Relinquishing the Real. New Strategies of Documentary Practice

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fia mein Opa

a wenn i koa Astrophysikerin worn bin

und fia mei Mama

de ma glernt hod, dass da einfachste Weg immer da langweiligste is

Abstract

I argue that there is a new development in documentary film that responds to a *crisis of perception* brought on by a changed media situation in which the image itself has become precarious. The topics these films address remain hidden, invisible, inaccessible and go beyond what is sayable.

The new strategies of filmmakers that aim to overcome this crisis of perception are characterized by a high degree of *artifice*. By introducing artifice as a major strategy, contemporary films accept the impossibility of an immediate, objective representation of reality, and shift the focus to our way of looking, a perception obstructed by our highly medialized surroundings. The use of artifice has two major effects: Its blatant presence sidesteps a reception based on empathy and identification which represent conventional documentary devices used to produce social impact. In an era oversaturated with images created to make the viewer empathize, however, these emotional strategies have lost their potential for meaningful engagement. The disruption of empathy in these contemporary films distances the audience from the issue at hand. Devoid of a trained reaction providing comfort in its familiarity, the audience is forced to reflect on its own perspective. This puts it in an active state where a critical engagement with social topics is possible again.

Artifice is a driving force in all examined films but is most prominent in the examples of what I call *Indirect Cinema*. Indirect Cinema replaces the unmediated, authentic appearance with artifice, the deliberate and unconcealed manipulation of what we see. Examples of Indirect Cinema avoid direct representation altogether, and instead opt for a new production of abstractly related images. The self-referentiality of the images allows an interrogation of the potential of documentary film in a crisis of perception, and provides a new and different access. A critical space emerges where the viewer can critically engage with these issues.

I examine nine films from the past 15 years using structural analysis and close readings. These analyses create the basis for the development of a new documentary mode specific to a historical and medial context in which the image has become precarious.

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Figure 1: Broken window in *Kurz davor*

In this still from the documentary *Kurz davor ist es passiert* (2006) by Austrian filmmaker Anja Salomonowitz, only the crack in the glass allows the conclusion that what we see here is a window. While the transparency of the glass suggests a direct connection between what happens in front of the glass and behind it, the crack reminds of the impermeable materiality, the physical border between the two. This shot unites the simultaneous longing of documentary film to represent the world as we see it with the painful realization of its impossibility. I argue that there is a new development in documentary film that, instead of trying to ignore the crack in the glass, zooms in on this break, draws attention to the rupture

that obstructs our view. The films I will analyze in the following concern themselves with issues that suffer from an obstructed view, a, what I call, *crisis of perception*.

> Die Wirklichkeit ist mehr als das Sichtbare und dort, wo es immer mehr Sichtbares gibt, immer mehr Abbildungen, ist es zunehmend notwendig, gerade das, was in diesen Abbildungen unsichtbar bleibt sichtbar zu machen.
>
> Reality is more than the visible and where there is more and more visible, more and more images, it is increasingly necessary to make visible exactly what remains invisible in these images. (Hohenberger 332)

In an exceedingly medialized environment, the concept of representation, a concept focused on the visible, reveals its limitations. Documentary films from the past 15 years use the crack in the glass to expose what lies beyond the visible, to create a space where it becomes perceptible, where we can reflect on our own position. The documentaries I will analyze in the following react to three manifestations of this crisis of perception:

The three documentaries in Chapter I by German filmmaker Philip Scheffner address the problems that arise when medial representations paradoxically prevent meaningful engagement. In *Havarie* (2016), a 3.5-minute amateur video recording of a refugee ship in the Mediterranean is extended to last 93 minutes. Interviews with people connected to the occurrence accompany the extreme deceleration of one moment of the so-called refugee crisis. The focus on an event that lacks drama, suspense, and tragedy contrasts the typical coverage that exclusively concentrates on these components. The disconnect between sound and image and the manipulated speed of the film disrupts empathy and identification and, therefore, force the viewer into a state of self-reflection. In *Revision* (2012), Scheffner

revisits a case of two murdered Romani 20 years earlier. By exploring a myriad of different perspectives on the event, the film still only achieves an approximation of the incident. The demonstration of this multiplicity of perceptions reveals the distance between an event and its perception based on mediation. *The Halfmoon Files* (2007), finally, addresses the misappropriation of archival footage from a prisoner of war camp during World War I. During Scheffner's investigation into one individual's history, he retraces the sound recordings and images of colonial soldiers, humans whose only remains are these media predominantly used and abused for propaganda purposes. While on different political and societal issues, all three films share a core concern for how to give access to these topics. Scheffner revisits sites, both physical and medial, that are haunted by social injustice and violent pasts. Despite the availability of media in all these cases, the human problems remain ghostly pale and distant.

Chapter II explores how recent Holocaust documentaries react to the oversaturation of a limited amount of images from the Holocaust that have lost their critical potential. 70 years after the Holocaust, most eyewitnesses and survivors have since passed and with them a direct physical connection to these events. In an era of *postmemory*, access to the Holocaust is entirely mediated and only possible through an overabundance of media. Yet, the repeated reproduction of certain footage of atrocities has stripped them of their significance and made it ethically suspect. *Night Will Fall* (2014) tells the story of a British post-war film about the concentration camps that was never finished. It examines the circumstances of its production as well as the moral implications of a documentary in a certain political

climate. Interviews with survivors, soldiers and cameramen recontextualize the filming and reunite media with their objects. Just like *Night Will Fall*, *A Film Unfinished* (2010) also examines a film that was never completed but by the Nazis themselves. The footage filmed by Nazi cameramen in the Warsaw ghetto has been used over the past 70 years as factual representations of Jewish life in the ghetto; only new-found materials revealed the extent of staging and forced performance. While survivor interviews and additional archival sources help to recontextualize and rectify these well-known images, the tension between one's new knowledge of the circumstances of their production and the still undeniable evidentiary power of the image persists. This tension is also a major force in Harun Farocki's *Respite* (2007) that relies exclusively on archival footage from a transit camp in the Netherlands that does not include any atrocities. The film material commissioned by a Nazi soldier but filmed by a Jewish inmate shows scenes from the camp that mean to convince of the camp's efficiency. *Respite* provides a close reading of the original footage which reveals the impossibility of watching these images without the knowledge of the atrocities. All three films address the highly mediated remembrance of the Holocaust and examine the role of archival footage in an era of postmemory. Their return to well-known images recontextualizes them and allows access to the depicted events that can still be significant.

In Chapter III, the issues the three documentaries address all lack meaningful medial representation. In *The Missing Picture* (2013), the Cambodian genocide through the Khmer Rouge suffers from both a physical absence of visual evidence of the committed atrocities

as well as a societal resolution and coming to terms with these events. Director Rithy Panh sets out to find the one picture that summarizes his personal experience but, faced with this dearth of available media, ends up constructing his own that weaves together memory, propaganda material, and reenactments. *Hat Wolff von Amerongen Konkursdelikte begangen?* (2004) features the life stories of several significant economic leaders, their success, their downfalls, and their ethically suspicious methods. As the interconnectedness and size of the global economy challenge the ability of adequate visual representation, the film connects the voice-over narration with images connected to the three parts of economy with production, consumption, and circulation. The Austrian documentary *Kurz davor ist es passiert* (2006) removes women's stories of human trafficking from their originators, and instead channels them through regular Austrians in everyday spaces. The absence of the female bodies who originally uttered these words symbolizes the distance to their fates despite their hidden presence in everyday life. The familiarity of the spaces, the language, the bodies paired with the distressing stories unsettles the audience and allows an engagement with the issue beyond empathy. These three documentaries focus on topics where conventional visual representation fails, either due to their nonexistence or their lack of significance.

Despite the variety of issues these nine documentaries address, they all respond to a crisis of perception; these topics remain hidden, invisible, inaccessible and go beyond what is sayable.

Yet, the theoretical discussion of documentary film in the past has been dominated by a discussion of representation that proves to be inadequate to describe or explain what these films do. Even looking only at the titles of some influential recent publications in the field reveals a focus on the relationship between a film and its subject, i.e. between a film and the reality it aims to portray: *The Subject of Documentary* (2004) by Michael Renov, *Speaking Truths with Film* (2016) by Bill Nichols, *Lies, Damn Lies, and Documentaries* (2000) by Brian Winston, *Documentary. The Margins of Reality* (2005) by Paul Ward. This perspective with representation at its core remains in the domain of truth and thereby in the already visible. Yet, the exceedingly medialized nature of our time makes it necessary to shift the discussion from the subject to the communication itself. That is not to say that this perspective ceases to have any importance but rather that these questions retreat more to the background. Instead, a crisis of perception requires filmmakers to evaluate how to make their issues visible, perceptible, and experienceable in a media situation that clouds access to them. To come back to the still from *Kurz davor*, it is less about what is beyond the glass and more about that crack that forces our perspective.

I argue that the new strategies that aim to overcome this crisis of perception are characterized by a high degree of *artifice*. Artifice in this context means neither artful (as e.g. the essay films by Vertov from the 1920s were) nor artificial (as mockumentaries) but rather the deliberate presence of manipulation that is not concealed or masked; it approximates the effect of a variety of different strategies prevalent in these documentaries. The use of artifice represents a clear delineation from an approach as e.g. Direct Cinema

around 1960 pursued; the supporters of this movement believed in the ability of documentary film to represent reality directly if only the scene could be as natural as possible. They viewed any manipulation of what happened in front of the camera as well as behind as an obstruction to produce a successful documentary. By introducing artifice as a major strategy, contemporary films accept the impossibility of an immediate, objective representation of reality, and shift the focus to our way of looking, a perception obstructed by our highly medialized surroundings. The extreme deceleration in *Havarie*, for instance, is not a manipulation that can be ignored or overlooked; it is the central strategy, an end in itself. To say that *Havarie* is a film about the refugee crisis is a reduction ignoring the extent of artifice and its consequence.

