JOURNAL OF THE RESEARCH CENTRE
AT THE LATVIAN ACADEMY OF CULTURE

CULTURE CROSSROADS

VOLUME 14
2019

Culture Crossroads is an international peer-reviewed journal published by the Research Centre of the Latvian Academy of Culture.

Culture Crossroads No. 14 is supported by
The European Regional Development Fund (ERAF) within the project *Facilitation of Research at the Academy of Culture* (*Latvijas Kultūras akadēmijas zinātniskās darbības attīstība*, Nr. 1.1.1.5/18/I/017)

IEGULDĪJUMS TAVĀ NĀKOTNĒ

ISSN 2500-9974

CONTENT

INTRODUCTION

This specialized, 14th volume of Latvian Academy of Culture's journal "Culture Crossroads" is a continuation and resume of a crucial event in the scientific life of the Baltic States, a conference "Poetics and Politics of History in Film and Theatre".

The conference was dedicated to various perspectives of historical counterpoints and took place in Riga, at the Latvian Academy of Culture, from 29 November to 1 December 2018. In the conference were included 28 papers by prominent and respected film and theatre researchers and practitioners from 10 countries. These reports were in-depth analyses of spectacular arts and historical traces of artistic language that tried to answer whether and how through the artistic work it is possible to reconstruct previous time and scenes. Most of the papers were dedicated to the exploration on how performing and audio-visual arts have modelled, interpreted and reflected the history and people of Latvia and the countries bordering the Baltic Sea, and how historical processes have influenced fates of theatre and film makers.

The conference was organised as part of the project The European Regional Development Fund within the project Facilitation of Research at the Academy of Culture, and it was financially supported by State Culture Capital Foundation, Riga City Council and the Embassy of the United States in Latvia.

In this journal, we have gathered 12 articles that further develop themes which were discussed in the conference "Poetics and Politics of History in Film and Theatre". Authors of the journal represent six countries – Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Finland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America –, and their daily professional activity covers not only theatre and film research and academic work in universities, but also is linked with different scopes from producing films and theatre performances to administrating creative processes. Therefore, the spectrum of published articles has an extensive range – from scientifically and theoretically-based researches to empirical historical shreds of evidence and artists' reflections on making their own work within the context and course of history. The journal has been made into a unified formatting style, yet the preferences of the authors and idiosyncratic way of expression has been taken into account and respected.

Special attention has been paid to those artistic phenomena which were devoted to the centenaries of the Baltic States in 2018. As it is usual, the majority of films and

theatre performances, which in the period of celebrating centenaries were made with the support of Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian state programmes, were dedicated to the history or took a focalization from today's stance to see the past in a novel perspective. The most significant is that part of these articles tried to look into the future through the past – either through the eyes of a child or having a direct interplay, even a confrontation between a modern person and his own past.

Read about it in the special edition of the "Culture Crossroads" journal!

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CENTENARY OF LATVIA THROUGH THE EYES OF A CHILD

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Abstract

Article "Centenary of Latvia Through the Eyes of a Child" focuses on the recent history of Latvian cinema – programme "Latvian Films for Centenary of Latvia" (LV100) –, within framework of which 16 full-length films were made. For the first time in the history of the independent Latvia the films made in 2018 have been watched by more than half a million spectators. The main characters in several films from this programme are children and they offer a chance to view various events from the perceptual vantage point of a child. Author analyses numerous films of the programme ("Bille", "Paradise 89", "The Mover", "To Be Continued") in the context of representation of children's experience in cinema and focuses on the different cinematic approaches used by the authors of the films to communicate stories about the history of Latvia. Does the principle of choosing a child as the central image of the film signal the desire of the Latvian film directors to observe historical processes with a child's eyes?

Keywords: *Programme "Latvian Films for Centenary of Latvia" (LV100)*, *Latvian cinema*, *Bille*, *The Mover, Paradise 89, To Be Continued*, *a child*.

The last year – 2018 – has been special and successful for the cinema of Latvia. For the first time since regaining independence of Latvia at the beginning of the 1990s, so many films have been made and for the first time the films have reached such high numbers of attendance. For the first time in the history of the independent Latvia the films made in 2018 have been watched by more than half a million spectators according to the statistics collected by National Film Centre of Latvia (attendance of domestic films was 560,257; which is 22.14% of market share). For a country with a population of less than 2 million it is a considerable achievement. A significant role in this process was played by the programme "Latvian Films for Centenary of Latvia" (LV100), within framework of

which 16 full-length films were made – including 6 feature films, 8 documentaries and 2 animation films. Fourteen of the Latvian Films for Centenary of Latvia that were screened till the end of 2018 have gathered the audience amounting to 370,000 (according to the statistics collected by National Film Centre of Latvia). The main characters in several films from this programme are children and they offer a chance to view various events from the perceptual vantage point of a child. Those are feature films "Bille" (*Bille*, directed by Ināra Kolmane), "Paradise 89" (*Paradīze 89*, directed by Madara Dišlere) and partly also "The Mover" (*Tēvs Nakts*, directed by Dāvis Sīmanis) and the documentary film "To Be Continued" (*Turpinājums*, directed by Ivars Seleckis). That makes one fourth of the entire film programme and at least half of the feature films included in the programme.

There is a logical question, why such intense focusing on a child as the main character in the film? Why do filmmakers present a child as the protagonist of their film? Is that a particular concept of the creators of the programme LV 100 or a significant contingency?

To answer this question, it is necessary to outline briefly the **institutional framework** of the programme LV 100. The film programme driving force, developer of its strategy and the monitoring institution is the National Film Centre. The film projects were selected by way of a competition that consisted of several stages and that began already in 2014 when an expert commission evaluated the film treatments and projects. The thematic framework was formulated by emphasizing creation of *high-quality films of variety of genres and making of films significant for society with an aim to bring into focus the themes of history of Latvia, its statehood and national identity* [NKC 2014]. The films were to be made for general audience.

From 32 projects submitted to the competition 16 were selected. The Commission assessed the quality of the projects, their thematic aspects so that in an ideal case LV 100 films would embrace various and different stages of history of Latvia. No principle of "mechanical quotas" concerning typology and genres of the films was applied. Gender quota principle was not applied either although half of the 16 programme directors were women (in the European context more and more frequently there are discussions about the gender equity in film industry). The projects for film production were selected for their quality and not as a result of applying some specific quotas (thematic, gender and so on). The first film of the programme LV100 was premiered in August 2017, the closing film – in March 2019. Until the end of April 2019, the attendance of the films of the programme reached 424,000.

The first and one of the last LV 100 programme films – the family film "Grandad More Dangerous than Computer" (*Vectēvs, kas bīstamāks par datoru*, directed by Varis Brasla) and the full-length animation film "Jekabs, Mimmi

and the Talking Dogs" (*Jēkabs, Mimmi un runājošie suņi*, directed by Edmunds Jansons) – could have also been included in the present report since children are the main characters in both the films. Yet we will not examine the animation film for the specificity of its genre while "Grandad More Dangerous than Computer" offers a fairly conventional plot structure typical of family films – comedies, and its setting is contemporary reality. Therefore, I will focus on these LV 100 programme films where children are used as the film protagonists for the analysis of a broader historical experience.

Many of the film projects that were implemented within the programme LV 100 have similar structural principles. The child is the main character (or one of the main characters) of these films; certain stages of Latvian history are narrated from his or her perspective. The action of the film "Bille", as well as "Paradise 89", and "The Mover" takes place during various historical periods and children are the central characters of these films.

An interesting experience for analyses of contemporary processes by using children as protagonists or social actors (to use Bill Nichols' terminology) is offered by the documentary film "To Be Continued" which I will also examine in the present article [Nichols 2001].

The film selection consists of:

"Bille", directed by Ināra Kolmane. A story about growing up based on an autobiographical work by the Latvian literary classic Vizma Belševica. The setting of the film is the 1920s–1930s; it is a period that in Latvian cinema is usually represented in an idealized way as the *lost paradise*. Childhood experience of Bille who is growing up in a poor family is harsh – also because of the destructive relations between her parents.

"Paradise 89", directed by Madara Dišlere. A narrative about events taking place in a Latvian small town in 1989 where little Paula and her sister have been sent to spend summer holidays. The events in this little town and in lives of the girls who are spending carefree time actually without their parents' care also reflect the events that give evidence about crumbling of the USSR and its near end. It is the year of the Baltic Way that has become a symbol of non-violent resistance of the Baltic States, marked the processes of collapse of the Soviet Union and brought nearer the independence of the Baltic States. The events of the fragmented history in 1989 are presented through the eyes of the girl Paula.

"The Mover", directed by Dāvis Sīmanis. The film reflects events in Latvia, Riga in the 1940s and the theme of holocaust. Its main character is Latvia's Schindler – Žanis Lipke who saved tens of Jews during the Second World War by hiding them in the cellar of his house. A significant role is played in the film by Lipke's small son. The film is based on Inese Zandere's literary work under the title "The Boy with a

Dog" – that was also the working title of this film which was changed during the shooting process.

"To Be Continued", directed by Ivars Seleckis. A documentary film whose characters are five contemporary first-formers. The children represent different social groups – city dwellers, country people, Latvians and Russians, children of well-off parents and of parents who lead fairly modest lives. By following a certain period in the lives of the children, the film actually creates portrayal of contemporary Latvia, minutely representing the heterogeneous social environment in Latvia, and various social groups and their values.

Representation of Child's Experience

The image of a child and representation of children's experience have strong traditions. Besides, film language possesses various tools with the help of which representation in a film can be special and expressive: "When it comes to the representation of the child, cinema, with its privileged access to the perceptual, its visual and aural richness, would seem to have the advantage: closer to perception, it can come closer to a child. In particular, the impulse and capacity to see continue to be invested as primary modes of discovering the world for infants and young children" [Lebeau 2007: 16]. During its development the film medium has emphasized the mythological aspect of childhood stressing childhood as a special time and space. Children as protagonists have a potential to create an alternative cinematic space where reality and imagination, memories and virtuality merge. Undeniably the adult spectator is ready to nostalgically identify with the young character of the film since the viewer has once been like this character. "Child as spectacle, child as subject: cinema can offer unprecedented access to both, its impression of reality combined with its capacity to deliver the points of view that help to put the (adult) audience back in the place of the child" [Lebeau 2007: 40].

Vicky Lebeau in her study "Childhood and Cinema" offers a comprehensive analysis of this theme, including in her research the first early primitive films where children were participants (for example, Lois Lumiere's "Feeding the Baby"*/ Repas de bébé,* 1895*) that started "genre of the child" in the cinema, vitalizing the claims of the moving pictures to document the spontaneity and immediacy of "life itself"* [Lebeau 2007: 13], as well as the diverse use of the child's image in films made in different countries and at periods of time. It should be noted that in the history of the 20th century cinema there are many films where a child is used as a figure with the help of which the tragic historical periods can be researched. Child became a figure through which to explore the legacy of war and genocide during the twentieth century. This tradition began already after the Second World War with Roberto

Rossellini's "Rome, Open City" (1945), its continuation is Andrey Tarkovski's "Ivan's Childhood" (1962), Louis Malle's *Au Revoir, les enfants* (1987), Agnieszka Holland's *Europa, Europa* (1990) and many others.

Analysing the LV 100 fiction films whose protagonists are children it is noteworthy that both "Bille" and "Paradise 89", as well as "The Mover" are films that are set at important and complicated periods of history of Latvia. The film plots taking place at various stages of the 20th century are different; the dramatic intensity is different as well, not to mention the genre demarcations that range from dramedy ("Paradise 89") to intense drama with tragic accents ("The Mover").

The notion *child's gaze* can be interpreted as a metaphor and also as a cinematically purposefully structured narrative by using unique resources of film language, for example, a subjective point of view and optical focalization. Do "Bille", "Paradise 89", and "The Mover" offer some specific cinematographic techniques that emphasize the child's image, a child's gaze and whether they use some particular subjectivization strategies? Although the directors of the mentioned films have not applied radical subjectivization resources, still several of the mentioned films use similar stylistic means: for example, a dream. In the film "Bille**"** there are several Bille's dream and fantasy sequences, which the director singles out stylistically – they are black and white. The dream enables to feel empathy with Bille's feelings and fantasies. It is a conscious means of subjectivization that makes the spectator feel closer to the main character Bille and allows to perceive the events through the prism of her sensations. Voice-over is also used – monologues by Bille.

In the film **"Paradise 89"** similar subjectivization means are used that are similar to those in "Bille" – there are several dream sequences in the film. They have been implemented in the film narrative in a manner like "Bille", namely, the characters dream/have nightmares while being ill and lying in bed with high temperature. It is both the scene with Lenin's monument, as well as the final sequence of the film in which Paula jumps from 1989 into modern times – when Latvia has regained its independence. The film uses (although not very consistently) subjective POV that facilitates identification with one of the characters of the film. It must be noted that there is a sense of *the author's presence* in the filmic narrative – the film is the director Madara Dišlere's debut, and it represents her memories about the teenage years, childhood and 1989.

The film "**The Mover"** is a more complex and interesting example. During its making process this film underwent considerable transformations. Initially the title of the film was "The Boy with a Dog" (it is based on a literary work by Inese Zandere under the same title). The boy is Žanis Lipke's son Zigis, and at the stage of application of this project the idea was to structure the entire narrative from the vantage point of this character. Yet during the working process the adult Žanis Lipke (actor

Arturs Skrastiņš) became the protagonist of the film. The change of the narrative focus is reflected also by the title change – "The Boy with a Dog" became "The Mover". Yet there are still some episodes that are focused on his son Zigis, and they signal that the boy could have had much larger significance in the film narration than in its final cut (for example, the episode at Žanis home when Zigis is watching through a slit of the door things he cannot understand – a discussion between his father and mother). Yet the authors of the film have made a conscious choice refusing from the child as the main narrator and possible subjectivization of the narrative. Possibly those were strategic considerations, for example, the fact that recently the world was shaken by László Nemes' film "Son of Saul" (2015) that deals with holocaust theme by offering restricted, subjective and shocking experience of the main character in a concentration camp. Yet the change of such a narrator allows promoting a hypothesis that refusing from *a child's gaze* the authors of the film "The Mover" have chosen both a more conventional and more complex approach. They attempt to look at the holocaust events in Latvia from the perspective of an adult and mature person's perspective but not with *the eyes of a child* – the limited child's understanding of the events. Yet there are still episodes in the film that give evidence of the initial intention to create a subjectivized narrative from a child's perspective.

The film **"To Be Continued"** became one of the most popular documentary films of the LV 100 programme, and it was also nominated from Latvia for the Academy film award *Oscar*. "To Be Continued" presents a different approach to the theme of *the child's gaze*. The difference is certainly determined also by the means of expression and narrative strategies characteristic for a documentary film that are different from fiction films. The film "To Be Continued" uses the classical observational strategy. At the beginning of the film the director Ivars Seleckis' narrator status is emphasised. The film begins with his voice-over narrative about his school years, but the director does not appear in the subsequent part of the film, except some conversations with the children and Seleckis stays out of the frame. The consistent and very precise selection of the characters of the film, use of the Latvian poetic documentary tradition that in this case has been done by one of the founders of this tradition in the 1960s, have resulted in a documentary film in which observational strategy has been used quite consciously. Camera work (to be more precise – the work of the cameramen team) by filming for a prolonged period of time five children in their environment and their relations with their parents and peers, creates a particular sense of closeness, the trust in the characters – we are allowed to enter their subjective space by using the observational strategy unique for documentary film yet avoiding radical means of subjectivization that are sometimes used in live action – fiction films.

What is then the answer to the question why the film programme LV 100 marks a particular desire of the directors to use children as protagonists and the main

characters? Is that a childhood myth and an opportunity to create specific "childhood space", as well as a potential for the spectator to identify with the character of the film? One should also remember that representation of specific historical periods plays an essential role. The fact that several filmmakers of the LV 100 programme have used a child as the protagonist of their film is to be assessed from various aspects.

The strategy to look at the historical processes with *a child's eyes* has its definite advantages, for example, in attracting larger audiences. The films about and with children can be offered to the family audience. This was certainly one of the arguments why the LV 100 programme films made such a box-office success. "Critics often agree that the cinematic 'value' or function of the child-protagonist is to permit adult spectatorial movement: the possibility of a flexible or perhaps fractured spectatorial position – in space-time, between past and present, or self and other – the child's view thus allowing for a defamiliarization or a shifting between the familiar and the unfamiliar, a flexible, heterogeneous or mobile spectatorship" [Delgado, Hart, Johnson 2017: 188].

Yet the choice of a child as a protagonist for representation of history enables the director to avoid a comprehensive narrative and the analysis of a specific historical period in all its broadest aspects. The child's experience is limited, his or her understanding about the historical events and calamities is much more fragmented than that of adults. The principle of choosing a child as the central image of the film signals the desire of the Latvian directors, the authors of these films to represent pure and innocent childish experience, a wish to observe historical processes with a child's eyes without offering a comprehensive narrative and analysis of these processes.

Perhaps the dominant choice in the LV 100 programme to represent history from a child's perspective gives evidence also about certain problems of maturity of the film industry. Funding of cinema in Latvia has been modest since the beginning of the 1990s, while this special programme that provided the possibility of making a large number of films in Latvia was both an opportunity and challenge for the film industry. It also became an implicit impulse to use for the representation of history one of the emotionally most effective ways of narrative construction by using children as protagonists.

By analysing the global cinema trends, researchers have identified an interesting tendency – a particular interest about films whose main characters are children who become catalysts of various historical processes, is characteristic for cinemas that have undergone deep crisis (political, economic). For example, Latin American, and especially Argentinian cinema experienced such a boom at the beginning of the 2000s [Garibotto 2019: 140–143]. A similar tendency can be observed in Latvia as well, although we cannot talk about political crises because Latvia is an independent country since the beginning of the 1990s that supports development of national cinema.

Yet funding for cinema since regaining of independence has always been limited. LV100 programme and additional funding for cinema (about 8 million EUR for four years) helped to overcome the shortage of financing at least in short-term period and helped to ensure generally diverse film production. And still – several of these films have similar trends – a wish to look at the processes of the present-day and the past with a child's eyes.

"How does cinema refract the image of the child across different genres, across national borders, across moments of time?" [Lebeau 2007: 20] This is the question asked at the beginning of her book by Vicky Lebay. Insight into the recent Latvian cinema experience – in the film programme LV 100 offers an answer in a specific national and historical context.

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ALTERNATE HISTORIES AS GATEWAYS TO THE FUTURE[1]

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Abstract

The article is analysing three productions from Estonia 100 theatre series "Tale of the Century" (*Sajandi lugu*): "The Landlady of Raven Stone" (*Kaarnakivi perenaine*), "Estonian History. A Nation Born of Shock" (*Eesti ajalugu. Ehmatusest sündinud rahvas*) and "Will Be / Will Not Be. Estonia in 100 Years" (*Tuleb / Ei tule. Eesti 100 aasta pärast*). These three productions had a common feature: they presented an alternate history, using either mytho-historic, counterfactual or utopian approach in interpreting Estonian history. The main aim is to demonstrate, how poetics of alternate history or utopia is explicitly or implicitly also building up politics of the future, depriving from victimisation and empowering subjectivity and agency.

Alternate histories create space for opportunities where different stories – both factual, personal and fictional – can be realized. Estonian theatre makers and audiences seem not need any more precise imitations or reconstruction of history but reflections from different point of views and with different degrees of authenticity that help them to remember and understand the palimpsestic nature of history, the current situation and possible future scenarios.

Keywords: *Estonian theatre, representation of history, alternate history, utopia.*

Hayden White has pointed out that *'belonging to history' (rather than being 'outside of it') or 'having a history' (rather than lacking one) have become values attached to certain modern quests for group identity* [White 2008: 9]. The quest is especially relevant for the representatives of small states, nations and communities, who do not only strive for self-identification with an imagined community but also for acknowledgement by others. Estonia, a piece of land of approximately

[1] Research for this article was supported by the Centre of Excellence in Estonian Studies (CEES, European Regional Development Fund, TK145).

45,000 km^2 inhabited by indigenous Estonian-speaking community, has enjoyed political freedom only for two short periods: 1918–1940 and since 1991 until nowadays. As an occupied country, it has been either left outside of history as a discursive practice altogether or has belonged to someone else's (German/Danish/Swedish/Polish-Lithuanian/Russian/Soviet or Baltic German) history. And only in the 20th century when Estonians were educated and Estonian language was developed enough and they both had acquired acceptable position in the society, Estonians started to claim their own history, written from the local perspective [Tamm 2009].

White draws parallels between physical or psychological trauma of a person and a community or society. "This physicalist conception of trauma (developed by Breuer and Freud in the 1890s) does not differ in any special way from its historiological counterpart in which the historical event is viewed as a significant disturbance of a historical (social) system that throws its institutions, practices, and beliefs into disarray and results in group behaviors similar to those manifested in the conditions of hysteria, paranoia, fetishism, and so on" [White 2008: 26]. In the contemporary framework of trauma studies, the idea is not novel, even when applied mostly in psychology and cultural studies.

The Second World War and Soviet occupation as major cultural traumas and its physical and mental consequences on Estonians have been investigated quite thoroughly after the end of the occupation, mostly through life stories [Aarelaid-Tart 2006, Kirss 2006, Kurvet-Käosaar 2014, Jaago 2018] and literature [Hollo 2016, Laanes 2017]. Eva-Clarita and Vello Pettai have also pointed out that post-Soviet memory culture in the Baltics can be characterized by exclusion of responsibility and collective victimisation [Pettai, Pettai 2015: 58–63]. Significant interest in the traumatic war and post-war period, maybe even inherited psychosis, is reflected also in films and theatre performances by Baltic directors of younger generation in the 21st century. In 2018, Estonia and Latvia celebrated the centenary of the states' independence and several art works dealing with the trauma were produced also for that occasion. Thus, victimisation is still a common strategy in dealing with historical topics in the Baltics.

Estonian Union of Performing Arts Institutions decided to set up a marathon of historical performances and a test for collaboration between theatres as a main theatrical event celebrating the centenary of Estonian independence. The aim was to present audiences a tale of the century of the Republic in twelve productions, each of them depicting one decade in the history and made in collaboration by one big and one small theatre/group. The pairs were drawn in a lottery, thus sometimes groups from different cities with different working principles (repertoire versus project based) or with entirely different ideological

and aesthetic principles found themselves in forced collaboration. Unfortunately, not all pairs were able to work together, and the plan ended up with thirteen original productions premiered from August 2017 until August 2018. Although it was not prescribed, theatre makers created relatively novel approaches to Estonian history, mostly avoiding canonical topics or ways of representation. Several productions from the series had a common feature: they presented an alternate history, the sub-genre of historical fiction with interfaces with science fiction [Singles 2013: 6], using either mytho-historic, counterfactual or utopian approach to the history. All these terms have been introduced more closely after specific empirical example. In the article, I am analysing three productions, concentrating on the issue, how poetics of alternate history or utopia is explicitly or implicitly also building up politics of the future: depriving from victimisation and empowering subjectivity and agency.

"The Landlady of Raven Stone"

"The Landlady of Raven Stone" (*Kaarnakivi perenaine*), a new play written by Andrus Kivirähk, was staged by Peeter Tammearu and produced in collaboration between Endla and Kuresaare Theatre. The decade they had to depict was the 1950s and Kivirähk located the story in 1951. The main character is young landlady Ilse (Lauli Otsar) whose parents together with many other Estonians were deported to Siberia in 1949 (deportation is almost an obligatory element in Baltic trauma narratives). Ilse lives in the past, stubbornly trying to preserve the muss in the house left after the deporters (time has stopped for her at the moment of trauma) and to imagine and vivify posh life style in the independent Estonia (the lost and forbidden world) when reading old women's magazines. Her boyfriend Heino (Markus Habakukk), who shares the same fate with Ilse, on the contrary, lives through the Soviet utopias of technological development described in the Soviet newspapers. The black and white character system of the play and the ideological struggle are typical features of socialist realism. In socialist realism, obsolete characters like Ilse driven by the past are despised and criticised, but since she represents the mentality of the dominant part of Estonians, Ilse wins the sympathy of spectators.

But Andrus Kivirähk mixes in the play the poetics of socialist realism with the poetics of fairy tales whereby the latter starts slowly to deconstruct the first. This is not a surprise because pastiche and bricolage has been detected as the main trademarks of Kivirähk [Kraavi 2003]. Estonian folkloric version of devil, Vanapagan, appears on stage, wounded and childishly helpless, as a character like others. And the household spirits – *naksikesed* – who abandoned Ilse's home after the deportation return at the end of the play when Ilse finds her subjectivity and inner power. The

magical raven stone[1] (egg) Ilse has inherited from her great-grandfather is not able to change the past (return her parents from Siberia) but it is able to influence the present and the near future (confuse people, increase fodder and repair tractors), according to the wish of its owner. Ilse uses the knowledge of the past, i.e. the magic item as a cosmic power source to control the situation. All characters in the play are divided by their devotion to the past, the present or the future. But Ilse's knowledge of the past improves the present and opens for her the future of Estonia because the raven stone is able to project also the distant future. As a matter of fact, the distant future as it is represented in the production, consists of sinister murmur and sketches of Estonian politicians of the 1990s when Estonia was announced independent again. The equivocal projection of the future empowers Ilse and the country, giving an aim to their everyday business. One should also consider that Lauli Otsar who plays the role of the landlady reminds Estonian president Kersti Kaljulaid. Despite the fact that Estonian president has no political power, only symbolic one, the production suggests that the stone is probably in good and wise hands.

Hayden White argues that miraculous events as manifestations of a power outside nature are never treated as historical facts because they fall out of the worldview of natural sciences. Nevertheless, "there is a whole body of contemporary writing that suggests that the notion of event and especially the notion of event informing and authorizing a belief in the reality of 'history' is a displacement from mythical modes of thinking and actually has more in common with a religious idea of miracle than with any scientific conception..." [White 2008: 24–25]. Despite the speculative nature of the statement, it is easy to agree that the reception of both historical and magical events relies on belief that they probably are true because of the discursive context the events are presented in. Kivirähk's poetics that combines miraculous events (influence of raven stone and the appearance of Devil) with historical ones (Soviet occupation, ideology and social roles, deportations, etc.) can be characterized as mytho-historic. Oxford Living Dictionaries defines the term "mytho-historic" as something "involving or invoking a mixture of myth and history; relating to or concerned with both myth and history" [Oxford Living Dictionaries].

Kivirähk exploits the belief of spectators in realistic drama when smuggling in miraculous/magic items and characters, making them through discursive context and stylistic framework of the production as believable and real as historic events.

[1] Raven stone, in English known as thunderstone, in academic language "belemnite", is a black smooth stone that was believed to have a magical power and that could be found from raven's nest. In Estonian folklore, stories about raven stone giving to its owner knowledge, or more specifically the knowledge of the language of birds, and together with magic words had healing virtue [Eesti Rahvakultuuri Leksikon 1995: 50].

The playwright performs hereby rehabilitation of miraculous events, bringing them back into the historical discourse, and also empowerment of conquered nation.

"Estonian History. A Nation Born of Shock"

Out of the collaboration between the Estonian National Opera and the Kanuti Gild HALL (independent performing arts production house), contemporary opera "Estonian History. A Nation Born of Shock" (*Eesti ajalugu. Ehmatusest sündinud rahvas*) was born. Thirteen persons are named as authors of the production without any distinction about their specific role in the process, but it is predictable that Tatjana Kozlova-Johannes acted as composer and Andrus Laansalu as the main scriptwriter.

One of the main characters is Lennart Meri (René Soom), the first Estonian president after the Soviet occupation, who is in the middle of writing a book about Estonian prehistory at some time in the 1960s. Meri's book "Silver White: Travelogue on the Winds and Ancient Poetry", an extensive hypothetical reconstruction of the prehistory of Estonia and the Baltic Sea region and an inspiration for Estonian self-awareness, was actually published in 1976 but it is probable that he started to work on the book earlier. Nevertheless, "Estonian History" seems to be rather an autobiography and legacy of the main protagonist, fictional Manfred MIM (Priit Volmer) who moves freely on the time scale between 888 BC and 2014 and seems to be omniscient and omnipresent. Manfred tries to take Meri to the crucial event of Estonian history – to the impact of a meteorite on island Saaremaa during which Estonians were born from a dogbane family (represented by vacuum-cleaner-like machines). The shock experienced in the ancient time explains also why Estonians have predominantly blue eyes and white hair. Manfred considers this historical event to be the source of Estonian identity: "But the whole sky never falls down. But they, the island people. They made from its stories and weapons[1]. Later on, they made dreams. And afterwards, when all this was forgotten, appeared that they made from it themselves" [MIM 2018: 2]. The reason Manfred needs Meri is to ground the stories with research and scientific facts.

For this journey, Manfred builds a time machine, using Estonian geology and architecture. For example, he states that waves of the fall of the meteorite have been recorded into Estonian slate and the arch on the song festival stadium in Tallinn works as a large depressator that magnifies the depression of Estonians into the time travel accelerator. Manfred uses here a technic of bricoleur: to take Meri back from the 1960s to the primal event in 888 BC, he combines the unofficial anthem of Estonia (written by Gustav Ernesaks in the 1940s), the arch of the song festival

[1] Iron meteorites consist of up to 90% of iron.

stadium (built in the 1960s) and 2014 song festival[1]. The neomythological story of "Estonian History" relies on magical realism, on the assumption that local geology and architecture contain magical power and cryptic knowledge about secrets of the existence. As in the 1960s, when exaltation about technology and science overlapped with deep interest in folklore and roots, the production is also combining myths of Kaali meteorite with present day scientific knowledge and analogue technology.

"Estonian History" starts symbolically with a scene where a coffee cup falls down into pieces and ends with the reversed scene. The pieces of the imaginary whole are a representation of the Western understanding of history in its materiality, factuality and discursivity. Manfred as a supernatural power is trying to reconstruct the pieces into a whole – into a coffee cup and a causal development of Estonian history.

Alternate histories as a genre of speculative fiction provide usually alternative versions to the current course of history, including possibilities of time travel and parallel universes. "The Landlady of Raven Stone" and "Estonian History" are in this sense not typical alternate histories, as they do not propose versions of contrasting courses of history, but rather having explanatory approach to well-known facts. They thus provide novel mythological versions of cause-and-effect relationships between different historical events. Considering the style and closeness to the historical facts of "Estonian History", the work can also be characterized as a counterfactual and ironic approach to history, since it is balancing between scientifically asserted or historical facts, historical hypothesis (especially about prehistory) and fictional imagination. The production questions clear divisions between so-called historical facts and speculations (including Lennart Meri's "Silver White"), pointing to the impossibility of historians return to the site of events under research as it was made possible to Meri by Manfred MIM. The production also mocks about national myths and symbols, using emotional estrangement and slow tempo of music as tools for bringing audiences to the level of contemplation.

Interludium

It seems symptomatic that when more distant history was tackled quite boldly and freely mixing facts and fantasy then when approaching to the present day, the theatre makers of the project "Tale of the Century" were trapped by their own personal bittersweet memories and/or social stereotypes of certain decade. The so-called simple people invaded the stage: young people trying to adapt to new circumstances and old people burdened by the grinding wheels of life. Estonians as the victims of history have become the victims of capitalism. The representations of nowadays were

[1] This was a historical song festival with maximum number of singers – 33,000 – and participants – 153 000 tickets were sold.

openly realistic or tragicomic but mostly with a happy end. Estonia seems to have impeccable façade abroad, but theatre makers tend to resist this image. The fact that political theatre is rather marginal feature in the Baltics, has made me look for political messages that are expressed implicitly and also in traditional forms and styles like comedy or realistic drama.

For example, is a happy end just a dramatic convention or also a political statement? A theoretical framework that helps to explore the politics of representations in arts is offered by Jill Dolan's book "Utopia in Performance. Finding Hope at the Theatre". Dolan argues that "live performance provides a place where people come together, embodied and passionate, to share experiences of meaning making and imagination that can describe or capture fleeting intimations of a better world" [Dolan 2010: 2]. Utopian performative as her main theoretical tool is described as "small but profound moments in which performance [..] lifts everyone slightly above the present" [Dolan 2010: 5] and is informed by the sense of partiality and process [Dolan 2010: 7]. Thus, utopian performatives as they are tackled in the book are not necessarily utopias describing better futures but rather moments in productions – dealing also with the past –, which create the sense of opportunities of better futures. It also means that alternate histories can work as utopian performatives.

