, as for instance in Sam Peckinpah's *Steiner – Das Eiserne Kreuz (Steiner – The Iron Cross)* which paved the way for a number of West German

war film productions.[263] Henceforth, German war movies have increasingly overcome former constraints in favor of a more accurate historical-political approach to World War II. *Das Boot (The Boat)*, for instance, had a massive impact on an international level.[264] Unlike in older films, the individual fate of soldiers was given priority and the war was emphasized as a world of terrible psychological experience. On the other hand, the historical classification of the storyline was almost completely missing. While *Das Boot* focused on the everyday warfare on a German submarine in the Atlantic ocean in 1943, it made no reference to either a concrete historical time frame, or sea warfare, nor the war in general. Instead, central elements of the "Wehrmacht myth" were addressed in *Das Boot*. At no stage did the film the mention the crimes of the "Third Reich" or address the national-socialist system. Criticism of the military system of order and obedience was neglected, as were the dismantling of heroism and military spirit of self-sacrifice. *Das Boot* described the military virtues such as bravery, masculinity and devotion to duty of the German naval forces in terms of appreciation and admiration.

Der Untergang (Downfall), which was produced in 2004, represents another landmark in the genre of the German war film, yet it modified the "Wehrmacht myth" only gradually.[265] This is surprising because a film, which describes the last days of Hitler's rule and life in 1945 Berlin and the end of the "Third Reich", would have offered opportunities for illustrating the results of militarism and blind obedience. Even more astonishingly, the producers recalls the last days of the pivotal figures of the most immense crime in the history of mankind without even mentioning the victims of the genocide, the European Jews, the Sinti and Roma, the huge number of persons persecuted under the Nazi terror, or the over 55 million people killed during the war. Instead, most of the portrayed soldiers and officers of the "Wehrmacht" (and even the "Waffen-SS") were praised once more for their professionalism and their military acumen. The film described merely the generals in the narrowest circle around Hitler as "operetta officers". Thus, *Der Untergang* also made its contribution to the continuation of the "Wehrmacht myth". It is in line with *Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter* and other German war films which, since the 1950s, have sustained the "Myth Wehrmacht" by shortening and simplifying history.

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[263]   USA 1977 (Screenplay: Julius J. Epstein, James Hamilton, Walter Kelley, Director: Sam Peckinpah).

[264]   Germany 1981 (Screenplay: Wolfgang Petersen, Director: Wolfgang Petersen).

[265]   Gemany 2004 (Screenplay: Bernd Eichinger, Director: Oliver Hirschbiegel).

In *Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter*, the myth is undoubtedly shifted to an individual-personal level. Out of the central figures of the film, the most prominent character is first lieutenant Wilhelm Winter as a platoon leader in a German infantry unit taking part in the raid on the Soviet Union in June, 1941. His younger brother Friedhelm Winter, a pacifist and art-loving mind, who gains nothing positive from the war, also serves in his unit's team´s rank. Wilhelm represents the type of regular officer who fascinates people with excellent personal qualities such as discretion, overview and a razor-sharp mind. He is portrayed as an excellent and charismatic commander who is a role-model to his men with regards to bravery and awareness of duty. His brother Friedhelm, on the other hand, eschews these attributions of bravery or dutifulness and is therefore accused of cowardice. Through combat, group compulsion and the immediate experience of the war, however, Friedhelm mutates into a cynical fighting machine, thoughtlessly killing enemies and civilians alike. Apart from this, the ideal of comradeship is held high. Nonetheless, Wilhelm is forced to commit war crimes by national-socialist influences. He questions more and more the legality of the war. Both figures are being developed in the film along with the "Wehrmacht myth". They appear to have been deprived of all active action possibilities, as a result of a nonjudicial system in the logic of the modern war. While Wilhelm avoids fulfilling his officer's duty by desertion, his younger brother becomes visibly hardened. Friedhelm is unconditionally moulded by the murderous system according to the motto "kill or be killed". However, in the course of the film, both characters receive their "punishment". Wilhelm is taken up, condemned to death, pardoned (because he has courageously fought before his desertion) and assigned to a penal command. Now he must atone for his offence and he owes his survival to sheer luck. Friedhelm, on the other hand, loses his life during the last days of war at the Eastern Front, when he seeks death voluntarily. Both strands of the plot are in line with the "Wehrmacht myth". Since neither desertion nor brutalization of the single armed-forces soldier are compatible with the reference framework of the "Wehrmacht myth" with soldiers' honour, they are not admissible. According to the "Wehrmacht myth", Wilhelm, as an upright character, survives the war. Friedhelm must die because he has brought too much guilt upon himself and has thereby stained the soldier's honour.