The use of artifice has two major effects: Its blatant presence sidesteps a reception based on empathy and identification which represent conventional (and quite successful) documentary devices used to produce social impact. In an era oversaturated with images created to make the viewer empathize, however, these emotional strategies have lost their potential for meaningful engagement. The disruption of empathy in these contemporary films distances the audience from the issue at hand. In *Havarie*, the disconnect between image and sound as well as the apparent visual manipulation of the image disrupt any empathy the viewer might have for the bodiless voices of the interviews one hears or the voiceless bodies of the people on the boat one sees. The anonymity of both makes an identification with any of the people difficult. By preventing these two major mechanisms, artifice evades the emotional response commonly used to convey an issue like the refugee

crisis. Devoid of a trained reaction providing comfort in its familiarity, the audience is forced to reflect on its own perspective. This puts the audience in an active state where a critical engagement with social topics suffering from a crisis of perception is possible again.

Artifice is a driving force in all nine films but is most prominent in the examples from Chapter III that I call *Indirect Cinema*. Indirect Cinema is not to be understood as a straight opposition to Direct Cinema but rather a development of concepts in documentary film. The emergence of the movement of Direct Cinema at the end of the 1950s can be seen as the beginning of modern documentary aesthetics. The development of more portable filming equipment allowed a more spontaneous use of the camera. The aesthetics of these films are still immediately recognizable as documentary and, thus, represent a major contribution to the genre of documentary cinema; this look is also what is generally exported to other genres such as horror movies, mockumentaries, and docudramas for an authenticating effect. Indirect Cinema, on the other hand, discards this style and its connected ideal of objectivity and immediacy entirely; it replaces the unmediated, authentic appearance with artifice, the deliberate and unconcealed manipulation of what we see. *Kurz davor ist es passiert* that also provided the still for the beginning of this introduction is a paradigm example of this new development.

Kurz davor features five stories from female victims of human trafficking in Austria; yet, instead of a conventional interview-based approach, the film denies all access to the victims themselves entirely. Instead, their stories are recited by regular Austrians. Unlike Direct

Cinema with its 'living' camera, the camera perspective is rigid and inflexible with one of the five protagonists at its symmetrical center. We watch a border officer carry out his duties, a woman walking in the neighborhood, a brothel owner getting his property ready for opening, a consul doing business, and a taxi driver in his cab. While this first seems observational, the protagonists then look directly into the camera and start their monotonous recitation devoid of any emotion. Only after a little while does one understand that they are not actually telling their own story but someone else's. The situation of the scene, the border officer at his job reciting a female's story into forced prostitution does not resemble a naturally occurring scene in any way. The artifice of the presentation, the tedium of the narration are in stark contrast with the distressing account of the woman and make unobstructed empathy impossible. The distance of the women's fates illustrated by their absence imposes itself on the audience in a way that prevents an emotional reaction. The conventional, comfortable emotional response is replaced by an impassive detachment that forces the audience to reflect on the issue from a distance. In this critical space, a reflection on the, in everyday-life often hidden, issue of human trafficking, on the familiar reporting on matters as this, one's own inability or unwillingness to help, but also the limitations of meaning in a documentary image become possible.

Indirect Cinema offers a paradigm example of why a new discussion from a changed perspective is necessary. With films like *Kurz davor*, existing theories fail to meaningfully describe what is happening: Bill Nichol's modes (poetic, expository, observational, participatory, reflexive, performative), Michael Renov's four fundamental tendencies

(record/reveal/preserve, persuade/promote, analyze/interrogate, express), and Hohenberger's differentiation of realities (nonfilmic, prefilmic, reality film. filmic, postfilmic) provided important interventions in the history of documentary film theory, yet, all find their limitations when it comes to Indirect Cinema as the true effect of this category does not work in a context of representation but in a context of perception.

My contribution to the field of documentary studies consists of the identification of these contemporary films as one development that shares distinguishable markers: These films from the past 15 years all respond to a crisis of perception, a precarity of the image; the overabundance, lack, or triviality of images obstructs the perception of the addressed issues. I introduce artifice as a term to describe the deliberate and unconcealed manipulation of the documentary image that prevents a familiar emotional reaction and forces the viewer into a self-reflexive state. The self-referentiality of the images allows an interrogation of the potential of documentary film in a crisis of perception, and provides a new and different access. A critical space emerges where the viewer can critically engage with these issues.

I will examine the films using structural analysis and close readings. In Chapter I on the haunted documentaries by Philip Scheffner, I use Bolter and Grusin and their concept of remediation as a framework to interrogate the use of media in these films. Scheffner uses dehierarchization and deconstruction of conventional documentaries to reveal different layers of mediation and reorganize sources. His approach allows a reflection on the authority of certain institutions such as the law, the archive, and the media, and thereby

also demands a reflection on one's own perspective, one's own conditioned perception. In Chapter II, I argue that all three films aim to mirror the experience of postmemory to create a more contemporary access to the Holocaust. In a situation of oversaturation with Holocaust representation, they return to the evidentiary power of the individual image, recontextualize archival footage, and question its misappropriation. Chapter III introduces the category of Indirect Cinema based on a historical development with Direct Cinema as its starting point. It uses extreme artifice to disrupt empathy and allow a new critical engagement with the topic.

These analyses create the basis for the development of a new documentary mode specific to a historical and medial context in which the image has become precarious. The films described in the following chapters react to a media situation in which the image despite its proliferation and relentless reproduction still fails to capture what it seeks to depict. The insuperable distance between image and meaning might be the core of a problem that Jean Baudrillard in a somewhat apocalyptic tone pointed out long before YouTube and Instagram:

> We have arrived at a paradox regarding the image, our images, those which unfurl upon and invade our daily life – images whose proliferation, it should be noted, is potentially infinite, whereas the extension of meaning is always limited precisely by its end, by its finality: from the fact that images ultimately have no finality and proceed by total contiguity, infinitely multiplying themselves according to an irresistible epidemic process which no one today can control, our world has become truly infinite, or rather exponential by means of images. It is caught up in a mad pursuit of images, in an ever greater fascination which is only accentuated by video and digital images. We have thus come to the paradox that these images describe the equal impossibility of the real and the imaginary. (Baudrillard, "Evil Demons" 95)

I. Remediating the Image. The Haunted Documentary

Simply put, *remediation* means the representation of one medium in another, as, for example, in the common practice of film adaptations of novels. While remediation is not a new phenomenon, Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin argue in their book *Remediation. Understanding New Media* from 1999 that remediation is a defining property of new digital media based on the simultaneous need for immediacy and hypermediacy in our culture. As philosopher Norbert Bolz puts it:

> Ich sehe einen klaren Zusammenhang zwischen der explosiven Entfaltung unserer Medienkulturen, der zunehmenden Medialität und technischen Vermitteltheit unseres Weltumgangs und dem Hunger nach Echtheit, Ursprünglichkeit, dem Reinen, Unverfälschten, Puren. Hier zeigen sich Reaktionsbildungen auf eine Erfahrung, die eigentlich uralt ist, aber aufgrund der enormen Beschleunigung der technischen Medienentwicklung und ihrer penetranten Aufdringlichkeit für alle unabweisbar geworden zu sein scheint. Thesenhaft gesagt: *In einer Welt der Simulation wird das Reale zur Obsession.*
>
> I see a clear connection between the explosive development of our media cultures, the increasing mediality and technical mediatedness of our approach to reality and the hunger for authenticity, originality, the uncontaminated, the unadulterated, the pure. These are reactions to an essentially ancient experience that due to the enormous acceleration of the technical media development and its penetrant obtrusiveness has become irrefutable for everybody. To conclude: *In a world of simulation, the real becomes obsession*.[1] (Poerksen, "Im Gespräch" 441)

According to Bolter and Grusin, our culture is subject to the "contradictory imperatives for immediacy and hypermediacy," which leads to a "double logic of remediation: ideally, it

[1] All translations are my own.

wants to erase its media in the very act of multiplying them." (5) Immediacy describes the attempt to create the illusion of the viewer and the object in the same space, without the medium[2] while hypermediacy is defined as the co-presence of multiple media at the same time, e.g. websites that use both text and video.[3] There is a tension between the real space, the depicted object, and the visual space that a medium creates. The logic of immediacy tries to eliminate the second, visual space while the logic of hypermediacy draws attention to this tension. It wants to make the viewer aware of the medium as a medium and uses this acknowledgment as a source of enjoyment. Immediacy and hypermediacy both represent the desire to

> get past the limits of representation and to achieve the real. [...] The real is defined in terms of the viewer's experience; it is that which would evoke an immediate (and therefore authentic) emotional response. Transparent digital applications seek to get to the real by bravely denying the fact of mediation; digital hypermedia seek the real by multiplying mediation so as to create a feeling of fullness, a satiety of experience, which can be taken as reality. Both of these moves are strategies of remediation. (53)

Remediation is not a fixed term but depends on how a culture at a specific moment defines immediacy and hypermediacy. New media always exist not in a vacuum but in a context with older media with which they are in competition with; their goal is to be better and

[2] Direct Cinema, for example, aims at completely erasing these traces of mediation.