The power of audiences who come together in theatre to imagine the future together with performers can also shape the future outside of theatre. Performance as a ritualistic practice unites embodied and imagined visons and energy to start a new process in – and outside of theatre. Unfortunately, utopian performatives do not take place very often, either due to the lack of intentions of theatre makers, or the inability to engage audiences. "The Landlady of Raven Stone" and "Estonian History" had both potential to work as utopian performatives but, in the following, I am going to analyse a performance that makes a strong claim as a utopian performative.

"Will Be / Will Not Be. Estonia in 100 years"

Ironically enough, the production about the future of Estonia "Will Be / Will Not Be. Estonia in 100 years" (*Tuleb / Ei tule. Eesti 100 aasta pärast*) was made by the Russian Theatre in collaboration with children. Formally, it was a pure coincidence because as stated above, the decades and theatres were paired by a lottery. Due to an uneven number of theatres that participated at the drawing, the last theatre remained alone with the hope that a new theatre would be established during the period who would be willing to participate in the project. Symbolically, the proposition that the future of Estonia and maybe even the whole world is highly dependent on Russia is not utopian one.

Based on the texts and pictures sent by children of the age between 3 and 19 from all over Estonia, five utopias were formed by stage director Artjom Garejev and four

dramatists, representing both Estonian and Russian speaking theatre community: Karin Lamson, Mari-Liis Lill, Jelena Tšitšerina and Laura Kalle. Spectators could vote among the utopias by cell phones during a performance, thus no performance was exactly alike. Artistically, the production did not have a strong impact, but it made spectators think about three essential questions the humankind is facing already today: how we shape our ecological, technological and cultural environment.

I have attended two performances: one during the theatre festival DRAAMA in Tartu on 9 September 2018, and the second in the Russian Theatre in Tallinn on 27 December 2018. According to my observation, in Tartu, the audience consisted mostly of international guests of the festival and Estonian-speaking spectators; in Tallinn, mostly but not entirely of Russian-speaking spectators.

First, attenders of the production had to choose the level of difficulty of the performance. In both cases, audiences preferred the difficult level and performance started with the information technological utopia. The production consisted of presentations of different utopias. When a utopian world was introduced, spectators had the opportunity to choose, should Estonia proceed in the selected path or not. If a utopia was affirmed by audiences, it became a dystopia in the course of performance and after that it was possible to vote again and select a new direction of development for Estonia until a consensus was found in the audience about the future. In Tartu, the performance lasted three hours forty minutes and ended with the nation and language-based utopia supported by a slight majority of votes. But the world was far from an ideal! The utopia depicted the TV-show "The Last Russian" where spectators – based on the cultural performance and knowledge of Estonian by a Russian family – could vote, either the family will be deported from Estonia or not. In Tallinn, the performance lasted two hours forty minutes and ended with an ecological utopia (52.2% of votes), which was playfully rejected in Tartu[1]. (The Tallinn audience had chosen multicultural scenario with 58.8% of votes and rejected it with 50.6% of votes but the national and language-based utopia was not selected in that performance.) In the ecological utopia, plastic, meat and alcohol are forbidden and the society is based 100 percent on renewable energy, including body warmth as a source of energy. Human bodies are thus an important energy resource for the society that is regulated by different kinds of restrictions.

Based on rather careless and insensitive texts and pictures of children, "Will Be / Will Not Be" presented the immersive sense of dystopia and danger. Since all utopias were developed to an extreme, audiences had difficulties to accept them, thus there was a tendency to reject the proposed fictional worlds at first and after a longer duration of the performance to accept the imperfection of the world. (It is stated in the

[1] I did not take notes about the percentage of votes at the Tartu performance.

beginning of the production that a performance may last from two to forty hours, depending on the choices of audiences.) Also, Dolan resists the efforts to find representations of a better world because a fixed and static image or structure would be much too finite and exclusionary for the soaring sense of hope, possibility, and desire. She makes a reference to Marxist philosophers Ernst Bloch and Herbert Marcuse, who suggest that an alternative world could be expressed rather "through the communication of an alternative experience" [Dolan 2010: 7–8].

The production also highlighted and naturalised the constant presence of alternative experiences and *dissensus* when inviting audiences to vote between different alternatives. It seemed that a considerable number of spectators started voting only when the opinion of the majority was visible on the screen to balance the inequality of votes with their counter-opinion. Can this playful resistance towards voting as a tool of democracy and towards sociological construction of homogeneous groups be compared with the behaviour of people in politics and everyday business? The latest developments in Estonian political life at least support the opinion and there is even a word for that – protest voting (for example, performative and controversial Indrek Tarand with little political experience was elected to the European Parliament with 100,000 votes in 2009). But the most important impact of the production is the raised awareness that our future depends on the decisions made in the past and in the present, and every person and community can make and is making their choices every day. The refrain of the final song warns: "If you do not decide by yourself, someone will decide for yourself."

Nevertheless, the Russian Theatre ended the production with a song by actors of different Estonian theatres, praising humanistic values over all kind of realities. Considering the historical and current social and cultural realities of Estonia, tensions between Estonian- and Russian-speaking population, the scene was definitely intended as a utopian performative uniting citizens of Estonia despite of their mother tongue. Aesthetically it made visual references to the national awakening in the 19th century and musical references to the songs of the second independence movement at the end of the 1980s, to the periods when Estonian citizens showed extreme unity and expressed the sense of national belonging. It is a pity that many spectators interpreted the utopian performative as naïve and superficial.

Kathleen Singles has introduced notion of future narratives in the discourse of alternate histories. She states that majority of narratives, including most works of science fiction, which may claim to narrate a future scenario, possess events as if they had already happened. A true future narrative "is one that preserves the characteristic feature of future time, namely that it is yet undecided, open, and it has not yet 'crystallized' into actuality". In addition, they should contain at least one node or nodal situation, which allows more than one continuation and often it depends

on receiver how the story or discourse proceeds [Singles 2013: 4]. Future narratives share significant resemblance with utopian performatives because as was mentioned above, Dolan also stresses the sense of partiality and process in utopian performative [Dolan 2010: 7]. "Will Be / Will not Be" is a good example of future narratives, since the structure contains several nodes, which activate audiences and lay the future in direct (development of the performance) and indirect (the future of Estonia) sense in the hand of spectators.

Conclusions

The discipline of history is considered to be based on facts. Personal histories are considered to be born out of lived experiences and recollections that both are coloured by emotional memory. But alternate histories create space for opportunities where different stories – both factual, personal and fictional – can be realized. Estonian theatre makers and audiences seem not need any more precise imitations or reconstruction of history but reflections from different point of views and with different degrees of authenticity that help them to remember and understand the palimpsestic nature of history, the current situation and possible future scenarios. Nevertheless, theatrical performance is not only a medium of knowledge and comprehension but first of all a space for collective meaning making and imagination and a process that might lead to utopian performatives that are able to change the world and the future. "Tale of the Century" (13 productions) was an unconscious and collective attempt of theatre makers to take back the discourse of history from professional historians and politicians, to express their own vision of, i.e. to write their own history through the tools of performing arts and to make the histories practical tools of empowerment of the state and the nation.

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THEATRE AS COUNTER-HISTORY IN ESTONIA: THE CASE OF "BB AT NIGHT"[1]

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Abstract

The theatres of Estonia celebrated the centenary of Estonian Republic by staging performances depicting different decades of the country's history. The article discusses one of these performances "BB at Night" that staged the 1940s. The performance is based on a novel of the same title that tells the story of Berthold Brecht's journey to Finland during the Second World War. The aim of the article is to show – by describing three particular scenes from the performance and using the theories of Jacques Rancière, more precisely his notion of *dissensus* to analyse these scenes – how a performance that is not political *per se* could be received as political. By inviting audience members to participate in certain scenes, the bodies of theatre visitors are politicized, and the performance becomes aesthetically political and politically aesthetical.

Keywords: *Brecht, participatory theatre, political theatre, dissensus*.

Prologue

In 2018, the Republic of Estonia celebrated its centenary. Estonian theatres contributed to the celebration by launching a year lasting project titled "The Tale of the Century" that consisted of twelve different productions depicting the decades of Estonian history from the 1910s to the 2020s. The performances premiered from August 2017 starting with the production representing the 1910s to August 2018 finishing with the production about the future, the 2020s. In addition to the aesthetic aim of the project, the second purpose was to make theatres collaborate with each other – so every production was staged in collaboration between two theatres,

[1] This research has been supported by the Centre of Excellence in Estonian Studies (European Union, European Regional Development Fund).

a small and a big one. All participating theatres (23 all together[1]) were paired up by lottery. The decade was also chosen by lottery. This article discusses only one of these productions, "BB at Night" that depicts the 1940s. The production was created by Mart Koldits (b 1979) from Von Krahl Theatre and Ivar Põllu (b 1974) from Tartu New Theatre[2]. In addition to directing, Ivar Põllu was also the author of the play text. The production, highly appreciated both by the audiences and theatre critics, won the Best Production of the Year and the Special Award in Performing Arts in Estonia. The aim of the article is to show – by describing three particular scenes from the performance and using the theories of Jacques Rancière, more precisely his notion of *dissensus* to analyse these scenes – how a performance that is not political *per se* could be received as political. By inviting audience members to participate in certain scenes, the bodies of theatre visitors are politicized, and the performance becomes aesthetically political and politically aesthetical.

Introduction

"BB at Night" is based on a novel by a writer and theatre director Mati Unt (1944–2005), published in 1997. The novel talks about world famous theatre director and theorist Berthold Brecht, who in 1940 travels to Finland with her wife Helene and lover Ruth to visit Estonian-Finnish writer Hella Wuolijoki. The author of the play text Ivar Põllu has combined, in addition to the novel, also materials like diaries from the 1940s (for example, by famous Estonian theatre director and theorist Voldemar Panso), his own grandfather's letters from Siberia and other documentary materials into the play text.

The term "counter-history", used in the title of this article, is not a theoretical notion, but has been borrowed from a headline of an article in the daily newspaper [Oidsalu 2017] analysing the performance. I adopt the term "counter-history", because even though the performance is presenting the audiences with certain real time historic events and using real life characters like Berthold Brecht, the Estonian president of that time Konstantin Päts or a communist party functionary Maksim Unt, the performance also plays with the history by offering a somewhat different perspective to the 1940s. Despite stating the tragic events, the authors have combined comic elements without being too vulgar or mocking the horrors of that time.

[1] One position (logically there should have been 24 theatres instead of 23 to pair them up) was left empty for the purposes of involving a theatre or a group that did not exist at the beginning of the project in 2014. In the end, the Russian theatre that staged the performance about the 2020s chose *Estonian children* as their partner.

[2] Both of these theatres are private theatres without permanent troupe, but with their own venue and artistic director. Von Krahl is located in Tallinn and New Theatre in Tartu.

Even though the performance has not been considered a political performance, I will show, based mostly on the framework of French philosopher Jacques Ranciére – who has analysed the relationship between arts and politics and uses the notion of *dissensus* – how, by making people to participate in the performance, "BB at Night" becomes a political performance that offers an alternative, more playful perspective to the 1940s, to one of the darkest decades of the 20th century.

The main theoretical notions

In his essay "The Paradoxes of Political Art" (2010) Rancière discusses the re-politicization of arts and asks for *the models of the efficacy of art* that are used when judging the political aspects of arts [ibid: 135]. In answering to this, Rancière [2010, 2006, 2004] himself presents three regimes of the "distribution of sensible" in the realm of aesthetics: the ethical regime of images, the representative regime of art, and the aesthetic regime of art.

In the ethical regime, the images created (Ranciére [ibid] says you cannot yet talk about artworks in this regime) are defined by their function and benefit for the society. In the representative regime, art obtains autonomy[1] and is defined by the ability of art to mimic the world around us by fictionalising it simultaneously. It is the aesthetic regime of art where the redistribution of sensible is made possible – art becomes the unifier of known and unknown, art is autonomous as well as identifiable with life, so art moves between autonomy and heteronomy, between pure art and non-art [Kangro 2017: 194–197].

The term "distribution of the sensible", especially from the perspective of politics, refers to the given order of things at the society, the "law that defines the forms of partaking [..]. This partition should be understood in the double sense of the word: on the one hand, as that which separates and excludes; on the other, as that which allows participation" [Rancière 2010: 36]. It means that as citizens we are to follow the given rules and structure of the system, being "included in" or "excluded of" certain activities. It is the "dissensus that creates a fissure in the sensible order by confronting the established framework of perception, thought, and action with the 'inadmissible', i.e. a political subject" [Rancière 2004: 86]. So for Rancière the idea of politics and of democracy is to create *dissensus,* to confront the existing forms of partaking. *Dissensus* does not have to be executed through revolution *per se* but rather it should be a constant process of the society and its relationship to politics. I argue that "BB at Night" creates *dissensus* and through this becomes a political performance even though it was not titled directly political either by the makers themselves or theatre critics.

[1] Compare to the Kantian notion of disinterestedness (e. g. Van Maanen 2009: 178–183).

The definition of political theatre in the 21st century is very vague, and "BB at Night" is a good example of the versatility of this genre. Estonian theatre researcher Madli Pesti [2016: 54–58] has proposed to distinguish between four types of political theatre: thematic (the subject matter of the production is political), functional (the purpose of the production is political), ideological (she asks weather a performance should defend or present some kind of ideologically loaded ideas) and aesthetic (political theatre defined based on aesthetics). It is the fourth definition that could be used to describe the politics of "BB at Night": even though the subject matter and the main character Berthold Brecht, seen as one of the pioneers of the political theatre of the 20th century, might make one assume that "BB at Night" would be also thematically and ideologically political, I argue that the politics of this performance conceals in the ways audience members participate in the performance, creating an aesthetic world that creates the possibility for *dissensus*.

Participation and politicized bodies

"BB at Night" takes place in two locations – in the train (either from Tallinn or Tartu) and at the train station of Tapa, in the city between these two cities. The performance starts already at the train stations of the two mentioned cities where all the theatre goers get headphones that they are asked to wear during the whole performance. The second part of the performance takes place outside and inside Tapa train station[1].

The first part of the story of Brecht arriving to Helsinki (that is literally taken from the novel) is told to the audience members as a radio drama that they listen to through headphones during the train ride. Idealistic communist Brecht is presented by being quite ignorant of the realities of this regime and therefore he already becomes an ironical main character. The realistic sounds of the radio drama (harbour and street noises, different languages spoken, different inside locations marked by familiar sounds) take the audience easily back to the 1940s. Concurrently, listening to the radio drama of Brecht, the audience members are aware of the symbolic meaning of the train ride itself to the final stop of Tapa – during the mass deportations of the 1940s, Tapa was one of the central train stations from where people were sent to Siberia.

As theatre visitors are not separated from other passengers and are sharing the carriages with them, they are aware of the fact that unlike the thousands of Estonians in 1941 they are free to leave the train at any stop if they feel like it. They are free to

[1] The performance can be seen having a third part – the train ride back to the train station the theatre visitors started the performance from (ride back is also included in the ticket price). But as the third part is not directed or staged in any ways, I will not consider it as part of the production.

choose the seats in the carriage, free to remove the headphones if they do not like the performance. Some of the audience members are even able to sleep during the train ride. Quoting Rancière [2010: 136–137]: "The efficacy of art resides not in the model (or counter-model) of behaviour that it provides, but first and foremost in partitions of space and time that it produces to define ways of being together or separate, being in front or in the middle of, being inside or outside, etc." The dialectic role of a theatre visitor who is at the same time also an ordinary passenger is blurring the boundary between reality and fiction, questioning the normal behaviour of a regular theatre goer and regular train passenger[1]. The concurrent inclusion into the smaller group of theatre goers and bigger group of passengers offers the possibility of being together and being separate at the same time. In addition, the audience members are literally brought together by trains, are guided to move around in groups, but are able to choose their own personal space and position during the whole performance. By participating in the performance, they are able to choose their own role and the way of being.

When the train stops at Tapa, theatre visitors are asked to leave the train (the train continues its journey as usual). It is especially the next scenes where audience members are invited to participate actively and where their bodies are politicized no matter if they choose to actively participate or not. One might even say that the audience members are "forced" to participate and therefore partake in the performance either way which will be shown in the following descriptions.

Scene 2.1. Crowd celebrates the train arrival. The people coming from Tartu find themselves in a movie set when they get off the train in Tapa. They realize instantly, that the time of this scene is the present, because the movie director and assistant are dressed in contemporary outfit. The theatre visitors are treated like stunts who are there to take part in some mass scenes – they are asked to walk slowly and silently, pretend that the weather is awful etc. At one point, people are asked to form one big group on the platform of the station. The movie director teaches the group how to "wave like in the 1940s", because he wants to film a scene how a joyful group of people are shouting "hurray" and welcoming an arriving train by waving at it cheerfully (Figure 1). After rehearsing the waving for a few times, a real actor playing an amateur actor among the audience members, asks whom they are waving at and from where the train is coming from. The following dialogue is taking place:

Actor 1: Okay. Wait... I'll ask again. Where do they come from?
Film Director: From the train.

[1] This blurriness becomes particularly visible by the surprised looks of the regular passengers who have no idea why some people are wearing similar headphones. Clearly some people are therefore behaving differently than usual.

Actor 1: From the train?

Film Director: From the train.

Actor 1: Like, directly from the train?

Film Director: So, to speak. The train is bringing back a delegation from Moscow who delivered the declaration that asks Estonia to be accepted into the Soviet Union.

Actor 1: I see. Right.

Film Director: That's right.

Actor 1: Could have said it before.

Film Director: Yes, and you believe these changes are good.

Actor 2: Changes can't be good for everyone [Põllu 2017: 24].

After listening to this dialogue between the film director and an amateur actor, the theatre visitors know why and whom they are waving at but keep doing it anyway. The waving has also a real-life effect when the theatre visitors from Tartu are asked to welcome the arriving train from Tallinn by waving at them and shouting hurray very cheerfully. The people from Tallinn are invited to join the group and the scene of waving and cheering is finally recorded by a real camera.

Figure 1. Audience members are filmed while they are waving at the arriving train in the style of the 1940s. (Photo by Gabriela Liivamägi)

Scene 2.2. People don't listen to their own president. After the first scene, the audience members are directed to stand on the grass at the side of the train station. Estonian first president Konstantin Päts, played by the same actor who just played the film director, is standing at the second-floor window making a speech to the crowd i.e. the audience members standing outside. The crowd, led by the communist party functionary Maksim Unt, played by the actor who was just playing the amateur actor asking all these questions in the previous scene, is now asked to boo and huzza at the speech president is giving. The theatre visitors are still wearing the headphones and the Narrator is asking them to boo with Maksim Unt. For example, in the following manner:

Maksim Unt (*in the middle of the crowd*): Boo! Boo!
One can hear the unruly crowd shout both "boo" and "huzza".
President: If you want to interrupt with these calls then I won't speak...
Maksim Unt: Don't need to!
President: But – but if you want that – if you think workers are not part of our people you are very wrong.
Narrator: Shout "huzza". Huzza!
One can hear the unruly crowd shout both "boo" and "huzza".
President: I – I have not differentiated between workers or peasants or artisans or intellectuals in the term "our people".
One can hear the unruly crowd shout both "boo" and "huzza".
Narrator: Those standing on grass shout "boo" and those on asphalt shout "huzza" [Põllu 2017: 29].

When in the first scene, the actual events (waving at the theatre visitors arriving from Tallinn) overcome the real historic events (waving at the communist party members arriving from Moscow), the second scene blurs the border between fiction and reality much more. Even though the scene with the President clearly depicts the real speech given in June 1940 and could be therefore first of all received as representing history (different from the first scene in which the audience members are clearly in the present, playing the crowd at mass scene shooting, where it is much easier to imagine "it is just a movie" because of all the visible cameras and film crew around the audience members), the commanding voice of the Narrator asking people to boo the President's speech makes the theatre visitors question their actions in this situation. They are aware of the real historical consequences (Soviet army invaded Estonia and the occupation started) and even though they cannot change the course of the history, the type of aggressive participation – meaning booing the President of Estonia – makes you question between the reality and fiction of one's actions.

Both of these described scenes can be received as political or aesthetic so I argue that even though we cannot go back to history to take a different political stand, we can, guided by the director and by the aesthetics of this performance, think it over now. "The real must be fictionalized in order to be thought. [..] Politics and art, like forms of knowledge, construct 'fictions', that is to say material rearrangements of signs and images, relationships between what is seen and what is said, between what is done and what can be done", states Rancière [2006: 38–39]. For Rancière the fiction re-frames the "real" and through this the framing of the *dissensus* takes place. New relationships between reality and appearance, the individual and the collective are built in these scenes [Rancière 2010: 141].

While in the first two scenes people are asked (forced?) to participate, the fourth scene "The Crowd Eats Free Soup" seems to offer a different participation strategy, i.e., no active participation[1]. At the beginning of this scene, the audience members are finally guided inside the train station where they are offered some free soup. After finishing the soup, they are asked to sit down inside the train station. Two characters, The Poet and the Painter (Figure 2) enter the scene giving the following dialogue:

Painter: But no. Passionless, bland, tormented. What's the point? In living like this?

Poet: Silent submission... Some kind of Oriental survival model... Sad... Image... I was hoping for something... Bigger... I did everything for them to have... Some kind of resistance... Maybe for them to suddenly... Find... A wild... But they did not... Find it... They stayed... As if in agreement... Till the end...

Painter: Passion! There's little of it... There is! Something dignified? But... falls off!

Poet: Don't put it... So... Simply... It doesn't rise up... Into the heights...

Painter: My people! Suffer! Even in silence. But eventually! Resist! And resist! Themselves. And then again. Suffer! But here...

Poet: Don't start... Saying... Bad things...

Painter: Just... Like that... Like that... Like... nothing...

Poet: Say it! Simply.

Painter: Simply... [Põllu 2017: 33–34].

The scene is staged very poetically – first of all, the characters Painter and Poet are depicting Hitler and Stalin; a piece by Estonian composer Arvo Pärt, the most played living composer of the world [Tambur 2018], is used as a soundtrack.

[1] Of course, every theatre performance is a form of communication and therefore always includes active participation, here the word "active" refers to the partaking of previous scenes (See, for example, White 2013:4).

Figure 2. Two characters, (from the left) the Painter (Henrik Kalmet) and the Poet (Tõnis Niinemets) in the scene "The crowd eats free soup". (Photo by Gabriela Liivamägi)

The two most hated men of the 20th century are presented as intellectuals discussing the eastern spirit of the numbness of people who do not fight back even when given a chance. Subconsciously the audience members are reminded again of the course of Estonian history – would things have been different if the political leaders and Estonians themselves had acted differently in 1939 and 1940, had stood up against the Russian invasion? Sitting in the old and tainted train station, packed together in the uncomfortable seats, the visitors are invited to imagine the same kind of situation more than half a century ago – frightened and suspense people crammed tightly into Tapa train station probably not grasping the personal and collective tragedy of that moment.

Dialectics of Brecht

The idea of reframing the "real", the idea "that such strategies are intended to make the invisible visible or to question the self-evidence of the visible; to rupture given relations between things and meanings and, inversely, to invent novel relationships between things and meanings that were previously unrelated" [Rancière 2010: 141], is also similar to the idea of the dialectics used by Brecht himself to "demonstrate and provoke awareness of the individual's place in a concrete social narrative" [Brooker 2006: 210].

The dialectics have a distinct function in the performance. In the novel itself, the author Mati Unt is very ironic about the idea of dialectics and the creators of the performance are following this ironical line of thinking and using dialectics deliberately during the whole performance. The alienating acting does not allow audience members to engage with the shown events realistically – for example, the same actor is playing the movie director who wants people to cheer at the train bringing devastating news from Moscow and then the President of Estonia. Even in the third scene, where the theatrical illusion is the strongest, emphasised (of course ironically) by the music and the theatrical space itself, the alienation comes from the fact that the two actors playing Hitler and Stalin are foremost well-known comedians from television.

Due to the use of the dialectical approach, audience members are in one way aware of the theatrical frame that reminds theatre visitors that "it's just theatre", but at the same time, they are often put into the situations where the "real" meets the "fictional" and through these scenes the possibility of *dissensus* is created. When shouting "boo" at the Presidents' speech, are they just participants in the theatrical scene, or are they actually doubting the right of freedom of Estonian Republic by participating? When waving at the train, are they just doing it because the actors ask them to do these things, or are they cheering for communist regime that killed millions in the world? The audience members have the right to decide whichever role they choose to participate in the performance. Paradoxically, even remaining silent (not doing what is told or asked from us) in these described scenes, the bodies cannot escape the political role they are given just standing or sitting quietly through these scenes. The bodies are politicised, the performance becomes political in its aesthetics, retaining its poetical aesthetics.

David Barnett [2016: 9] discusses in his article about dialectics and Brechtian tradition that for Brecht the dialectics was "like a montage form in which the parts communicate with each other suggestively rather than logically". In the case of "BB at Night", logically the audience members should use the representational frame to look at the performance talking about the historic events of the 1940s and realise the consequences of the devastating decade. However, by participating actively (or passively) theatre visitors can connect the scenes suggestively, placing themselves in different positions in these scenes, maybe trying out different ways of participation, different roles, getting a different perspective of the decade. "Activity is a central component of dialectical practice" [ibid: 10] and the three scenes previously described prove the point.

Conclusion

"Artworks can produce effects of dissensus precisely because they neither give lessons nor have any destination", argues Rancière [2010: 140]. "BB at Night" is not just presenting history even though some of the characters depicted and situations presented in the performance are based on real people and real events. By providing the audience members the possibility to play along, they may get a different insight into this decade. I argue that therefore "BB at Night" is a performance of the aesthetic regime and its aesthetics offers a possibility of *dissensus*. And through this possibility the performance also becomes political (actually not functioning like it or aiming for ideological change) without defining itself political *per se*.

"Knowledge, for Brecht, has to start with an observation of processes, and these are likely to change over time, and so knowledge, too, will never be stable", writes David Barnett [2016:11]. The knowledge about history is on the one hand based on facts, but on the other hand matter of perspective, memory and representation. "BB at Night" also is an example of ways knowledge about certain events (especially traumatic historic events) can also change and even the painful events can be staged as playful without becoming vulgar or comic.

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LUMINOUS AMBUSH: SEIZING THE HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE OF CATASTROPHE THROUGH FILM

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Abstract

"There are wounds with which we should never cease to suffer, and, sometimes, in the life of a civilization, illness is better than health" [Ankersmit, "Remembering the Holocaust"].

My book, "Unspeakable Histories: Film and the Experience of Catastrophe" (2016), addresses films that depict 20th century atrocities and focuses on historical experience, not *historical truth*, and the emotions that still adhere to unresolved traumatic events. Using key concepts and analysis from this book, my goal here is to demonstrate, through the interpretation of three films, how such historical experiences can be represented. In Yaël Hersonski's "A Film Unfinished" (2010) the filmmaker deconstructs a Nazi propaganda film on the Warsaw Ghetto and brings us into direct contact with the experience of survivors. Rithy Panh in "S-21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine" (2003) and Joshua Oppenheimer in "The Act of Killing" (2012), use a technique I call psychodramatic *mise-en-scène* to incite perpetrators to reenact their genocidal acts. These films, among others, I argue, are capable of triggering moments of heightened awareness in which the reality of the past may be recovered in its material being.

Keywords: *historical representation, historical experience, catastrophe, deconstruction, psychodramatic* mise-en-scène.

Introduction: Historical Representation or Historical Experience

I will argue for the essential importance of **historical experience** in the representation of the past in film. What do I mean by historical experience? Historical experience is the perceptual and sensorial inside of events: the concrete material of the past, as opposed to the more abstract analysis of events which is the objective of most historical narratives. Historiography has always considered experience as the

indispensable substratum that historians subsume (i.e., repress) in the process of constructing their *objective* discourse. From this perspective, experience dies its *natural* death in the finished, teleological narratives that are the aim of classic historiography. Representations of the past are at heart intellectual, cognitive forms. When we enter the space of discourse, we leave the world of experience behind. Historians have held that it is only through the verbal reconstruction of events that we can, credibly, know anything about the past. Indeed, as Frank Ankersmit points out, philosophers of history have categorically denied that one can have any sort of direct experience of the past "for the simple reason that the past no longer exists" [Ankersmit 2012: 175]. For historians, experience occupies a disquieting zone of impressions and emotions, alien to historical analysis. The historian's task is to isolate historical facts from raw traces of events – sift through the evidence – then align the significant facts, brushed clean of extraneous material, in a meaningful (that is, causal) sequence.

I will hold, against historians, that historical experience is not in fact beyond our grasp. It can be recovered. However, the recovery of experience is of a totally different nature from the representation that historians advocate. Experience is anchored in *immediate* perceptions; it is made of undigested material, often preverbal, which emerges from the domains of emotion and sensation. If history gives us an **account of the world**, historical experience is about **being in the world**. In its strongest forms, the recovery of historical experience becomes, in Ankersmit's estimation, *one of the many variants of ekstasis,* an uncanny experience of *truth* that takes you unaware and thrusts you into a sphere where the usual protocols do not apply: "This contact with the past that cannot be reduced to anything outside itself, is the entrance into a world of its own" [Ankersmit 2012: 187].

Film, I will argue, is exceptionally capable of evoking the world of past experience. It is even capable of triggering moments of heightened awareness in which the barrier between past and present falls and the reality of the past we thought was lost is momentarily rediscovered in its material being. Recovery of experience can be harrowing and is particularly so in films that speak about traumatic events of the twentieth century. Such films evoke unresolved historical situations – unresolved for the communities that experienced them – situations that continue to inflict individual and collective pain.

Experience manifests itself in the manner of what Ludwig Wittgenstein calls the *groan*, an inarticulate sound that escapes from us as if the pain of experience were speaking on its own. Following Wittgenstein, Ankersmit forcibly argues that civilizations also groan:

"These groanings may overwhelm us with an unequaled force and intensity... we should not interpret them as being about something else in the way that the true statement is about some state of affairs in the world. We should take them for what

they are, as the groanings of a civilization, as the texts in which the pains, the moods, and feeling of a civilization articulate themselves. In this way these groanings are essentially poetic: just like the poem they do not aim at truth but at making experience speak" [Ankersmit 2005: 197].

Making experience speak

To clarify what I mean by historical experience in film, I begin with examples drawn from Yaël Hersonski's "A Film Unfinished" (2010). The film was instigated by a family memory, or, rather, a refusal to remember. Hersonski's grandmother, a survivor of the Holocaust and the Warsaw Ghetto, was interviewed by Ida Fink for the oral history archive at Yad Vashem. As Hersonski examined the transcript, one passage troubled, indeed dismayed, her: "We escaped the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943 to a little village near town. On my time in the ghetto I don't want to talk." Another discovery at Yad Vashem offered Hersonski an opportunity to overcome her grandmother's reticence: the Nazi documentary film titled "Das Ghetto", produced ostensibly as a record of Jewish life in the Warsaw Ghetto in spring 1942 (on the eve of first deportations to Treblinka). "Das Ghetto" exists as a rough cut: an image track lacking a sound track. Beginning with this terrifying yet mute propaganda piece, Hersonski wanted to recover something of the lived experience of the ghetto about which her grandmother had kept silent. She tells us in the film's voice-over: "from the frenzy of propaganda, the image alone remains, concealing many layers of reality."

Films, especially documentaries, always say more than their filmmakers intended. As Hersonski insists, in every documentary there are two gazes, the gaze of the filmmaker who chooses and frames material, and the gaze of the camera, which the filmmaker cannot completely control. What may emerge, as Marc Ferro so eloquently insists in his **counteranalysis of society,** are *truths* the filmmaker has been unable to suppress [Ferro 1988: 23–46]. From the image, which is never completely tamed, the unintended, the involuntary, the excessive spill over the discursive meanings the filmmaker seeks to impose.

"A Film Unfinished" is a film about a film. A representation about a representation. George Steiner, in *Real Presences*, tells us that "all representations, even the most abstract, infer a rendezvous with intelligibility". Representations are an attempt to respond to the *sheer inhuman otherness of matter*. Representation attempts to attenuate the utter strangeness of the human experience of the world. And what could be more uncanny than the fearful images that "Das Ghetto" furnishes us? Referring to the cave paintings of Lascaux, Steiner develops a striking metaphor: "[The paintings] would draw the opaque and brute force of the *thereness* of the man-human into the luminous ambush of representation and understanding" [Steiner 1989: 139]. Hersonski's film is such a luminous ambush.