Finally, even in 2013, the "Wehrmacht myth" lives on, and presumably will live on in future films about the Second World War. This development is more than just unfortunate. The international reactions to the film *Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter* have demonstrated that there is hardly any other historical subject, nationally and internationally, with more political explosiveness

than the European period from 1939-1945. The idea of intensifying a vertical dialogue between the generations by producing films such as *Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter* should be welcomed as such. However, horizontal dialogues across borders about Europe's past should not be neglected or hampered either by inaccurate, biased or wrong interpretations of the past. Given the present crisis of Europe, in which knee-jerk national and historical clichés are reviewed again, it is necessary to examine national myths with objective and thorough scrutiny of historical connections and submit them to public debates. However, wide parts of the film industry, at least in Germany, still avoid accepting unpleasant facts identified by researchers and destroying a long living myth by films. Or are we witnessing the primacy of economy over history? In the "film" segment, few stories may sell better than that of grandpa as a brave and honourable soldier. Honi soit qui mal y pense.

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Memory of the End of the World and European Identity: Strategies of Visualization and Narration in Lars von Trier's *Melancholia* (2011)

The European civilization has a long cultural tradition of representing the end of the world in literature, films and various arts. All these artistic forms have created and implanted shared memories of apocalyptic 'memory sites'. The concept of 'memory sites' introduced by Pierre Nora is traditionally explained in terms of actual sites in which historical meaning is concentrated. What is of greater relevance for this article is that 'memory sites' are also interpreted as discursive and representational commonplaces, topoi or *loci communes*, such as figures, symbols or myths:

> A *lieu de mémoire* is any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community.[266]

Thus, the idea of the end of civilization, as well as a history of its representation in different arts, can be perceived as a history of creating certain recognizable and meaningful motifs, symbols and texts, which are able to consolidate the cultural memory of the European community.

During the previous centuries, European philosophy, literature and art have created an image of death, which has predominantly been interpreted as an ontological event. Contemporary European filmmakers have supported this tradition. One of them is Lars von Trier who has proposed a vision of the end as an ontologically beautiful event. His *Melancholia* (2011), I feel, is a good illustration of the intertextual strategy of the usage of traditional European representational commonplaces in a new film narrative.

Undoubtedly, *Melancholia* implies the collective memory of the European cultural phenomena based on German philosophical tradition and German romanticism. Thus, collective cultural memory is seen as a foundation

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[266] Nora, P.: "From Lieux de mémoire to Realms of Memory." In: Nora, P. (ed.): *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past (Vol. I: Conflicts and Divisions)*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1996, pp. XV-XXIV, here p. XVII.

for constructing modern European identity. Here, we interpret identity in tune with James W. Booth who describes it as follows: "Identity in a general sense is a way of speaking of the persistence and sameness of something across time and change."[267] It is crucial to understand that if we are going to talk about the memory of the end of the world, no one actually has ever seen, we will deal with the traditions and the specific ways of speaking about it. Furthermore, it is important to analyze how Lars von Trier's film forces our personal memory to shape the perception of the common cultural and historical past, present and future.

Let's take a look at Trier's film and its specific strategies of visualization and narration of the death of the world. The layout of the movie consists of three parts: introduction, part 1 and part 2.

The *Introduction,* or overture, is a sequence of shots involving the main characters (two women and a boy), images of two planets approaching one another and colliding in the last scene, an image of a horse, and Pieter Brueghel's masterpiece *The Hunters in the Snow* (1565). These images present the main leitmotifs of the film and model the viewer's horizon of expectations. The idea of a film genre that is evidently a mix of drama and science-fiction is conveyed. Additionally, the arrangement of the shots is rather important. The director's allusion to one of the greatest paintings in the world of art may be interpreted from different perspectives. Traditionally, it has been acknowledged that the picture shows the harmony of the world, the unity of nature and everyday life of a human being. It is a momentary look at the still world, but the viewer predicts and feels that the awakening will occur the following second. Conversely, Trier attempts to depict chaotic moments in life, discord between nature and man, and predict the approaching Apocalypse of the civilization. A clear indication of this is the burning of the masterpiece and its final destruction. At the same time, the inclusion of *The Hunters in the Snow* in a film narrative appears to be an open reminiscence to Andrei Tarkovsky's usage of the same image in his films *Solaris* (1972) and *The Mirror* (1974). The famous Russian film director´s last work, *The Sacrifice* (1985), was dedicated to speculations about the end of the world, too. His ideas of the Apocalypse are also well-known in the European culture.[268] Thus, from the first minute of the film, Lars von Trier refers to ancient and modern European art and enters into a dialogue with the predecessors.