[3] Their definition as well as their examples in the following chapters reveal how much the media situation has changed since the release of *Remediation* in 1999. To define hypermediacy simply as the co-presence of different media in another medium – which, by now, simply describes the status quo – means to deplete the term of any meaning. I would argue that, in order to produce a sense of hypermediacy, a medium cannot simply present them in the same space but must explicitly, deliberately and aggressively draw attention to its displacement.

newer versions, while previous media in turn react to this development. (For example, in a world where all communication occurs via email, the handwritten letter turns into a romantic gesture according to Bolz.)

Remediation has implicit and explicit functions: It works a mediation of mediation but also reminds of the inseparability of mediation and reality. "The events of our mediated culture are constituted by combinations of subject, media, and objects, which do not exist in their segregated form." (58) Media function as objects within the world which means that all media are real. This also echoes philosophical ideas both from poststructuralism[4] as well as contemporary media theory[5]. According to Bolter and Grusin, by eliminating the real or the world as a referent, modernism paradoxically emphasized the reality of both the act of painting and its product. Modern art was often regarded as real or authentic, precisely because it refused to be realistic, and the example of modern art reminds of the need to distinguish mediation and remediation from representation. Mediations are real not only because the objects produced circulate in the real world but also because the act of mediation itself functions as a hybrid and is treated much like a physical object. "Mediation is the remediation of reality because media themselves are real and because the experience

[4] "Strictly speaking, the object is no longer privileged over the image in terms of essence or signification. One is no longer the truth of the other: they coexist in the same physical and logical space, where they 'operate' equally as signs (in their differential, reversible, and combinatorial relations)." (Baudrillard, "Mass Media Culture" 16)

[5] Bolz: "Es gibt kein Jenseits der Medien. […] Medienwirklichkeit und Lebenswirklichkeit sind identisch./ There is no beyond the media. […] Media reality and life reality are identical." (Poerksen, "Im Gespräch" 439)

of media is the subject of remediation." (59) Lastly, remediation can work as reform with new media trying to supersede the old, especially in being more immediate; and media reforms reality itself.

They introduce a spectrum of remediation depending on the degree of perceived competition or rivalry between the new media and previous forms. I argue that German filmmaker Philip Scheffner uses an approach in his documentaries that Bolter and Grusin call 'aggressive remediation:' While the previous medium is refashioned entirely, its presence is still deliberately marked which produces a sense of multiplicity or hyper-mediacy. The disruption of context forces the viewer to acknowledge the artificiality of both original and digital. "In this kind of remediation, the older media are presented in a space whose discontinuities, like those of collage and photomontage, are clearly visible." (47) Scheffner uses this aggressive remediation to address issues that withdraw themselves of perception, that resist a solution; media provide traces to the core problem but remain hidden and indeterminable like ghosts. Despite their occasional coverage in the media, they remain hidden at their core; some in plain sight, some completely buried.

> What is a ghost? How does he live? How many types of ghosts exist? How does he become a ghost? This is what I will tell you. Lots of ghosts take the form of an old tattered rag lying in the street. It just lies in the street most of the time and people walking by get trapped in it. The ghost is constantly moving about. . . . He can go everywhere.
>
> —Bhawan Singh, The Halfmoon Files

Avery Gordon writes in "Some Thoughts on Haunting and Futurity:" "What's distinctive about haunting […] is that it is an animated state in which a repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known, sometimes very directly, sometimes more obliquely." (2) Haunting produces instances that defamiliarize the familiar, change the linearity of time, and demand attention to the fact that the suppression is still very much present even when concealed. In contrast to trauma, haunting produces a state of urgency, where something has to be done to alleviate the circumstances. Following Gordon's definition, I argue that Scheffner's documentaries can be called *haunted* documentaries because they continuously interrogate the visible and the sayable.

Brigitta Wagner writes about Scheffner:

> Scheffner is the guy who walks in the opposite direction and stands quietly below the basket or beside the goal not knowing but perhaps sensing that the ball will come to him. When it does, he scores a film (or two) that nobody could have anticipated. And just when it matters most. Originally a video artist, Scheffner the documentarian makes the unseen visible and the unheard audible […] Embracing a methodology that's closer to scholarship and artistic research than the high stakes of the well-funded documentary, Scheffner can risk open-endedness, discovery and a revised thesis.

Havarie

Scheffner's film *Havarie* premiered at the Berlinale in 2016. Broadly speaking, it interrogates the medial representation of the fate of refugees crossing the Mediterranean Sea to get to Europe. Cosima Lutz claims: "Dieses schneidend fiese Kunstwerk entfaltet mehr politische Dringlichkeit als jede verfilmte Meinungsäußerung zur 'Flüchtlingskrise', die vielleicht längst eine Krise der Wahrnehmung ist./This bitingly vicious work of art develops more political urgency than any filmed expressions of opinions about the 'refugee crisis', which might already be a crisis of perception." Her categorization of *Havarie* as a work of art rather than a documentary adumbrates the effect of Scheffner's use of media in this film. The overt employment of remediation creates a sense of hypermediacy that distances the audience and allows a reflection of its own perspective in this crisis of perception brought on by an oversaturation with the same recurring images.

The film starts out with coordinates on black screen: 37º 28.6′N 0º3.8′E. What follows are over 90 minutes of footage slowed down to an extreme. For the majority of the film, one sees a boat on the ocean:

Figure 2: Boat in *Havarie*

The source for these images is a YouTube video of about 3.5 minutes. After watching it, filmmaker Philip Scheffner and his partner Merle Kröger decided to make a film about the refugee crisis. Irishman Terry Diamond had filmed the short clip from aboard the cruise ship "Adventures of the Sea" on September 14th 2012 between Spain and Algeria. The cruise ship remained in proximity of the refugee boat until rescue services arrived about 90 minutes later. Scheffner and Kröger tracked down the filmmaker, people from the rescue services involved in the saving of the boat, and other people involved in the incident. After collecting a lot of material, they, however, decided to change their approach. In an interview, Scheffner explained:

> On paper this concept looked great, and filming was very interesting and intense. But something had changed. Of course people dying in the Mediterranean Sea is nothing new. But when we started looking at our footage, we realised that the representation of people on boats in the Mediterranean had changed a lot. The images were everywhere. On every news channel. Not the action itself but the representation had changed. We had the feeling that we had to react to that. (Wagner)

What was lacking in this approach according to Scheffner was the perspective of us Westerners watching these images. What they ended up with is the extension of the 3.5-minute film to about 93 minutes (the time it took for rescue services to arrive); the frames are about one second long which leads to jerky movement between the frames; sometimes, frames even seem to overlap. This overlap creates the illusion of two or multiple boats reminding of the death of over 5000 people in the Mediterranean that haunt this ubiquitous image of the ocean. The interviews Scheffner and Kröger conducted before changing their approach to the film provide the soundtrack for *Havarie*. It includes stories by refugees about why they fled their home countries, conversations between refugees and their relatives, communication between the cruise ship from which the video was filmed and the rescue service. The sounds provide a context that make the audience reinterpret the images and lead the imagination in different directions. One tries to make connections between the visual and the audible but the context keeps changing, and a definite relationship between the two is impossible. The questioning itself becomes the purpose and effect of the film. From the start, the audience is also asked to assess what perspective they see here. Only at minute 47, a pan finally reveals the position of the camera and the distance to the boat.

Figure 3: Boat in *Havarie*

It then pans to the right which allows an idea on what kind of vessel the camera is located.

Figure 4: Pan in *Havarie*

And finally a pan to the left where the confrontation with the sun creates some surprising, colorful frames.

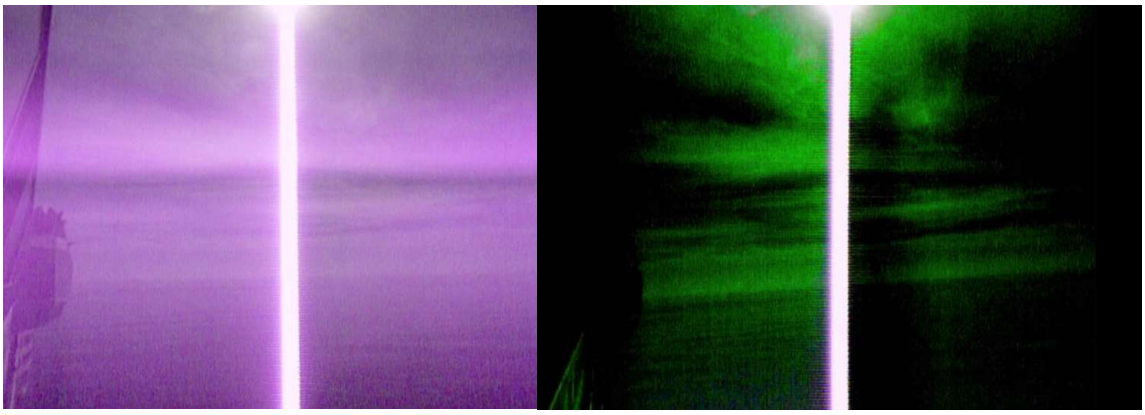

Figure 5: Colorful frames in *Havarie*

This is a central moment in the film not only because it represents the only disruption but also because it does reveal the perspective of the filmmaker as well as, ultimately, the viewer. It is the fixed point, the scale, revealing a cruise ship – not a means of transportation but a vessel entirely designed for luxury travel and entertainment. The contrast between the passengers of the cruise ship enjoying a vacation (albeit not an unusual or exceedingly extravagant one for Western standards) and the people on the boat who were forced to leave their countries behind could not be more stark. The effect is emphasized by the clear physical hierarchy with the people on the cruise ship towering over the tiny boat on the ocean. Like 'Fortress Europe,' the large cruiser remains completely inaccessible to the 13 individuals on the boat. This scene like no other additionally juxtaposes the Western concept of travel with the harsh reality of being a refugee.