Deconstruction

Hersonski's first task is, then, **deconstructive**. A work of refutation that she creates through the complex, often adversarial relationship between image and sound. She wants to tear apart the Nazis' "Das Ghetto", expose all the manipulation of its *mise-en-scène* (its deliberate staging), the virulence of its anti-Semitism, in short to unmask the perverse intentions behind this presumably transparent representation of ghetto life. The easiest way to do this would have been to append a voice-over commentary (after all the absence of a soundtrack in "Das Ghetto" is an invitation to use this technique), a running explication of the perversions and manipulations the image track illustrates. Although Hersonski includes a voice-over in her film, it is discreet and far from dominant, one voice among others. Instead, she prefers to deconstruct "Das Ghetto" by juxtaposing the Nazi images to texts she draws from other sources. Hersonski is a brilliant editor and the intertextuality of her film is complex. Here are three illustrations of her intertextual strategies.

(A) Hersonski makes frequent use of the notebooks kept by Adam Czerniakow, president of the Warsaw Ghetto Judenrat (the Jewish Council established by the Nazis to govern the ghetto). A brief example. On the image track we see two sequences from "Das Ghetto" that the Nazi film sets up in parallel. The two sequences embody one of "Das Ghetto's" essential messages: if the Poor Jew is dying in the ghetto, it is the Rich Jew's fault. The first sequence, composed of three shots, takes place in the sumptuous bedroom of a vain Jewish woman as she prepares for a night out (Czerniakow's apartment was frequently requisitioned for scenes portraying the presumed Jewish elite). The elegant woman examines herself in the mirror of an armoire; she crosses to her dressing table; she is shown in close-up as she preens; and then a final shot shows her smoking and gazing at her image. The sequence has all the marks of fictional *mise-en-scène*: the grace of the actress's movements, the smooth continuity editing, the three-point lighting system, and so forth. Against this brief sequence we hear on the soundtrack a voice reading from Czerniakow's diary: "May 5, 1942. In the afternoon, the filmmakers were busy. They brought in a woman who had to put on lipstick in front of a mirror." The sequence that follows, also composed of three shots, takes place in the utter misery of two ghetto bedrooms where we see emaciated couples, wrapped in filthy blankets, immobilized in the final stage of starvation. The scene is harshly lit from the front. In the third shot, a member of the film crew offers a crust of bread to a starving man who manages a smile. We are clearly in the realm of documentary. The authenticity of what we are seeing is undeniable: the setting is real, as is the physical and emotional state of the starving Jews. On the soundtrack we hear the continuation of Czerniakow's diary entry: "In addition to all this, there are persistent rumors about deportations, which appear not to be unfounded. Kommissar Auerswald ordered us to provide a contingent of 900 people."

(B) Adrian Wood at the Library of Congress in the U.S. led an exhaustive search for filmed archival material on the Nazi regime and he unearthed outtakes from "Das Ghetto", which Hersonski makes use of. Images never intended to be seen demonstrate the extent to which the Nazi film indulges in *mise-en-scène*. Hersonski shows, for example, four different takes that represent two ragged young boys, their eyes fixed on a butcher shop window. Take 1: the camera pans down to discover the two hungry children at the window. Take 2: the camera pans up as a well-dressed woman enters the shop and the boys approach the window. Take 3: a closer view in which the camera pans up to show the boys at the window. Take 4: the camera pans up as in take 3 but from a different angle. The motifs of the outtakes create melodramatic contrasts: ragged children ogling the unobtainable, the wealthy (Jewish) customer who ignores their misery, and so forth.

(C) *Fictional* reenactment. Nine sequences that punctuate the film at intervals are drawn from the court deposition of the only member of the Nazi film crew, Willy Wist, who was identified after the war. In these sequences, Hersonski not only quotes from the trial record, she stages a reenactment of the deposition. She is, however, very careful to avoid any hint of docudrama, the past made present in the mode of fiction. Two actors, playing Willy Wist and his interrogator, read passages from the four surviving transcripts. When we watch these sequences, we notice the detachment of the camera from the characters. We see them in distant long shots in the halls of justice or in extreme close-ups during the deposition, which give us only fragments of face and body. Hersonski doesn't intend for us to identify with the characters. For example, in the first reenactment we see a fragment of the tape recorder and the microphone, then the camera pans right to show us a hand and part of an arm belonging, we suppose, to the witness being deposed. When we see Willy Wist's face, it is de-centered and cut off by the frame. There are of course the actors' voices that reproduce the words spoken by the historical Wist and his interrogator. This testimony, which interpolated images from "Das Ghetto" often contradict, remains the focus of our attention.

Historical Experience

If Hersonski the editor employs discursive strategies in her deconstruction of "Das Ghetto", she is equally intent on uncovering the layers of historical experience the film contains: those features that reveal the ways in which victims of the ghetto lived their claustration, in particular their emotions and sensations and their intimate observations. It is possible, Hersonski shows us, to **restore**, if only fleetingly, moments in which the present comes to cohabit with the past. Here are two aspects of this restoration of experience. The first comes from the testimony of ghetto survivors.

What distinguishes the witness is that she or he was **there** at the scene of the crime and speaks with an authenticity unmatched by experts who were not present at the event and can only attempt to reconstruct it from a distance and always partially. Historians rightly contend, however, that memories have their dangers. To cite French historian Pierre Nora, memories are unlike the "scalpel-sharp representations of history; they are, rather, a phenomenon of emotion and magic that accommodates only those facts that suit it... They thrive on vague, telescoping reminiscences, on hazy general impression or specific symbolic detail" [Nora 1996: 3].

In "A Film Unfinished", by contrast, memory is not a narrative of events cobbled together from reminiscences and warped by desire. Hersonski invites survivors of the Warsaw Ghetto into a screening room where she confronts them with the brutal footage from "Das Ghetto". She knows the images have an enormous power of provocation. In these harrowing exchanges between the film and the spectator, Hersonski abandons the art of editing and is content to set up the situation: a simple alternation between two spaces according to the structure of point of view. First, there are the close shots of the witnesses: the beam of the projector comes from behind them, as the flickering images play on their faces. Then we see the images themselves on the screen, what these particular spectators are looking at. Hersonski is quite conscious of her strategy: to tear the witnesses away from well-worn narratives, personal or collective; to fix their gaze on the specificity of the image; and thus open them to their own forgotten experience. The close shots of the survivors make us particularly conscious of their pre-verbal reactions: gestures of the face and body that translate, without language, their direct experience of the past. Hersonski tells us, "I noticed that when my questions dwelled on detail and challenged what [the witnesses] remembered, for example: if this or that crew member wore a hat, in what angle they positioned the camera, all these specifics come together to an image that was scorched in their minds. The rest is a story they've been telling themselves as years passed by. Somewhere deep inside there was an image and I tried to reach that image" [Laliv 2013: 15].

The specificity of the images often provokes involuntary memories. For example, in the screening room an old woman confronts the grim realism of the Nazi footage of the dead and dying, lying against walls in the ghetto streets, on the sidewalk or in the gutters. The images provoke a sudden rush of memory in the survivor, a short, urgent narrative:

"When it was already dark and I was walking... [image of corpses] down Karmelitzka Street, which was crowded with people, I tripped on something and lost my balance [the witness's face]. When I opened my eyes, I saw I had fallen on a corpse [image of another corpse]. My face was nearly touching his, and I was shaking. It

was as if all the corpses I had previously avoided looking at were there in the face of this one man [close-up of the witness, a hand over her eye]. It was a human being!" [image of a third corpse against a building]. As the witness speaks, we watch her haunted face: she cups one eye with her hand and massages it. The hand would like to assuage what the eye has seen. The witness has become momentarily fused with her experience from the past.

In his "Sublime Historical Experience", Frank Ankersmit describes the recovery of historical experience as an intense exchange of looks between the present and the past:

"Everything surrounding us in the present is pushed aside and the whole of the world is reduced to just ourselves in this specific memory – where the memory sees us, so to say, and we see only it. The past event in question can present itself with such an unusual intensity when it was in one way or another incompletely or not fully experienced when it actually took place: We finish, so to say, in the present a task that we had prematurely laid down in the past itself" [Ankersmit 2005: 186–87]. This is, I would argue, exactly what happens in the confrontation between Warsaw ghetto survivors and the images from a Nazi propaganda film that calls upon them to relive devastating moments.

A second type of historical experience that Hersonski's film provokes in the viewer takes place without the intermediary of witnesses. The sense of immediacy is achieved through the filmmaker's manipulation of the image. Hersonski explains, "I had a few techniques I used to alter or reorient the gaze, like slow motion, pause resize." She disrupts our normal sense of cinematic time. The effect is hyperbolic: documentary images are stretched out, in a sense taken out of time. According to Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, such moments involve the **production of presence**. **Presence**, as he describes it, has to do with our experience of space and much less to do with our grasp of relationships in time: "The word *presence* does not refer (at least does not mainly refer) to temporal but to a spatial relationship to the world and its objects. Something that is *present* is supposed to be tangible for human hands, which implies that, conversely, it can have an immediate impact on human bodies" [Gumbrecht 2004: XIII].

For Gumbrecht, **production** is the gesture performed by writers, artists, or filmmakers as they exhibit objects for the sensual apprehension of their audience: "Production, then, is used according to its etymological root (i.e., Latin *producere*) that refers to the act of *bringing forth* an object in space. (...) Therefore, *production of presence* points to all kinds of events and processes in which the impact that *present* objects have on human bodies is being initiated or intensified" [Gumbrecht 2004: XIII]. The artist or filmmaker **intensifies** our experience of an object, pushes it toward us, so to speak, so that our attention is focused on its *being*.

An example. During one of the reenactments devoted to Willy Wist, the deposed filmmaker is defending himself, saying the Jews were frightened of the SS and there were no *incidents* during the filming. His testimony stops and what follows is a sequence of *portraits* of Jews, men and young boys, who are in an advanced stage of emaciation. They are framed in close-up against a neutral background. Each portrait has the quality of a mug shot, as the subject appears first in profile and then turns his head to face the camera or starts facing the camera and then turns aside. The film attempts to offer a typology of the male Jew, a kind of perverse phrenology, like the pseudo-science fostered by the Institute for Hereditary Biology and Racial Hygiene at the University of Frankfurt: figures of misfortune, hapless, utterly unredeemable, degenerate victims of their genetic destiny. Hersonski reduces the series to slow motion so that we have a long time to observe the faces and their unnatural movement. The subjects' look into the camera is wary, grim, beyond anger. Fluttering eyelids react painfully to the light; the eyes are deadened but penetrating. We read the tragic passivity, the pathos of the faces, as an accusation that shatters the ideology of "Das Ghetto".

Yet something more is happening: another experience of the past is taking place. The contact we feel with the subjects is intense. We are startled by these phantoms that are looking directly at us across the void of 70 years. Their faces, which could not have suspected our presence, engage with us and we are totally absorbed by the look that was not meant for us: we look at them, they look at us. The present suddenly **recognizes** the past. These faces are no longer cynical and disturbing representations in a Nazi film; we can no longer simply observe them. They are what they were: living beings, whose plight now strikes us to the depth of our souls.

Psychodramatic *mise-en-scène*

I will concentrate now on two films: Rithy Panh's "S-21: the Khmer Rouge Killing Machine" and Joshua Oppenheimer's "The Act of Killing". The parallels between the two films are striking. Both address genocidal events in the same global region – Cambodia in "S-21" and Indonesia in "The Act of Killing" – that took place in the context of the Cold War and were impacted by American foreign policy and the War in Vietnam. Both films focus on the (still unpunished) perpetrators of mass murder: the Khmer Rouge executioners, who were active between 1975 and 1979 in the first case; and, in the second, members of right-wing death squads culpable of mass killings from 1965 to 1966. Both Panh and Oppenheimer set out to expose the methods that totalitarian regimes – one Communist and the other anti-Communist – used to crush any real or imagined opposition. Both express the outrage we should feel toward violence that operates with impunity and iniquities that go unpunished.

I will focus on one approach the two filmmakers share: a technique I call **psychodramatic *mise-en-scène***, which is intended to reawaken the historical experience of genocide that still lives inside the perpetrators.

S-21

The Tuol Sleng Museum occupies the buildings belonging to S-21, the notorious prison where the prisoners – presumed traitors to the Revolution – were tortured, forced to confess their *crimes*, and then summarily executed. The museum houses archives of written and photographic documents, many still lying uncatalogued and unexamined, which hold the promise of piecing together a historical account of incarceration during the Cambodian genocide. These documentary fragments can also constitute, in their **tangibility**, a field of traces capable of awakening memory in the killing machine's perpetrators and the few victims who survived. The same documents thus serve distinct purposes. History intends to explain events by turning documents into historical facts that can be aligned on the causal chain that produces meaning. Reactivation of the past, on the other hand, moves in quite the opposite direction, back toward traces as the raw elements of experience. It is this *rawness* that Panh the provocateur exploits to stage the return of the repressed.

Rithy Panh refers to the former prison of S-21 as a *dramatic space*. The *reunion* he organizes by inviting survivors and perpetrators into that space is harrowing for his *actors*. The mode of representation Panh adopts is performative rather than narrative. The characters speak in their own voices and on their own account rather than being spoken about. Pahn is not present in the scene. Instead, he assumes the role of *metteur-en-scène*, who directs his actors from the outside: "I deliberately chose to stage this situation, by imposing on myself a moral rigor that requires that I keep the necessary distance from witnesses and that I not let them deviate from the goal we had set" [Panh 2004:16]. He may maintain his distance, but he is implacable and unsparing in subjecting his witnesses to the evidence of their wrong-doing. Panh wants to goad his actors into confessing their crimes. He wants to know how these perpetrators functioned within the Khmer Rouge killing machine, how they represented their actions to themselves, and how they assume their responsibility when confronted with the enormity of their crimes.

The servants of death whom Panh confronts in "S-21" are on some level aware of their guilt because they suffer from it symptomatically. Headaches and insomnia torment them. However, while their bodies express their need to confess and seek absolution, they shield themselves with the Khmer Rouge's empty slogans: the party doesn't make mistakes; the arrested are guilty by definition; whole families, even small children, are guilty because class betrayal is contagious. In his account of his interviews with the sinister Commandant Duch in preparation for his documentary,

"Duch: The Master of the Forges of Hell" (2011), Panh is aware of the necessity of breaking down the defensive wall of language: "The executioner never falls silent. He talks. He talks endlessly. Adds. Erases. Subtracts. Recasts. And thus, he builds a history, already a legend, another reality. He hides behind speech" [Panh 2012: 255]. Faced with the lies of language, Panh remains vigilant. As he says in an interview with Joshua Oppenheimer: "Of course you can always look away. Take your focus off your subject. Let it move aside, drift, disappear – simple eye movement is enough" [Oppenheimer 2012: 244].

In Panh's film, psychodramatic *mise-en-scène* is a method for focusing the attention of the guards on their acts of violence. It consists in asking them to replay moments from their lives at S-21, in the ghostly settings where their acts actually took place. Panh is quite explicit in describing how he imagined this imitation of the past: "And then I had the idea of taking the guard back to S-21...and because the guard said he worked at night, I took him there at night." Panh lit the scenes with neon because that was how the Khmer prison was lit. Place evokes memory, he contends: "I sought to create an atmosphere, which recalled the situation which the guard was actually working in" [Panh 2012: 73].

This method relies, then, on a planned confrontation between the present of the subject and his past existence, often stimulated by settings, objects (*props*), texts, photos, and, perhaps most intimately, the replication of movements and gestures that Panh shrewdly suggests: "Often during the filming..., I ask the *comrade guards* to *make the gestures* of the period for my camera. I specify that I'm not asking them to *act*, but *make the gestures* – a way of extending their words. If necessary, they start, stop, and start again ten or twenty times. Their reflexes return; I see what really happened. Or what's impossible. The method and the truth of extermination appear" [Panh 2012: 91].

It was in the process of working with the guards that Panh began to realize that language was not an effective vehicle for expressing traumatic memory but that a truer access to the past could be found through the *body*, especially the body's response to the haunted space of S-21 (The archives are alive, Panh tells us). "And it's then that I discovered," he explains, "that there was another memory, which is the bodily memory" [Oppenheimer 2012: 244]. In the most charged examples of psychodramatic *mise-en-scène*, we witness the fusion of the subject – the executioner in the present – and the object – his acts in the past – as evidenced by the resurgence of long suppressed emotion.

Consider the following example. One perpetrator was abducted and brought to S-21 as a child, subjected to systematic brain-washing, drained of empathy, and trained in the cruel procedures of prison life. Panh asks this still young guard to go through the motions of his daily routines during which he torments his charges.

More than the others, this guard is unusually susceptible to psychodramatic techniques and prone to tipping from repetitive imitation into real experience. He appears in two sequences – both shot as very long takes.

In the first, the camera is a stationary set-up in the vast room where other reconstructions in the film have taken place. Panh and his crew keep a discreet distance from the guard, who is seen in long shot throughout the sequence. As the guard moves about inspecting the imaginary rows of shackled prisoners, he narrates his actions: "When on guard duty, I inspect the locks four times. I rattle the lock and the bar. I test it. All's well. I do the next row." And then: "I start the body search. I feel their pockets. I look here and there. They mustn't have a pen with which they can open their veins or hide screws or rivets they can swallow to kill themselves." At this moment there is a shift in register as the narration is mixed with direct speech: "*Sit! No one move!* Then onto this row. *On your feet! Hands up!* I start my search. *You! Taking your shirt off? Without the guard's permission? To hang yourself by your shirt? Give me that!* I grab it and take it away." The mechanical action becomes charged with emotion; the guard's voice rises in anger as he rebukes the inmates. In his reenactment, the guard is, on the one hand, the narrator, who describes his own actions as if he were observing himself, explaining himself to others. On the other hand, he casts himself, at moments, as the character who performs them and speaks in his own voice, thus placing himself at less of a remove. This ambivalence positions the guard somewhere between self-representation and the recovery of experience. The latter asserts itself insistently as we can judge from the guard's mounting rage.

The second sequence takes place in the *real* space of a former cell. Everything about the *mise-en-scène* is different. The camera is placed in the corridor outside the cell where the action can be seen through the observation windows the guard also uses or through the entrance whose imaginary door the guard repeatedly pretends to unlock, open, then close and relock as he brings prisoners water, the *can*, or a bowl of rice soup. The moving camera allows us to follow the activities within the cell in medium long shots but also gives us intimate closer shots of the guard as he observes the prisoners through the windows and threatens to beat them with a club. If the first sequence is a chilling view of violence at a distance, the second brings us into a relationship with the guard that is uncomfortably close, as if we needed to resist identifying with the perpetrator.

In "S-21" the settings are not theatrically constructed spaces but the real space of the Khmer Rouge prison: the abandoned buildings with their prison cells and interrogation rooms where the dust and debris of the past still move in the wind and the walls are still stained with blood that diligent washing has not completely effaced. The prison execution ground remains unchanged except that the corpses, which lay scarcely below the surface, have been removed for decent burial.

The remnants of murder and the ghosts that memory sees everywhere are still so chilling that the guilty, whom Panh brings there to bear witness, speak in hushed voices. It is a place, Panh tells us, that is still haunted *as if impregnated with the drama that unfolded there*.

The Act of Killing

Joshua Oppenheimer spent eight years in Indonesia interviewing perpetrators of the mass killings of 1965, accumulating a massive amount of documentary footage, some of which he would incorporate into his second film on the Indonesian genocide, "The Look of Silence". For "The Act of Killing" he decided to focus on a particular right-wing death squad in the city of Medan on the island of Sumatra. Oppenheimer was particularly drawn to a charismatic figure among the killers, the gangster named Anwar Congo, who becomes the film's protagonist. He and his fellow perpetrators identify themselves as the *movie house gangsters* because they operated out of a movie theater where they earned money by scalping tickets. Across the street a storefront served as their office, and upstairs on the rooftop they established their killing ground. The movie house gangsters were not only ruthless killers, but also ardent cinephiles, in love with the Hollywood cinema. Hollywood provided them with their ego ideals (tough gangster figures or flinty Western heroes), the iconography of urban violence or the lawless frontier, and all the conventions associated with these and other genre styles, including the musical.

Oppenheimer's strategy is based in a subterfuge. In essence, he says to these mass murderers, who were still publicly venerated as heroes in Indonesia: I want you to use your imagination, tell your own stories; feel free to model them after the Hollywood films you love; create your own *mise-en-scène*; and act your personal histories in the scenes you create. My role will simply be that of a technician. I will teach you about cinematic representation. Oppenheimer's intuition was that the gangsters' flights of fancy would disclose the sinister underbelly of their genocidal acts.

Thus, Oppenheimer encourages the outrageous parodies of Hollywood genres for what they reveal about the gangsters' moral perversity. He of course has no intention of simply acting as a facilitator for the murderers' self-representations. With his vigilant camera he lies in wait for moments when something unexpected (unscripted) takes place. Something cracks in the process of filming the sequences the gangsters have created, and a reality of one sort or another intrudes. This is when, normally, the director calls out *Cut!* so that the diegetic effects he or she is seeking to produce can be preserved. All can be repaired on the editing table. Oppenheimer, on the other hand, embraces such intrusions for the latent realities they reveal. He keeps the camera rolling when representation fractures, and he has not the least intention of correcting such *mistakes* on the editing table.

A particularly striking example of Oppenheimer's strategy can be seen in a pair of sequences that *mirror* each other across more than an hour of the film-text and represent two different stages in Anwar Congo's psychological evolution and self-awareness. These studio-shot sequences reenact a scene of torture and execution in the film noir style. Oppenheimer uses multiple cameras so that he can produce the psychological effects of analytic editing, in this case an alternation between medium shots and close-ups that focus on the expressive gestures of face and body. In this sequence, Anwar assumes the role of the perpetrator. He appears totally at ease, as the camera shows us by focusing on his face and not that of the victim. The medium shots follow Anwar as he helps tie the victim to a table, then crawls into the dark space under the table to secure the garroting wire around his victim's neck. As he emerges, he feels enough in charge to halt the shooting because he hears from off-screen the muezzin's call to prayer: "Hold on, Joshua. It's evening prayers."

In the second sequence, Anwar is cast in the role of the victim, not that of torturer. Although this recasting of roles remains unexplained, we can well imagine why Oppenheimer would want to reverse Anwar's position. Is Anwar capable identifying with his new role? Would playing the part of the victim provoke a moment of empathy? Oppenheimer must have known that at this point in Anwar's development, the gangster might respond to the stimulus.

This sequence, like the first, makes expressive use of analytical editing. Medium shots frame Anwar seated in a chair surrounded by his tormentors; close-ups focus on his face, in which we begin to discern unanticipated emotions. At first, Anwar appears to be in control as he tells the younger gangster Herman: "Hit the table to frighten me." As Herman threatens Anwar with a knife to his throat and then ties a blindfold across his eyes, the close-ups on Anwar's face are disturbing. Herman places the garroting wire around Anwar's neck and steps back to increase the tension. Anwar gurgles to feign strangulation, a last gesture that adheres to the mechanics of acting. Then something unexpected occurs. In medium shot, we see Anwar raise his right hand, presumably tied behind his back, to the level of his leg where it appears to shake uncontrollably. Herman is unnerved: "Are you alright?" he asks Anwar, as he loosens the wire. Anwar responds, "I can't do that again." A voice cries "Cut!" but the camera continues to roll as we watch Anwar slowly blowing air in and out in an attempt to recover his composure.

Oppenheimer intuits in Anwar a yearning to break through his ego defenses. He is obviously eager at moments to get Anwar alone, away from the bravado and banter of his cohorts, so that he can probe emotions that would otherwise remain repressed. In a sequence, apparently shot at Anwar's instigation, Oppenheimer films his subject as he travels by train to the site of an atrocity he committed that has deeply disturbed him. As the camera shifts between shots of the countryside taken from the train and

a medium shot of Anwar seated in the railway car, we hear him explain the pull of this particular place: "Why am I coming to this place? Because it affected me deeply. Because the method of killing was very different. Is it because I've been telling you my story so honestly? Or maybe the vengeance of the dead? I remember I said, *Get out of the car.*"

The imagery changes radically: we see a sky, blue with dusk, and the flight of countless birds. In voice-off, Anwar continues: "He asked, *Where are you taking me?* Soon he refused to keep walking... I saw Roshiman bringing me a machete." A medium close shot reveals Anwar obscurely lit, his back against the trunk of a tree. He continues the narrative: "Spontaneously, I walked over to him and cut his head off. [He imitates the gesture of the *coup de grâce.*] My friends didn't want to look. They ran back to the car. And I heard this sound. [Anwar gurgles.] His body had fallen down and the eyes in his head were still open." Anwar looks up, his own eyes shining in the light. Now the camera frames Anwar in long shot as he lifts himself up. "On the way home, I kept thinking, why didn't I close his eyes? All I could think about was why I didn't close his eyes?" The camera shifts back to the medium close shot that frames Anwar as he stretches out his hand. "And that is the source of all my nightmares. I'm always gazed at by those eyes I didn't close." The sequence closes with a shot repeating the motif of bird flights against the night sky.

"The Act of Killing" is, among other things, the study of a man who, under the pressure of memory, is increasingly unable to hold it together. Consider this episode near the end of the film in which Anwar once again loses his balance. Structured as a point of view series, the sequence opens with a close-up of Anwar, dressed with his usual flamboyance and seated in a throne-like chair. The camera records in intimate detail the emotions that cross his face. The continuous take of Anwar in close-up alternates with seven shots of a television monitor showing moments from the sequence of torture in which he plays the part of the victim. During these moments, Anwar's commentary and exchanges with the filmmaker are heard off-screen. In the first shot Anwar says, "You know the scene where I'm strangled with wire? Please put it on." He lights a cigarette. While an image of his bloodied head appears on the monitor, we hear Anwar calling his grandson: "Yan? I want him to watch this." We return to the close-up of Anwar: "Yan, come see grandpa beaten up and bleeding." Anwar gets up and exits.

Anwar reenters the frame and gathers his two sleepy grandsons on his lap. He asks the filmmakers to turn up the volume and is unresponsive to the voice from off-screen: "But this is too violent, Anwar. Are you sure?" The point of view series continues, the dark spectrum of the scene of torture contrasting with the brightly lit, saturated colors that show Anwar and his grandsons. Anwar reassures his grandsons that *this is only a film*, but is overtaken by the realism of his own

performance. Smiling broadly, he says, "It's so sad, isn't it? That's your grandpa. That's your grandpa being beaten up by the fat guy. Grandpa's head is smashed." The children look dazed, and Yan giggles. Anwar kisses one grandson, and the children leave the frame.

Alone again and confronted with his suffering image, Anwar winces and half closes his eyes. "Did the people I tortured feel the way I do here?" he asks. We then see Anwar the actor threatened with a knife as he says, "I can feel what the people I tortured felt." In close-up again, Anwar gestures with his hands as if he were trying to grasp something. "Because my dignity has been destroyed... [He glances off-screen] and then fear comes, right then and there. All the terror suddenly possesses my body. It surrounded me and possessed me." A voice from off-screen tells him: "Actually, the people you tortured felt far worse [Anwar looks stunned] because you know it's only a film. They knew they were being killed." Anwar replies: "But I can feel it, Josh [his face contorts, and his eyes tear up]. Really, I can feel it. Or have I sinned? Is it all coming back to me? I really hope it won't. I don't want it to, Josh." Anwar shakes his head as if to rid himself of a vision. He has – and not unwittingly – staged his own moment of revelation. The contract of fiction – this is only a representation and therefore I am not in danger – is broken. We hear Anwar's stunned voice (*Is it all coming back to me?*) and we see, in his face and his desperate gestures, the signs of a devastating recognition.

This sequence is followed by the haunting episode that closes the film. In long shot we follow Anwar, dressed in a mustard yellow suit, as he approaches the entrance of what once was the gangster's office, now a tawdry boutique lined with handbags suspended from rods. In long shot we see him begin to climb the stairway. On the rooftop, two very long takes in medium shot shadow his movements. "This is where we tortured and killed the people we captured." A long pause follows. "I know it was wrong – but I had to do it," he confesses – but then recants, as if the murders were somehow beyond his control. He paces, then begins to retch. Moments later, he discovers the garroting wire he used earlier in the film to demonstrate the gang's technique of strangulation. He leans over a long basin and continues to retch. Oppenheimer's camera – the moral force that traps him in this sinister confessional – gives him no quarter as it continues to roll.

At the end of the sequence, a long shot frames Anwar's diminished figure in the rooftop doorway as he slowly begins to descend the stairs. A deep shot of the salesroom, with its stacks of handbags, frames Anwar in the background as he pauses at the door, then exits. The penitent's climb toward the place of his ordeal and his descent as a diminished human figure have strong mythological resonance. The verbal confession of wrongdoing he makes on the rooftop is inept and incommensurate with his crimes. The dry retching, which Oppenheimer records unmercifully, is a

much more potent avowal. Anwar's body would purge itself of its sickness of the soul but to no avail. Re-experiencing the past does not promise resolution.

As Arthur Danto reminds us, Aristotle, in "The Poetics", gave us a stunning insight into the psychological dimension of mimetic representations: "The sight of certain things gives us pain, but we enjoy looking at the most exact imitations of them, whether the forms of animals which we greatly despise or of corpses" [Danto 1981: 14]. Pleasure depends, of course, on the sort of contractual guarantee that spectacle offers, as psychoanalyst Octave Mannoni describes in his brilliant analysis of theatrical illusion: "When the curtain rises, it is the imaginary powers of the Ego which are at once liberated and organized – dominated by the spectacle" [Mannoni 1969: 181]. But as we have seen in "The Act of Killing", things are much less clear when *the master of the game* – Anwar Congo – is telling his own terrifying story, no matter what distance he attempts to take from his harrowing past. Although he seems less vulnerable the more fantastical the spectacle he imagines, irony, humor, and all the trappings of *mise-en-scène* are ultimately not enough to protect him from the sinister *real things* he attempts to transfigure. A feigned corpse can without warning become a real corpse, or at least *the living memory of a real corpse*. Indeed, we have witnessed the chilling moments when Anwar falls from the realm of the imaginary into the realm of the real, as he does so painfully in the last sequence of the film. His exit from the rooftop killing field and from the film is full of existential pain and suggests that the dangerous game he is now fated to play is far from over.

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ANSIS EPNERS' FILM "ALIVE": FROM DOCUMENTARY TO FICTION

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Abstract

The first short documentary "Alive" (*Dzīvs,* 1970) is an important signifier of Latvian director Ansis Epners' (1937–2003) oeuvre both in terms of his approach to documentary film practice, and growing interest in fiction filmmaking. The film "Alive" and later idea to develop a full-length fiction film based on its main character demonstrate Epners' unconventional expression of both kinds of filmmaking, which was received with a mixed response at the time. Epners used performative elements in the documentary, and included real-life character playing himself in the planned fiction film, challenging the assumptions and conventions of filmmaking practices in Latvia at that time.

In this article I will analyse Epners' formal and stylistic choices in the film "Alive" and its reception in the early 1970s, and the script for the fiction film based on the main character of the film "Alive" Arnolds Cīrulis. The reception of "Alive" shows the contradictions between the dominant views on the documentary film form and Epners' work. The fiction film script, which was not turned into film, remains as an example of versatility of Epners' ideas on the potentials of fiction filmmaking.

Keywords: *documentary, performance, Ansis Epners, Latvian cinema*.

Ansis Epners (1937–2003) was a prolific documentary film director in Riga Film Studio. He started to work at the studio in 1969, without having professional training in film. The same year he directed several newsreels, but the following year made his first short documentary "Alive" (1970). The next year he graduated from the High Courses for Scriptwriters and Film Directors in Moscow with a short documentary "Flight in the Night" (*Lidojums naktī*) as his graduation work. He continued making short documentaries and newsreels throughout most of the 1970s, directing his first full-length documentary in 1978 – "Four Men Look for a Million" (*Četri*

meklē miljonu). Simultaneously with the documentary work, he developed various ideas for fiction films, but did not manage to make any fictional work until the early 1980s: "Ibsen's Motif" (*Ibsena motīvs*, 1984, together with stage designer and scriptwriter Viktors Jansons) was produced for television studio "Telefilma-Rīga". Much later he directed his only full-length fiction film "The Cage" (*Būris,* 1993), based on the novel of the same title by Latvian writer Alberts Bels. Among Epners' documentaries are two short films about Sergei Eisenstein ("Sergei Eisenstein. Post Scriptum" / *Sergejs Eizenšteins. Post Scriptum* and "Sergei Eisenstein. Foreword" / *Sergejs Eizenšteins. Priekšvārds,* both 1978), demonstrating his interest in editing and theoretical approaches of Eisenstein, which was not so common among his colleagues at that time.