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[267] Booth, W. J.: *Communities of memory: on witness, identity, and justice*, Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 2006, p. 14.

[268] *Cf.* Andrei Tarkowsky's Media Archive, http://tarkovskiy.su/texty/Tarkovskiy/Slovo.html [30.09.2015].

It is not just the images and their sequence that are of great importance. The techniques of extremely slow motion images and still camera are equally significant and reminiscent of the phenomenological method of reduction or bracketing. Bracketing involves setting aside the question of the real existence of the contemplated object, as well as all other questions about its physical or objective nature. In this sense, the *Introduction* gives us images of experience. The question is whether it is possible to move like that or whether it is natural for the heroine's fingers to illuminate light that should be forgotten. With every new shot, a viewer is immerging into his own consciousness and starts to feel the charm, the beauty and the power of the images. Finally, the colliding of the Earth and the planet Melancholia appears to be anticipated, powerful and the most picturesque event in this eight-minute line of beautiful shots.

The third tool Lars von Trier applies to make the *Introduction* so impressive, is music. The prelude to Richard Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* (1865) provides the main musical theme of the film.[269] Trier opting for an introduction before the movie itself and the idea of leitmotifs is a technique closely associated with Wagner's aesthetics. The director claims that the choice was inspired by a 30-page discussion of what was the greatest work of art of all time in Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*. The answer was the overture to *Tristan and Isolde*. Moreover, Trier cuts the film to the music, as stated in the following comment:

> For years, there has been this sort of unofficial film dogma not to cut to the music. Don't cut on the beat. It's considered crass and vulgar. But that's just what we do in *Melancholia*. When the horns come in and out in Wagner's overture, we cut right on the beat. It's kind of like a music video that way. It's supposed to be vulgar. That was our declared intention. It's one of the most pleasurable things I've done in a long time. I didn't have to force it out, like in 'Antichrist', not at all. Cutting on the beat is pleasurable.[270]

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[269] As stated on http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tristan_und_Isolde [30.09.2015]: "The score of *Tristan und Isolde* has often been cited as a landmark in the development of Western music. Wagner uses throughout *Tristan* a remarkable range of orchestral color, harmony and polyphony and does so with a freedom rarely found in his earlier operas. The very first chord in the piece, the *Tristan chord*, is of great significance in the move away from traditional tonal harmony as it resolves into another dissonant chord."

[270] Carlsen, P. J.: "The only redeeming factor is the world ending." In: *Film Magazine*, Copenhagen, May 4, 2011, http://www.dfi.dk/Service/English/News-and-publications/FILM-Magazine/Artikler-fra-tidsskriftet-FILM/72/The-Only-Redeeming-Factor-is-the-World-Ending.aspx [30.09.2015].

The *Introduction* ends and the following shot reveals the title: "Lars von Trier. Melancholia." Generally it looks like the author's name and the book title. The background is grayish, the letters are white, and the font reminiscent of a child's handwriting. This shot creates the expectations of a further reading of the film narrative as a text in its classical understanding, as a text written by an omniscient author. Trier assigns the title of author to his work and it attributes certain standards to the film, as well as to the audience of its viewers-readers. The potential viewer is ready to accept this work in the context of Trier's previous avant-garde projects. One more detail is of vital importance here: when the audience sees the title of the film, they have no clue that Melancholia is the name of a big planet approaching the Earth. For this reason, while watching the introduction and the first part, *Justine*, viewers mainly interpret Melancholia in terms of psychology and the popular melancholia cult known to European culture since the 17th century in England. German romanticism exercised a lot of extensive meditation on the phenomenon. Besides, much of the counterculture of modernism of the 20th century dealt with alienation, frustration, death-obsession and sense of purposelessness, which are considered to be the main symtoms of this mood disorder.