In an interview with the German newspaper *taz*, Scheffner explains:

> Das war eine Tendenz, die wir auch in der Medienreaktion auf die vielen Toten im Mittelmeer festgestellt haben. Es wurde versucht, mit Empathie darüber zu berichten und der Anonymität der Zahlen eine persönliche Geschichte entgegenzustellen. Was ich total nachvollziehen kann. Aber in der Ballung zu der Zeit hatte das einen ganz merkwürdigen Effekt. Ich konnte mich schneller distanzieren. Denn das Identifizieren wurde mir so einfach gemacht, dass ich gar nicht mehr über meine eigene Person dabei nachdenken musste. Dass ich gerade am eigenen Frühstückstisch mit der Zeitung in Berlin sitze. Dass ich auch Teil des Problems bin und nicht einfach nur von draußen darauf gucke, wurde nicht hinterfragt.
>
> This was a tendency that we also noticed in the media reaction about the many dead in the Mediterranean. People tried to report about it with empathy and to contrast the anonymity of the numbers with a personal story. I can completely understand that. But with the concentration of the time, this had a very strange effect. I could distance myself faster. As the identification was made so simple that I didn't have to think about my own person any more. That I sit at breakfast with my newspaper in Berlin. That I am part of the problem as well and don't just look at it from the outside; that wasn't questioned. (Gerner)

Torsten Körner asks how we are supposed to orientate ourselves in these worlds of suffering, confronted with an enormous amount of misery from all directions and substantially different qualities. He claims that we have to pragmatically distance ourselves from the empathy these images evoke; only detachment allows an assessment of one's own position and possibilities of action. "Mein Leben ist keine Simulation, und der Krieg ist es auch nicht. Wahrheit bemisst sich nicht an Blut und Knochen. Und unsere Kultur, die an den Nadeln der Authentizitäts-Dealer hängt, ist nicht weniger wahr als eine umkämpfte Häuserschlucht in Aleppo./My life is not a simulation, and war isn't either. Truth is not measured in blood and bones. And our culture hooked on the needles of the authenticity dealers is not less true than a war zone in Aleppo." (284) With this quote, Körner does not

argue for an impassivity regarding global problems but an interruption of natural compassion in favor of a detached reflection. *Havarie* achieves this disruption of empathy with the pervasive effect of artifice. The revelation of the perspective on the cruise ship, of the Western distance from the boat, also reveals the viewer's passive perspective from the movie theater. The interviews themselves do not lend themselves towards empathy either. The voices absent of a visual body combined with the voiceless bodies on the refugees' boat make the situation too abstract to allow empathy.

With no visual distractions, the viewer is forced to focus solely on the voice, the stories, the shared experiences of the people that all talk about the same issue from different perspectives. Devoid of a point of identification, of connection, the audience is forced to reflect on their own position during the gaps and silences in the conversation that progressively feel impossibly long. The conversation between the rescue service and the cruise ship that matches the length of the film provides a timeline that also works like a countdown, for the people on the boat, but for the viewer as well.

The lack of tension, of crisis, of anything happening makes the pace of the film painfully slow. Cosima Lutz writes in a review of the film that people had left the theater after not even half of it: "Eines von beidem, ein Ankommen oder ein Untergehen, wäre offenbar irgendwie wünschenswert, im Kino. Ein Drama, etwas Spannendes, ein tragisches Ereignis. Erlösung./One of the two, an arrival or a sinking, would apparently somehow be desirable, in the theater. A drama, something suspenseful, a tragic event. Redemption." Yet, *Havarie* does not provide any of these familiar components. The film denies the

viewer the fulfillment of any expectations of some kind of narrative. The intense magnification and poor quality when watching *Havarie* on the big screen makes the hypnotic effect overwhelming. The shadow or reflection of the boat in the water can be mistaken for a drowning person, something, *anything* more dramatic. One almost hopes for something to happen. The conventional images of refugees come with a familiar set of emotions, the comfort to know what to feel. The images in *Havarie*, however, do not provide this comfort and additionally deprive the audience of narrative structures.

The announcement that rescue services will arrive in 10 minutes induces a feeling of relief. The audience accompanies these 13 men on the boat for the last 90 minutes of their failed voyage; it must share their uncertainty about what was be happening, their endurance of the vastness of the ocean, their boredom. This creates a solidarity that none of the stories in the interviews can convey. At the same time, the film tires the audience; it can observe itself lose interest, feel bored, being more concerned with one's own comfort during a 90-minute film than with the misery of the people on the screen. Wagner writes that the "spectators must acknowledge their cinematic privilege, a stand-in for their privilege beyond the movie theatre." In film critic Olaf Möller who called the film "one of the most morally abject works the Berlinale 2016 had to offer," this guilt seemed to induce a feeling of resentment: "[T]he cruise passengers (seen briefly in a pan) a mass of people vaguely guilty of… something, simply by being where they are." This defensive reaction certainly mirrors a common response when people are confronted with their own privilege.

Towards the end of the film, Terry, the video maker, theorizes about who these people are, what they feel, where they come from, how they ended up there, etc. Yet, this is not information available to him or the viewer. He seems to lose the boat with his camera and tries to find it again; it keeps floating in and out of the frame of the image. The film ends with a shot of the sea without the boat; a beautiful day.

Havarie negotiates the tension between immediacy and hypermediacy by means of remediation. Terry Diamond's video, and with it representative of all YouTube videos, is the ideal of an immediate clip; it is raw material uploaded without any further information. The medium itself does not play any role in the video, yet, at the same time, it works as a perfect reminder that any image is meaningless without context. *Havarie* on the other hand is a festival of hypermediacy; the visual material is clearly manipulated, sound and image do not connect directly. The scene that illustrates this perfectly is the moment of the pan. On the visual level, the most exciting moment in the film, the colorful frames are accompanied by a Filipino hit from the 1970s. Two performances of the song – one by the band of the cruise ship, one by the crew of a container ship during karaoke – are eerily intercut. The unnatural colors of the frames, the intercut song, everything about this scene is a reminder of the medium, a reminder of the impossibility of immediacy. It forces the audience to reflect on its own position and perception. Additionally, the film collapses different temporalities: The short film clip is extended to last the whole film mirroring the time of the cruise ship next to the boat; the interviews were not only recorded over a prolonged period of time, the conversations also cover many years. This clashing of

different temporalities reminds of the complexity and vastness of individuals; the lost lives and forgotten memories haunt us. It also reminds the audience of how little time they usually spend on a global, tragic issue such as this one – it usually only amounts to headlines. Yet, in *Havarie*, the audience is forced to 'endure' a 93-minute film spent on this topic alone. The contrast of the subjective painfulness of the film in comparison to the fate of the people on the boat is shocking.

In *Havarie*, Scheffner is certainly the most experimental, uses the highest degree of artifice in comparison to his other films. *Revision*, for example, at first sight employs conventional documentary techniques; yet, closer analysis reveals artifice in these as well. The subtle interventions allow the film to go beyond the scope of a mere truth-finding mission.

Revision

In 1992, two Roma men were shot near the German-Polish border, presumably in a hunting accident for which the two German hunters never faced legal consequences. Twenty years later, Philip Scheffner's documentary film *Revision* (2012) reexamines the case and its circumstances by interviewing officials, eye-witnesses, and families of the victims. While this approach at first sight resembles the traditional format of rectifying past events of social injustice by uncovering the truth, *Revision* goes beyond the mere recovery of facts. I argue that *Revision* uses specific aesthetic strategies to address the state of mediation and remediation in this particular case in order to reconstruct the systemic societal reasons for this event.

One famous example of a previous documentary film investigating a criminal case is Errol Morris' *The Thin Blue Line* from 1988. At the time of its release, *The Thin Blue Line* offered a ground-breaking new perspective on the possibilities and impact of documentary film by investigating a murder that had happened 12 years earlier with the alleged murderer already behind bars. *The Thin Blue Line* made it possible for the case to be re-opened, and save the convicted Randall Dale Williams from the death sentence. Furthermore, Alexandra Heller-Nicholas claims that it "introduced many thematic and stylistic elements that have since become commonplace, not only in other documentary feature films but also in related areas such as television documentary" (109) with e.g. the use of re-enactments and the depiction of material evidence. Like *The Thin Blue Line*, *Revision* centers around interviews with

people who have not been interviewed for the official investigation. However, *The Thin Blue Line* incorporates these interviews to either bring facts to light that give a different account of the events or to reveal certain witnesses as liars. Both aspects contribute to the film's overall goal to give a different, more truthful version of what had happened. With new information being given, the reenactment of the shooting changes to represent different versions. (Heller-Nicholas 111) In *Revision*, the purpose of the selection of interviews is far more unclear at first sight. One example are the interviews with the victims' families that do not have any valuable information to contribute to the criminal case. They do, however, make up a large portion of the first part of the film. Here, it becomes apparent that *Revision* is not simply and solely interested in finding the truth in the sense of factual evidence of the case. What happened that night is quite clear from an early point on with more and more details getting filled in over the course of the film. Instead of pursuing a correction of a legal ruling, *Revision* focuses on the variety of different narratives, on the multitude of possible perspectives. This is further emphasized by the interview of an eye-witness that can tell exactly what had happened with the two victims in that night. This could be assumed to be the core element and climax of the film as the quasi-confession of David Ray Harris is in *The Thin Blue Line*. In *Revision* however, this interview is not given more weight than any other, no special space is reserved at the end of the film, no climactic importance given to this piece of information. It has the same weight as the interviews with the families that, despite their lack of new facts, have a central role in contributing to the multi-faceted circumstances of a case like this. Here, the

depiction of the two dead men as members of a family is important, the consequences of their deaths not only for their wives and children back in 1992 but also on their lives today, the further impact on the next generation. It reminds the viewer that any event is always embedded in a complexly mediated system rather than completely isolated and detached as a news podcast or a legal case might make it appear. The film approaches this single event from a myriad of different possible perspectives which becomes clear in the reoccurring theme of the 'beginning of the story' which is set up by Scheffner's first voice-over:

> The film begins with the end of a story. A story with many beginnings. For me it begins with a radio traffic message. In 1992 in Germany, two years after reunification. "Due to a fire on the Berlin-Szczecin autobahn, the German-Polish border crossing is temporarily closed. Traffic is held up for 3km." For a family from the city Craiova, the story begins much earlier: In 1989 in Romania, shortly after the revolution. For another family from Alba Iulia, the story begins 1991. In Romania with pictures from Germany.