In his early documentaries Epners did not just follow and record people or events, but intervened and on some occasions dramatized their situations, enhancing our awareness that "the dialectical relationship between the event and its representation is the backbone of documentary filmmaking" [Bruzzi 2006: 14]. The presence of the author-director (such denominator Epners also used in the credits of "Alive") historically has been seen as escalating the polarities of subjectivity and objectivity, presuming that repressing the presence of the author will imbue the film with a greater sense of objectivity [Bruzzi 2006: 198]. Epners was not concerned with a straightforward representation (which would be understood as "objective"), but similarly to Jean Rouch's manner "generates reality" instead of allowing it just to unfold [Renov 2004: xxi]. With involvement of performative elements, Epners invites "to respond emotionally and intellectually to the images in question" [Bruzzi 2006: 43–44].

Epners' first film "Alive" does exactly this – it requires viewers to respond to it both emotionally and intellectually, using the cinematic expression unlike that of his contemporaries. Also, the film's main character was important to Epners – a decade later his personality and biography still intrigued him. The history teacher Arnolds Cīrulis became a co-creator, and the main character for a fiction film that Epners together with the stage designer Viktors Jansons began to develop in 1981. Analysing both materials – the film "Alive" and several script versions of the fiction film on Cīrulis – we can trace elements of Epners' artistic expression.

Documentary film "Alive" (1970)

"Alive" is a ten-minute long black and white wide-screen film. The film's main character Arnolds Cīrulis works at Džūkste secondary school in Kurzeme region in Central-Western Latvia. "Alive" is set in the summer of 1970, but it reflects the events in Cīrulis' life in the early 1940s. Then as a young adult during the first year of the Soviet occupation Cīrulis was an enthusiastic supporter of the new regime. When

German forces occupied Latvia in 1941, he was arrested and ordered to be executed. Along with other 178 people he was brought to the forest to be executed, but he managed to escape, being the only survivor of the whole group. Nearly 30 years later, Cīrulis and his pupils re-enact those past events at the same location where they took place. They walk the same path and do it in the same way as back then: they put their hands on the shoulders of the person in front, their heads bent down not to be able to look around. When they reach the place of the massacre, the pupils are lined up as the soldiers were once standing, and Cīrulis takes the same spot as he took in 1941. He demonstrates the escape which was possible only because there was a larger gap in between two soldiers, and that he was able to pull himself together and try to run.

Re-enacting the same event again leads to evaluation of the meaning of performance and performativity in documentary. As Bruzzi argues, "Performance has always been at the heart of documentary filmmaking and yet it has been treated with suspicion because it carries connotations of falsification and fictionalisation, traits that traditionally destabilise the non-fiction pursuit" [Bruzzi 2006: 153]. Bruzzi proposes that all documentaries are performative embodying "the performance for the camera as the 'ultimate document', as the truth around which a documentary is built" [Bruzzi 2006: 154]. Within this framework she distinguishes performative documentary that "uses performance within a non-fiction context to draw attention to the impossibilities of authentic documentary representation" [Bruzzi 2006: 185]. Such performative element within the context of "non-fiction is thereby an alienating, distancing device, not one which actively promotes identification and a straightforward response to a film's content" [Bruzzi 2006: 185–186]. This notion of performative is introduced in "Alive" in a slightly different manner, where re-enactment of the events takes place in a non-fiction setting and is carried out partly by real-life participants. Nevertheless, the performative aspect is present as the main character not merely orally recollects the past, but with bodily presence performs it.

The event performed by Cīrulis and his pupils intersects another realm – that of a memory. The film's off-screen voice is that of Cīrulis who speaks in the first-person narrative, evoking the past events. Also, the film's narrative is constructed as a transition from the present to the past. As William Guynn explains, memory refers "to two distinct concepts: memory as the (passive) presence of the image to the mind, and memory as the intentional activity of recollection" [Guynn 2006: 168]. In the film Cīrulis shares his individual memories to the group and invites children to participate in the experiment (in the over-voice he says: *let's stand in the same way as then, when 179 prisoners were taken to their deaths and I was the only one of them who managed to escape*). The memory process is not presented as unfolding directly on screen. The returning and re-enactment of the past "aims at recovering not only truth but

also the psychological and emotional dimension of past experience" [Guynn 2006: 193].

The film "Alive" begins with a scene where Cīrulis and children gather hay in the field, the images are accompanied by a loud sound of approaching storm and the musical theme is introduced. Then it begins to rain, and they all hide in an old shed. From the image of children playing with the radio set the scene with photographs of various sorts are shown (family pictures, people lined up at the pit), and then follows a cut to a close-up of Cīrulis, as if it has been an insert of visualisation of his memories. His face is wet from the rain; he looks almost directly into the camera. It is followed by the film's titles: "history teacher Arnolds Cīrulis /cut/ and pupils of Džūkste High school /cut/ in the Riga Film Studio's film /cut/ "Alive"." Such presentation resembles that of a fiction film, where the main players are named at the film's beginning.

Careful composition of the narrative ties it to the film's title: until the moment of the escape, both Cīrulis and the pupils are shown, but in the final part, when he has successfully disappeared in the woods, we see only him – alone, representing him as the only survivor. The tension in different scenes is represented also by using sound: already mentioned loud storm, but when they reach the shooting place, there is silence which is interrupted by a noise of a stork bill-clattering.

The film's editing gradually becomes faster and faster, reaching its peak during the escape scene: the run of Cīrulis is interspersed with photographs of people on the edge of the pit, right before being shot, the film's tempo presenting almost a flickering quality. And when he has demonstrated his escape and walks on his own in the woods, the rhythm slows down again. Throughout the film the camera is often flexible, moving among people, turning around in circles, shaking when the running scene is filmed. Such approach is mixed with well-balanced shots, reflecting the mood of scene. Visually there is a different black and white colour palette in the images shot in 1970 and still images from the past. Film's cameraman Valdis Kroģis[1] recollects it as a conscious choice: "In this film we experimented with a tone, black and white tone [..]. Flashback scenes differ from contemporary ones in terms of lighting, colour tone. The contrast of tones distinguishes the tension of the visual material"[2] [Skalbergs 1971]. Thus the building up of tension is done in many levels, trying to recreate the emotional sensation of the time of the massacre.

In subsequent years, evaluating Latvian documentary cinema of the 1970s several film critics and journalists have expressed opinions about Epners' use of

[1] Valdis Kroģis (1934–1994) was a versatile Latvian cinematographer, who often used shots with a lot of movement, experimenting with different devices to stress the dynamics of the scene.

[2] This and further translations from Latvian into English have been done by the author of the article.

"provocation", "dramatization", "experiment", seeing it as too challenging and different from the films of his colleagues. For example, Juris Nogins wrote: "Authors have chosen very unusual approach for our documentary filmmaking – provocation of the event" [Nogins 1973: 43].

Film critic Armīns Lejiņš surveying several of Epners' films from the early 1970s, points out to another angle: "A. Epners first of all sets up his own author's concept and then makes the effort to reveal it with the means of real-life material. He dramatizes life, to be able to express that what he wants to tell about certain people or occurrences. Therefore, the highest achievement in my point of view has been in the film "Alive", where dramatization and direct intervention of the director justifies itself" (in an original form the escape of a captive during the Nazi occupation is repeated) [Lejiņš 1973].

Film scholar Viktors Djomins voices his concerns: "Craftsmanship that is turned towards **explanation** can become contradictory to the very essence of documentary cinema. [..] The director offers to a history teacher who had miraculously escaped the death by the rifles of the Nazi soldiers, to show to his pupils when and where it happened. In front of our eyes a risky, harsh, but very necessary experiment takes place. But eccentric editing, estranged poetic attributes to the filmed material so dazzling effectiveness, that the real feeling of the fact disappears, the perception of the sense of the event is encumbered" [Djomins 1977: 43].

What is brought forward here is a precaution that overt artistic expression of the film's author overarches the actual events or characters represented. The degree of artistic expression over historical documentation doesn't exclude the film from the non-fiction domain [Renov 1993: 35]. As Thomas Waugh states, "Documentary film, in everyday common-sense parlance, implies the absence of elements of performance, acting, directing, and so forth, criteria that presumably distinguish the documentary form from the narrative fiction film" [Waugh 2011: 75]. How contradictory and unreliable this common sense has been, can be seen by evaluating presence of documentary characters in their relation to acknowledging a camera. Two distinctions are useful here. Waugh suggests to use the word *representational* to describe the characters that *act naturally* in front of the camera, but *presentational* involves presenting oneself for the camera with full awareness of its presence [Waugh 2011: 76]. Aiming for *representational* quality which is missing in "Alive" (and other Epners' films of the time) is seen as an alienating form of the Latvian documentary cinema of the time. Looking more broadly at the tradition of national documentary film, the previous decade was dominated by films of poetic style, but in the 1970s social themes began to dominate [Pērkone 2018: 20].

Epners' expressivity didn't belong to either of them. Looking back broader at the documentary film history, re-enactments that embodied *representational* quality

were part of the documentary tradition. Toward the end of the 1930s presence of documentary characters playing themselves became more widespread [Waugh 2011: 75]. Direct cinema and *cinéma vérité* triggered new enquiries into these two domains, which over the years have much increased. In the 1980s, for example, we can witness "a flourishing wave of hybrid experimentation with these presentational modes as well as with stylizations of representational modes, including dramatization" [Waugh 2011: 81].

Waugh lists several forms of *presentational* and *representational* means in the films. Among the embodiments of *presentational* style, he names *Social actors explore geographical setting of their past at instigation of filmmakers* [Waugh 2011: 82]. The film that very powerfully uses telling of the memories in the exact geographical settings by its characters is Claude Lanzman's *Shoah* (1985), made in later period and in greater scale than "Alive". The approach to bring characters back to the place that signifies for them painful memories is the film's set-up, difference here being the use of direct interviews or voice-over. Expressivity provided by "Alive" and other Epners' films of the early 1970s "expand our understanding of historical reality by suggesting new ways of looking at events with which we might already be familiar" [Spence, Navarro 2012: 70].

"Alive" – further development (1981–1982)

The personality and biography of Arnolds Cīrulis remained in Epners' sphere of interest even a decade after he shot "Alive". He invited stage designer Viktors Jansons (1946), who had just returned from Leningrad back to Latvia, to work with him on another script[1], but eventually they started to develop the script based on Cīrulis' life. It offered complexity and intriguing questions about his ideological beliefs, current life (he no longer worked as a teacher, but instead did logging), personality. Cīrulis' biography was going to be the thematic backbone of the script. The script was supposed to be handed in at Riga Film Studio at the end of November 1981, but it wasn't completed on time.[2] Cīrulis' unexpected death in a road accident on 13 November 1981 left its mark on the continuation of the initial idea, and these events were integrated in the script.

The four versions of the script[3] (described as "libretto for a full-length fiction film") in the length of 14–17 typewritten pages date back to 1981–1982. They have been written already after Cīrulis' death. They involve minor modifications between the versions, the main differences are in the end part. Not all of them include an

[1] The script for the film "The Cage" was not turned into a film at this stage.

[2] From an interview with Viktors Jansons in August 2018.

[3] The documents are kept at the Ansis Epners' family archive.

exact date, allowing to make a clear chronology. The script had various title options: "Dr. Kant, Friday, 13th November"; "Game with Kant"; "Witness Dr. Kant"; and several other variations.

The script has an unusual form: Epners writes it from the first-person narrative position. The first sentence of the script reads: "*Time by time he called:* Hello, Ansis, I am still Alive!*, sometimes colleagues at the Film Studio found me and said:* That man from the woods awaits you again..." Such intimate approach continues throughout the script: he tells about the first encounter with Cīrulis in the film "Alive", the connection of Viktors Jansons to the story, and Cīrulis' death. In the script, Epners uses the characterization of the film as *a collage of Cīrulis' life documents and staging*.

After this introductory (and documentary) set-up, the script continues with the staged scenes which will take place in the Film studio's pavilion. Reference to the filmmaking process is an important element in the script and story's development. One of the film's characters is a director, another important character is a Grey woman, and, of course, Cīrulis himself.

Cīrulis' death will be announced by the Grey woman – in the same way as Epners had learned about it. Fragments from the film "Alive" will be significant plot-points, structuring the narrative as a string of memory fragments. The first one is about his escape in the woods, the second one reaches further back in the past. It reflects the time when Cīrulis was a pupil and had to study Immanuel Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason" at school. This episode introduces film's antagonist – a preacher, who will cause a lot of harm to Cīrulis in the subsequent events. The plot continues with Cīrulis already as a young man playing football with border guards' team. The evening continues with dances, and his partner there is a girl, visually very similar to the Grey woman. It is 1940, Soviet era has begun, and Cīrulis supports the new regime. Then the German army invades, and Cīrulis is arrested, he is brought to the woods, to the pit (so familiar already from the documentary "Alive"). This scene when he is so close to his death in 1941 is followed by the one of his funeral in 1981. There is a photographer taking pictures at his funeral, and this serves as another trigger point to connect the present and the past: photographs made at the pit connect with Cīrulis' escape, and further events. After the escape, he manages to reach his parents' house, where he will be hiding for several years. When the Soviet power is re-established, Cīrulis can finally leave his hiding place in which he used to read Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason", trying to keep common sense in the difficult circumstances. At the very end of the script, Cīrulis goes to the house of the preacher, now already an old man, who had denounced Cīrulis. Another script version has an additional scene at the end, with the presence of a film crew, reminding once more about the staging and fictional reality created by filmmaking.

It is difficult to predict how this idea would develop and what the film would be like. The work on it was discontinued, and one of the reasons was Cīrulis' death, as initially he was going to play himself in the film. Jansons notes that Epners' scripts were more like essays than real screenplays[1], and it can be very well attributed to this work. It could be seen as too experimental for the studio type production that existed at the time.[2] Mixing of documentary and fictional approaches, experimental form, going outside the limitations of genres, invites to think about hybrid forms at the core of "hybrid cinema" [Marks 2000: 8]. This could be a tool for categorization and understanding of the film idea on Cīrulis, which contradict the conventional storytelling, plot development, choice of actors.

Even though looking at the realm of fiction, from the perspective of fiction film's idea, coming back to Waugh's distinctions of characters' performance in front of the camera in documentary seems relevant here. The hybrid forms of experimentation, mentioned in the context of the 1980s documentaries, are useful tool for looking at Epners' film idea described above. The suggested hybrid approaches are different: mix of professional and nonprofessional performers that construct an intertextual essay; social actors dramatize representationally their social conditions or collective history, which are contextualized presentationally, etc. [Waugh 2011: 83]. The indications of such approaches can be found in the script, making the distinction between fiction and documentary quite complex.

Conclusion

A short film which is also the first film of a director has become an important element in understanding the approach of Epners' to documentary at the beginning of his career. "Alive" has been also a tool for him searching for the entrance into fiction filmmaking. The script which was never made into a film carries in itself yet another meaning – it presents a document of an interrupted work (Cīrulis' death becomes a plot point changing the initial idea) which is transformed and turned into another, involving the unfortunate events as part of the new script.

Jansons' characterization of Epners as being like a carousel that constantly turns and creates something out of it[3] seems appropriate attribution to Epners. Two quite different works analysed in this article present his attitudes towards documentary and fiction filmmaking, where the commonly understood approaches are transgressed and reinvented.

[1] From an interview with Viktors Jansons in August 2018.

[2] Such was the case with Epners' script for the film "The Cage" in the mid-1980s.

[3] From an interview with Viktors Jansons in August 2018.

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CINEMATIC SHIFT FROM THE FRONT TO THE BACKGROUND. LANDSCAPE IN A POST WORD ERA

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Abstract (from the editors)

With great honour to readers of "Culture Crossroads" we are offering an essay by outstanding Lithuanian documentary film director Audrius Stonys (1966), in which he shares reflections on spatial and temporal changes in documentary films within the historical context by fixating cinematic turns in elements of *mise-en-scène*, especially in the landscape representation.

The author is looking more closely at what is happening in the front and background of the documentary film "Ten Minutes Before the Flight of Icarus" (*Dešimt minučių prieš Ikaro skrydį*, 1990) directed by Arūnas Matelis (1961), a contemporary of Stonys. This particular film has been considered as a landmark which led to a shift towards a new era in Lithuanian documentary cinema.

Keywords: *documentary film, Lithuanian cinema, film landscape, Arūnas Matelis*.

The heritage of the Soviet regime was total distrust in any publicly spoken or written word. With the collapse of the regime a word, commentary, title left cinema space and moved the function of story-telling to the territory of visual poetry. The visual poetry becomes not a device any more, that helps to show the inner world of a character, but the main structural element of story-telling; territory where relationship with a film-viewer is born. No longer a stranger, the village artist or some wise old man is the main character of a film, but the environment, filled with signs of time, landscape and a man connected to that landscape. Or, to say more precisely, complex, multi-layered poetical image, created from feelings, memories, city streets marked by time, people passing by, sunlight and play of shadows.

If we want to understand film codes, we need to look closer at the role of the background in the structure of the story-telling. Traditionally the background serves as a passive filler of the space behind a character. Its function is usually limited to highlighting the character. The background is intentionally "cleaned" from all unnecessary details, in order not to draw attention from something that is happening in the front or, with the help of film optic, the background is pushed further away, separated from the front, "washed out" in order to create a distance between the front and the background in order to get the depth of the frame. In the post-Soviet documentary, the background gets the function of creating the meaning and gets independence. It is used as a very important medium not only to create the atmosphere of a film, but to awaken the historical and personal memory of the viewer. Film space becomes symbolic space.

My generation went through at least a few radical historical, political, aesthetical turning points. Restoration of independence, disappearance of censorship, consolidation of new structures and economic relations in cinema evolved quite far beyond the political sphere and directly influenced not only the principles of filmmaking, but also the cinema language itself.

Documentary cinema finds its internal strength from indirect hidden polemic with official narrative. During historical turning point period it lost its *source*, which nourished it in a paradoxical way. Suddenly it was possible to talk about everything and in every way. The spring of oppression, which provided creatives with internal kinetic energy, turned loose, leaving particular creative emptiness.

I perfectly recall the time when the elder generation of documentary directors at the beginning of the 1990s were tossing between recently emerged commercial cinema's temptations and official narrative, approved already by the modern times. This led to losing the internal resistance energy which distinguished and formed this generation.

I do not want to speak in absolutes or make categorical generalizations. Certainly, each artist accepted the changes personally and differently, but I think that I can talk about certain tendencies because I was a direct witness and participant of documentary filmmaking processes of that time.

Currently I am writing a thesis called "Landscape in Lithuanian Poetic Documentary". I want to look at transformations of documentary from a political turning point perspective. Specifically, at the importance of landscape in its movement in the perspective of movie frame and the dramaturgical structure of documentary movie.

It is possible to separate movie frame into foreground, background, second background etc. of the shot. Different layers of the shot have distinct functions in the structure of a documentary narrative.

In this short paper I won't go deep into talking about what is happening in the second background of the shot and further, but I will look more closely at what is happening in the front and background of the documentary film "Ten Minutes Before the Flight of Icarus" (*Dešimt minučių prieš Ikaro skrydį*, 1990) by Arūnas Matelis. The shift from the front to the background. This tendency later became the mark of a new documentary filmmakers' generation in the 1990s.

Traditionally the front serves as a space for active narrative. It's like a theatrical foreground of the movie where the main character is acting, talking, living. In the background landscape can perform the function of creating the atmosphere by using light/darkness, light/shadows, direct light changes. The background can resonate and complement whatever is happening in the front or can create a contrast where the director wants a dissonance in that scene. Both cases, the function of landscape will remain auxiliary, highlighting or distinguishing the front.

The background in documentary movie can even be dramaturgically ignored by making it an anemic wallpaper behind the main character with no semantic, atmospheric or emotional charge. At the same time the narrative of the movie does not cease, it continues. Such decision is often authorized as an intention to concentrate the viewer's attention to the action happening at the front without dragging the attention to the events happening in the background and further.

In documentary movie landscape is often treated as an implicitly emerging background of action and the attempt to adjust, form, choose the landscape is considered as a deformation of documentary truth.

This function, as if secondary of a background, preserved this layer of a movie frame from an attentive glance of censors and at the same time it became a certain territory of freedom. This was a space where censor's scissors weren't flinging around meaning that it was possible to breathe more freely and talk about things with no contradictions to the creative conscience of an artist.

The idea that something can appear in the frame accidentally and unintentionally is deeply inaccurate. Each frame is the act of a director's/DOP's will[1]. Even the attempt to ignore the dramaturgical role of a background I mentioned and the attempt to refuse the semantic function is also an act of will, speaking about the creative strategy of a director/DOP.

Even in that case when a director/DOP concentrates all attention to the front and tries to make the background a "silent background", that "silent background" is kind of speaking about something.

The perspective of time has a quality to change the focus of meaning and signification. If a character is being filmed surrounded by urban landscape now it seems to

[1] DOP – Director of photography, cinematographer.

us that the most interesting thing is what the character is saying while standing in the front; it can happen that after many years the people twinkling in the background, their dress up style, the way of walking, faces, passing cars and urban architecture that appeared there as if by chance, will become an invaluable object of investigation for cultural and historical researchers.

To make landscape the front instead of background during the Soviet period was a courageous step, placing the movie to a category of experimental poetic movie. Inevitably there was an attempt to frame the space for interpretation that appeared in such movie in order to present an official "safe" version of the movie. It was important for getting approval, state support, releasing the movie in cinema screens and avoiding censorship.

One shouldn't be surprised by the discrepancy between the official movie presentation and the internal content of the movie that often denied it. As Alexei Yurchak (Алексей Юрчак) notes in his book "Everything was Forever, Until it was No More": "The breakdown into censored and uncensored elements would suggest that the tasks of a socialist state were clearly established, static and predictable. Anyway, in reality most of the tasks were so contradictory and inconsistent that it is impossible to reduce them into clearly formulated black and white ideology" [Yurchak 2014: 41].

Such uncertainty was caused by the fear of cultural workers to take responsibility both for what they were releasing to screens and for what they were censoring. Every valid decision would have forced to clearly set the evaluation criteria and to justify it. They knew that both the ideological malpractice and painstaking diligence could turn against themselves. In such conditions without no clear criteria the formal part of the artwork becomes more important: is the *canon of documentary movie* retained. Its criteria, of course, changed according to the period. The form starts to exist autonomously and, losing its original meaning, is filled with meanings and interpretations of an author. According to A. Yurchak, "it was more important to recreate the exact form of ideological statements and structural form of rituals than to comprehend their meaning" [Yurchak 2014: 52]. Yurchak calls this phenomenon a "performative shift", which he defines like this: "In the context of late socialism the reproduction of ideological statement norm was dominating. In the level of form, it firstly showed up as a ritual or a symbol which caused alterations of meaning, making it different from the direct statement's meaning. This principle is described in the book as the 'performative shift'" [Yurchak 2014: 25].

Director Arūnas Matelis comes to the field of cinema during a very diverse historical period. 1990. Censorship has vanished, the state commission no longer exists. The screens and public space are filled by the new narrative. The front of the shot

dominates telling or sometimes screaming out the stories of injustice and oppression which have been prohibited for 50 years. The background depicts depersonalised mass which became the mark of modern political will and generality.

In his movie "Ten Minutes Before the Flight of Icarus" Arūnas Matelis makes a very significant move which later will be notable in the works of the whole generation of the 1990s. He swaps the front with the background. The front shows a small mundane man Misha who is talking in short inarticulate monologues balancing on the fringe of absurdity and the whole emotional charge is being brought to the urban landscape, unfolding in the background.

Dingy smoke pipe, lightly yellow Belarusian cauldron with a wine bottle cork squeezed in the handle of the lid in order to prevent from burning hands, a teapot which used to be white some time ago, blackened grater hanging on the nail, cast iron furnace, the power cord roosted by flies – all these are the inseparable attributes of post-war homes.

Director creates a strong emotional load of memory by intervening them in the material of the movie. It provokes a whole system of memories and associations. The viewer starts seeing not only the views, surroundings that are not in the movie but also hearing voices, smelling scents. We enter into this space of a foreign apartment as into something very familiar, homey.

The viewer's consciousness provoked by the recognition all alone creates spaces of home that were not in the movie. This is more a sensual, emotional action than intellectual. The movie penetrates into deep layers of associative memories, turning alien images into their own. As if it would fill foreign homes with images of our own homes from the memories.

Užupis street of the old Vilnius. Through a dark crackling arch, we see a brightly sun-lit courtyard. Young men and girls are chanting worshipping songs repeating *Vilnius will be saved, believe in God's word...* Camera focuses from here, from the "home" point to that sun-lit, alien space, to these young people who obviously are not from "here" and behind whom in the distance we see a totally different, modern city full of traffic. The promise of salvation itself speaks about some kind of change. Something will certainly be different.

A separation is being drawn up visually by dividing the space lit by the sun and the shadow. The main character of the movie Misha is sitting on the bench; behind him white laundry is moving in the wind. It is wavering like wings of an angel, more deeply reinforcing the impression that all this world with this strange old man, his pre-war shoes, wooden lumber rooms will take off from the ground and rise up. And next to him young people are singing about salvation of Vilnius in the sun-lit area. Two such different worlds meet in one frame that it seems as if the action were taking

place in two different spaces and two different periods of time. Misha is watching the singers as a distant mirage, scarcely related to him.

The city reveals itself through movement. While the camera watches a lost dog wandering through Užupis street, we see facades, windows, damaged rainwater pipes of ragged and worn-out houses passing by. Everything whiffles indescribable cosiness. The city is waking up. It doesn't try to be more beautiful, cleaner, younger than it is.

People and cars are passing by. Everything is happening as usual. The city in the morning – familiar and recurrent. There are no strangers here. All the people, kids and cars become a part of recurrent action.

The space of a city as a home is revealed through a ritual of routine actions. A woman climbs down the stairs with a bucket in her hand audibly tapping with her shoes. A man pours out the water. Another neighbour passes by.

Even the slightest sounds are audible, even such silent ones like creaking of a bucket's handle or steps of people in a closed space of a courtyard.

The cinematic poetry of A. Matelis lets in its territory the coarsest textures – blackened streets, worn-out houses, smoky dirty kitchens, people, battered by passing time – and creates poetic images out of them, which radiates the light of primordial innocence. The people shown in the movie are not very pretty or heroic, more pitiful and ridiculous, but they all radiate the inner light which exposes itself in monochromaticity of shadows even more.

In the movie "Ten Minutes Before the Flight of Icarus" A. Matelis chooses a path where no other Lithuanian documentary has walked before. Having refused to use the classic storytelling of a documentary movie with almost no words he speaks the poetic movie language about the forgotten and neglected neighbourhood of Užupis – the shelter and homes of the poor and the outcasts.

The director is just observing the silent residents of this strange world, enabling houses, walls with signs of passing time, slanting windows, curved wooden balconies, the lost dog in the street and the contrasts of a sunlight to speak. The landscape in the movie becomes the main character, creating the semantic material of the movie.

The dialogue between the houses and territories of light and shadow helps to understand and feel the inner tensions of time and a man in that time. It creates a feeling of waiting for something to come.

It is interesting to observe in the movie of A. Matelis how the new cinema of the independent generation takes over the cinematic way of speaking through the background from the elder generation.

Wide shot became an inseparable mark of documentary genre. It is a shot where the main character of the movie leaves the front giving way to the dialogue between a landscape and a viewer.

The motion of semantic focus from the front to the second during different periods of time confirm that there is a vital need to creatively oppose the official narrative opening up a space not only for the characters living in the marginal zone but also giving back the status of a dramaturgical story participant to the landscape, bringing out the meanings hidden there.

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DOCUMENTARY DISCOURSE: COGNITIVE AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON MATTERS OF REMEMBERING AND AUDIO-VISUAL MEMORY

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Abstract

The article examines the ramifications of documentary discourse. The approach is formulated to give a voice to interdisciplinary research on documentary. The emphasis on the close analysis of extracts and larger documentary entities will bring a new level to this meeting of various aspirations. It gives the possibility to create a heightened sensitivity of matters of analysis that covers similarities and differences, as well as causal and empirical reflections. The aim is to create a web of associations for these perspectives and perceive a wider approach on documentary in order to argue that the meaningful appropriation of various tendencies in documentary studies requires sufficient correspondence and dialogical proneness for an understanding of the conceptual, formal and aesthetic legitimacy of this phenomenon.

The essential part of the investigative strategy relies on cognitive mapping, which means a combination of individual and collective perceptions. Furthermore, cognitive mapping enables the viewer to practise distinct perceptual, phenomenological and cognitive activities. It also features a methodical device that is related to a contemplative attitude towards the discourse of documentary, forming a relationship between the projected images and sounds and a mind that observes them. This leads to a method of aesthetic contemplation that is connected to a disciplinary logic of inscription which aims to produce insights and patterns of thought provoked by filmic affectations. In this article, the focus lies especially on questions of remembering and audio-visual representation of memory issues.

The article features three film examples, which are Patricio Guzmán's "Nostalgia for the Light" (*Nostalgia de la luz*, Chile, 2010), Pirjo Honkasalo's "The 3 Rooms of Melancholia" (*Melancholian 3 huonetta*, Finland, 2004), and Chris Marker's "Sunless" (*Sans soleil*, France, 1983). These films are cinematic re-meditations of past and present, and forms of audio-visual ethnography. The resulting inferences

and elementary conclusions include that they aspire to demythologize the past, and bring forth a mode of representation, which features an elevated and sensory form of documentary discourse, connected with artistic signs of narrative, performative and aesthetic connotations.

Keywords: *discourse, cognition, perception, memory, phenomenology, aesthetics, documentary film*.

The term *documentary* refers to all processes by which the filmic input is transformed, reduced, elaborated, stored, recovered, and used. It is concerned with these processes of images and sounds that create filmic environments; it is apparent that documentary is involved in many processes of existential being. Research of documentary has described the idea of documentary film and its relation to various processes. These underlines have been widely discussed among documentary theory, especially when seeking to account all the intellectual and other activities related to documentary perspective. Generally, theory of documentary forms an interdisciplinary research cluster, related to the fields of philosophy, psychology, anthropology and aesthetics [Álvarez 2015, Nichols 1994, Bruzzi 2000].

Each field consists of a unique and notable set of tools and perspectives. Documentary approach unites different theoretical perspectives and is, in this sense, a position and a stance of intellectual and attitudes. Documentary approach is often historical, an inquiry that designates the very operations of historical knowing. In another connection speaking of historiography, Paul Ricoeur has spoken of "documentary phase", which starts with the reception of the witnesses' statements and ends with the production of archives that serve to establish documentary proof. And further on, he has exemplified explanation and understanding phases, where the historian explains the reasons and consequences of things that have happened, and then, a representative phase in which the actual representation of the past occurs. These are the methodological moments interwoven with one another, as Ricoeur explains [Ricoeur 2004: 137–138]. His model forms a methodological layout that has its connections with documentary discourse as it appears in Patricio Guzmán's film "Nostalgia for the Light" (*Nostalgia de la luz*, 2010).

Dimensions of declarative memory

Guzmán's film is a study of heaven and earth, situated in Atacama Desert in Chile, a place for stargazing, and a place for searching the bones of people who were buried in the desert sand during the Pinochet dictatorship. Guzmán's filmic methods resemble Ricoeur's list, since explanation, understanding and representative phases are

all present in Guzmán's approach. He has designated his film as an interdisciplinary historical research within the aesthetic domain of film language. He concentrates on these phases as to concentrate on the practices of temporality. The historical roots of explaining things, comprehending and representing them are all relevantly present. It is the audience's duty to resolve these puzzles once the question of historicity has been addressed, as well as, the question of extra-terrestrial phenomena. Indeed, the fundamental motivation for Guzmán is to raise questions, and to see what the relationship between past, present and future would be. In the documentary phase of Guzmán, a declarative memory is born out of these circumstances and turned into documentary proof of matters. Guzmán presents testimonies of witnesses, and they are evaluated so that a documentary truth prevails.

Crucial is Guzmán's affirmation that the declarative memories of witnesses are the initiating moments of historical knowledge and possible aspects of truth. In the film, Guzmán interviews Luis Henriquez who is one of the survivors of Pinochet's death camps, and he recounts how inmates studied astronomy until it was later forbidden. Another survivor, Miguel Lawner was a very talented draughtsman, able to produce compelling drawings of the concentration camp by memorising how many feet he covered as he paced its grounds. In another passage of the film, Guzmán's interviews Atacama astronomers' attempt to link their probing of the cosmos with the equally daunting task of making a nation to recall its victimisation. The study of heaven seems to be offered as a form of consolation, when a scientist tells us that the stars contain the same calcium as our bones, including the bones of the disappeared lying near the telescopes. The moments show how essential is Ricoeur's affirmation that the testimonies are the initiating appearances of historical knowledge. The people who are the witnesses of terrible events want to reassure us; they want that we believe what they are saying. It is our responsibility to evaluate the credibility of their testimonies. In Guzmán's film, this forms a key operation in the establishment of the documentary proof through remembering.