A lot of evidence for such a perception of the title can be found in the first part of the film, depicting the wedding of a young woman called Justine (Kirsten Dunst). Low levels of enthusiasm and low levels of eagerness for any activity characterize her behavior. The entire ceremony is organized by her sister, Claire (Charlotte Gainsbourg), and her sister's husband (Kiefer Sutherland) in their mansion. The narrative is organized on the basis of juxtaposing two objects or ideas:

1. Two diametrically different sisters: their behavior is as contrasting as their appearance – Justine is blond and chic, Claire is brunette and ordinary; Justine is impulsive, unpredictable, tired, depressed and frustrated, while Claire is outwardly restrained, calm, self-confident and pragmatic;

2. The crowd of guests and the solitude of the main character: Justine drifts away from the party several times – to take a nap with her young nephew, Leo (Cameron Spurr), to drive a golf-car around the estate, to sit in the library where she opens art books containing pictures of famous European masterpieces and puts them on the shelves (*The Hunters on the Snow* is also among them), to have sex with her coworker, to speak to her Mom, to take a bath and other things;

3. Having sex and being in love: the question is, what is more important for a person and what can be the basis for creating a family? At the end of the party, Justine's new husband leaves her in spite of all of the words of love he said to her during the evening;

4. Music provokes us to think of another juxtaposition of a real 'love' story between Justine and Michael (Alexander Skarsgard) versus the cultural memory of the ideal love story between Tristan and Isolde;

5. Private event and interference of the outside, consumerized world: the sequence where an advertisement is presented to which Justine has to propose a slogan until the end of her wedding;

6. Having family and being alone: a family group memory is established and preserved, as Booth writes, "[t]he family and especially its physical spaces have long been favorite tropes of writers about memory. The rooms of the family home are the original and principal locales of memory."[271] It seems rather significant that the wedding ceremony is held at Justine's sister's place, where the parents are just ordinary guests and not even very welcome ones. It especially concerns the sisters' mother, who they try to send away several times and to whom, by the way, the tag-line of the whole film belongs: 'Enjoy it while it lasts'. The house chosen for the ceremony isn't a site of memory for Justine, she also feels alienated by her family members;

7. The stifling atmosphere of a wedding celebration in the estate and free horse riding the next day, after the separation. This list of binary juxtapositions could be continued.

In the first part of the movie, numerous symbols and archetypes common for the European identity are presented: horse, road, wood, water, sundial and others. The road is one of the most important symbols, as it frames the whole narrative of this part. The first road is presented just at the beginning of the story: the road is narrow and crooked, the nature is not flourishing, the color scheme of the scene is basically yellow (in European art and literature, yellow has always been associated with depression; this color became particularly popular on the threshold of the 19th and 20th century), the long wedding limousine is on the road and can't make its way. Hence, the interpretation of the sequence is rather plain. This road misleads the characters; this is not their way and, as witnessed, the couple splits up at the end. The final sequence of the first part also depicts the road. This time it is straight. There is much greenery. The two sisters are horseback riding. They are moving ahead in the mist until they approach a bridge. Again, we witness a line of juxtapositions: a crooked and a straight road, yellow and green colors, a limousine and a horse.

The principle of juxtaposing becomes extremely evident in the second part of the film – *Claire*. In this part Justine, who is deeply depressed, comes

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271   Booth: *Communities of memory: on witness, identity, and justice*, p. XI.

to her sister's mansion and they find out that the planet named Melancholia is approaching the Earth. The closer it gets to the moment of the collision, the more confident Justine becomes and the more puzzled Claire feels.A clear shift is noticeable: the wedding, which is supposed to be the happiest day in a person's life, becomes the worst one for Justine, whereas the last day of her life is portrayed as the best. At last, the word 'melancholia' receives a metaphorical sense: now it is the threat and the reason of inevitable death for the entire humanity.

There is another interesting intertextual aspect that is connected with the following situation in the movie; Claire is deeply worried about the approaching event, while her husband mistakenly believes that Melancholia will pass Earth. In secret, she searches the Internet and finds the diagram of Melancholia's first and second approach to the Earth. The event is called "Earth and Melancholia: Dance of Death". "Dance of Death" is likely to refer to the medieval plays that inspired many German engravers, but the most famous version was produced by Hans Holbein the younger, in 1538, and an earlier painting known as *Dance of Death* or *Death from Lübeck* (1463). It was a 30-meter painting depicting the scenes of the play. Death is dancing in a long chain with 24 humans from all classes of society, from Pope to infant. Death dances around in the procession, calling people to the dance, but most of the dancers attempt to decline. This painting was famous for centuries and nearly every European city has had its own version of the plot. The purpose of the plot is to teach the truth that all men are mortal and should prepare to appear before the Judge. There are also Danish *Dances of Death*: translations of books from Lübeck, one rather original book *Typus Omnium Morientium* (1622) and lots of later frescoes in Danish churches depicting 'real' dances of death. Hans Christian Andersen twice visited St. Mary's Church in Lübeck and gave descriptions of the famous *Dance of Death* in his travelogue, *Shadow Pictures from a Journey to the Harz Mountains and Saxon Switzerland* (1831), and in his novel, *Only A Fiddler* (1837). In this light, Trier's idea that Melancholia approaches the Earth twice can be interpreted in line with the above-mentioned plot: the Earth was invited to dance but declined the invitation the first time. However, the second time was fatal. Furthermore, the idea of the dance connects the first and second parts of the film: Justine's dance with the guests during the wedding and Melancholia's dance with the Earth. Thus, Justine is semioticized as a personification of Melancholia and, consequently, she is semanticized as a personification of Death.