Over the course of the film, the viewer hears different versions of the events of this night:

> Nadrensee, North East Germany, June 29, 1992. Two farmers discover something lying in the corn. On closer inspection, they recognize two human bodies. They drive towards the village to look for help. Behind them, the field is in flames.
>
> On June 29, 1992, two people are shot in a field close to the German-Polish border. […] On June 29, 1992, Edache Calderar is shot in a field close to the German-Polish border. The second body is identified by relatives currently at the refugee center in Gelbensande near Rostock. His name is Grigore Velcu called Parizan, from the city Craiova in Romania. […]
>
> On June 29, 1992, Eudache Calderar and Grigore Velcu are shot in a field close to the German-Polish border. […]

Different words all describing the same single event reveal how the choice of words informs our perception; e.g. when a report uses the names of the victims, it ensures that the viewer perceives them as people rather than anonymous entities, and enables us to empathize with them, and to sympathize with the families. At the same time, the fact that different words can be used to describe the same occasion emphasizes that all descriptions are always the result of human narrativization bound to interpretation, purpose, and goal of the speaker. It is important to point out that this multitude of versions all exist simultaneously without one being more viable or more truthful than another. While *The Thin Blue Line*'s changing reenactments represent a truth-finding process at the end of which one – the factually most accurate – version emerges, *Revision*'s approach is more interested in the multitude of versions itself. I do not argue that *Revision*'s program is to advocate for postmodern relativism in which truth is irrelevant altogether. Instead, the film reflects on the complexity of a case deeply embedded in a system of mediation (of which *Revision* is part as well) that goes well beyond the concept of only one true descriptive story. In order to enable the viewer to judge or intervene, the film forces us to work through this complexity by making us aware of the multitude of simultaneously valid truths.

This multitude also emerges from the various people in the interviews which *Revision* highlights by framing them differently. When Scheffner interviews officials, such as lawyers, forensic examiners, policemen, they speak from a different social role than family members. Consequently, the families are interviewed as a group rather than individuals; a circumstance on that one of the sons also comments; he expresses the wish to be

interviewed separately. Additionally, the family interviews take place in their homes; they are surrounded by their personal items, and wear everyday clothing. The interviews with the officials, on the other hand, take place in their professional workplace with the interviewees sitting behind their desks surrounded by items that underline their professional capacity. An especially illustrative example is the figure of Romeo Tiberiade who is interviewed once as the officer for Roma affairs in the district council of Dolj, and once as a former asylum seeker in Germany talking about his personal experience.

Figure 6: Officer for Roma affairs Romeo Tiberiade in *Revision*

Figure 7: Former asylum seeker Romeo Tiberiade in *Revision*

This separation between personal and official space exists in regard to the content but is visually emphasized outside of the interview framing as well. Interviews alternate with silent shots of the windows in the rooms where the interviews take place. Many of the windows in Germany go out to nature settings, one can see trees with green foliage, while the windows in Romania show courtyards, other houses, the village, people.

Figure 8: Window in Germany in *Revision*

Figure 9: Window in Romania in *Revision*

Naturally, this separates the lives of people in different cultures, social roles, and countries which reminds of the complexity and multiplicity of a case such as this one, and in what kind of various spaces it continues to have meaning. At the same time, *Revision* stands out by *not* showing and reproducing certain negative stereotypical representations of Romani people that are common in media. (Novoselsky) *Revision* consciously avoids these images dominated by connotations of dirt, filth, and chaos, and instead gives the individuals space for their perspective. By doing so, the film reacts to a visual but also verbal media situation in which people are reduced to negative stereotypes as Scheffner himself found when the two men had only been characterized as human traffickers. (Kassler 25)

At the same time, the visibility of the window's frame and the reflection of the glass highlight the window's function as a separator between the inside and the outside. Even though the transparency of the glass creates a link between the two, it is only ostensibly permeable but ultimately represents a physical barrier, just as media grant us access to remote spaces while the medium itself confines this perspective. This reminds the viewer that even though *Revision* presents stories, and narratives from various angles, the 'truth' as a whole can never be conceived.

The direct use of the camera in the film also contributes to that reminder. In one instance, Scheffner and his camera man try to capture the exact visual conditions the hunters must have experienced when they shot at the two men.

Figure 10: Recreation of light conditions in *Revision*

The viewer learns that they made sure that the light conditions exactly matched the night of June 29 1992 to understand if the story of the hunters claiming they thought they were shooting at boars is plausible. In the off, one can hear the two men discussing the adjustments of the camera to imitate the scene in front of their eyes as closely as possible; one can also hear their frustration in this attempt which echoes with the viewers' frustration being presented with an image, and being told at the same time that it does not look like reality. They conclude that what they see, and what the camera shows is still not an exact match but they agree that it is hard to believe that one could mistake a human for a boar under these conditions. This scene certainly has the purpose of recreating the circumstances of the event in order to determine the likelihood of certain versions; simultaneously, it also reveals the limitations of a camera to depict reality. The moving image has an intrinsic,

very convincing "strong evidentiary power;" (Nichols, "Introduction" 35) this scene confronts the viewer with the boundaries of this power, and one's own misguided trust in it. When a journalist recounts the events of an attack on a refugee center that escalated into violent fights, he reveals another effect of the camera lens: "Without my camera, I wouldn't have endured this for half an hour." His observation confirms the concept of the camera as a mediating filter but also exposes the protective power of an image compared to the real experience.

In *Revision*, the relationship between immediate experience and its representation is further complicated by the strategies employed in the interviews. The first scene of an interview shows the interviewee listening to a recording of their own statement, confirming their agreement with what they said. On a practical level, this strategy allows the interviewees to correct or revise their statement making sure their words convey what they want to say. Making this process part of the film certainly gives the impression of transparency in terms of an ethical treatment of the film's subjects with the goal to not misconstrue statements, as well as in terms of an ethical filmmaking itself in showing the complexity of the issue along with the complexity of the humans who happen to be part of it. In an interview with Dieter Kassel, Scheffner elaborates on the reasons for choosing this strategy:

> Aber damit ist eine der Grundfragen des Films gestellt: Wer spricht da, wer erzählt eigentlich die Geschichte? Das ist eine ganz zentrale Frage, weil die Geschichte je nach Perspektive ganz anders beginnt, ganz anders endet und auch eine ganz andere politische Dimension entwickelt. Wir wollten, dass die Menschen, mit denen wir sprechen, das höchste Maß an Kontrolle über das haben, was sie sagen. Wir wollten, dass eine Art von filmischem Raum

> entsteht, der die Machtverhältnisse, die in so einem Interview entstehen, zum Wanken bringt.
>
> But this is a core question of the film: Who is speaking, who tells the story? This is a very central question because the story begins differently, ends differently and develops an entirely different political dimension according to different perspective. We wanted the people we spoke with to have the utmost control over what they said. We wanted a kind of filmic space to develop where the power relations in an interview situation are destabilized. (25)

At the same time, the moment of the interviewees listening to their own recorded voice reveals the volatility of the present moment that one can only attempt to capture. Listening to the statement alone already alters and changes it forever, adding layer after layer of mediation. It emphasizes that none of the things one sees on the screen are part of one's own present except for the screen itself. The same is true for the interviewees whose own voice acts like a ghost of the past; even if they corrected their previous statement it will always only represent a correction, never an actual change to the past event. These scenes are haunted by the past without creating a direct link to it.

The landscape shots inserted throughout the films give a similar impression.

Figure 11: Landscape shots in *Revision*

For the most part, they show shots of the field in Nadrensee, thus, the location of the crime. Yet, none of this is visible in these peaceful and serene scenes that show the corn swaying in the wind or the monotonous hypnotizing movement of farming machines and windmills. There is no sign that two people lost their lives there, no sign of the tragedies their families had to endure. In the film these shots offer moments of contemplation for the viewer to gather one's thoughts while these moments are simultaneously fully informed by the accounts of the film, i.e. by the knowledge of the crime and its impact. This knowledge haunts these calm shots and, thus, contrasts past and present, absence and presence, the invisible and the visible.