The type of questions raised in "Nostalgia for the Light" are crucial for historical research, since they concern documentary facts that are dealing with not just the remembered events but their actual occurrence. In this way, the described event becomes the referent of testimonies. Ricoeur's description of the historical traces of documentary actually discloses and gives form to something very meaningful, showing a great concern of the silenced voices of the people who have lost a lot and lived through and experienced a paradox of being a human whose humanity has been utterly jeopardised.

"Nostalgia for the Light" represents an artistic practice that invites the audience to think about the past, and to make multiple connections between characters and objects in sequences that describe the happenings. It also represents a memory work

that concentrates not only on certain historical matters, but also on cultural representation of them. In Guzmán's film, the method of investigation controls the narrative, representing a view of ignored past. The filming at Atacama Desert performs a way of retelling, and a way of how a contemporary activity of a filmmaker can shed new light on past events. The idea concerns remembering and forgetting, produces a meta-historical account, a trace in mobilising the effect of the past, and adds cultural meanings to it. As Malin Wahlberg has demonstrated: "The trace is a trace of something, and therefore it stands out as an intentional object whose mode of being is equivalent to its function as inscription of the past within the present" [Wahlberg 2008: 35].

A documentary can invoke an act of reminiscence that is outside of personal memory, symbolising something more. This is in line with the influence of existential phenomenology and phenomenology of time experience concerning historical ideas and their outcomes. Nostalgia in "Nostalgia for the Light" represents a form of audio-visual memory as a productive force. Guzmán aims to show possibilities that are still valid in the present and Guzmán's nostalgia contains a utopian presence of the future, a desire for a state of matters that could be better than the current one. Following this logic, one can think that nostalgia contains a critical element, since it is usually a symptom of longing for something else, a change, or hope for another reality [Magagnoli 2015].

Scholarship and criticism

Current research on documentary – concerning the meaning, interpretation and status of it – is based on a complex history of ideas. Many of the earlier arguments have formed the basis for a great deal of research on documentary perspectives down to the present time. Therefore, it is crucial to know the heritage of this tradition, and to understand what kind of issues are at stake in talking about documentary. When addressing the historical value of documentary, several theoretical stances have been adopted in discussion of ontological differences and similarities between them. As Vivian C. Sobchack and Thomas Sobchack have emphasised: "Documentary filmmakers who choose to analyse their subject matter rather than simply record it have also chosen to acknowledge their own mediation in the filmmaking process" [Sobchak and Sobchack 1987: 354].

The increased subjectivity of the filmmakers has also affected the nature of documentary discourse, but there have been difficulties in assessing subjective and objective dimensions together or deciding the borderlines between them. This mediation concerns other disciplines as well. For instance, in cognitive and neuroscientific approaches to mind and brain we can find similar problematics, because of the difficulty to clearly separate objective and subjective realms. The systematic

interest in the operations of the mind has been a major target of cognitivism. In this perspective, the mind is a representational and intentional system, and the study of the mind is a challenging and complex issue where no single perspective is adequate. Cognitivism, as well as documentary theory itself is not a unified field or theory but more a collaborative stance or effort among researchers working in these fields. The uniting factor that holds cognitive theory together is the study of the mind and, for the most part, the use of scientific methods [Friedenberg, Silverman 2006: 2].

We can say that documentary discourse fragments the complexity of matters, since some matters are valued over others without comprehending the relationality between them. Documentary discourse forms a basic way of communicating ideas forward, favouring conversational, formal and orderly represented voices as expressions of thought [Nichols 2011].

At best, documentary discourse develops an interdisciplinary field of matters studying the structures documentary and its artistic practices that have expanded and changed the directions of investigations. The spectrum of documentary is nowadays wider than ever, mainly because of this interdisciplinarity approach that connects philosophy, psychology and screen studies with documentary modes of address. These modes can be direct, or indirect, depending on the point of view, scale of narration, and the perspective of the audience. Jonathan Kahana has notified that "documentary is a process by which certain traits of cinema as such – the indexical character of its auditory and visual signs; the capacity to separate the audio track from the visual track, and to recombine them in different ways; its ability to incorporate other performance, textual and recording media; its portability; and its ability to be viewed by one or many – are brought to bear on a social topic" [Kahana 2008: 23].

By appropriating this perspective and using techniques of representation to produce certain kinds of stories with meaningful structures that are there to be notified and explored, documentary as a discourse can differentiate itself from other modes of cultural and historical representation. One of the most significant features of documentary has been its relation to authenticity. So, if a documentary is authentic, it contains a certain amount of freedom from conventional expectations that are supposedly required in a given situation, and with a sense of responsibility that characterises the discourse.

Documentary discourse can be hermeneutic when interpreting individual and social perspectives. A documentary can feature ontological events, which produce interaction between the film and its audience. In approaching documentary, the circularity of interpretation concerns the relation of parts to the whole, since the interpretation of each part is dependent on the interpretation of the whole. In a sense, a single documentary emphasises the understanding of it as a continuation of historical and cultural tradition, as well as a form of dialogical openness, which creates a

situation where the horizons of documentary can be broadened. Both directly and indirectly, this passage echoes the authenticity of documentary's social effectiveness, which does not come merely from technical or other capacity but is comprehended as a diffusive element of documentation considering a number of different, even contradictory, purposes. According to Mike Wayne, "documentary sits at the intersection of contradictory philosophical streams and manifests this in its theory and practice" [Wayne 2008: 83].

Sensory estimations

The rhetorical capacity of documentary has changed through time, since documentary films address the state of our being in a certain moment of time. Effective rhetorical way of dealing with documentary matters includes the art of speaking and writing, as well as studying the application of the principles and rules of composition. This creates a thicker sense of documentary's forms and aesthetics that provides a needed interplay between objective and subjective forces, complicating the dimensions of documentary knowledge as a basis of actual experience. The state of being aware of something relates to the act of understanding documentary's perceptual challenges, and the acknowledgement and cognizance of the mind [Merleau-Ponty 1964, Bruno 2002]. Perception in this sense relates to the characteristic experiences associated with different senses. Often in documentary, the complex relations between narrative imagination and historical and cultural representation provide new and revelatory insights of understanding the social realm of events. This outlines the possibility to understand the inner nature of documentary discourse as a token of intuitive seeing, bringing forth a documentary stance that can connect representations of the past with a creative montage and narrative imagination.

This kind of specific cinematographic eloquence is fully experienced in Pirjo Honkasalo's film "The 3 Rooms of Melancholia" (2004). The film is a three-part – *Longing*, *Breathing* and *Remembering* – journey, which tries to come to terms with children and the effects of the Second Chechen War. As we follow Honkasalo's narrative, we become aware that the places and spaces she depicts are permeated by historical and personal touch. The war was the site of political and ideological confrontations, including the most harrowing battles between Russian forces and Chechen rebels. Honkasalo's aspiration extends beyond that, since she is mainly dealing with the many-sided effects that the war had on Russian and Chechen children. Director's exploration becomes a compass point within the field of global and political ramifications. The three parts examine critically the features of this landscape in Russia and Czechnya. Throughout the mixing of documentary form and political and ideological critique with poetic undertones, Honkasalo provides a powerful commentary on these matters.

Beyond this, "The 3 Rooms of Melancholia" deals with cinema's ability to exist as an audio-visual entity for memory and history. Honkasalo refers to the complexity of representation. She seems determined by the way cinema has the ability to grasp the impressions that have their context and source in the faces of young children in a Russian military academy (Room No. 1), in the people's desperate situation during the war in Grozny (Room No. 2), and in the social rituals of people in Ingushetia (Room No. 3). The theme of war acquires added dimensions in all three sections.

The issue of the fragility of children in front of these events saturates the images and sounds, and the political and cultural memory is marked by a prevailing sense of the harmful effects of war. This suggests another way to understand the described reality, since the film is a journey through the complexity of spatial and temporal dimensions. The rhetorical framework of the documentary is firmly rooted in an attempt to reassess phenomenological themes and problems of space and time. Perception and ethics are in the middle of this existential inquiry. Honkasalo's film provides an ongoing hermeneutic approach to this perspective, and a metaphysical journey into the experience of children in the middle of all this. Honkasalo offers a mind-opening discourse where existential, psychological and aesthetic insights are consciously bracketed into the context of audio-visual display. In this regard, the depicted historical events form a collective history of political and ideological fields of vision, under which lies a history of personal aspirations, and a larger frustration towards these circumstances.

The created image of memory is a mental construction of sites and places that are united through personal memories of the social actors. This indication prepares the way for intensive notions of time and place. As the narration begins, we witness an overview of the happenings in a military academy that is situated in Kronstadt, an island outside St. Petersburg. In this specific place, many of the pupils are children from the streets of Russian cities, aged from ten to fourteen years. They are about to learn the methods and mechanics of war. The fragments of their learning processes are described merely as impressions on their faces. In the next section, the theme opens up more sociologically, depicting the war-effects in a concrete battle of humans, trying to survive in the ruins of Grozny. In the last section of the film, the impressive and sociological perspectives are more or less united, as we approach the aftermath of war in a small community living in Ingushetia, only a few miles away from Chechen border.

Honkasalo's concerns are present, dealing with the passage of time and the conditions to empirically know the reality. These connections, ideas, and postulations are emblems of duration and other existential proponents in order to grasp the continuity and persistence of life. Honkasalo searches for new audio-visual ideas and forms that she can materialize, connected with the belief in depicting the relation-

ship of human beings and their surroundings. The emotional register of the narrative is persistently intimate especially in the first and last sections of the film.

Honkasalo's film marks a convincing point in which aesthetic qualities are presented with an approach to the idea of "figures in a landscape". This cinematographic concern is also a nuanced and atmospheric approach rather than just a tendency to simply restore something. The impressive use of colours, and the carefully choreographed camera movements are deeply enthralling. Moreover, the editing of the film structures the narrative heavily.

The phenomenology of matters contains an intuitive and sensory estimation of audio-visual imprints that reflect the expression of memory and other states of documentary discourse. The aspects of film are inscribed to rearticulate the meanings of framing, editing, sound and narration. In Honkasalo's documentary, these are dramatically refracted signs of existence. Documentary discourse appears as a mediated process where personal and social realms form an interactive reconstruction of matters punctuated by ethical and moral engagement. In hypermodern documentary such as "The 3 Rooms of Melancholia", the state of affairs can appear as a continuous search for the discreet connections of disparate places and times, allowing the possibility for images and sounds to resonate and vibrate suggestively in creating configurations that have no prefixed meanings. The enunciation of such a documentary discourse intensifies and enriches the quality of expression.

A phenomenology of appearances

Consequently, perception is recognition and understanding of spatial and temporal structures, and an understanding of different objects and parts and their relations in the field of audio-visual thinking. The phenomenological description focuses on the analysis of the experience. In Chris Marker's "Sunless" (*Sans soleil*, 1983), the audience is shuttled back and forth between the pre-industrialised landscape of Africa and the post-industrialised economy of Japan. Through the rhythmic counterpointing, we become aware not only of the disparities between the two, but also of the persistence of forms of thinking and cultural expression that link these places and spaces together. These forms of thinking are ultimately utilized in the film as a way of critiquing and challenging Western ideologies, in particular the metaphysics of "presence" in Western thought, concerned with its privileging of what is spoken over what is left unsaid [Valkola 2017: 140–148]. Many images speak for themselves needing no further comment and, in this regard, Marker's film comes close to cognitive understanding, including long sequences of sounds and images that reflect the cineaste's comprehension of specific still and movement aesthetics to emphasise seemingly contradictory views and perspectives. Recognising the "truth" of an event always exceeds the presented facts. Marker's attempt to

locate the contributory subjects of meaning and association, whether these include personal, social, ideological, emotional, philosophical, moral, ethical, cultural or ethnographical dimensions, is worked out through a metaphorical play of contrasts and oppositions that include the spectator. Marker's associative montage offers a nuanced, pictorially multivalent spatial and temporal perspective, and creates an audio-visual experience – an event resulting from the intersection of the everyday and the modern – and an intersection of various filmic forms (stillness, animation, movement, frame-based aesthetics of montage and pictorialism) that takes place across the lines marked by the simultaneity of history and audio-visual memory. and manifested in reflections of the advance of digital technology.

However, one of the most interesting propositions emerges from the investigation of film's power to work as an audio-visual ethnography concerned with the depiction of places and spaces. *Sans Soleil* acknowledges its biases and constructiveness as a systematic and open-ended analysis of the social-historic basis of the camera-based audio-visual process. The narrative meaning of the represented images depends a lot on the commentary. Marker's reflections can be understood on two levels: on the one hand, regarding narration, which is constructed by means of the interplay between fictional and documentary contexts; on the other hand, regarding the historical meaning of the representation, which works more as suggested than revealed by the narrator's notions. "Sunless" combines classical knowledge, eloquence of form, beauty and poetry. Its global atmosphere is so genuinely strong that if affects us immediately.

As this example testifies, the cognitive, phenomenological, and perceptual aspects of image-and-sound combinations are of major importance. They are related to the understanding of these processes, connecting the mental to the pictorial. The scientific study of mental states could particularly bring forth greater precision for the understanding of the subject. The sensitivity to the typology of mental states could help prevent the temptation of homogenising the biochemical expressions of mental states to a narrow type, and give space for the diversity of the phenomenon, for the mixture of feelings, thoughts, abstractions and sensations.

The issue of fragility of memory immerses and saturates the images and sounds of "Sunless", and a single film can appear as a token for the representation of memory. Subjective and collective memories are represented as images and sounds of a universe whose 'reality' forms a constantly shifting perspective. A documentary can have the ability to reform and probe its existential nature, unfolding and reflecting upon connotations that discreetly denote the concretism of the narrative. In the light of this, the audience has its expectations, which are intertwined with metacommentary on film as a medium of representation. Aesthetically speaking, these filmmakers have a special sense of the use of light in their films. They are devoted to the casual fall of light on depicted phenomena and the visibly composed immersion into the flow of

passing experiences, rendering controlled grouping of social characters in significant poses, controlled by a unifying style of appearances. The general camerawork is finely tuned into the dramatics of the described events. The distant views of people and the surrounding landscape are observed from the point of view of observational onlooker, confirming a hypermodern connection with illustration. The notions of socio-historical past colour the expression with careful period details that are subdued to the general atmosphere of narration. This features an elevated form of documentary filmmaking practice, connected with the artistic model of intuitive performances. The camera is attached as an aesthetic medium, associated with pure documentary illustration.

One of the main results deals with the idea that in these films we can find an audiovisually composed style that relies on facial close-ups and bodily presences and poses, and is filtered through a cultural continuity in which the importance of details, such as the flow of passing experiences, is subdued to the general atmosphere of narration. The films are journeys into the past in order to rewrite history in a situation where past and present are inseparable. Another result is that while it is obvious that documentaries can contain a source of truth in recording and reproducing the phenomenal appearance of social characters, they can also revitalise the interest between past and present issues in avoiding mythological and unspecified references. The ambiguity of the content of documentary can reflect the uncertainty of character-decisions under difficult situations, as it happens in these films.

Documentary discourse deals with historical and social realms, complicating the dialogical discussion of representation in a situation where narrative imagination and audio-visual poetics meet. Documentary can establish a common perception since it expresses the filmmaker's point of view and style, which is then offered to the audience. After that the audience interprets it literally, differently, and complementarily, changing and contrasting the emerged meanings. According to Julian Hochberg, the viewer's construction of edited space can be compared to cognitive mapping, since the task of a filmmaker is to make the viewer pose a visual question which s/he answers [Hochberg 1978: 208]. In cognitive mapping, individual and social perceptions are combined. Besides inscription (what the camera can record), my viewpoint deals with reception (how images and sounds can be understood and viewed). These various attributions help us to accentuate the contours of documentary vision, even though they too easily suspend the question of the interplay between the subjective and objective realities of the image.

As Guzmán, Honkasalo and Marker have verified in the context of documentary, the image and its constructions give possibility to a specific dialectic between the narration and its perception. The way these artists understand the creative process opens the doors to the expression of larger perspectives in the whole filmmaking practice.

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SCREENING SPACE IN FILM ADAPTATIONS OF ESTONIAN HISTORICAL FICTION: "THE LAST RELIC" (1969) AND "BETWEEN THREE PLAGUES" (1970)[1]

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Abstract

This article analyses the spatial representations of "The Last Relic" (*Viimne reliikvia*, Grigori Kromanov, 1969) and "Between Three Plagues" (*Kolme katku vahel*, Virve Aruoja, 1970). While almost diametrically different in terms of intention, execution and reception, the films exemplify the complex interplay of the past and the present that is typical to screen adaptations of historical fiction. "The Last Relic" and "Between Three Plagues" belong to the same wave of cinematic works that was inspired by debates on the architectural heritage of Tallinn's Old Town in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Using this historical urban environment, as well as its broader field of connotations, as a central point of reference, the films provide intriguing critiques of the late Soviet period that was characterised by negotiations of power, identity and history. As specimens of the heritage film genre, "The Last Relic" and "Between Three Plagues" open up a room for discussing the discursive intricacies of narrating the nation, demonstrating that industrial conditions, audio-visual structures and ideological undercurrents can sometimes lead to unexpected, even conflicting constellations.

Keywords: *Estonian cinema, heritage film, spatial representations, "The Last Relic" (Viimne reliikvia, 1969), "Between Three Plagues" (Kolme katku vahel, 1970).*

Introduction

This article looks at two Soviet Estonian screen adaptations of historical novels: "The Last Relic" (*Viimne reliikvia*, Grigori Kromanov, Tallinnfilm, 1969), based on

[1] This publication is an edited version of an article "*Viimne reliikvia" ja "Kolme katku vahel": ruumist eesti ajalookirjanduse ekraniseeringutes*, published in 2015 in *Methis: Studia humaniora Estonica*, No. 15, p. 102–119.

Eduard Bornhöhe's novel "Prince Gabriel or The Last Days of Pirita Monastery" (*Vürst Gabriel ehk Pirita kloostri viimased päevad*, 1893), which became a box-office favourite throughout the Soviet Union and even beyond; and "Between Three Plagues" (*Kolme katku vahel*, Virve Aruoja, Eesti Telefilm, 1970) that reached a much less extensive TV audience and the connections of which to its literary "source", a multi-part novel of the same title (1970–1980) by Jaan Kross, are more complicated. These screen adaptations are considered from the perspective of spatial representations. I will examine the strategies and devices employed by the scriptwriters, directors and production designers for constructing these cinematic spaces, as well as the way the films related to their literary hypotexts. My analysis draws on the understanding that a novel and its screen adaptation are not involved in a hierarchical relationship of an *original* and a *copy*; rather, they should be perceived as artworks of equal standing that are associated by links of intertextuality [Stam 2000; Hutcheon 2006]. In the final part of the article, I will evoke Deleuzian concepts of time-image and movement-image [Deleuze 1986 and 1989] as interpreted in relation to narrating the nation by David Martin-Jones and Jeffrey Skoller, in order to theorise the way these films utilise historical narratives for constructing and (re)producing national identity.

Urban, literary and cinematic intertextualities

Like adaptations of historical novels in general, both "The Last Relic" and "Between Three Plagues" speak, perhaps even primarily, about their time of production; about the present rather than the past [Sorlin 1980: 170]. In this regard, it is important to recall the role of Tallinn's Old Town as a locus of resistance in Soviet Estonian culture. Representations of the Old Town, as well as its architectural features, have always served as an essential arena for intriguing negotiations between conflicting ideologies and (national) identities, evoking complex issues of power, resistance and adaptation. In the 1960s, the Old Town in particular and medieval heritage in general acquired unprecedented topicality in academic circles and mass culture alike, inspiring a broad range of visual and literary texts. A somewhat nostalgic and romantic "medieval trend" materialised in various articles of consumer goods, many interior designs and in an extensive array of motion pictures. In cinema, the trend is especially conspicuous between 1969 and 1972 when every third feature film released in Estonia relied on the imagery of the Old Town [for more detail see Näripea 2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2005d].

"The Last Relic" and "Between Three Plagues" form a part of this cycle, while also sharing the same historical spatiotemporal frame of reference – both are set in and around Tallinn during the Livonian War (1558–1583). Despite covering a certain common ground, the films are clearly set apart by some remarkable differences.

Perhaps most prominent is their dissimilarity in terms of genre. "The Last Relic" is a romantic adventure film with a mass appeal, which became an international blockbuster and a cult classic to a great extent due to its main message – struggle for freedom. This thirst for emancipation resonated not only with the colonised peoples across the former Eastern Bloc at the time of the film's release, but also with several generations of audiences in the capitalist "free world", the restrictions of which might be subtler than those of the "Soviet prison of nations", yet not significantly less limiting in their ultimate effects. By contrast, Jaan Kross, the author of the screenplay, defined "Between Three Plagues" as a psychological-historical drama [Kross 1965: 2], designed as an intentional escape from the field of mass entertainment and deliberately targeted at a more refined segment of the domestic market. As a result, the film's sphere of influence remained modest and it has been virtually forgotten by today. Equally interesting are the diverse alignments of the respective hypotexts and hypertexts in terms of genre and mode of expression. While Börnhöhe's novel stays well within the limits of a historical romance, "The Last Relic" is generically amphibious, a hybrid that draws on tropes of costume dramas, historical and romantic adventure films, westerns (or, more precisely, their eastern counterparts) and even parodic comedies. In the case of "Between Three Plagues", the opposite is true – the film is decidedly executed as a pure-bred historical drama loyal to conventions of cinematic storytelling, while Kross' novel is regarded as a remarkable innovation in Estonian literature for its mode of narration that synthesises several voices – "the text of the chronicler, staged scenes and the internal monologue of the protagonist" [Veidemann 2011: 119]. In terms of cinematic form, "The Last Relic" is a fast-paced colour film, while "Between Three Plagues" is black-and-white and notably slow in its narrative drive. The budget of "The Last Relic" reached a record high in Tallinnfilm's history (750,000 roubles, twice the budget of an average film; Teinemaa 2001), while "Between Three Plagues" was a relatively low-budget production. Finally, Tallinnfilm was a transnational enterprise in all respects [for more detail, see Näripea 2012], and carefully monitored by centralised censorship organs, while Eesti Telefilm catered mainly for the domestic audience and faced considerably fewer constraints in terms of censorship until the early 1970s. These differences are crucial when tracing the films' varying attitudes towards historical urban space and its representation.

Spatial subversions in "The Last Relic"

"The Last Relic" presents a complicated love story between Agnes and Gabriel on the background of the conspiracies and plots of the church and the nobility, and the revolt of Estonian peasants against these institutions. In terms of *mise-en-scène*, the authors of "The Last Relic" were relatively unconstrained by the prescriptions of Bornhöhe's original text, simply because the author of the novel had remained rather

laconic when describing the spaces of action. Hence, the filmmakers were at liberty to fill the gaps of the literary forerunner to their own liking. While the ideologically subversive manoeuvres of "The Last Relic" have been predominantly examined in relation to the film's soundtrack [in particular the lyrics, see Torop 2002], the ideologically ambiguous sub-currents of its spatial representations have received much less attention.

The film's mischievous politics and spatial sabotages of the Soviet hegemony are particularly noticeable in one of the central locations of the film – the monastery [Kaljundi 2007]. Imagined as a stronghold and symbol of repressive masters, the monastery is attacked and plundered in both the novel and the film. Yet while in the former the Pirita Monastery is razed to the ground by Ivan the Terrible's ruthless army, then in the latter it falls victim to Estonian peasant insurgents. This shift of nationality (and, consequently, falsification of historical facts) of the assailants was most likely an act of self-censorship on the part of the filmmakers, yet by employing a series of artistic filters they granted a clearly contemporary national-political dimension to the hijacked historical event – after all, it is quite easy to imagine the cynical masters of the monastery as standing for the representatives of another well-known repressive system. The empty, luminous, clinically cold rooms of the monastery function as a spatial metaphor for the arrogance and hypocrisy of the clerical institutions as well as the Soviet regime. Against the background of this clean radiance, the dark silhouettes of the monks stand out in a particularly graphic manner. Equally dark are their deeds, their cynical and cold-blooded intrigues in the name of their "holy cause". As in any ideologically correct Soviet film, the church is imagined in a negative light – the nunnery is a place where helpless women are imprisoned and where all kinds of crimes are committed under the veil of sanctity. Even the abbot has to admit that the monks living in his monastery are "drunkards, thieves, debauchees, lazy-bones, numskulls". At the time of the film's release, these words must have sounded like a deliciously audacious assessment of the regime that picked up the bill for the entire undertaking.

At the same time, for at least those local spectators who were aware of the heated debates over Estonia's built heritage and the vigorous efforts to protect it in the late 1960s [for more detail see Näripea 2005a], the monastery, as well as the Old Town that makes its appearance in a few brief but remarkable scenes, must have served as a sign and reminder of the fact that the local spatial culture essentially belongs to the West rather than to the East. Moreover, the portrayal of the monastery and the Old Town as places of corruption and sin can be seen as an ironically self-reflexive commentary of the filmmakers on the massively popular "medieval trend" that commercialised this historical built environment in order to fuel the Soviet economy with the hard currency of the Western tourists. In its representations of the Old Town,

"The Last Relic" avoids the most easily recognisable architectural "gems" and instead favours rustic romanticism, exhibiting the dirty brown-grey colouring of patina on limestone building blocks and demonstrating the heaviness of squared timber. On the one hand, this visual idiom highlights the film's generic undercurrents of romance and supports the common understanding of the "Dark Ages" as a drab and rough era. On the other hand, however, this emphasis on textures can also be read as an intentional act of resistance to the most blatantly commercial manifestations of the "medieval trend", which frequently relied on images of the *façades* of selected landmark buildings. The idea of city as a nest of corruption is spatially summarised in the form of a tavern where Gabriel meets Siim after having escaped imprisonment in the monastery. Waiting for Ivo Schenkenberg who had almost killed him earlier, Gabriel plots his revenge, accompanied by a song that talks about selling oneself, one's faith and truth. Also, in the tavern sits an idle, lute-fiddling prostitute who comes across as an almost literal embodiment of the trope "Tallinn as a whore", in a marked contrast to Agnes's almost angelic look. Equally, the analogy of prostitution can be evoked in relation to Hans von Risbieter, a knight residing in Tallinn, who is prepared to exchange spiritual and divine values for carnal pleasures. Again, as with the inhabitants of the monastery, it is not difficult to imagine the contemporary equivalents of these derogatory comparisons. These are some of the ways in which the connotative terrain of the built environment is integrated into the film's critiques of the dominant regime, all the while the mechanisms of the same regime were used to turn "The Last Relic" into a blockbuster that attracted millions of spectators.

In sum, regarding the relations between the good and the evil, as well as the spatial representation of these relations, "The Last Relic" is nearly in every respect a true-to-regime film, which has all the prerequisites for being a part of mind-numbing and repressive entertainment mechanism of the society of spectacle – a relatively simple adventure story with a happy ending and with just the right amount of romance and music. And yet the film managed to acquire clearly discernible connotations of national resistance, particularly through music, but also through subtle shifts in spatial representations. By means of lyrics, but also with the help of the various ambiguities related to the main settings of its story – the monastery and the Old Town – the film performed a brief intervention into the discursive space of the dominant power, creating a vacuum where, for a moment, the Other reigned.

The anti-tourist space-time of the Old Tallinn in "Between Three Plagues"

Set in Tallinn in the second half of the 16th century, "Between Three Plagues" is a biopic of Balthasar Russow, one of the most prominent Livonian and Estonian chroniclers, and the Lutheran pastor of the Estonian congregation at Tallinn's Holy

Spirit Church. The film focuses on struggles arising from his social position between the German and Swedish upper classes and Estonian peasants. One of the contemporary commentators described the *mise-en-scène* and cinematography of "Between Three Plagues" as akin to *rigid medieval engravings* [Tobro 1970]. It is certainly true that the atmosphere of the film is rather reflective than dynamic, which decisively sets it apart from the spectacularity and false optimism of socialist realism. The compositions, camera movements and spatial configurations are characterised by a sense of minimalism, moderation, even rigor.

In terms of its visual style, "Between Three Plagues" resembles the works of Scandinavian authors, such as Carl Theodor Dreyer (especially "Day of Wrath"/ *Vredens dag*, 1943) and Ingmar Bergman (especially "The Seventh Seal"/*Det sjunde inseglet*, 1957). Indeed, the work of Anton Mutt, the cinematographer of "Between Three Plagues", betrays strong impulses of the Scandinavian tradition, primarily in delicate and precise treatment of light and shadow for constructing forceful visual compositions and conveying various moods. For instance, in "Day of Wrath" the shadows that linger on the face of the protagonist Anne Pedersdotter signal her emotional splintering, her dilemma between surrendering to the power of passion and adhering to the social conventions. In "Between Three Plagues", Russow's wife Elsbet is torn by a similar love triangle, and the film uses the same device for visualising her predicament, although less consistently than in "Day of Wrath". The restrained pace of editing is also characteristic to the Scandinavian films as well as to "Between Three Plagues". Furthermore, "Day of Wrath" and "Between Three Plagues" share a comparable situation of spatial limitations that stands for the restrictive influence of external (social) forces on the lives of the protagonists, as well as for the liminality of their personal circumstances. While in "Day of Wrath" Anne is accused of witchcraft, of crossing the borders between this world and the next, in "Between Three Plagues" Russow is suspected of being a double agent, of serving several masters and thus surpassing the limits of his power; he also frequently moves between various ethnical, cultural and class spheres. The image of border as a (spatial) metaphor that plays a significant role for Russow's figure in Kross' novel has been also noticed by Juhani Salokannel who has written that "his Estonian descent and German education take Russow to the border of two worlds" [Salokannel 2009: 199]. In the film, the notion of borders, as well as limitations, is additionally signalled by numerous doors, through which people keep coming and going, and which tend to open for Russow with particular ease, thus suggesting that nothing can stand on his quest for the truth.

The inertia that contemporary commentators found to be an important fault of "Between Three Plagues" stems to a significant extent from Jüri Arrak's drawings that mimic the appearance of woodcut prints. In part, these illustrations depicting the

silhouette of Tallinn, scenes of the Livonian War and agony of the city afflicted with plague were predominantly necessitated by budgetary limits, which prevented the filmmakers from building lavish sets or employing intricate special effects for portraying the distant past and panoramic events. More importantly, however, the minimalism of these prints provided a welcomed alternative to naturalistic, sensationalist representations of *the bloody Middle Ages … when war, plague and famine were regular guests* [Tobro 1970]. By rejecting the Hollywoodian tradition that seduces mass audiences with promises of bloodshed and notoriety, the authors of "Between Three Plagues" treated its spectators with more respect, as a refined and educated public that does not need to be attracted with graphic violence and decaying corpses.

In fact, the goal to resist easy entertainment was embedded into the very first version of Kross's screenplay, which resolutely prohibited *the exhibition of old architecture and museum pieces*, instead asking to highlight the *material texture of the backgrounds and larger props – cobblestone pavement, grain of timber, rough textiles and, especially, limestone walls* [Kross 1965: 2]. The result confirms that Kross' guidelines were indeed followed – the exterior shots are never panoramically sweeping, as was characteristic to more "tourism-oriented" productions; and the emphasis is on the heaviness of limestone walls that underline the overwhelming anxiety and sense of entrapment in a city tormented by war and plague. Even spacious rooms seem to be haunted by a sense of claustrophobia, which is supported by cinematographic techniques and graphic inserts. These choices correspond with Kross' vision that *in terms of the optics, the film should strive for a graphic rather than spatial impression. The eyes of the optical style-makers should be turned to the black-and-white naiveté and rigor of medieval woodcuts, rather than to the perfect lustre of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's forms* [Kross 1965: 2]. At the same time, because of the modest proportion of location shooting and the pre-eminence of medium-range shots, the city does not develop into a character in its own right, unlike later in the novel [Liivamets 1978; Kreem 2008]. And yet, especially in comparison with "The Last Relic", Kross' attempt to present *an urban space that relies on personal experience* [Kreem 2008: 1082] is clearly discernible both in the filmic and the literary incarnations of "Between Three Plagues". While in "The Last Relic" the topography of Tallinn serves the purposes of the cinematic narrative, replacing the actual urban space with a decidedly abstract "filmic city" targeted to international audiences, in "Between Three Plagues" the locations of action and shooting coincide with the real and concrete historical sites, thus instilling a certain sense of immediacy and verity that finds its most appreciating audience on the home turf.