The approach of the Apocalypse is presented as a discourse of trauma from three perspectives: that of a male, a female and a child. Trier is known for his sympathies for women. In most of his films, they are portrayed as

stronger and considerably more mature than men. *Melancholia* is no exception to this tradition. At first, Claire's husband, an amateur astrologist, cannot identify Melancholia and mistakenly names her Antares. Later, he believes that the collision will not take place. But, when the reality of the situation becomes clear, he commits suicide. The women, Justine and Claire, are presented in juxtaposition, but at the same time, as a´n entire female unity. Justine complements the features Claire lacks and vice versa. In the final sequence, they are both seen fulfilling the main female function by protecting the child. Leo, Claire's son, also prepares to see the end, but as a child, he lacks experience or, in today's terms, he lacks memory of the stories about the end of the world. Therefore, he is absolutely dependent upon his mother's and aunt's will and behavior. Leo builds a symbolic cave and he is calm and happy in the last moments of his life on the planet.

The next aspect to consider is the film's scenery. Events in both parts take place in Claire's estate or country house, surrounded by a golf course, a forest and a waterway. This locus is quite symbolic. It combines the traditional markers of European wealth. At the same time, the landscapes are emotionally and culturally evocative. They have a lot in common with the paintings of Carl-Gustav Carus (1789-1869) and Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840), two of the most outstanding representatives of German romanticism. Both painters are known for their predilections for the themes of death, decay and desolation. In Carus' observation

> no-one painted the landscape of his soul in a more virtuoso way than Caspar David Friedrich. His melancholy became visible to the viewer in tombs and sunsets, his despair in the ruins of an abbey, his loneliness in the desolation of an Arctic plain.[272]

Trier's scenery recalls this frame of mind. Moreover, Carus, as Douwe Draaisma claims in the book *Metaphors of Memory,* "has the right to act as a spokesman for Romantic ideas on memory."[273] It is known that Carus' lectures and letters took inspiration from landscape painting. One of his lectures on psychology, given in Dresden in 1829-30, was devoted to memory. He compared it to a living magnet that stands between reality and our mind. As it is also remarked,

> [t]he third landscape letter deals with the correspondence between the event in nature and what happens in the soul. In nature, everything develops according to

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[272] Draaisma, D.: *Metaphors of memory: a history of ideas about the mind*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 74.

[273] *Ibid*., p. 73.

the four stages of growth, completion, decline and destruction, whether it be the cycle of a planet, the advent and dispersion of a thunderstorm or the changing of the season.[274]

The last observation comes rather close to what we see in Trier's film today.

Carus' and Friedrich's best-known paintings depict graveyards, and although Trier's film is located on the golf course of a big country house, his passion for graveyards is well-known. The director himself comments:

> I steal everything from other films and I stole that idea from Michelangelo Antonioni's "La Notte", which is also set on a golf course. There's some odd melancholy about golf courses. They go on forever and, if you take away all the golfers – and you won't find a single one here – they're amazingly cultivated landscapes. I always loved golf courses and graveyards.[275]

Overall, the color scheme of the film has much in common with Carus' and Friedrich's paintings. The most picturesque scenes are shot at night. For romantics, night became a protagonist in its own right, too.

On the other hand, the observer doesn't have a clue about the real country where the events take place. It is a sort of place out of time where people live out of space; it is a territory of suburban oblivion. Thus, in the film narrative, we face an idea of juxtaposing urban and suburban memory and experience. As Graeme Gilloch and Jane Kilby remark in their work *Trauma and Memory in the City,* Walter Benjamin was the first who foregrounded

> the manifold connections between urban life, memory and trauma, trauma understood here not as the experience of specific catastrophic events, but rather in a more general sense as the very condition of city-based existence, as 'shock'. […] Shock experience is the very fragmentation of experience itself and the concomitant diminution of memory.[276]

In the second part, there is a sequence where Justine cannot leave her apartment to get to her sister by taxi. She is extremely devastated and distressed. In Benjamin's terms, her urban experience is absolutely traumatic. In Claire Pajaczkowska's words:

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[274]   *Ibid*.