The result of these aesthetic strategies is a changed perception of the viewer. Documentary films often aim at a call of action, the creation of a viewer's intrinsic motivation to become

active and change whatever issue the film is targeting, e.g. *The Thin Blue Line* clearly aims at a new trial for Randall Dale Adams to have him acquitted based on the proposed outrage of the audience of the film. Heller-Nicholas further argues that *The Thin Blue Line*'s self-reflexive questioning of the validity of evidence, and thus of documentary film itself, puts the spectators in a position to become "critical viewers rather than passive consumers." (114) For *Revision*, the legal consequences of the crime, the fact that the hunters were never persecuted, are far less important. This film does not take the place of a private investigator searching for the guilty through evidence but rather the place of a historian, and to be more precise, of an *effective* historian according to Michel Foucault's concept of genealogy. Foucault demands a rejection of the concept of history as "retracing the past as a patient and continuous development" and calls to "relentlessly disrupt its pretended continuity." (380). By presenting us with a multitude of different and contradicting perspectives that all simultaneously exist (rather than replacing one another), *Revision* argues against the belief in one true history that can be reconstructed as *The Thin Blue Line* might have us believe. Like all filmmakers', Scheffner's and Morris' choices shape the depiction and arrangement of the visual material on which the truth claim of documentary film is based. As Michael Renov puts it:

> But public history cannot simply be an aggregate of private histories strung together or nimbly intercut. […] Delegating the enunciative function to a series of interview subjects cannot, in the end, bolster a truth claim for historical discourse; the enunciator, the one who 'voices' the text, is the film or videomaker functioning as historiographer. (*Theorizing* 27)

Along the lines of making *Revision* a genealogical project, Philip Scheffner, however, goes beyond that by being a constant presence in the film; he reads the voice-over narration, conducts the interviews, discusses with his cameraman. One scene especially reveals his perspective:

Figure 12: Lawyer in *Revision*

Scheffner asks the lawyer who is surrounded by volumes of legal writing making him the official representative of the law in the film about his notification of the liability insurance for hunters that covers hunting accident such as the one from June 29 1992. That is to say that the insurance would have covered any claims "if the families had put in a claim."

> Lawyer: "That's how our legal system works. I can only fulfill demands when someone files a claim. That is, seen from a legal perspective. It's possibly difficult for you to relate to but...

Scheffner: "It is difficult to relate to. Legally or not." [6]"

This emotional response of indignation and outrage from the filmmaker is a singular event in the movie. It intentionally breaks the established separation between official and personal narratives by forcing the lawyer out of his social role as representative of the law, and addressing him as a private person – as a human – on a moral rather than a legal issue. This outbreak along with Scheffner's continuous presence throughout the film affirms his own "grounding in a particular time and place, [his] preferences in a controversy" (Foucault 382) which makes him a genealogist and effective historian in comparison to Morris' not atypical, traditional relinquishment of any personal existence of the filmmaker in the movie.

The goal of *Revision* is not simply to make the viewer an activist against antiziganism, racism, and an unjust legal system but to put the viewer in a critical space of medial awareness. The film displays this case not as criminal investigation but as a result of societal systems and patterns, and thereby, alludes to the issues and problems in today's society. Scheffner sums up the program of his film: "Also diese kriminalistische Form der Aufarbeitung ist gescheitert. Unser Schwerpunkt war die Frage: Was kann eine filmische Form als Ergänzung oder als andere Form des Umgangs leisten?/So the criminal form of reconciliation has failed. Our focus was the questions: What can a filmic form as an

[6] The tone of the conversation is better comprehensible in German: "Mag vielleicht für Sie ein bisschen schwer vorstellbar sein, aber…" Scheffner: "Das ist auch schwer vorstellbar. Da gibt's… 'tschuldigung, aber juristisch hin oder her, ähm."

addition or as a completely different form of coping achieve?" (Kassel 25) This program reflects on a media situation in which the authentic experience, the immediacy of reality represents an impossibility. The movie ends with the statement of one of the daughters; she says: "If you had at least one lasting memory of him. You'd have at least that memory when you miss him. But we don't have memories. We have photos."

The Halfmoon Files

The Halfmoon Files focuses on a situation where there are no memories available at all, and photos and sound files represent the only access. It is a documentary film about colonial prisoners of war in Germany during World War I that were all interned in a camp in the town Wünsdorf near Berlin. Prisoners at the camp were mostly Muslims who fought for the Allies that were to be convinced to change sides in the name of jihad against their colonial masters. Thus, the prisoners were allowed to freely practice their religion which led to the building of the first mosque for religious purposes on German ground. The camp was also called 'das Halbmondlager/the Half Moon Camp.' Some of the other prisoners were Hindus and Sikh. Scientists used the internees to collect a variety of ethnographic and anthropological data; e.g. for a sound archive (Lautarchiv) founded by professor Wilhelm Doegen who gathered sound recordings of the prisoners. They include standardized data such as numbers and alphabets read by the prisoners in their native language as well as individual stories and songs.

Director Philip Scheffner uses the recording of a Sikh prisoner called Mall Singh as a point of departure for his film. He tries to find out more about this individual and his life after the war. When asked what the film is about in an interview with the Indian ambassador in the beginning of the film, Scheffner says: "It's a ghost story." In a literal sense, this proclamation refers to the ability of media to give access to people who have long died. "Seit Edisons Erfindung [des Phonographen] können Tote sprechen./Since Edison's

invention [of the phonograph], the dead can speak." The recording of Mall Singh who was born in 1892 is one minute and 20 seconds long; instead of a visual, there is only a black screen with the subtitles of the translation from Panjabi.

Figure 13: Mall Singh's story in *The Halfmoon Files*

The story is about a man who ate butter and milk every day. He joined the British army, went to war in Europe, and was captured in Germany. He wants to return to India and have the food he is used to. It has been three years and will be two more. "He will surely die." He hopes for peace so he can return home. A close-up of the filing sheet of the recording provides general information about the speaker such as the date of the recording (December 11 1916), name and origin of the speaker, education, native language, profession, etc. It

also includes a final comment by the commissioner Doegen: "starke, helle Stimme mit guter Resonanz/strong, clear voice with good resonance."

What is missing from the sound files are photographs that should be included but have been lost. Scheffner includes some photographs that have been reappeared in an estate sale.

Figure 14: Photograph in *The Halfmoon Files*

He shows portraits and reads the depicted person's name, finally reuniting name and face. There are also group shots which might or might not include Mall Singh.

Figure 15: Group shot in *The Halfmoon Files*

Scheffner uses this disconnect between sound and image as a point of departure to interrogate the use of different historical media in current representations. As an example, he uses a TV documentary from the 2000s about World War I that includes a speech by Wilhelm II.

Figure 16: Wilhelm II in *The Halfmoon Files*

The anonymous, omniscient, god-like voice-over narrator not uncommon in documentaries informs the viewer that the scene and the speech took place in 1914. The TV documentary makes use of what Jaimie Baron calls the 'archive effect.' Baron sees a need to recontextualize the notion of an archival document to incorporate documents produced and stored outside of official archives. She suggests to view archival documents as a spectatorial experience rather than an intrinsic property to the object. She distinguishes between temporal and intentional disparity as experiences accompanied by the archive effect. Temporal disparity means that the viewer experiences the difference between the 'then' of the footage with the 'now' of their own viewing experience. "[T]he production of temporal

disparity forces us to recognize that the past is irretrievable even as its traces are visible. […] Thus, our desire for the 'presence' of the past through its archival traces is always accompanied by the recognition of its absence, of all that has been lost." (109) Intentional disparity allows a comparison between (perceived) intended use of these documents with the actual one; e.g. the archival materials featured in *The Halfmoon Files* were produced for ethnographic and propaganda purposes while Scheffner uses them as the beginning of a story, an exploration into one man's history. The goal of Doegen was to strip the prisoners of their personalities to only be left with the type, the idea of the average Panjabi speaker; Scheffner, on the other hand, aims to restore the person, see the human behind the minimal traces left behind. In this film, the confrontation of the original footage with their status today allows the audience to experience the archive effect that gives the documents a certain authority to speak about the past, a status of factual evidence.

Yet, Scheffner recontextualizes the scene from the TV documentary by pointing out the absence of a microphone, and claiming that the sound recording was actually made in 1918 by the emperor and Wilhelm Doegen. What follows is the actual recording containing several takes because the emperor was speaking too quietly in the beginning. The sound-track is accompanied by Doegen's notes.