Although making significant efforts to ensure historical accuracy, as well as finding fresh camera angles and locations, "Between Three Plagues" falls short on providing impressive architectural metaphors comparable to those in "The Last

Relic". At the same time, the absence of popular music and the lack of romanticism typical to the "medieval trend" indicates that "Between Three Plagues" sidesteps the repressive desire machine of mass entertainment, refusing to (re)produce illusions of airbrushed Soviet "reality", unlike so many other productions in this popular wave of Old Town films. The same ambition can be detected in the ambivalence of meaning that is central to the text of the screenplay, as well as in a number of elements that are both ideologically problematic and highly topical in the context of the Soviet society of the time – for instance, the issue of censorship and the (im)possibility of speaking the truth; the struggle between the structures of power and the creative class; the problem of sacrificing one's ideals and values in the name of day-to-day existence. Hence, as any historical film, "Between Three Plagues" uses the past in order to interrogate the present, just like "Day of Wrath" drew parallels between the witch-hunts of the 17th century and the Nazi occupation in Denmark of the 1940s, or "The Seventh Seal" compared the 14th-century fear of the Black Death with the anxieties provoked by the nuclear threat in the 1950s. However, despite these thematic analogies and textual ambiguities, "Between Three Plagues" remained firmly within the limits of permissibility and did not contest the main ideological tenets of the Soviet system, thus being an example of adaptation rather than outright resistance, even if serving as a site of cultural difference.

Historical narrative and national identity

In terms of relationships between historical narrative, audio-visual form and representation of national identity, "The Last Relic" and "Between Three Plagues" function in a somewhat unexpected manner. In spite of its upbeat and deceitfully superficial entertainment values, "The Last Relic" facilitates ambivalent and subversive procedures of interpretation and identification, while the boldly anti-mainstream visual form of "Between Three Plagues" conceals a narrative force field that clearly favours a single understanding of history and national identity. For analysing this paradoxical situation, I will draw on Gilles Deleuze's concepts of movement-image and time-image [Deleuze 1986 and 1989], as well as on David Martin-Jones and Jeffrey Skoller's renditions of Deleuzian ideas in relation to cinematic representations of national identity and history.

In the broadest sense, Deleuze formulated the notions of movement-image and time-image as theoretical tools that describe the different practices of editing in American and European cinema. To summarise very briefly, the movement-image refers to *the unbroken, linear narrative, based upon the continuity editing rules established by the Hollywood studio system and the time-image to the cinemas of the new waves which experimented with discontinuous narrative time* [Martin-Jones 2006: 2]. Martin-Jones connects the two modes with representations of national identities in

films. Borrowing from Homi K. Bhabha, he suggests that movement-image tends to be more or less *pedagogical* in its drive *to establish one dominant view of national history, and identity*, while the labyrinthine time-image reflects the potentially ungrounding *performative rethinking* of those notions [Martin-Jones 2006: 33]. In a similar way, Jeffrey Skoller argues that so-called conventional films are essentially *closed*, validating, naturalising and reinforcing dominant ideology and hegemonic narratives of the past, while avant-garde films remain *open*, challenging the established *truths* and offering alternative perspectives [Skoller 2005: xv–xxxiii]. It is important to emphasise that, according to Martin-Jones, most films are in fact hybrids, combining and intertwining the elements of movement-image and time-image. Indeed, this kind of hybridity characterises both "The Last Relic" and "Between Three Plagues". Perhaps most interestingly, while thoroughly entertaining and in general operating within the framework of the so-called *Hollywood-Mosfilm* [Butler 2007: 92] tradition of storytelling, "The Last Relic" remains remarkably open to conflicting and even rebellious modes of interpretation and identification, offering moments that can be called *performative* in the sense described by Homi K. Bhabha [Bhabha 1990: 297]. Despite playing on the field the rules of which were determined by the dominant ideology, "The Last Relic" enriched the hegemonic understanding of history with essentially contradictory elements. Meanwhile, "Between Three Plagues", which made every effort to resist the mainstream in its patterns of audio-visual and architectural representation, is surprisingly conservative, cautious and closed in its narrative form and ideological undercurrents, in many ways cementing a certain single *truth* – a *pedagogic* understanding of history. Although it is true that the national self-image nurtured by "Between Three Plagues" was secondary to, and effectively jeopardised by, the dominant narrative of *the great Soviet family of nations*, this does not change the point that the film advocates for a return to a single *truth* about the past, rather than opens up various points of view. In this regard, Kross' subsequent novel is much more heterogeneous, demonstrating that he disapproved any heroisation of history and *was open to discrepancies and uncertainties* [Salokannel 2009: 179].

Conclusion

Although it can be argued that "The Last Relic" and "Between Three Plagues" are very different films, it is important to reiterate that they share a number of similarities, including the general framework of the "medieval trend" that is in various ways critiqued in both works. Furthermore, as screen adaptations of historical novels, "The Last Relic" and "Between Three Plagues" tend to talk more about their own time and less about the past they portray. However, "The Last Relic" has stood the test of time significantly better than "Between Three Plagues" and it continues to

have an impact on how certain historical events, places and periods are understood by new generations, both in terms of the film's diegetic time-space and that of its time of making.

Finally, at a time when isolationist forces, demanding stricter political control over autonomous institutions, advocating for a return to "traditional", patriarchal values that severely challenge the most basic human rights, and surreptitiously inducing a deepening sense of (self) censorship, grow increasingly prominent the idea of freedom and, in particular, freedom of speech, which is central to both films, is gaining altogether new urgency, giving them a new lease of life.

Acknowledgement

Research for this article was funded by Eesti Teadusagentuur, grant no. IUT31-1. I would also like to thank the Estonian Government for continuously keeping up our hopes about raising research funding to 1% of GDP.

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TAKING THE ACTORS SERIOUSLY: MICHIEL VANDEVELDE'S "PARADISE NOW (1968–2018)"

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Abstract

The article departs from a phrase in Paul Ricoeur's "Memory, History, Forgetting" (2003), and attempts to take Ricoeur at his word, by taking seriously the troupe of Flemish teenage actors performing Michiel Vandevelde's "Paradise Now (1968–2018)", a re-working of the iconic performance by The Living Theatre, which when it was presented fifty years ago at the Avignon Festival offered itself as a preparation for its audience to take action, individually and collectively, personally and politically, beyond the space of the theatrical representation. Vandevelde and the teenagers' re-do functions rather differently. Drawing as much on film history and news and popular media as on theatre history, it offers a compilation of iconic images winding back to 1968, an occasion for these young 21st century performer-citizens – at once theatrical actors and "actors" of their own history – to voice their ambivalence about the potentials for common action in the present moment and the times ahead. The article considers the role of the "actors" (including the absent and the dead) in historical representation. It argues that the temporal form of the serial or chronicle (one image after another in chronological order) rather than the supposedly more complex – and human – dramatic plot (which structures relations between beginning, middle and end), attends to "taking the actors seriously" – in their actions and their passions – as a pressing task for our times.

Keywords: *"Paradise Now", teenage actors, theatrical re-enactment, chronicle and historical representation*.

Performance documentation

1968. A photograph of a crowd, people together in a space. Some sort of stage area. Those in the dark around the edges are watching. Those in the middle, in the light, are letting themselves be watched, talking to each other, or just hanging out.

Several of the people in the central, lit area are naked, half naked. Although they are a crowd, they are individualised, as people often are after something has taken place, in the aftermath of an event. Some clothes have been hung up at the back of the room. The crowd and the darkness extend all the way over to here, where the photo was taken, and to us who know next to nothing of what went on over there only a moment ago.

1968. An image from earlier in the event. Choreographed clusters of semi-clothed bodies, some sort of ritual action perhaps. But it is also a spectacle: produced for public consumption. We can see the backs of spectators' heads: an audience like at a theatre. A blue light pervades, no-one is individualised. Does any theatre look like this anymore?

1968 again, a last image from this set. If the photos are all of the same performance, then this one was probably taken some time between the other two. We can see more clearly where we are. A stone interior, like a medieval church, somewhere in Europe maybe. The spectators are in the performance space now, and some of the performers – their exposed flesh marks them out – are among the audience, but the action is still going on. It involves several other partially-naked people on the floor, horizontal, embracing, wrapped around each other, seemingly oblivious to the nearby spectators, absorbed with each other and with themselves. It is an odd sort of action to be watching, to be present at, but you can see the attention in people's gazes. Appreciative, expert even, taking in the whole scene. Connoisseurs of actuality. They are there and part of it. And what they are part of is something serious, meant and intended. Something real going on.

Fifty years later. 2018. A group of young people, some if not all of them teenagers, looking out from behind what appears to be a string curtain. Perhaps they are looking for "us", over here on the other side. They are there as themselves – individualised fully – but also not quite themselves. Their looking looks like something rehearsed, like they could be pretending. They could be performers, actors or dancers in a show. They are costumed, in single-tone pastel colours. The background is black, giving definition to the image, their posture, their faces.

Finally, 2018 once more. The same young people, but this time a motion image. A still image of people in movement. A group circles a duo, again against a black background. Picture-making. The group and the duo are moving at different speeds. The group are blurry – and therefore must be moving faster than the duo, who can be seen clearly. This is odd, because the two in the centre look like the ones who should be in sudden motion, one throwing a punch at the other. But they are frozen in their pose, holding their balance, straining to keep still: two young people, one white, one black, imitating a historical photograph of boxer Joe Frazier swinging at a leaning back Muhammad Ali during the 1971 "Fight of the Century". Worlds away from

them, from us, from here. The others, circling, watch them do that. As do we, from wherever we find ourselves right now.

The historical images, by photographer and counter-culture documentarist Don Snyder, are of American company The Living Theatre's "Paradise Now", which premiered at the Avignon Festival in summer 1968 and then toured the USA – along with other works by the company – later in the year, the tour serving as the occasion for The Living Theatre's return to their home country after several years of European "exile". At this point in time, for the young people in the more recent photographs, "Paradise Now" is – as it were – still to come; or else they are still to arrive.

These latter images, by Koen Cobbaert, are publicity shots for "Paradise Now (1968–2018)" [Kunstenfestivaldesarts 2018, where all of the images described above are archived], directed by choreographer Michiel Vandevelde for fABULEUS [fABULEUS 2018a], a company based in the Belgian city of Leuven, who specialise in artistic collaboration between young performers and experienced theatre makers. The production, made with thirteen young people aged between 14 and 23, premiered at kunstenfestivaldesarts (KFDA) in Brussels during May, 2018 (which is where I saw it performed), as part of the festival's 50th anniversary commemoration of "May '68", and the multiple narratives that went into and arise from that moment. Acknowledging what The Living Theatre's "Paradise Now" attempted and, to an extent, achieved for its time: its critique of the dominant culture, its radical method of aesthetic assault, and its complex poetics of "suspension" of the language and structures of "command" for the sake of what the Living themselves claimed as "spontaneous, non-violent anarchist revolution", Vandevelde and his collaborators also acknowledge the ambiguity of the '68 "legacy", the subsequent commodification of that cultural moment, and the difficulty of "thinking the future" on the model of this or any other received historical precedent. The 2018 production remains, though, we could say, concerned with exploring what remains of the revolutionary impulses of an earlier era, what can be retained – so to speak as critical or transformative potential – not least by those who have no memory of that past at all. But who have, perhaps, the youth – the "energy" – and the stake in futurity to realise aspects of that potential, to the extent that history still holds its potential in store.

History, remembered

A project, then, on the poetics and politics of history pursued, in large part, through the extension of collective *memory*, reaching back through the intervening years – and across generations – between 2018 and 1968. The way it works: the young ensemble inhabits a movement piece structured around the "freeze-frame" imitation of fifty iconic photographs [fABULEUS 2018b], drawn from news media, films, popular culture, performed in reverse chronological order. A movement into

the past that perpetually stops, and re-starts. Captions projected on the back wall of the stage identify the events for the audience, each projection a sort of history lesson in miniature, underwriting the shapes being thrown on stage, which may or may not provoke us to recall the images that have been selected to represent a history of the past fifty years. A history, largely, of main events. 2017: "pink protests" by women around the world following the inauguration of Donald Trump. 2016: Trump's election victory. 2015: Alan Kurdi's infant body at the sea's edge in Turkey, watched over by a stunned policeman, the projected caption recalling the Syrian Civil War and European intransigence over refugee migration. 2005: youth protests in the Parisian Banlieues and a note on President Sarkozy's inflammatory response. 2002: the Moscow theatre siege. 1997: Leo and Kate, "Titanic", prow of the boat, My Heart Will Go On, eleven Oscars. 1986: Chernobyl. 1972: Vietnam War, the Napalm Girl. 1971: Ali v Frazier, the fight of the century. 1970: the Kent State University shootings. 1969: Woodstock. 1968: Vietnam War, the handgun execution of a Vietcong soldier, an image – as the caption informs us – that was also used prominently, i.e. mimed onstage in a sequence of repeated "shootings" and fallings, by The Living Theatre in "Paradise Now".

By which point, accompanied by the suspended climax of a contemporaneous rock song (which will remain noisily "stuck" in its groove for the next twenty minutes or so), they have arrived "at" "Paradise Now", and I am wondering, from my seat in the auditorium, how they – these contemporary adolescents – are going to deal with it. The "it", I should confess, is something that in May 2018 I was only imprecisely familiar with, from images and reports I had come across over the years. I knew – or thought I knew – about the exhibition of "liberated" sexuality in The Living Theatre piece, and something about the invitation to take what has been rehearsed on stage into our lives – for real, as it were – and also outside the temporal and spatial bounds of the theatre, as they say – or as they said then – into the streets. My knowledge hardly went further. I was curious how theirs would.

The way that the young cast appear to deal with it is by continuing the same mimetic process through which they dealt with the 50 iconic images, imitating the actions of the Living in much the same way. And to an extent, that is what happens. They enter the space of the audience, climbing over our seats, climbing over us, reciting – as did their predecessors – a list of prohibitions that impact on their – our – someone's lives, with a kind of high-energy hooligan enthusiasm that befits their age. And it remains imitation, or it remains choreography, or at least a kind of performative action that – for all the intensity with which it is put over – remains free of "pathos" [Kaminski 2018] or rhetorical demand. They do not, it appears, feel obliged to believe in it: nor do they oblige us to believe in it either. And so, they recall the 1960s performers' exposure of their bodies by referring, gesturally, to their own

bodies – hitching up a top briefly, flashing a belly or a bum cheek – not so much in moderation or temerity, but in a way that remains resolutely within the realms of the representational. This is us on show: this is us doing history, if this is what doing history requires. And then they snatch their bodies, their voices, their energies back from us, and invite us to join them on stage. Or rather a projection on the back wall invites us to do that, promising – on their behalf – that our bodies and sensibilities, as paying spectators, will remain sacrosanct: *Don't worry, we will not touch you*. Some of us accept the invitation, we go up and sit among the performers, and – the evening that I am there at least – more follow until eventually we just about fill the stage, although there are still plenty of spectators behind us to watch. And then, as the music that has been playing all this time is exchanged for silence, and the theatre lights fade slowly for the end of the performance, the young people, dispersed among us, pass round a microphone and speak. Each speaks individually, and in the language of the "personal", not about taking theatre or revolution to the streets, but about hope and hopelessness, about the inefficacy of protest, about their distrust of democracy, about solidarity and desire but about exhaustion too, about doubt and courage, and about despair. Mostly they speak about despair. And it is a kind of despair that circulates, here, unsentimentally enough. As if, having sat down in this very spot – wherever it is we have all arrived – these young people know what time it is. And that is what they are doing now, telling the time. But the time has changed. Something else has emerged alongside the imitations.

I stay for the post-show discussion. The cast speak confidently about their experiences making the show with Vandevelde and his dramaturg Kristof van Baarle, both of whom are present but barely called on to speak. Several of the performers describe the learning process, encountering historical events of which they knew nothing at first, but which they have come to understand better, they say, by confronting – and inhabiting – images of those events and understanding something of their context and implications. There is, then, much here to appeal to someone like myself, who teaches theatre at a university. On the one side, a project of artistic investigation built around a complex historical object, a rigorous methodology and a clearly-articulated set of research questions and impact considerations (with a range of theoretical touchpoints, cited by van Baarle in an essay in the programme booklet [van Baarle 2018]). On the other, a resounding demonstration of the pedagogical efficacy of theatre-making with young people. There is, though, something else that interests – or bothers – me more, and which has to do with the sense of a change having taken place, between the imitation of the 50 historical photographs and the acting out of elements of the 1968 performance. Something of a switch, between iconic representation and a kind of "standing for", as if between memory and history. And the grounds of that switch – what makes it available for consideration –

is that both the 1968 and the 2018 productions make it a matter of significance that we attend to the actors as it were "for themselves". That is to say, as actors on stage (performer-demonstrators, pretenders, switchers between roles and places), but also as social actors: or at least, as living contemporaries of the performances in which they take part. Either way, as actors – or so I would suggest – who expose themselves as such in those moments when they appear beside themselves, in the shadow of mimetic accomplishment. For instance, here in this place where they invite us to join them at last and hear what they have to say of themselves, which is somewhere – we might feel – they are no more at home than we are, their witnesses. At least not yet.

Taking the actors seriously

For philosopher Paul Ricoeur: "the historian does not only strive to resuscitate the living of the past who are no longer but who once were, but also attempts to re-present actions and passions." He continues: "What history is concerned with is not only the living of the past, behind today's dead, but the actor of history gone by, once one undertakes to *take the actors themselves seriously*" [Ricoeur 2004: 384–385]. To add a gloss to these oppositions. Not just the living of the past behind today's dead: for example, the figures of the departed who inhabit the fifty photographs, where death is not just a prominent and explicit feature of the image content – the dead of the Vietnam War, of the purges in Cambodia, of state violence in Soweto, of civil war in Lebanon and so on – but also intrinsic to the representational structure of the historical news photograph as such, which is only ever (not least for Ricoeur) the trace of an absence. History is concerned, then, not only with the figures in the images, but also – in the philosopher's phrases – those *people of the past* who *formulated expectations, predictions, desires, fears, and projects* [Ricoeur 2004: 382], and did so *in situations of uncertainty, responding to constraints, norms, and institutions* [ibid 384]; *under the limitation* – as he elaborates elsewhere – *of the production of the social bond and of the identities concerned* [ibid 344]. To take the actors themselves seriously, in this sense, is to reintroduce "contingency" to history, so that past events are no longer regarded as "fixed", with respect either to their meaning or their moral significance for later times (Ricoeur: *the moral weight tied to the relation of debt with respect to the past can be increased or lightened* [381]). For the philosopher, then, the territory to be mined is where the tremors are felt between the writing of history – which for Ricoeur, following French historian Bernard Lepetit, concerns *acting-in-common in the social world* [Ricoeur 2004: 354] – and the affective impressions, fadings and erasures of memory. It involves worrying at the distinction between the past as *what has elapsed, eluding our grasp*, and what can be claimed on our behalf as *having-been and belonging as such to our existence as care* [ibid 351]. In this respect, history appears, in Ricoeur's words, *not only as the evocation of the dead but as the theatre of the living*

of other times [ibid 351]. Here again, we recall that suspension between the re-enactment of the fifty photographs and a partial re-inhabiting – by way of behaviours and representations – of the "actions and passions" of the actors of The Living Theatre fifty years on. This "theatre of the living" will be one in which historical being, and the experience of living-in-time, will be a matter of care or "concern", and that primarily a concern for a life lived alongside other beings, among others. One particular aspect of which – emphasised in Ricoeur's thought, explicit in the reflexive, epochal claims of the 1968 performance, and implicit at least in the ages and identities of the mimetic labourers of the 2018 re-do – is generationality: both in the sense of an "anonymous" relation between succeeding generations, and as an interpersonal bond, a horizontal connection, an "us" that connects members of the same generation [Ricoeur 2004: 395], even as that "us" performs itself to a mixed-age gaze, as on the Kaaitheatre Brussels main stage in May that year.

There is a further aspect of Ricoeur's reflections on the interlinkings and mis-alignments of history, memory and forgetting that might enable us to redirect the metaphorical resonance of phrases such as *the theatre of the living of other times* or *taking the actors themselves seriously* towards – well – the "actors themselves" in a substantive – or theatre-specific – sense. Ricoeur returns frequently to a felt absence, in the philosophical materials he attends to, of what he calls at one point a *carnal dimension* [ibid 379]. He misses, for instance, in the Heideggerian discourse of care that underpins an important part of his thinking, *the very particular existential that is the flesh, the animate body, my body*. Elsewhere, he marks the absence of *any consideration of the relation to one's own body, to the flesh, by virtue of which the potentiality of being adopts the form of desire in the broadest sense of the term* [ibid 357]. And, even as he unpacks the concept of generation referred to a moment ago, he bemoans the lack of that *carnal dimension that the concept of birth could have provided* [ibid 379]. We might suppose that the actors "themselves" in our own study materials, given the – as it were – up-front physicality, if not outright carnality, of "Paradise Now" (1968) and the vigorous choreographic embodiments of "Paradise Now (1968–2018)", would answer to such a lack. But the matter is not so straightforward. It hardly ever is where the actors are concerned. I offer a couple of comments, both of which derive from the founding structure of a chronological ordering, or chronicle form, and the kinds of sensibility – poetic and political – that such a form might provoke.

Contemporary chronicle: living in time

For the first, if we return to Ricoeur's invocation of the actors of history as deciders and desirers, thrown into situations of uncertainty with regard to the norms, constraints and institutions that consolidate this or that aspect of the social bond, then we might consider the immediate "norms, constraints and institutions" confronting

the young performers of "Paradise Now" (1968–2018) to be the fifty photographic images themselves, and the particular version of collective memory those images appear to institute. For one thing, the fifty photographs are not merely a collection of images but also a temporal ordering, specifically a chronological ordering, arranged year by year from 2018 back through 1968. As far as historical narrative form goes, this is the form of chronicle, rudimentary enough perhaps, but as Hayden White has remarked in no way neutral: it is a "first-order symbolisation" involving selection and placement, symbolising – to put it again in rudimentary terms – living in time, and in relation to a certain externality (a pastness, say, beyond one's knowledge and experience), an external or "given" selection and placement that determines the order and ends of representational action [White 1987: 176]. To put it very simply indeed, I don't imagine that the young performers chose the fifty images themselves. That, however, is not the reason I mention the matter. Rather, it strikes me – or it did that evening at the theatre in May – that by deploying chronology to structure the first part of the performance in this way (i.e. the imitation of the fifty photos one after another), Vandevelde's piece finds family resemblance with a number of very different recent works that also employ a "chronicle" structure to engage with historical materials from the perspective of the contemporary, and in doing so share a certain poetics – and politics – of the actor and of the actor's requisite "seriousness". I am thinking, for instance, of Egyptian film-maker Wael Shawky's multi-part epic "The Cabaret Crusades" (2010–2015), which retells the history of the 11th and 12th century (according to the Western calendar) "crusades" from a non-orientalist point of view, deploying a voice-over story-teller and using 200-year old marionettes, or custom-made Venetian glass puppets – with their strings clearly showing on film – as "actors" in the historical roles. Or American performer, singer and drag artist Taylor Mac's 24-hour musical theatre performance "A 24-Decade History of Popular Music" (2011–2016) [Mac 2018] charting 240 years of American history, from 1776 to the present day, each decade of that history represented by popular songs of the time, the songs themselves like actors or characters of a sort: re-dressed, re-purposed, taken seriously for sure but then put to work on stage in the service of Mac's queer, spectacular account of "how communities are built as a result of being torn apart." Or else, British ensemble Forced Entertainment's 36-part "Complete Works: Table Top Shakespeare" (2015): each one of Shakespeare's plays reworked as a 50-minute narrative, told by a single performer at a kitchen table, with the characters of the drama represented by ordinary household implements: a pepper-pot, a condiments bottle, a hairbrush, a box of matches [Forced Entertainment 2019]. Chronicle form appears here, not as datability and recorded time, but in the reduction of the temporal complexity of Shakespeare's dramatic plots – through the simple expedient of narrative re-telling – to a basic succession of events, of things that take place on the table, each play

beginning with the spoken phrase *It begins with...* and concluding with *And the last thing that happens is...* One aspect of resemblance across these works, is that the actors – the marionettes, or the kitchen and bathroom objects, as much as the figures of medieval middle eastern history or the song-sheets of American popular history – are exposed, with whatever ridicule or pathos or empathy, as hubristic in regard to the passing of time. In Forced Entertainment's "Complete Works", for instance, future thinking is figured as often as not by the character being held forward – literally – and declared to be "feeling very pleased with himself" as some unlikely scheme or device is concocted. To be part of the past, then, is – again literally – to be laid horizontal on the table, killed, dead, no longer acting as anything other than itself. The young performers of "Paradise Now (1968–2018)" of course bring something else to the stage than this, and they will emerge on the other side of the year-by-year chronicle into a space of speech and re-enactment; but their end in this is also – as we saw in the photographs at the start of this lecture – a horizontality of a kind, a closeness to the floor that we will not entirely disentangle from the landscapes of horizontal and entangled bodies we have passed through during the past hour: in the Lebanese refugee camps at Sabra and Shatilla in 1984; in Rwanda in 1994; at Srebenica in 1995; at Abu Ghraib in 2003. Our taking seriously the young actors would involve acknowledgment of *their* taking seriously – through the chronicle of carnality and the carnage they have inherited – the very particular existential that is "the flesh, the animate body, my body", and these other bodies too, other actors than myself, beside me now and behind me then.

For the second, related, observation, we might begin by remarking that while, say, the inanimate actors of Forced Entertainment's "Complete Works: Table Top Shakespeare" draw attention to their insensibility, we are likely rather to project a significant degree of sensibility – and sensitivity – onto the adolescent performers of "Paradise Now (1968–2018)". As Astrid Kaminski remarks, in her review of a performance in Berlin during summer 2018: "With some bodies one builds up a sensual tension, but not with others. That can be nice, but also tragic. Who with whom? The question can cause panic in children's eyes. Remaining: a stigma. Status questions often form for childhood around body issues. Someone has greasy hair, or dandruff, is chubby or just dressed uncool. Although the tolerance limit shifts hopefully later in life, the effect of foreign bodies on our own remains" [Kaminski 2018, my translation]. Kaminski remarks that one of the social aesthetic achievements of dance is to have developed techniques that mean one does not have to surrender to such situations. She goes on to ask, however, in consideration of the techniques of "care" evidently developed by Vandevelde and fABULEUS in their work with these young performers: *How much sensitivity, tenderness, consideration, empathy can be expected of the not yet sexually autonomous body?*

Vandevelde frames his own approaches to such questions in a video interview [Radio Etoile 2017], where he says that one of the concerns of the production will have been to negotiate intimacy on stage between young bodies in a contemporary context marked, on the one side, by extreme conservatism with regard to how we deal with bodies in public space; and, on the other, a ubiquitous commodification and pornification – not least of young people – through advertising and other public media. We might imagine, then, these matters to be particularly tested by the performance legacy – the theatre-historical "institution" – that is The Living Theatre's "Paradise Now". As James Penner sets out in a critical excavation of the 1968 production, the declaredly utopian project was not immune to its own violent, dystopian whiplash, which did not go unacknowledged by core members of the company such as Judith Malina, and which was witnessed by contemporary spectators such as Erica Monk, whose first impressions of the production Penner quotes: "Chaos, fury, mindlessness. Damned if I'll be bullied into participating. Nothing to see anyway except crowds in a shapeless muddle occasionally punctuated by the actors' grossly rhetorical gestures or a couple of naked people groping or yelling at each other. Maybe it would have been OK 10 years ago? Would Beats have thought it was Artaudian? Right now, no joy. Something deadly here" [Penner 2009: 30]. With regard to which, if a certain criticality engrained in the 1968 production – concerned with challenges to authority, to the police, and the status quo as such – was met later by another sort of criticality in Monk or Penner's historical revisionism, it is not exactly these sorts of radical, undermining criticality that we encounter in the 2018 theatrical re-do. Rather, if anything, what "Paradise Now (1968–2018)" appears to be presenting for the consideration of its audiences is a resolute repetition of the forms, actions and passions of the earlier work, involving – for sure – some necessary modification of behaviour that is partly to do with a responsibility of care with regard to the young 21st century performers (and partly down to a fundamental unreality of historical re-enactment, at least in these representational conditions); but predicated even so on a committed deferral as it were to the autonomy and externality of the historical material. There is, for instance, no question of the credibility of the images that are being re-enacted here, nor of the credulity of the re-enactors, even as the materials extend – as we have been noting throughout – towards a past that none of the present company can be expected, ever, to remember. In these lights – and in a very different way to the 1968 production, which used physical proximity and confrontation as a performative vehicle for its concerns – the sensitivities and sensibilities of the young performers from Leuven attach to the performance as a kind of remainder; or, better, as an "accompaniment" to the performance of which they are a part. A sensibility, in short, that is their business only; and figured as such; and, as such, to be taken seriously by ourselves. Nothing anyway is said of these bodies, until – eventually – these bodies, the actors, speak for themselves. And, when they do

so, they speak of themselves alone, before passing on the microphone, one to another, companion to companion, pulling at the links between being here, now, this living in time, and what can be recalled, of what has passed, between one and another.

Coda: another theatre

Some weeks ago, I went back to The Living Theatre's "Paradise Now" myself, by way of various materials including Marty Topp's contemporaneous film of the company's North American tour [Topp 2019], the four-hour plus performance compressed into a 45-minute, black-and-white sound and vision collage: livid, cacophonous, hallucinatory. It is a film in which picture and soundtrack are synched only imprecisely, if at all, and where voices are perpetually coming in, as it were, from off-image, so that shouts from the audience are mixed with scraps of scripted and improvised speeches from the performers, the former now as much part of the performance text as the latter. In the early section where the actors take a litany of repeated complaints among the spectators, some of these sounds, now, simply complaining *I am not allowed to smoke marijuana*. *I am not allowed to take off my clothes*. Others have as much force as they did fifty years ago: *I am not allowed to travel without a passport*. *I cannot live without money*. Other elements stick for this particular viewer. For example, a confrontation between a black, male member of the cast, the upper part of his body exposed, and a white, male, suited member of the audience. They are yelling in each other's faces: *I'm tired of suffering while you suffer. I don't want any more of white suffering. I refuse your guilt. And I am not a hooligan*. The exchange escalates from there. Other voices swirl around. *Let's see your flag, American. Let's see your red, white and blue, cocksucker*. *You're only getting bourgeois people coming in here, and that's who you're getting across to*. *What are they doing with your money? Keeping you fat. Suppressed and fat. Don't look at your body like you don't understand what I mean. Fat in the brain*. And then, when I hear the word "theatre", in hollered phrases like *free theatre* and *free sexual theatre*, it sounds out of time, archaic. Like the technical vocabulary of some cultural practice – other places, other times – I can't be sure I know, let alone remember, what that is.

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TRUE DRAMATURGY VS. FICTIONAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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Abstract

The paper is an essay about three different autobiographical stories. The play by the author "Being a Nationalist", the memoir book "Catharsis" (*Katarse,* 2012) by the lawyer Andris Grūtups and 60 notebooks of diaries by the homosexual Kaspars Irbe. The author shows the different approaches a playwright can have and what is his own mode of thinking in structuring "life" for a theatrical performance.

Keywords: *autobiography, dramaturgy, playwriting, Soviet history*.

In this paper I will examine some autobiographical works and try to illustrate two ideas. In order to explain why I'm focusing on the mesh of dramaturgy and autobiography; I have to tell a little about myself. One of my plays is an autobiographical story – "Being a Nationalist" (*Būt nacionālistam*, dir. Valters Sīlis, Dirty Deal Teatro, 2017).

Less than eight years ago, during my first year of studies, I was invited to work in the Parliament of the Republic of Latvia as the parliamentary assistant to Imants Parādnieks – a deputy of the party "National Alliance". Even though partly it was a mere coincidence, it was also the result of my political activism since the age of fourteen. I was part of a marginal group of people with interest in militaristic activities and strong determination to get political power. I came closer to corridors of power than all of my friends but couldn't bear the coldness of the relationships with my colleagues. After four years I left my job in the Parliament.

It is a little frightening to create dramaturgy from your own life, as I know how brutally one must treat stories in order to tell them in the restricted duration of a movie or play. The stories must be shortened, and then the cut episodes must be shortened a little more – and in the end the director asks you to explain the content of the episode in one sentence. After the play had some success my former boss, still a parliamentary deputy at the time, said: *There are some fabrications, exaggerations and*

at least once – lies in the play [Zvirbulis 2017]. Partly, of course, he was right, because life is not concentrated. Life is long and dull. Life happens on its own, while a play must be performed.