[275]   Carlsen: "The only redeeming factor is the world ending."

[276]   Gilloch, G. / Kilby, J.: "Trauma and Memory in the City: from Auster to Austerlitz." In: Crinson, M. (ed.): *Urban memory: history and amnesia in the modern city*, London / New York, Routledge, 2005, pp. 1-22, here p. 5.

> Contemporary culture shows that while the urban is conceived as a space that is full of historical meaning, the suburban is represented, and experienced, as a dystopic void, an absence of historic significance. It is suggested that this void is also a symptom of forgetting, particularly a kind of childhood amnesia that is generated by the growing significance of suburbia in contemporary childhood.[277]

These ideas explain why the protagonists of the film are not able to cross the bridge that can lead them to the village, to other people or to the community. This occurs twice: once at the end of the first part, when Justine's horse stops before the bridge, and during the second part, when Claire tries to escape from the estate with Leo, but they have to return. Moreover, their only servant from the village does not appear at his workplace on the last day; it was impossible because the place had been absorbed by oblivion. The main characters are doomed to death. They are in a double encirclement. On one hand, there is Justine: a medium between the reality and the haunted world of the European melancholia, Europe's dark past and the European romantic vision of the end of the world. On the other hand, there is a mystical planet, Melancholia, that is going to take the Earth in. Closer to the end, the locus of oblivion is even more narrowed. Justine and Leo are going to build an imaginary cave to protect them.

Caves are a profound symbolic image in art and literature. In mythological poetics, a cave opposes the world and the underworld. It can replace the home, but you cannot live in a cave. It is a place to be saved or kept in. In myths, caves are often interpreted as a sacral place of birth, for hiding and for death. Additionally, it is a popular locus associated with passion and love (especially in European literature, music and art). Caves are often presented as the bosom of the Earth, its vagina and at the same time its grave, so, the usage of this symbol in the final episode is rather expressive. In general, Trier supports the idea that humanity deserves to be destroyed, according to its merits. In the film, Justine proclaims this idea to Claire.

The last observation worth mentioning concerns the specific camera movements. As stated before, the "Introduction" is shot with the still camera in extremely slow pacing. The main parts are contrasted by hand-held camerawork, by cutting to short fragments and by editing them with clashes and omissions of scenes. This depicts the chaotic pace of modern life and desultory thoughts of the characters, nervousness and the feeling of the approaching

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[277] Pajaczkowska, C.: "Urban Memory / Suburban Oblivion". In: Crinson: *Urban memory: history and amnesia in the modern city*, pp. 23-48, here p. 25.

catastrophe. Also, the director masterfully uses the light. He is extremely resourceful with colors. He contrasts them in the sub-dominant sequences and juxtaposes the color schemes of the following parts: dark for wedding sequences and bright for the last moments of life on the planet.

In conclusion, Lars von Trier makes use of a wide range of strategies to visualize the European vision of the end of the world. It is mainly based on the revision of collective cultural memory of European art, music and literature. The film narrative is filled with allusions, reminiscences and citations. Furthermore, the use of intermediality and intertextuality inscribes Trier's film in European tradition and articulates common values for the European collective identity:

> Melancholy, nostalgia, the bittersweet recollection of things that have passed are forms of memory, and so too are regret and remorse. Memory, as the making present of an absence, can be the work of guarding the unity or integrity of individual lives.[278]

In this light, Trier's film on the melancholy of the Europeans is one of the contemporary 'memory sites' that helps us guard our unity and integrity as people who share a similar history and culture, myths and values.

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[278]   Booth: *Communities of memory: on witness, identity, and justice*, p. X.

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This book investigates the multiple interconnections between film and different cultures of memory, presenting discussions of, amongst other things, the representation of memory, rememberance and oblivion in films, and the role of film in the construction of collective memory. It is the result of a close cooperation between Saarland University (Saar-brücken, Germany) and Petro Mohyla Black Sea State University in Mykolaiv (Ukraine) and unites contributions of German and Ukrainian scholars of various disciplines. Their papers invite the reader to discover different cultures of memory through case studies about Russia, Spain, USA, Cuba and Germany, and illustrate various approaches in analyzing the relationship of the medium film to (collective) memory and rememberance.