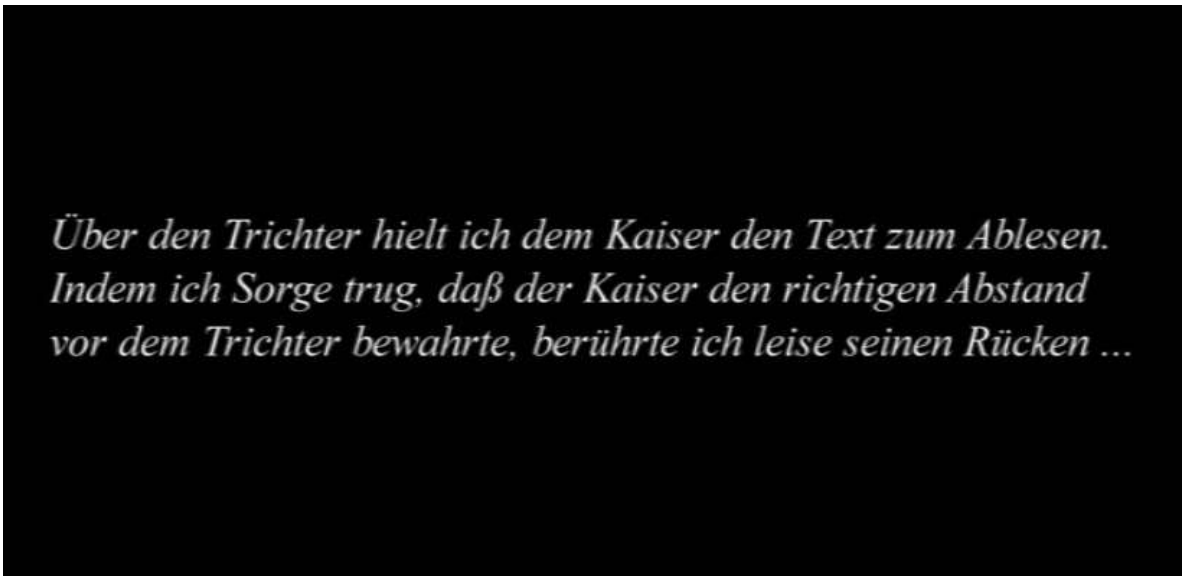

Figure 17: Doegen's notes in *The Halfmoon Files*[7]

By deconstructing the TV show's suggestive use of different media, Scheffner criticizes the methods of conventional documentary filmmaking to create a coherent history. He then continues to use this method himself to illustrate how easy it is to combine media in order to tell a convincing story. The Indian ambassador reads the preface of a book with Indian ghost stories that contains a story of, as luck would have it, Wilhelm II seeing the White Lady of Hohenzollern. Scheffner uses archival footage of Wilhelm on a hunting trip to match the scene of the story, and adds eerie music as a soundtrack. Although nothing in the images suggests the encounter with a ghost, or anything extraordinary at all for that matter, the combination of these different media clearly evokes a certain simultaneity, an

[7] The note reads: "I held the text for the emperor to read over the funnel. By making sure that the emperor remained the correct distance from the funnel, I quietly touched his back…"

appearance of evidence based on the archive effect. Although Scheffner uses the TV documentaries method to bring together image and sound in order to demonstrate its power, he also avoids this artificial consistency in the rest of the film. The use of black screen to accompany a sound recording reveals the remaining boundaries between sound and image to preserve their respective integrity. "Die Grenzziehungen, die die fotografischen und phonografischen Archivquellen markieren, werden aufeinander bezogen, aber nicht nachträglich zur *living history* einer filmischen Erzählung versöhnt./The demarcations that mark he photographic and phonographic archival sources refer to one another but are not conciliated for a *living history* of a filmic story after the fact." (Rothöhler 22) The viewer is forced to reflect on this method so common in contemporary documentary filmmaking; it destabilizes any truth claim any documentary (including Scheffner's) can make.

Scheffner underlines the variability of the same story even earlier in the film. When he introduces Mall Singh and Wilhelm Doegen, he uses the formula: "Zu dem Zeitpunkt, in dem er in dieser Geschichte auftaucht,…/At the time, when he appears in this story,…" This phrase, similar to "Die Geschichte beginnt…/The story begins" in *Revision*, emphasizes the status of any story as a creation from a certain perspective rather than one true history. Rather than a longing for cohesion or a criticism of those trying to create cohesion, Scheffner highlights the subjective experience when we engage with media.

As an example, he uses the book *Der Völker-Zirkus unserer Feinde*/*The people circus of our enemies* by Africa researcher Leo Frobenius that contained images of the internees of

the camp. Scheffner bought the book from 1916 at a used bookstore, and his version contains handwritten notes and drawings by a former owner, young Martha Kühn.

Figure 18: Drawing in *The Halfmoon Files*[8]

The childlike drawing is in stark contrast to the aggressive header. From this picture, Scheffner speculates that Martha must have gotten the book for Christmas. The book is not only an artifact of racial politics during World War I but also of Martha Kühn's life; like the nameless people in the book, she haunts these pages with her presence.

Yet, while images of the internees were used for 'scientific' books such as this one, the use of the prisoners went even further. The Deutsche Kolonial-Film GmbH Berlin, a

[8] The header reads: "Algerian hunters (Turkos), awaiting the attack."

production company that only existed for two years, made several propaganda movies set in Africa with the prisoners as actors, or rather extras. They, equipped and dressed with props from the Museum of Anthropology, provide the perfect background for these films, the perfect set to create an effect of authenticity. The misappropriation of the internees' images, bodies, and cultures for the development of propagandistic material is not an issue that is at the forefront of World War I remembrance. Instead, these forgotten people haunt the artifacts that remain from the time.

In the body measurements of a doctor who wanted to prove that the Sikh represent a homogenous race, Mall Singh is reduced to only a number (15) in the endless tables.

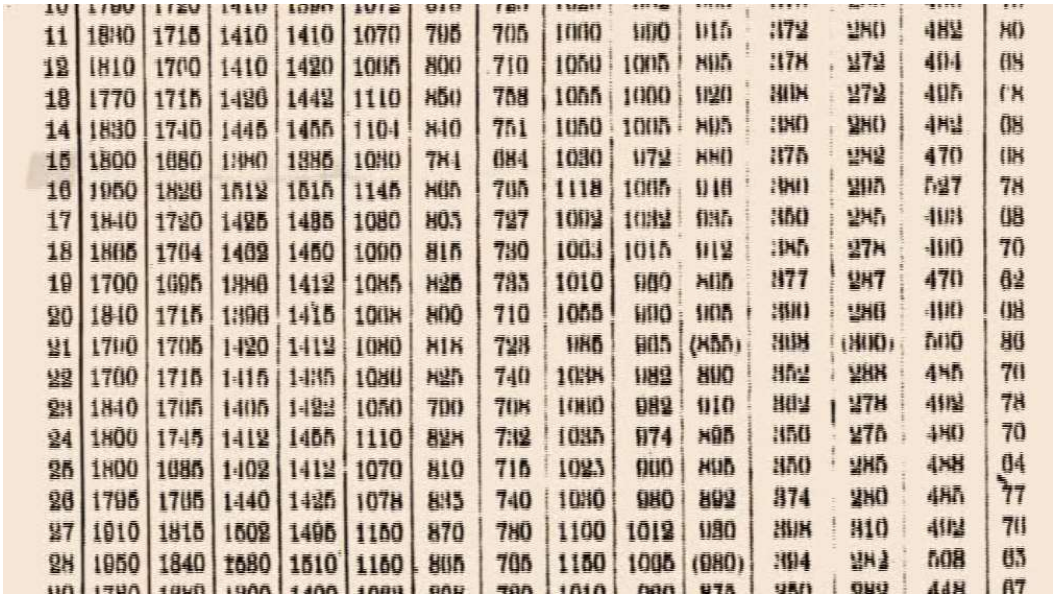

Figure 19: Measurement table in *The Halfmoon Files*

Scheffner reads the description of what the different columns signify; his voice and the words he speaks fade in and out. Even though all this data about Mall Singh's body and

origin is available, one still does not have access to the actual person. When Scheffner compares Mall Singh's chest circumference on inhalation with his chest circumference on exhalation (920mm vs. 880mm), it becomes clear that the whole is more than the sum of its parts, that the person Mall Singh is somewhere found in this 40mm difference.[9] "A ghost is like the air around us. It can go anywhere." The connection between air and spirit is visually emphasized by several shots over the course of the film; e.g. leaves blowing in the wind. The film also includes shots that are conventional visual markers of ghost stories, of mysteries, and horror films, such as foggy landscape shots.

Figure 20: Foggy landscape in *The Halfmoon Files*

[9] In a scene at the beginning of the film, Scheffner provides the measurements of a room of an archive that is visible. Even here, and even though, it is only a space, the whole of the room cannot be captured despite measurement and a visual representation.

Another example for a haunting effect is the viewing of old slides on a projector; at first, the slides remain dark, then, when the light comes on, they are overexposed for a moment before the image is clearly visible.

Figure 21: Glass slides in *The Halfmoon Files*

Additionally, the shots are not digitized but, instead, the audience witnesses Scheffner handling the slides and the projector; his hands and his mirror image are visible at times, and the characteristic noises of the projector are audible. This scene clearly brings together the past and the presence, and these forgotten faces and bodies come to new life long after their deaths. Visually, these shots correspond directly with the foggy landscapes; in both cases, something invisible like air and light obscure the objects and obstruct vision.

At the end of the film, Scheffner learns from a researcher in India that he was collaborating with that a newspaper article about Mall Singh was published in an Indian newspaper. The title of the article is "Frozen in time, soldier's voice comes to life." She reads the article for Scheffner and the audience; apparently, a descendant of Mall Singh claims his heritage. Although Scheffner and his film project are mentioned, the filmmaker becomes a victim of misappropriation himself. The film ends with: "Die Dreharbeiten in Indien haben nie

stattgefunden. Die Drehgenehmigung ist bis heute nicht angekommen…/The shooting in India never took place. The shooting permit has not arrived until today…"

The haunting in this film does not only take place in the case of humans whose images and voices have been used beyond their deaths. It is also a film about the use of media in other media; remediation works like a haunting as well. Media can be used to keep people, stories, voices, images alive; they are artifacts from other times, remains from the past. And just as people do, they leave traces in our consciousness, in other media; by following these traces, one can explore layers and layers of mediation and remediation, reveal more and more visible, but it will never lead to an original, or something real. Even if Scheffner had found a complete biography of Mall Singh, the actual person would have remained just as removed and mysterious as in the beginning of his investigation.