The play was about me. About a long period of my life – approximately six years. It is an autobiography on stage. Looking back on the play, I came up with two ideas. I regarded them as interesting enough to share with you. First, the falsity of autobiography comes to light in regard to its audience. Autobiography is a story about oneself. What is its target audience? My autobiography had a purpose to show that I – a young man, who was once a radical nationalist – am still the same man, but one who can now admit his mistakes and his emotions that pushed him towards a job in the Parliament. In real life it seemed like the culmination, but in the play, it was the end of the story. None of the sentences in the play are lies, but the choice of events creates falsehoods. Autobiography is a means to single yourself out, to historicise yourself, though theoretically it aims at self-exposure. No autobiography is egocentric enough to be true. Second, the nature of dramaturgy allows you to be self-centred. Egocentrism is confronted by counter-force – the audience. Everyone is selfish, yet everyone wants to hear applause and wants to be heard. It is possible to write a sickeningly self-absorbed novel, however dramaturgy resists egocentrism in a way. It might be related to the essence of theatre – being together and experiencing everything the play tries to provoke in the audience.

Dramaturgy is always true, as its task is to focus attention. The dramaturgy of documentary theatre is the art of guiding the viewer's attention through facts, events, opinions, and trying to evoke emotions in the audience. Facts and opinions can be false or misleading, but the emotions the story arouses are absolutely real. The main goal of dramaturgy is emotions. Emotions are inconsistent, fickle, fleeting. Emotions and reality are similar concepts. Emotions are created by our senses, just like our perception of reality. That is why I want to show you a strange and unique exception, where autobiography contradicts my main ideas.

I don't know the underlying psychological reasons, but I feel a strong desire for truth in art. Some truth was incorporated in the play "Being a Nationalist", and I wanted to use the same approach again, take life as a whole and create a story, but I have only one life. Ironically enough, historian Ineta Lipša told me about 60 diaries stored in the house of a man who is long gone. It turned out to be true. This was a chance to acquire a new life that I could treat as ruthlessly as my own. Those were the diaries of Kaspars Irbe.[1] He was born in 1906. The first diary entries preserved were written on separate pages when Kaspars was only 20 years old. My story of being a

[1] The author of the diaries is Kaspars Aleksandrs Irbe (1906–1996). He is from Jūrmala, Latvia. They were stored in his family home, owned by historian Ainars Radovics. The diaries belong to him. All further quotes are from these diaries.

nationalist ended at the age of 19. It was tempting to see another ironical twist of fate that the diaries of Kaspars started when he was 20. As if we were one man living in parallel worlds – the past and the present.

It was tempting to hope Kaspars would resemble me. At the start he really did, or at least I wanted to see him that way. Then I encountered a diary entry, where Kaspars Irbe expresses a wish for his life's work – the 60 notebooks of his diary – to be used by a writer or a scientist-psychologist[1]. It's the target audience of his autobiography. There is no point in lying to psychologist, if you want to receive a fairly adequate assessment of yourself. A writer can be lied to if you want to create a legend instead of a portrait. Something in this duality – an autobiography that is a legend and a personal anamnesis at the same time – seems true and adequate.

An entry from the diary of Kaspars Irbe on **4 August 1940. 12th day**. Pay attention to the time dimensions in the text: *A sunny day. There is a chilly wind from the sea right now. Blue skies. I am writing in bed after a few hours' rest at the end of an adventurous night. I got home at 7:30 AM. It was really pleasant to sit in the carriage by the open window and feel the morning breeze. There was a really serious, handsome, large railwayman sitting beside me. I saw the blond boy who performs at night clubs snoozing. He also had a significant night. After I arrived, I went to the grocery shop ("Lilies"). Then I heated some water. When I had cleaned myself properly, I ate breakfast in bed – fresh milk, white bread, butter, jam. Then I rested for a few hours. Now I'm sunbathing in the bright sun, on the green grass. Yesterday I spent the whole day very anxious about the oncoming night's adventures. After getting barely any sleep at night, I took a nap for a few hours. Then I ate cucumbers, etc. Sunbathed. Walked around half-naked in the green, silent garden. I slept in a hammock in the shadow. I looked nice in the white outfit. Velvety soft body. I had a good meal. I rested, even though I was too anxious to sleep. My heart was beating fast. My mother brought me the newspaper. I was reading in bed until 7:15 PM. Then I started getting ready for the night. It was a pleasant, chilly evening.*

Looking and smelling good, I went along the river to Majori. I had fragrant flowers on my chest. There was a pretty Russian woman with a nice kid in the train. I watched as he clung to his mother seeking shelter. I was once like him. Who doesn't wait for this kid in life? Where is he going to find shelter later on?[2]

I spent a month in Vilnius, at the Lithuanian National Drama Theatre – developing a reading from the play that is based on the diaries of Kaspars Irbe. The play is called "The Normal Life of a Soviet Citizen Kaspars Irbe" (dir. Matīss Gricmanis,

[1] In one of the notebooks Kaspars writes: "*Savas piezīmes labprāt atdotu kādam spējīgam rakstniekam vai zinātniekam-psihologam*." / "I would be happy to give my notes to a talented writer or a scientist-psychologist."

[2] Translation by Grēte Grīviņa.

Lithuanian National Drama Theatre, 2018.) The truthfulness of dramaturgy is in the present. At the moment, when we are all together in a dark room, listening and watching what someone else has to show and tell. Unfortunately, diaries no longer reflect the present. Only my experience as a reader is still current. I am reading diaries. I am reading them to you. There is no other truth. It is autobiographically true, yet every time I am telling you about Kaspars Irbe, I am lying, as I have to keep thinking about my goal. Which aspect of his life do I want to highlight? In the play I focused on sexuality. Kaspars is a homosexual. Male homosexuality in Latvia was a criminal offense until 1992.[1] For me it was a journey back to a time I can hardly imagine. I got to know people I would have never met any other way.

Can you imagine a situation when a member of your own or opposite sex calls you and asks about your sex life in your youth? That is what a few men experienced when I interviewed them to expand the perception of the world exposed to me by the diaries of Kaspars. A world that existed in the bohemian underground, in the courtyards of Riga, a world supervised by the militia men – the world of the Soviet homosexuals. I interviewed two men who both lived as undercover homosexuals, both of them had encountered the Soviet repressive machine and both of them had adapted to the society which declared their homosexuality illegal. One of them become an agent, the other didn't and was punished.

The diaries of Kaspars hold way more stories than the one about homosexuality in the Soviet Union. There is the story about his house – it is not only shelter but gives the opportunity to earn extra money. It is located in the centre of Jūrmala, a notable resort in the Soviet Union, and during the summer there is a high demand for the tiny rooms. He is concerned about the house in one of the districts of Jūrmala named Dubulti, as his neighbours lose theirs, when block housing is built there in order to accommodate all the vacationers. There is a story here that Kaspars starts to realize only in the 1970s. Story about collective Latvian amnesia, about the holocaust. Before the war Dubulti was a Jewish district. Before the holocaust there was a synagogue across the street from Kaspars' house. Then one day all the Jewish people suddenly disappeared and Kaspars did not write about it. Maybe he was afraid, maybe he did not want to notice. There is a story here about unrequited love. About loneliness. About the system. There is some truth, and some lies in each of these stories. Let's focus on another example for a moment...

Andris Grūtups – Latvian lawyer, a man with a significant role in the restoration of the Republic of Latvia and possibly also in plundering it by helping oligarchs. He wrote an autobiography before committing suicide. The work is called "Catharsis"

[1] On 5 February 1992, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia passed a law "On the changes and additions in the Criminal law of Latvia". They came into effect on 1 March 1992. That is the date from which homosexual contact between men is legal in the territory of Latvia.

(*Katarse*, 2012). At the end of the book Grūtups complains about being scrutinized during the last couple of years by several people who were trying to use him in order to gain publicity for themselves. Those people are journalists – one of the journalists mentioned is Jānis Domburs. In the book he is characterized like this: "J. Domburs. He used to run a morally political show on Latvian television. He is capable, but uneducated. He has got some ideas and he is obsessed" [Grūtups 2012: 208].

Katarse was a limited-edition book. The person that lent it to me said only 10 to 20 books had been published. Grūtups gave them as gifts to close people and a journalist. All the books have been signed by him. The main theme of the book – I survived and understood the truth of the world. He repeats the phrase *I almost forgot* several times – it has no meaning, as nothing is obviously forgotten – I can see it clearly written on the page – but the autobiography seemingly fuses three-time dimensions. A quote: "Wisdom doesn't come only from books. Also, from people. People are a real and truthful source of wisdom. It is an inexhaustible source of treasure. For each his own world. Intriguing and unique" [Grūtups 2012: 165]. I used a quote from Grūtups' book in order to return to Kaspars Irbe and create the background for a quote from his diary in 1940: "The physical body is only a tiny expression of the spiritual world – it is not the essence. It is a small product for the world that revolves around an immortal centre that seeks change and eternal action with a great force. The human soul is a world on its own..." Grūtups is speaking directly – it is exactly what he wanted to say. However, the esoteric sounding banality of Kaspars continues with an unexpected recollection of events: "Elza was sitting down and smoking. The young one started to fool around with the Tall one. He pulled up the skirt and put his hand on the genitalia, he bent down trying to lick it. He supposedly had licked it before. The Tall one was ecstatic, her sublime face seemed enlightened. She had assumed an advantageous pose – her leg was sideways on the highest step. The small one took her again. Then his friend with thick, black hair came up. A very young boy. He finished fast." Kaspars reveals people in action, even though he is writing this, whilst sitting on his sofa.

At the beginning of the paper I came forward with two ideas: first, the falsity of autobiography comes to light in regard to its audience; second, dramaturgy is always true, as its task is to focus attention. The main goal of dramaturgy is emotions. "*Catharsis*" by Grūtups and the diaries of Kristaps Irbe have very similar themes. By strengthening his character, defying fate, correcting his mistakes, Grūtups has experienced the highest emotional fulfilment, as indicated by the title. His main enemy is himself. He gets drunk and beats influential Soviet officials, hits on hotel administrators, thus endangering his career. His insatiable, unpredictable something that seethes inside... libido? I don't know. But let's call it energy – it is the main enemy to a dull and peaceful life.

Energy is pouring out of Kaspars Irbe, too. His sexual escapades lead him to dangerous encounters with strangers in public toilets and parks. And his energy doesn't cease until old age. He learns a lot, he reads everything he can about human sexuality, in order not to be trapped by the system which condemns because his sexuality is illegal. He starts to work in the system as a law enforcement officer to find out how to be a normal Soviet citizen. A lot of KGB agents were recruited after being caught in homosexual acts. Kaspars doesn't fall into the KGB traps. With his romantic affairs Kaspars seeks emotions – love, fear and human connection. Yet his love is dangerous. Kaspars writes diaries to be able to reread them. When he is reading about moments of passion, he has a chance to relive them again and again... because it is not possible any other way. The conditions are not suitable for a real, passionate life. The diaries are full of emotions. I cannot feel them, but Kaspars – as indicated by various underlines and notes – rereads them again and again.

Grūtups, on the other hand, writes an autobiography for those who care about him – to lie that he had a life filled with emotions and true passion. And to prove that suicide was a logical and rational step after experiencing the catharsis of life.

Instead of a conclusion – the synthesis of both ideas. Theatre has the opportunity to replace the autobiographical lies with the dramaturgical ability to show the incessant energy of human life here and now. While autobiography can only imitate energy, life and passion.

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"BAŅUTA", THE FIRST OPERA IN LATVIAN AND ITS LIBRETTO AS A HISTORICAL NARRATIVE IN THE CONTEXT OF STAGING HISTORY

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Abstract

In theatre (including musical theatre genres), the text of the performance is an artefact which can express and echo a historical theme. Additionally, over the course of time, this artistic narrative can experience various changes due to the influence of external factors. This narrative can also consciously or unconsciously influence society's view over a longer period.

This article is focused on the first opera in the Latvian language "Baņuta" (1920, author of libretto Arturs Krūmiņš, composer Alfrēds Kalniņš). The three versions of this opera (1920, 1937, 1941), especially changes of libretto over time, seven stagings at the Latvian National Opera Theatre (1920, 1937, 1941, 1953, 1968, 1979, 1999) and several concert performances in Latvia and outside (in the 20th century eighties) reflect interesting historical experience. It is worthwhile get to know this story in the context of Latvian national culture in the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century.

Keywords: *"Baņuta" as the first opera in Latvian, historical narrative, libretto, history of staging, cultural context*.

In theatre (including musical theatre genres), the text of the performance is an artefact which can express and echo a historical theme. Additionally, over the course of time, this artistic narrative can experience various changes due to the influence of external factors. This narrative can also consciously or unconsciously influence society's view over a longer period. In the context of Latvia's centenary, such historically significant artefact and narrative is the first opera in the Latvian language, "Baņuta". Its libretto and, over the course of time, its staging provide a vivid example of the idea that a work of art can reflect the underlying currents of

Figure 1. Photo from premiere of opera "Baņuta" on 29 May 1920,
Latvian National Opera and Ballet Theatre.
In the centre – Dagmāra Rozenberga-Tursa as Baņuta.
From the collection of Literature and Music Museum, RTMM 53255.

the cultural context of the time it was created, and that these elements of context change due to the influence of external factors, which, seemingly, disappear, but are still maintained at the same time. In the end, after nearly one hundred years, an interesting story has developed, and it is worthwhile to review this story in the context of Latvian national culture.

May 29, 1920 is a significant date in the Latvian music history. On this day premiere of the opera "Baņuta" took place, which is the first opera in the Latvian language (composer Alfrēds Kalniņš (1879–1951), author of libretto Arturs Krūmiņš (1879–1969)), celebrated its arrival in the world.[1] The first opera genre example in Latvian was created and staged for the first time a little later than in other European nations in the North, East, South and Central territories. In other nations, the first opera genre examples (in the national languages and with topics

[1] It should be noted that the history of the opera genre in Latvia began in the second half of the 18th century. The first operas in the German language was created by Franz Adam Veichtner (1741–1822), he was the court composer of the former Duchy of Courland. After Veichtner, the next completed example in the opera genre was the opera "Gunda" (in German) Ādams Ore (1855–1927), a composer of Latvian descent, in 1898. However, "Baņuta" is the first completed and staged opera in the Latvian language.

which represent national culture) were created in the second half of the 19th century. Therefore, it was no surprise that, at the beginning of the summer of 1920, Latvian press in Riga displayed the enthusiasm of critics and editorial staff about the fact that, finally, the Latvians had their first opera in their native language, and national themes were being developed [Klotiņš 1979: 224–225].

The music of "Baņuta" allows one to clearly understand the late romantic style of the 19th century, as well as the influence of the aesthetics and principles of Richard Wagner's musical drama and composers of epic Russian opera. With an enviable spark of originality, composer Alfrēds Kalniņš wove all this together to create a truly musically vivid and historically enduring music for opera [Briede-Bulāvinova 1975: 64–74; Klotiņš 1979: 227–231].

After the premiere, a discourse has continued throughout the 20th century, and one of the main topics was – distinguished music with somewhat *problematic* quality of poetry and a compositionally resolution of the storyline development [Briede-Bulāvinova 1975: 57–60; Klotiņš 1979: 226–228, 445]. For now, leaving a detailed analysis of the musical and poetic quality of "Baņuta" for another time, the general aim of this paper is viewing on the historical narrative of the opera libretto and its amazing transformation on the stage over times.

The first version of the libretto

In Latvian musical and culture historiography opera "Baņuta" is denominated as the first national opera. However, the first version of opera libretto nowadays is forgotten. Overall, the history of the opera libretto creation and the first text version highlight interesting cultural and historical references.

In 1903, Riga Latvian Society announced a competition on the Latvian opera libretto creation. Competition rules contained the following condition: "A poet can choose the topic for opera's libretto as he wishes, but it is desirable to take it from Latvian or Lithuanian history, legends, and fairy tales" [*Balss* 1903]. Thus, the rules clearly indicated that it was desirable to focus not only on Latvian, but also on Lithuanian topical cultural themes. According to a variety of information, eight librettos were submitted to the competition. In the autumn of 1905, the only prize (second prize) in the competition was awarded to a poet-amateur, also architecture student at Riga Polytechnic Institute Artūrs Krūmiņš (1879–1969)[1], for libretto "Baņuta", in

[1] Architect Artūrs Krūmiņš played an important role in Latvian cultural history. After graduating from Riga Polytechnic Institute in 1907, he worked in Moscow. In 1920 Krūmiņš became a Docent at the University of Latvia, he was Professor from 1940 until his death. From 1936 to 1940 Krūmiņš led Riga Building Commission, he has prepared projects for several buildings in the city centre. Krūmiņš is the author of several books on Latvian architecture and building.

which nearly literally executed all contest rules and recommendations. Other prizes in this competition were not awarded [*Vērotājs* 1905].[1]

"Baņuta" libretto consists of four acts [Krūmiņš 1920]. The first act is characterised by a swift development of events, and a frequent change of the musical mood. The second act is characterised by growth in the event development, reaching a culmination at the conclusion – the attempt to burn Baņuta during Daumants' funeral, Baņuta's oath to get revenge. The third act is characterised by slowing of the intensity of the action. There is a musical *enjoyment* of the midsummer celebration with varied songs and dances. The fourth act is characterised by continuation and resolution in a psychological drama genre – this confirms the romantic opera tradition of the 19th century, where, due to external factors, love and happiness are never possible and the main characters always die tragically.[2]

Act I

Daumants, the son of the Romove king Valgudis, is celebrating his wedding with Baņuta, who has been brought to him after a battle. In hand to hand combat, Daumants is killed by Vižuts, to avenge the honour of his sister.

Act II

Valgudis accuses Baņuta of bringing misfortune and wants to burn her together with the body of Daumants. However, Daumants' shield suddenly falls off and is considered a sign to protect Baņuta. Baņuta must swear to find and kill Daumants' murderer, and she is forbidden to fall in love and begin a new relationship until that is done.

Act III

The people of the land of Romove celebrate midsummer night (Līgo). While this is happening, Baņuta begs Krīvs (priest of Romove) to release her from her oath for one night. Baņuta has fallen in love with Vižuts.

Act IV

At the end of the midsum‿mer night, after revealing their love to each other, Baņuta finds out that Vižuts murdered Daumants. Vižuts, to release Baņuta from her oath, kills himself. Baņuta decides to follow her lover into death.

[1] More about it in this publication: Kudiņš, J. (ed.) (2014). Lithuanian presence in the first Latvian opera Baņuta. Some interesting facts in Latvian music history. *Ars et Praxis* (2). Vilnius: Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, p. 11–25.

[2] It should be noted that in the third version of the opera (1941), however, there is a happy ending – Baņuta and Vižuts remain alive. See below.

Figure 2. Scene from the opera "Baņuta" staging in 1941. Act II, in the centre – Milda Brehmane-Štengele as Baņuta. From Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music Library Electronic Catalogue (Database of Pictures, LF 1771).

Figure 3. Scene from the opera "Baņuta" staging in 1968. Act II, Rita Zelmane as Baņuta, Kārlis Miesnieks as Valgudis. From Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music Library Electronic Catalogue (Database of Pictures, LF 1843).

Figure 4. Scene from the opera "Baņuta" staging in 1968. Act III, Regīna Frīnberga as Baņuta, Miķelis Fišers as Vižuts. From Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music Library Electronic Catalogue (Database of Pictures, LF 1851).

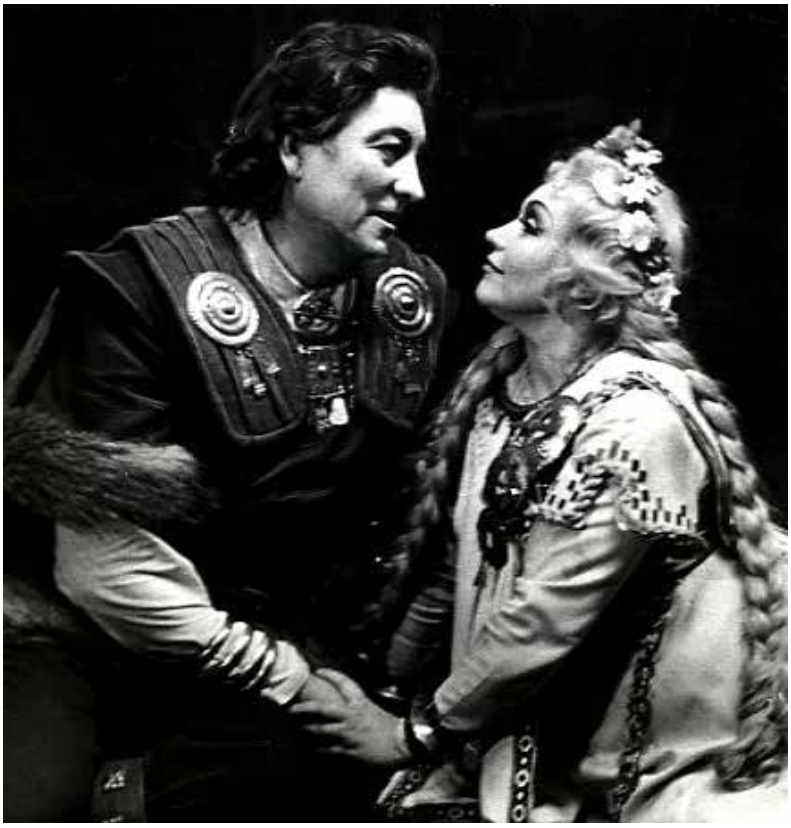

Figure 5. Scene from the opera "Baņuta" staging in 1968. Act IV, Rita Zelmane as Baņuta, Kārlis Zariņš as Vižuts. Photograph by E. Freimane. From Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music Library Electronic Catalogue (Database of Pictures, LF 1899).

Where in the opera's story and libretto are references to specific and still interesting cultural-historical concepts? In accordance with the first version of "Baņuta" libretto, which was published separately in Riga in 1920, at the very beginning it is stressed that the opera's imaginary story *takes place in the distant past of Lithuania and Latvia*. Besides, Lithuanian ancient history is mentioned first. It is truly a paradox. Moreover, the references to Lithuania are regular and consistent in the first version of the opera's libretto [Krūmiņš 1920].

For instance, in the first act wedding of the young king Daumants and Baņuta takes place. Daumants introduces his bride to the old king, his father, and the people, and he sings:[1]

[1] Translation into English by Biruta Sūrmane [Gailītis 1999 11, 53].

*Pār **Lietuvu** ērglis lidoja,* *viņš biedreni ligzdai meklēja.* *Pie jūras tas viņu atrada,* *caur gaisiem uz spārniem atnesa.* *Tēvs Valgudi, **kunigas** lielais,* *ja tu viņu pieņemi,* *kar apkārt tai dzintara rotu,* *to par Baņutu sauci!*	*An eagle flew over **Lithuania*** *searching a mate for his nest.* *He found her by the sea,* *carried her home on his wings.* *Father Valgudis, great **kunigas**,* *if you accept her,* *adorn her with an amber necklace* *and call her: Baņuta!*

Second act (at the end of the first act, Daumants was killed in the duel). The women's choir sing funeral song with the following text:[1]

*Vaimanā, vaimanā, **Lietuva**!* *Nava vairs varoņa kuniga!* *Ceļā viņš dosies drīz tālajā,* *bālajo ēnu valstībā.*	*Weep, weep, **Lithuania**!* *Your heroic kunigas is no more!* *He's embarking on a long journey,* *to the kingdom of pale shades.*

However, old king Valgudis sings that it is necessary to find the murderer in Lithuania:[2]

Nav zināms viņa slepkava, *tas **Lietuvā** vēl dzīvs!*	*His murderer isn't known,* *he's still alive in **Lithuania**!*

Then old king and people demand that Baņuta should make an oath to take revenge and after that they sing:[3]

Koris: *Tavu zvērestu dzird **Lietuva*** *un tās augstie un varenie gari!* Valgudis: *Tad zvēri vēl, ka nemīlēsi* *tu cita vīra **Lietuvā**,* *līdz kuniga tu neatriebsi,* *Līdz nebūs kritis slepkava!*	Chorus: *Your oath is heard by **Lithuania*** *and her high and mighty spirits!* Valgudis: *Then swear again that you won't love* *another man in **Lithuania*** *until you avenge the kunigas,* *until the assassin is slain!*

[1] Translation into English by Biruta Sūrmane [Gailītis 1999: 20, 62].
[2] Ibid [Gailītis 1999: 24, 66].
[3] Ibid [Gailītis 1999: 24, 66].

In continuation old king and the people (choir) sing the following texts, which includes the word *Lithuania* as reference to the place of action:[1]

Baņuta, celies! Meklē slepkavu! *Lūko kunigu atriebtu!* *Dzenā slepkavu* ***Lietuvā,*** *Nokauj, ja satiec pat svētnīcā!* *Romoves birzes ziedus kad ver,* *asmenis tavs lai asinis dzer!*	*Baņuta, rise! Pursue assassin!* *Seek to avenge the kunigas!* *Hunt the assassin throughout* ***Lithuania****, slay him, though you meet in* *a sanctuary!* *When flowers burst into bloom in Romove,* *let your dagger's blade drink blood!*

Getting acquainted with the libretto text, of course, one may ask questions. Why action in the first Latvian opera consistently takes place in Lithuania? How was it possible that, at the beginning of the 20th century, Latvian society could have such a tolerant and romantic understanding of ancient times, where ancient Latvians and ancient Lithuanians were mythically understood to be almost one nation? This is a reference to an entire cultural layer, which was well known and topical in educated Latvian society in the second half of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century.

Names and places

According to the opera's libretto, action unfolds in the Romove. What is Romove? Nowadays, in the ancient Baltic (based on the perceptions about Western Balts or Old Prussians and Eastern Balts or ancient pre-Latvians and pre-Lithuanians before Christianization) mythology research, this place is described as century earlier texts mention the possible sacred site, which has been located at a place called as Nadruva.

For example, medieval German (Teutonic Knights) priest-brother and chronicler Peter von Dusburg (lived at the end of the 13th century and the first half of the 14th century) in his *Chronicon terrae Prussiae* described Romuva or Romowe as a pagan worship place (a temple or a sacred area) in western part of Sambia and Nadruva, one of the regions of the pagan Prussia. In contemporary sources the temple was mentioned only once by Peter von Dusburg in his *Chronicon terrae Prussiae*, 1326 [Scholz & Wojtecki 1984]. According to his account, *Kriwe*, the chief priest or *pagan pope*, lived at Romuva and ruled over the religion of all the ancient Balts [Sužiedėlis 1975: 530]. Overall, this place was of the Old Prussian land, nowadays it is Russian Kaliningrad County territory [Gimbutas 1963; Bojtár 1999].

[1] Translation into English by Biruta Sūrmane [Gailītis 1999: 25, 67].

In period of the First National Awakening of the 19th century in seventies and eighties, then, when the first nationally significant examples of Latvian literature emerged, these examples reflected in previous centuries, mainly in German written texts about ancient culture of the Baltic people – Old Prussians, pre-Lithuanians and pre-Latvians – in the ancient past. Two of the first Latvian National Awakening period vivid Latvian poets – Auseklis (real name Miķelis Krogzemis, 1850–1879) and Andrejs Pumpurs (1841–1902) – created such texts, which reflected nowadays well-known ancient Baltic mythology elements (godheads, rituals etc.) of the transformation in the form of the subjective artistically phantasy. Thus, the opinion that the ancient Latvians had their own mythology, and largely it was closely related to Lithuanian mythology, this story in early 20th century was well known in Latvian society. Thus, it is not surprising why in the first Latvian opera action takes place in Lithuania, not Latvia. At the same time, the opera emphasizes the element of Latvian folklore (3rd and 4th acts – celebration of the midsummer night or *Līgo* with the stylized Latvian folk songs and dances).

This aspect – an eclectic libretto storyline – has also been illustrated in the names of main characters:

Valgudis – old kunigas (king) of Romove
Daumants – his son, new kunigas (king) of Romove
Maiga – Valgudis' daughter, princess of Romove
Baņuta – princess from another land and another tribe (maybe from Latvia?), Daumants' wife, new kunigaite (queen) of Romove
Vižutis (-ts) – stranger who came from other places to avenge his sister's Jargala (only in the text) honour which has soured Daumants
Zvantevaitis – commander of Romove army
Zvalgonis – ceremony master of Romove kunigas' court
Sorcerer – without his name in the libretto
Krīvu-krīvs – principal priest of Romove Holy Grove
Reda – Daumants' dead mother, old kunigaite (only in the text)

It is interesting that according to opera's libretto names of Lithuanian origin are *Daumants*, *Zvantevaitis* and *Reda*. Lithuanian and Latvian names are *Maiga*, *Valgudis*, *Vižutis*, *Zvalgonis* and *Krīvs* (priest). The old name *kunigas* (as *king*, *sir* etc.) also is undoubtedly of Lithuanian origin. Woman's name *Jargala* has been probably taken from Old Prussian or Polish. Ancient gods' names (*Pērkons*/*Perkūnas*, *Patrimps*/*Patrimpas*, *Pīkols*/*Pikuol*as) are represented in Old Prussian, Latvian and Lithuanian mythology [Gimbutas 1963; Bojtár 1999]. Finally, the origin of opera's title protagonist's name is a great intrigue until the present-day.

Woman's name *Baņuta* has no clear origin in the Latvian language. In Latvian history of persons' names, in the calendars, this name appeared only in early 20th century. In 1937, in an interview Krūmiņš told the following [*Сегодня Вечером* 1937]:

> *The name of a woman – Baņuta – for me has remained in the memory from one old magazine which I saw in my childhood. There was a one painting in grey shades. In this painting a young girl was shown, she was dead. Below this painting, girl's name was written – Baņuta. I remembered this name forever. Therefore, my libretto is titled as "Baņuta".*

In 1885, a novel under the title "The Young Hero" (*Jaunais varonis*) was published in Latvian in Riga's magazine *Rota* [*Rota* 1885]. The author of this romantic epic novel was the well-known 19th-century Polish writer Jozef Ignacy Kraszewski (1812–1887). However, the original title of this novel was not "The Young Hero", but *Kunigas* [Kraszewski 1881]. The action of the novel unfolds in the 14th century Poland and Lithuania, and one of the novel's heroine is *Baniuta*. Names of other heros in Polish are the following:

Lithuanians: Marger-Jerzy; **Baniuta**-Barbara; Rymos; Szwentas; Reda; Walgutis; Wiżunas; Jargała; Konis – wejdalota Perkuna
Teutonic Knights: Brat Bernard; Brat Sylwester; Luder; Siegfried von Ortlopp; Gmunda Lewen; Dietrich von Pynau; Ojciec Antoniusz

You can clearly see that such names as *Baņuta*, *Valgudis*, *Vižutis*, *Reda*, *Jargala* in the first Latvian national opera's libretto have been directly taken from Kraszewski's novel. The storyline of Kraszewski's novel has not been taken into Krūmiņš' opera libretto. However, it is important that some references to ancient Baltic mythology and religious rituals (for example, *Konis – wejdalota Perkuna*) have been included in Kraszewski's novel. Thus, the woman's name Baņuta has entered the Lithuanian

and Polish languages. Incidentally, woman's name Baņuta for the first time was published in Latvian calendar in 1910 [Siliņš 1990]. It is significant that this calendar was issued in Latgale which is one the historical regions of Latvia. It is well known that Latgale for several centuries (1561–1772) was under the rule of the former Polish-Lithuanian state (*Rzeczpospolita*).[1]

With such accent on Lithuania, mythical ancient Prussian place Romove and with stylized Latvian folk-music elements, *Baņuta* was first staged in 1920. And what is interesting is that in the music criticism of that time, the close presence of Lithuania was noted, but it did not inspire any discussions [Klotiņš 1979: 226]. It seems probable that in the first decades of the 20th century it was self-evident that there was an understanding of the cultural and mythological unity of the ancient Baltic peoples. This was included in the opera's text as a self-evident narrative, which surprises us nowadays with its romanticised unambiguity and eclectic style, where Latvian midsummer folk songs and folk costumes are put together with the land of Lithuania and a holy place of the ancient Prussian Romove people.

Historical narrative and its versions

The first opera in Latvian at the National Opera Theatre in the 20th century was staged 7 times:[2]

29 May 1920, Latvian National Opera (1st version, the tragic finale) Baņuta – Dagmāra Rozenberga-Tursa, Vižutis – Rūdolfs Bērziņš, conductor Alfrēds Kalniņš
7 October 1937, Latvian National Opera (2nd version, the tragic finale) Baņuta – Milda Brehmane-Štengele, Vižutis – Nikolajs Vasiļjevs, conductor Jānis Kalniņš
9 June 1941, Latvian National Opera (3rd version, the optimistic finale) Baņuta – Milda Brehmane-Štengele, Vižutis – Arturs Priednieks-Kavarra, conductor Jānis Kalniņš
25 October 1953, Latvian National Opera (3rd version, the optimistic finale) Baņuta – Regīna Māliņa (Frinberga), Vižutis – Arnolds Skara, conductor Edgars Tons

[1] For more information, see: Kudiņš, J. (ed.) (2014). Lithuanian presence in the first Latvian opera Baņuta. Some interesting facts in Latvian music history. *Ars et Praxis* (2). Vilnius: Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, p. 11–25.

[2] Information has been summarized on the basis of data from the Latvian National Opera Theatre history research [Briede-Bulāvinova 1987] and Opera Theatre repertoire publications on the Internet sites over the last thirty years.

23 September 1968, Latvian National Opera (3rd version, the optimistic finale) Baņuta – Regīna Frinberga, Vižutis – Kārlis Zariņš, conductor Rihards Glāzups
20 June 1979, Latvian National Opera (2nd version, the tragic finale) Baņuta – Rita Zelmane, Vižutis – Kārlis Zariņš, conductor Aleksandrs Viļumanis
21 August 1999, Latvian National Opera (3rd version, the optimistic finale), open-air staging in Zosēni (only one performance) Baņuta – Zigrīda Krīgere, Vižutis – Miervaldis Jenčs, conductor Aleksandrs Viļumanis

The opera has been played twice in Latvia as a concert performance:

17 September 1999, Latvian National Opera, only one concert performance (2nd version, the tragic finale) Baņuta – Zigrīda Krīgere, Vižutis – Kārlis Zariņš, conductor Aleksandrs Viļumanis
26 June 2003, only one concert performance, Riga Latvian Society House (3rd version, the optimistic finale) Baņuta – Zigrīda Krīgere, Vižutis – Miervaldis Jenčs, conductor Andrejs Jansons

This is a respectable count for the staging of one opera. Additionally, as can be seen in the summary of the performances, the opera "Baņuta" has had three different versions over time, and the reason for that is mainly the libretto. We should note that the historical narrative encoded in the opera's composition still is pure history, since the last staging of "Baņuta" was in 1979 – almost 40 years ago (in 1999 National Opera and Ballet Theatre staged only one special open-air performance of this opera) – and now, in the 21st century, we are still waiting for a new staging of this opera.

Particularly interesting are the changes in the artistically poeticised history included in "Baņuta" libretto, in the various cultural contexts of the 20th century. Besides, there is the question of what in this opera's libretto could be considered original nowadays.

Not long after, in 1937, when preparing the second staging at the National Opera Theatre, the word *Lithuania* vanished from the libretto, and it was replaced with words "fatherland" and "homeland" (for example, changing the phrase *Weep, weep, Lithuania!* to *Weep, weep, fatherland!* etc.). Why? This is the first known instance of political censorship in Latvian opera history.

The premiere of the second staging of "Baņuta" was personally attended by the authoritarian leader of Latvia Kārlis Ulmanis (1877–1942). From the memories of contemporaries, including the research of well-known music historian Joachim Braun, there is a note that in the mid-1930s, there were notable disagreements between Latvia and Lithuania regarding their sea border. When Ulmanis' government discovered that Lithuania was frequently mentioned in the first Latvian opera, there was an immediate demand to remove it from the libretto. And, from that time, the mention of Lithuania disappeared from the text of the opera [Brauns 2002: 330].

In this way, the second version of the opera appeared. Even without the change in the libretto, Alfrēds Kalniņš created a new orchestra instrumentation, and then both created a vibrant lover's duet at the end of the third act. This duet was criticised as *a bad example of banal music*, even though the audience liked it [Briede-Bulāvinova 1975: 78].

The third version of "Baņuta" appeared immediately after the Soviet occupation in 1940. The totalitarian political regime demanded to change the tragic ending in the original libretto, and the author of the libretto Krūmiņš and composer Kalniņš were requested to respect this statement [Briede-Bulāvinova 1975: 70–71]. Thus, the happy ending concept (in the third version of this opera, 1941) became a part of the historical narrative of "Baņuta". It is interesting that it marked a major dissonance with the overall libretto structure and its references to the romanticized ancient Baltic mythology.

Still, in the second half of the 20th century, the public liked the happy ending chorus of the third version of the opera, and, along with that, the opera "Baņuta" is even today a unique example in European Romantic opera history. It is an opera with two accepted, though fundamentally different endings – tragic and happy (optimistic). Still, the narrative of the "Baņuta" libretto transformations does not end there. There were also interesting cases of the "Baņuta" performances outside Latvia.

After the Second World War, beyond the borders of Latvia, exile composer and conductor Andrejs Jansons (b 1938, lives in New York) inspired and conducted three concert performances of this opera:

5 June 1982, New York Carnegie Hall New York Latvian Choir, orchestra, soloists, conductor Andrejs Jansons
30 June 1983, Milwaukee, USA New York Latvian Choir, orchestra, soloists, conductor Andrejs Jansons
July 1984, Münster, Germany New York Latvian Choir, orchestra, soloists, conductor Andrejs Jansons

It is interesting that in all three opera's concert stagings the first (original) libretto text version was used, which includes also the word *Lithuania*. Major roles in opera were sung by famous foreign singers. Baņuta's role in the Latvian language (!) was sung by famous soloist of the New York Metropolitan Opera in the seventies Maralin Niska (1926–2016). Italian opera singers Michael Fiacco and Aron Bergelli performed the role of Vižutis [Brauns 2002: 330]. In one performance as Vižutis and in two performances as Daumants was exile Lithuanian opera singer Algis Grigas (b 1935). In Latvian exile press of that time Andrejs Jansons said that the original version of the libretto became topical because it reflected interesting poetic peculiarities [Valdmane & Šmite 1983].

Conclusions

To summarize – "Baņuta", the first opera in the Latvian language, for the entire 20th century reflected the notion that the artefact as a carrier of a specific historical narrative had undergone dramatic transformations, which were caused by a changing cultural-historical context. In the second half of the century, the reference to the romanticized ancient Baltic mythology disappeared from this opera staging in Latvia. However, in performances outside Latvia, this intriguing reference remained. Along with that, over time, a truly fascinating story developed.

In 1999, a new publication of the first version of libretto of "Baņuta" [Krūmiņš 1920] appeared, with a translation into English, German, French and Russian [Gailītis 1999]. However, due to an incomprehensible self-censorship, the mention of Lithuania *disappeared from the translation* in the text versions of German, French and Russian.

For instance,

in Latvian: *Vaimanā, vaimanā,* ***Lietuva!*** *Nava vairs varoņa kuniga!* *Ceļā viņš dosies drīz tālajā,* *bālajo ēnu valstībā.*[1]
in English: *Weep, weep,* ***Lithuania!*** *Your heroic kunigas is no more!* *He's embarking on a long journey,* *to the kingdom of pale shades.*[2]

[1] Gailītis 1999: 20.

[2] Translation into English by Biruta Sūrmane [Gailītis 1999: 62].

in German: *Wehe dir, wehe dir,* ***Heimatland, Heimatland!*** *Einer der Kühnsten den Tod hier fand.* *Heut' geht sein Schatten ins Totenreizh,* *wandelt den weiten Weg so bleich*.[1]
in French: *O ma **Patrie** chérie, prends le deuil,* *prends le deuil tu as perdu ton prince* *fier et preux, fier et preux.* *D'un autre monde franchissant le seuil* *qu'il soit reçu parmi les dieux*.[2]
in Russian: *Плачет **отчизна**, плачет, плачет.* *Нет с нами князя, нет Дауманта.* *Скоро в далёкий он мир уйдёт,* *будет он в царстве теней жить*.[3]

Altogether, over the last 30 years, the opera "Baņuta" has made its mark on Latvian cultural life many times with both its release on CD[4] and publication of the original libretto in five languages (including the aspect of strange self-censorship). In 2011, in Jaunpiebalga, Zosēni, where librettist Arturs Krūmiņš was born, a museum dedicated to the opera "Baņuta" was opened. Still, for more than 30 years, the opera has disappeared from the National Opera Theatre repertoire.

Is the opera "Baņuta" now just a historical fact? What is the authentic version of this opera libretto nowadays? It is probably not possible to answer now, as we have not had any new staging of the opera. However, the opera itself, its libretto and the encoded layered historical narrative in its dramaturgy, are potentially intriguing elements for the creation of a new staging.

[1] Translation into German by Marta fon Dēna-Grabbe [Gailītis 1999: 102].

[2] Translation into French by Madeleine Vītols [Gailītis 1999: 181].

[3] Translation into Russian by Ludmila Azarova [Gailītis 1999: 144].

[4] Kalniņš, Alfrēds. Baņuta. CD. Rīgas skaņu ierakstu studija, 1996.

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MICHAEL CHEKHOV, SPIRITUALITY AND SOVIET THEATRE

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Abstract

The present article discusses the work of Michael Chekhov, director of the Second Moscow Art Theatre from 1922 to 1928. After the October revolution Chekhov sought to withstand the threat from those ideological tendencies which led away from the ideals and spiritual values of his teacher Konstantin Stanislavsky. The reasons for Chekhov's emigration were connected both with his opposition to Soviet cultural policy and the repression of religious groups in Russia. Chekhov was the most famous follower in the Russian theatre of the anthroposophist, Rudolf Steiner. In his production of "Hamlet" Chekhov also followed the spiritual ideas of the Russian symbolists while applying new methods of acting.

Keywords: *Russian theatre, art of acting, spiritual philosophy, communism*.

In a recent assessment of the October revolution James Ryan wrote of Lenin: "His goal was not power for its own sake, but communism: a vision of a perfected society, whereby people would live in complete social harmony. Communism, he believed, would bring with it the comprehensive development and realisation of each individual [..] For communism to exist, humanity would need to be improved and transformed. The core of the October revolution, then, was a vision of cultural revolution, that is, the creation of a new type of person, the so-called "new Soviet person". The October revolution represented the most ambitious and sustained attempt at human transformation and liberation in modern European history. In failing to realise its ambitions, however, the Soviet regime became the most violent state in European history" [Ryan 2018: 46].

The way in which actors, directors and dramatists accepted or rejected the Bolshevik revolution varied widely [Worrall 1989: 7]. Apart from Vsevolod Meyerhold,

only Vladimir Mayakovsky and Aleksandr Blok, among major artistic figures of the day, pledged total support to the Bolsheviks. For the rest, they tended to co-exist as so-called "fellow-travellers", were won over gradually (as were the directors Evgeny Vakhtangov, Aleksandr Tairov and Konstantin Stanislavsky), or else they emigrated. One of the most significant émigré artists was Michael Chekhov, an outstanding actor and teacher of acting, who headed the Second Moscow Art Theatre. In 1928, Pavel Markov, the distinguished Moscow theatre critic, in an article devoted to the anniversary of the Second Moscow Art Theatre, described Chekhov as: "One of the most remarkable actors of our time who is ardently and passionately seeking new means of theatrical expression" [Chekhov 1986a: 429].

In the same year, Michael Chekhov emigrated from Russia for good. I will discuss the complex reasons for his departure, which are connected both with his search for new means of expression and the "taming of the arts" policy of the Stalin period, as well as the repression of religious groups in Soviet Russia. The basis of this searching was prompted in part by the ideas of the anthroposophist, Rudolf Steiner, whose most famous follower in Russian theatre Michael Chekhov became.

Michael (Mikhail) Alexandrovich Chekhov (b. St Petersburg 1891 – d. Los Angeles 1955) was a nephew of Anton Chekhov and the most brilliant student of Konstantin Stanislavsky. He acted at the First Studio of the Moscow Art Theatre (MAT) from 1912 onwards, was its director from 1922 onwards and was the director of the Second Moscow Art Theatre from 1924 to 1928. In Russia, Chekhov is recalled as the most original actor of the last century. His major roles in the Moscow Art Theatre and its Studio included: Caleb in Dickens' "The Cricket on the Hearth", Malvolio in Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night", the title role in Strindberg's "Erik XIV" (directed by Evgeny Vakhtangov), Khlestakov in Gogol's "The Government Inspector" (directed by Stanislavsky), the title role in "Hamlet", and Muromsky in Sukhovo-Kobylin's "The Process". After leaving Russia in 1928, Chekhov underwent three separate stages of development: a period of directing, acting and teaching in Berlin, Paris, Riga and Kaunas (1928–1934); a period in England and America of the Anglo-American Theatre Studio (1936–1942); and, finally, his Hollywood career, working in cinema and teaching film actors in Los Angeles (1943–1955). Chekhov developed his projects in European and American theatres and acting studios, with tremendous vigour [Byckling 2000].

At the time of his death in 1955, Chekhov's name in Soviet Russia had been erased from the history of Russian theatre. In the 1980s, with "glasnost" and the return of the émigré legacy, Chekhov was rehabilitated, his books republished, and he has, once again, become a legendary figure in his native country.

Chekhov the actor applied Stanislavsky's "system" of actor training, which was practised in the First Studio from 1912 onwards. In Stanislavsky's method of acting

the foundation for the future concept of Chekhov's method was laid and put into practice after the October revolution of 1917. In the First Studio, Chekhov's work in productions by the brilliant director Evgeny Vakhtangov shaped the actor's concept of the theatre. Vakhtangov believed that the theatre must create forms from its imagination which he called imaginative realism. In his productions and theoretical articles, Chekhov expressed the spirit of turn-of-the-century Russian culture, symbolist poetry and non-naturalistic theatre. His sources of inspiration derived from legends and fairy-tales, and above all, from religious philosophy.

From early on, Chekhov read extensively in the work of all Western philosophers as part of an effort to define the meaning of life and the purpose of artistic endeavour. Chekhov's interest in yoga began in the First Studio under the guidance of Stanislavsky, the philosophy of which seemed to offer him the creative possibilities of life itself. Those spheres of creativity began to extend from the theatre to the possibilities of creativity within the bounds of his own personality. Yoga led Chekhov to the teachings of theosophy, whilst he also became interested in other mystical currents and frequented the occult societies of revolutionary Moscow.

Chekhov searched everywhere for his ideal spiritual teacher until he found him in the person of the Austrian philosopher and occultist Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925). Steiner was the founder of the Anthroposophical Society, a Russian branch of which was founded in 1913. Anthroposophy represented a modern gnosis; it sought to overcome materialism, to restore a spiritual dimension to human life, and to heal the rift between religion and science. Many famous Russian intellectuals were interested in Anthroposophy, for example the writer Andrei Bely and the painter Vasily Kandinsky. J. D. Elsworth writes: "It is not hard to understand the appeal of anthroposophy to those who had responded to Vl. Solovyov's [the XIX century Russian philosopher's] idea of creating an integrated culture. It is a uniquely comprehensive doctrine that proposes to reconcile the spiritual and material, to answer all questions and resolve all contradictions. Without rejecting scientific thought, it overcomes materialism and re-asserts, on a rational footing, the spiritual nature of man and the universe" [Elsworth 1982: 37; see also: Fedjuschin 1988].

Chekhov came to Steiner during a period of nervous illness when he left the theatre for a whole year. He wrote that his soul was so weary of the hopeless severity of his own world view, a weariness caused by materialism. In his autobiography "The Path of the Actor" (*Put aktyora,* 1928), which Chekhov wrote in Moscow under conditions of Soviet censorship, Steiner could not be mentioned [Chekhov 1986a]. However, notes concerning his spiritual beliefs were published twenty years later in his autobiographical memoirs "Life and Encounters" *(Zhizn i vstrechi)* (*Novyi*

Zhurnal 1944–1945, New York).[1] Chekhov read Steiner's books in Russian translation and soon joined the Russian Anthroposophical Society, probably in 1919. Chekhov's meeting with Andrei Bely influenced his destiny in many respects. Bely, the famous Russian symbolist writer and one of Steiner's most gifted Russian followers, had been a member of the Anthroposophical Society from the very start. Chekhov regarded Bely as his "Teacher" and guide to the teachings of Steiner.

For Chekhov, anthroposophy was the revelation of a modern form of Christianity. In it he found the meaning and goal of a life which provided him with mental health and equilibrium. Chekhov's crisis and his overcoming of it confirm the words of the modern Russian philosopher Sergey Averintsev: "Genuine mental health for the human being, as a being superior to the animal, is impossible if a person's outlook on life and aims are not put in order. [..] only the patient can complete the work of the psychotherapist in that he acquires an orientation for his world outlook" [Averintsev 1981: 114]. Maria Knebel, Chekhov's pupil, and later a distinguished Russian director and teacher, wrote: "Chekhov strove towards harmony. As an actor, he sought after and aimed for harmony on stage and in his roles. He was constantly in torment in that he sensed the disharmony of affairs in the external world. Hence his fears and restlessness. He believed that the truth that would reunite art and life, which he sought after, was contained in these very anthroposophical theories" [Knebel 1986: 34]. The sought-after harmony between mystical and scientific knowledge was attained in anthroposophy.

Inevitably, Chekhov stood in opposition to the new Communist regime. According to Lenin, all religions and religious institutions were instruments of bourgeois reaction serving to defend exploitation and as an opiate for the working class. Nicolas Berdyaev described Communism as the new religion. "Because Communism itself is itself a religion it persecutes all religions and will have no religious toleration. [..] Communism creates a new morality which is neither Christian nor humanitarian." Regarding the untruth of Communism, Berdyaev wrote: "What is false and terrible is the very spirit of Communism. Its spirit is the negation of spirit, the negation of the spiritual principle in man. [..] Communism is inhuman, for denial of God leads to denial of man" [Berdyaev 1966: 77].

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[1] Chekhov's memoirs (1928) were republished in Moscow: Chekhov (1986a). Chekhov's second book of memoirs: M. Chekhov, *Zhizn i vstrechi* ("Life and Encounters"), (*Novyi Zhurnal*, 1944–1945) was published in New York. Due to Soviet censorship the chapters on anthroposophy and Chekhov's religious searchings were omitted in the Moscow edition of *Literaturnoye nasledye* (Literary heritage) (1986). These chapters were first published in Russia by the present author in the appendix to her book in Russian [Bjukling (Byckling) 1994]. (The Letters of Michael Chekhov to Mstislav Dobuzhinsky (the émigré years, 1938–1951). 2nd, compl. ed. (St Petersburg: Vsemirnoye slovo, 1994). An abridged version of Chekhov's memoirs has been published in English [Chekhov 2005].

In 1922, after the death of Vakhtangov, Chekhov became director of the First Studio of the Moscow Art Theatre which, in 1924, was renamed the Second Moscow Art Theatre. As he commented twenty years later in his memoirs "Life and Encounters", after the October revolution Chekhov sought to withstand the threat of the "comprehensibility of popular materialism" and other tendencies that led away from the ideals and spiritual values established by the founders of the First Studio, Konstantin Stanislavsky and Leopold Sulerzhitsky. Of the revolutionary theatre, Chekhov wrote: "The quality of acting started to deteriorate, and the elements of creative imagination, theatrical invention and originality were relegated to a secondary role. The external influence was strong." As a theatre director, Chekhov wanted to preserve its artistic life. "First and foremost, I prohibited anti-religious tendencies and the theatre of the streets and decided to stage Hamlet as a counterbalance" [Chekhov 1944: 14–16].

No less important was the humanitarian reform of the Russian theatre. Under the heading of anthroposophy, Chekhov brought about the emergence of a spiritual component in Russian theatre based on his exploration of its inner workings. "Hamlet" produced by Chekhov in 1924 with a team of directors (he acted the role of the Danish Prince) had both experimental and spiritual objectives. Motifs inherent in Russian symbolism and German anthroposophy became interwoven in the course of rehearsals. Using the new methods, he announced the beginnings of a search which "led further away from Stanislavsky". "For the time being I can only say that if Stanislavsky's system is a grammar school, these exercises are a university in terms of their importance." Here the idea of "a path of initiation" was formulated. "We approach the play as if it were hieroglyphs, signs, and through them we ourselves must make the breakthrough upwards, into eternity [..] A new technique of acting has to be found. As actors, we have been trained through emotions in the animal sphere. Now what we need to achieve is not to act ourselves, but to let the forces that are on a higher level than we are act through us; we in turn must offer ourselves in sacrifice to those forces." During rehearsals there was talk of music in the play: "Hamlet is a myth in motion, a particular philosophy. That is why we talk about the musical element and music, because music more powerfully than anything else leads us into the sphere of the Spirit" [Chekhov 1975: 170–171]. The source of these arguments is clearly the language of the symbolists, as conveyed by Bely.

The few productions staged at the Second Moscow Art Theatre between 1924 and 1928, under Chekhov's management and in cooperation with assistant directors, were meant to be definite landmarks in the mastering of new methods of acting. In his earlier studio work (1918–1920) Chekhov had aimed at creating a feeling of truth and inspiring the actor's fantasy. Among the many resources utilized in the First Studio led by Stanislavsky and Leopold Sulerzhitsky were those of Asian derivation.

When Stanislavsky sought means to control an actor's moment of inspiration, he became interested in the possibilities of Yoga and exercises based on the spiritual disciplines of Hinduism and Buddhism directed towards a higher consciousness ("the superconscious"). Not surprisingly, Chekhov later found similar ideas in Steiner's teaching and incorporated his concept of the "Higher Self" into his acting method.

Anthroposophy was not only Chekhov's private creed, it also provided him with the art of movement and a mode speech called eurythmy or "visible speech", which gave new impetus to ways of refining non-verbal acting and developing the harmonious function of the actor's body. Chekhov adopted Steiner's method of eurythmy in his approach to speech and movement. This new art of movement envisaged that every sound possessed an inherent gesture which could be reproduced by movements of the human body. Eurythmy is interpreted, not as a means of communication, but as sound and rhythm that can be expressed using the language of the body. Chekhov wrote: "We studied the sound aspect of the word, as **movement transformed into sound**" [Chekhov 1986: 119]. Chekhov decided to introduce the experience he had gained through rhythmical exercises in his private Studio into the rehearsal process: "During our work on Hamlet, we endeavoured to experience the gestures of words in the way they sounded and to this end we selected the corresponding movements to fit the words and phrases. We imbued them with the force we required, added the particular emotional colouring and executed them until our inner feeling began to respond to them fully" [Ibid.]. A trend of the times, mistrust of the word, was manifest in Chekhov's exercises. Averintsev formulated it thus: "at the beginning of the century there was a diminishing of trust in the content of culture that is directly "articulated", in verbal formulations and consequently, literature with an ideological content" [Averintsev 1981: 80]. The results of the experiments in the studio left their mark on the production: in some scenes the pedagogical objectives of the development of the actors' movements and musicality were foregrounded.

Within the theatre, opinion about the production was sharply divided. At the premiere, Stanislavsky did not accept the performance of Hamlet by his brilliant pupil, whom he considered a tragi-comic, but not a tragic actor. A group of actors who were opposed to Chekhov condemned the fact that the role smacked of his enthusiasm for anthroposophy. However, audiences and certain objective critics, Pavel Markov in the lead, were deeply moved by the play and Chekhov's performance. The content of his portrayal of Hamlet turned out to be much richer in meaning than had been anticipated. Markov stated that the centre-point of the production had been Chekhov. "The feeling of a world undergoing destruction was the keynote of the performance. [..] Thus a character that is almost lyrical comes about, that stirs the audience totally and is penetrating and moving" [Markov 1976: 194].

The next stage in Chekhov's experimentation was work on the stage adaptation of Bely's novel "Petersburg" (1925), the independent interpretation of dramatic material written by Bely himself. The part of the old Senator Ableukhov was brilliantly acted by Chekhov, who concluded that circumstances were in his favour following three years of his direction at the Second Moscow Art Theatre.

Chekhov was able to pursue his own artistic line even in a changing ideological situation where mystical and occult groups had been officially liquidated in 1923. At the same time, the Russian Anthroposophical Society was closed and all connections with anthroposophy became potentially dangerous. However, anthroposophical ideas were not immediately extinguished by the changed cultural environment in Russia. This was largely due to the efforts and prestige of Bely and several Russian artists interested in Steiner's thought. The centre of Anthroposophical activity shifted briefly to the Second Moscow Art Theatre, where anthroposophical ideas managed to survive until 1928. Chekhov did not give up and his activities increased from 1923 onwards, during which period he applied Steiner's methods in practical theatre work, his aim being the spiritualization of culture and all professions and studies in the theatre. It became generally known, even outside theatrical circles, that Chekhov derived his spiritual knowledge and, in particular, his technique for applying it specifically to art, from the anthroposophy and eurythmy of Rudolf Steiner and the latter's teachings on artistic speech.

Later, Chekhov set out his method of acting in his two American books, one in Russian, "On the Technique of Acting" (*O tekhnike aktyora*, 1946), the other in English ("To the Actor", 1953). One of the main professional requirements is the actor's complete command of both body and psychology. In Chapter One, Chekhov laid the foundations for attaining the four basic requirements of acting technique. "By means of the suggested psychophysical exercises the actor can increase his inner strength, develop his abilities to radiate and receive, acquire a fine sense of form, enhance his feelings of freedom, ease, calm and beauty, experience the significance of his inner being, and learn to see things and processes in their entirety" [Chekhov 1953: 20].

Chekhov offers excellent exercises for awakening, opening and contracting dormant muscles aimed at achieving sensations of freedom and intensified life. There follow exercises with the imaginary centre as a source of power within the actor's body; exercises with different kinds of movements with the whole body directed at creating strong forms; exercises in ray emission into the surrounding space; exercises in four kinds of movement – moulding, floating, flying and radiating movements – reproduced in the actor's imagination only. Chekhov revealed clearly his emphasis on the harmony of the actor's body and psychology.

Chekhov writes about another rehearsal method, the working gesture or psychological gesture (PG): "we cannot directly command our feelings, but we can

provoke them by certain indirect means. The key to our will power will be found in the movement (action, gesture). [..] The strength of the movement stirs our will power in general; the kind of movement awakens in us a definite corresponding desire, and the quality of the same movement conjures up our feelings" [Chekhov 1953: 63, 66]. PG is used for creating the character, in the sense that it offers a condensed version of characterisation. Some principles of Chekhov's rehearsal methods anticipated Stanislavsky's "method of physical actions" in the 1930s. It was Chekhov's aim that the actors should acquire a practical grasp of the profound connection between movement and words on the one hand, and with the emotions on the other. This exercise served as an expression of Stanislavsky's demand that the author's words be not uttered until the inner stimulus to do so arises. Eugenio Barba, head of the Odin Theatre and a theorist of modern theatre has this to say about Chekhov's method: "Michael Chekhov attaches great importance to the performer's interior life. His "first days" [first exercises] show, however, that everything he calls "sensation", "feeling", or "psychological state" is innervated through precise physical attitudes. For Chekhov as well, the work on the body-in-life and the thought-in-life are two sides of the same coin" [Barba 1990: 78].

An important point of departure for Chekhov is the notion of "double consciousness" and being present simultaneously "inside" and "outside of" the character. Chekhov asserted the theory of imitation, the law of the three states of consciousness, objectivity *vis-à-vis* the character and self-observation during the performance, all of which became the foundation for the actors' work. Chekhov propounded an understanding of acting that differed from Stanislavsky's teaching in many respects. In attempting to solve the basic problem of the actor, that of the personality and the artist, whereby the actor is meant to be the creator of a certain ideal and liberated life, Chekhov's aim was to acquire a creative joy stripped of personal imperfection. In the Second Moscow Art Theatre Chekhov was at odds at one and the same time with Stanislavsky's notion of character embodiment involving complete transformation, and with those ideas promoted by Meyerhold and Vakhtangov of a more detached "relationship to the image". A subtext of Chekhov's tenet (of objectivity towards the image) is his dispute with what he regarded as the tendentiousness of modern theatre.

As already stated, Chekhov was able to conclude that circumstances were in his favour during the first three years of his direction at the Second MAT. He succeeded in implementing his ideas and a new approach to aesthetics during those first few years of his directorship: "spiritual insights were applied in a specific and practical way in the form that I had succeeded in manifesting them in my exercises and productions" [Chekhov 1986: 122]. Chekhov created his own theatre with its

new style of performing which gave the productions their distinct form. The style can be defined as the psychological grotesque or the character-mask that comes into being when the accentuation of the psychological portrayal of the character reaches its height. However, the term *Chekhov's Theatre* is ambiguous when applied to the Second MAT, since there were opposing tendencies within the company.

In 1925, radical political changes took place with the opening of the 14th Party Congress. Here a policy of rapid industrialization was first promulgated. The Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP), also came into existence at this time who strove for proletarian leadership in literature and who conducted a battle with theatrical innovators, the so-called formalists, such as Meyerhold and Tairov. Its methods were quite unprincipled and included political accusations against artists at every level. Among its stated purposes was "to scourge and chastise" in the name of the Party, i. e., effectively encouraging censorship of literature on ideological grounds, supported by the leadership of the Bolshevik Party. Among its targets were both pro- and anti-Bolshevik writers, including Mikhail Bulgakov, Maxim Gorky, Vladimir Mayakovsky, and Evgeny Zamyatin.

The opposition to Chekhov was intensified by the harshening of the regime. Simultaneously, conflicts arose within the theatre and the secret police stepped up its activity. The People's Commissariat of Education sent a letter to Chekhov informing him that his activity as theatre director was deemed "not entirely satisfactory" and that he should stop spreading the ideas of Steiner among the actors [Chekhov 1995a: 243]. As early as 1925, a serious conflict had arisen owing to the differing artistic and ideological aspirations. The following year, a group of actors under the leadership of the director Alexei Diky left the Second MAT, denouncing Chekhov as an idealist and mystic. Following the split in the theatre the Moscow newspapers condemned Chekhov as a "sick" artist and his productions were criticised as alien and reactionary and he was under serious threat of being arrested. In 1928, he resigned from his theatre and received official leave for one year to travel to Berlin with his wife Xenia. Chekhov left Russia in the wake of accusations that he was using the theatre to disseminate anthroposophical doctrines inconsistent with the Moscow Art Theatre's world view. His letter of conciliation to the Ministry of Culture in Moscow was left unanswered.

In Berlin from 1928 to 1930, Chekhov continued theatre work in parallel with his unceasing anthroposophical contemplations while combining work in Max Reinhardt's theatres and silent cinema with private studio work. Chekhov had not intended to leave Soviet Russia for good, but the situation changed dramatically with the implementation of the First Five-Year Plan in 1929. In that year the Bolsheviks, spurred on by Stalin, launched a new campaign against the "remnants of the bourgeois intelligentsia", actively hunting down and arresting members of occult

groups on a large scale. After 1929, those anthroposophists and other occultists who remained free went underground or ceased their activities altogether. In Paris, Chekhov learned of the arrests. His feelings of guilt towards friends who had been subjected to persecution is expressed in the Paris chapters of "Life and Encounters". Arrest for "occult propaganda" after 1933 inevitably meant exile and frequently execution. However, the destruction of the occult societies by decree, arrest, exile, and execution did not destroy the Russians' interest in occultism.

It was clear that, for Chekhov, there could be no return to Soviet Russia. The years of emigration in Europe and in the USA followed. Both Stanislavsky and Meyerhold tried to convince him to return. Officially, Chekhov never broke contacts with Soviet Russia and he remained a Soviet citizen until 1946 when he became an American citizen. Chekhov was finally able to give one of his spiritual mentors his due in "Life and Encounters", in "On the Technique of Acting" (in Russian 1946) and "To the Actor" (1953), all of them published in America. In "To the Actor" he wrote: "It was my work over many years in the sphere of the Anthroposophy of Rudolf Steiner that gave me the guiding idea for my entire work as a whole" [Chekhov 1953: X]. These sentiments from the foreword were omitted from the 1986 Moscow edition of his book "To the Actor".

The American-English version has been republished and is widely used in Western theatre schools. Eugenio Barba describes Chekhov's book as *one of the best practical manuals for the training of the "realistic" actor* [Barba 1995: 72] [See also: Black 1987]. Other versions and new books of Chekhov's classes have been published in the United States [Chekhov 1963; Chekhov 1985]. New books of Chekhov's classes have been published by his American students and also the second-generation teachers [Chekhov Master Class 1992; Merlin 2001; Petit 2010]. The Finnish translation from the Russian original was completed by the present writer and published by the Finnish Theatre Academy in 2017 [Tšehov 2017].

Chekhov created and taught an acting system which has become increasingly influential in both the West and the East. Until his final years in California, he remained devoted to Rudolf Steiner's system of belief, as well as to those ideals of the Russian theatre expressed by Stanislavsky and Vakhtangov.

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