To conclude, Scheffner's documentaries all arise from media situations in which meaningful engagement with the topic is obstructed. His focus is media itself and he uses remediation as a device to induce an effect of detachment. This disruption of empathy and the evoked sense of self-awareness in the audience allows a more critical perspective that interrogates conventional methods of visual narratives.

II. Return to the Image. The Postmemory Documentary

Philip Scheffner's documentaries all concern themselves with topics that seem to be invisible, that are hidden from examination, that suffer from an inadequate perception. With *The Halfmoon Files*, for example, he addresses an issue from World War I that is removed from a collective consciousness, and suffers from a lack of representation. Other historical topics do not have the same problems. In the case of the Holocaust, for example, there is rather a problem of oversaturation with certain images. Marianne Hirsch regrets that limitation of Holocaust remembrance to only few images is so limited:

> The repetition of the same few images has disturbingly brought with it their radical decontextualization from their original context of production and reception. Why, with so much imagery available from the time, has the visual landscape of the Holocaust and thus our opportunity for historical understanding been so radically delimited? (8)

In this chapter, I will examine what strategies current documentaries employ in order to still be effective in an overabundance of representation. I will first give a brief overview of the history of the Holocaust documentary and its relationship to the image, and then propose the concept of the postmemory documentary based on the analysis of three contemporary documentary films: *Night Will Fall* (2014), *A Film Unfinished* (2010), and *Respite* (2007).

Joshua Hirsch describes two phases of the Holocaust documentary in terms of the cinematic "transmission of a historical trauma from eyewitnesses to the public" (*Posttraumatic*

Cinema 9): In the first phase, films generate *vicarious* trauma; a psychological term coined to describe people who have been in contact with victims of trauma over a prolonged period of time, and who themselves start showing symptoms of PTSD. The compilation films produced in the late 1940ies, (e.g. *Death Mills* (1945) by Billy Wilder) which mainly aimed at information, fall into this category with the showing of footage from the atrocities found during the liberation of the concentration camps. Hirsch argues that an image *per se* is not traumatic but has a certain traumatic potential. The traumatic potential of the liberation footage is based on the display of the human body stripped of all properties linked to a meaningful human existence, and the prior absence of images of this scale. In this first phase, the images' main purpose is that of visual evidence of what had happened; they do not require a lot of verbal explanation and narrative in order to invoke this feeling of shock which turns out to be the basis for an epistemological shift in the history of the modern West. Hirsch links this shift to the 'negative epiphany' Susan Sontag describes in her first encounter with photographs from the camps. The main objective of the films of this era is the revelation and documentation of the extent of the horror and dreadfulness of Nazi crimes. However, the shock is quickly replaced by a collective numbing and defensive denial.

The films of the second phase aim to overcome this defensive numbing by invoking a posttraumatic historical consciousness in "a kind of textual compromise between the senselessness of the initial traumatic encounter and the sense-making apparatus of a fully integrated historical narrative." (J. Hirsch, *Posttraumatic Cinema* 11) Posttraumatic

cinema attempts to mirror the unique conditions of posttraumatic memory as opposed to 'normal' memory. Time in posttraumatic memory is uncontainable and disjointed. Usually, memories change with the altered circumstances of the rememberer and the act of remembering. In posttraumatic memories, the point of view is fixed and remains that of a witness which means that the "present 'I' is invaded by the memory of the past 'I'." (12) Hirsch suggests the need for a textually mediated form of trauma in order to experience the trauma of the Holocaust. He names Alain Resnais' *Night and Fog* (1956) as an exemplary posttraumatic film in which realism and its discourse of representation and modernism with its discourse of the impossibility of representation collide; this collision is the source for its historical shock effects after images of atrocities do not have an initial appalling effect any longer.

Night and Fog displays a subjective temporality from the beginning. Footage from the camps and their liberation in black-and-white is framed and intermitted by color shots of the conditions of the camp at the time of the production of the film in the 1950ies. This juxtaposition reveals the omnipresent relationship between present and past, i.e. in the form of memory. The changing from past to present pictures is not fluent but violent and intrusive which mirrors characteristics of posttraumatic memory; it contrasts feelings of simultaneous vision and blindness, remembering and forgetting, and forces and obtrudes itself on the rememberer with the quality of hallucinations. The film achieves this contamination by its collapse of the use of color (color vs black-and-white), movement (stationary vs tracking), and sound (softer vs staccato); in the beginning of the film, these

instances are used to make a clear distinction between past and present footage; over the course of the film, they start seeping into each other and blur the line and collapse past and present. (Hebard 95ff) Furthermore, it comes to a moral corruption of the camera: As the archival footage is mostly shot by the perpetrators themselves for the purposes of propaganda or documentation, the victims are shot from the position of the Nazi gaze. Brad Prager argues that this ambivalence of the original footage, the fact that all images require a context to be meaningful, is what moved *Night and Fog* to be different. The viewer, the one who is made to look, and make sense of the atrocities, is central; the film forces the viewer into the position of the victims as well as the one of an implicated witness. At different points in *Night and Fog*, the camera in the present-day footage assumes the position of the Nazi gaze patrolling down the rows of bunks. Hebard argues that the collapse and contamination of the distinction between past and present in *Night and Fog* aims to defamiliarize the archive by the images' mediation through primarily descriptive commentary and montage. (88)

Pollock and Silverman summarize the approach of *Night and Fog* which they recognize as one of the key representative of Holocaust films[10]:

> A *concentrationary* cinema disturbs the slumber induced by post-war reconstruction by showing us the novel message of the *concentrationary* system in which we have to *see* what it means that 'everything is [now] possible'. It is a cinema utilizing radical techniques of montage and disorientation, camera movements and counterpointed commentary to expose

[10] They actually use the term of Concentrationary Cinema which they use as a historical and conceptual means.

> invisible knowledge hidden by a normalized, documentary presentation of a real that could become bland and opaque unless agitated by disturbing juxtapositions and prolonged visual attentiveness. It connects the living to the dead, past to present, here to there in order to shock us out of comforting dichotomies that keep the past 'over there'. It uses the travelling shot and shocking montage to expose us to contamination. It is a cinema of hauntings, 'in-betweens' and warnings heavy with a menace revealed under sunny skies and harsh colour. (1-2)

According to Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, Resnais provides a concept of 'constructive forgetting.' (197) He approaches the problem of potential denial and defense in the face of atrocity pictures by trying to produce something beautiful which would be more widely seen and could therefore be more effective. His strategy is to answer social and moral questions by successfully integrating art and politics. One important aspect of this strategy is the collaboration with poet and concentration camp survivor Jean Cayrol who provided the poetic voice-over narration.[11] The viewer of *Night and Fog* transforms from an observer into a witness which is based on different conceptions of 'looking.' For the observer, the camera testifies, it shows 'fact,' the position of the observer is isolated. The witness on the other hand has a subjective relation to the image: the act of witnessing requires an awareness of the 'other,' and thus a communication between oneself and the other through language, which adds moral responsibility to the act of seeing. This transformation is emphasized by the narrative which switches from third person to you-I and finally to we. In an analysis of Cayrol's poetry, Christophe Wall-Romana describes the address of the viewer as an oscillation between "alternatively forcing and *forestalling* identification."

[11] As a side note, the translation for the German version is by poet Paul Celan.

Additionally, this is emphasized by the juxtaposition of images and text, and text and music in not always complementing ways, which results in a "*surplus* of experience […] In so doing, the project of *Night and Fog* reveals itself to be the diverting of visual experience away from fascination, and toward memory and the imaginary, though [sic] the text – and the voice and music." (218)

To conclude, *Night and Fog*'s concept of constructive forgetting is based on an artistic, universalizing approach. The message at the end of film is that this kind of evil is not specific to a certain time or nation but a potential existent in all of us. It overcomes the issues of shocking the viewer into denial or defense with images of atrocities by imitating a posttraumatic experience which includes e.g. the collapse of present and past. *Night and Fog* displays formal and historical self-consciousness. Formally, the film draws attention to being a film, being made, the commentary is self-reflexive. Historically, the film interrogates itself as a representation of history. By doing so, *Night and Fog* "draws attention not just to the past but to the traumatic effects of the past on us – its deformation of historical memory – and the necessity of working through those effects." (Silverman & Pollock 194)

Going back to the two phases of the Holocaust documentary, the first phase – the visual confrontation with never before seen atrocities – completely changed our understanding of time and knowledge. Yet, this phase soon lost its power due to an overexposure to certain images. This is why the second phase had to address the impossibility of adequate representation and the posttraumatic consequences of this rupture.

One could argue that Claude Lanzmann's nine-hour documentary *Shoah* introduced a third phase with its release in 1985. This third phase is characterized by a rejection of archival footage.

The power of photographs has been an ongoing discussion in the work of Susan Sontag. In her essay "Memory as a freeze-frame: extracts from 'looking at war'," she writes about the issue of the overexposure of certain images; while they can generate shock and fright, their power can also deteriorate to the image as cliché. By comparing the curiosity and simultaneous shame of looking at pictures of atrocities with pornography, she wonders if such images should only be shown to people who could alleviate the pain like surgeons at a military hospital or people who could learn from them. Instead of helping us understand, these photographs haunt us by satisfying our voyeuristic urges: "The problem is not that people remember through photographs but that they remember only the photographs." (113) Additionally, the spectator also takes part in the shameless act of photographing these scenes in the first place and, thus, in the double victimization of the depicted people through the perpetrators' gaze. Due to the dubious ambiguity of the images of victims of the Holocaust, Lanzmann decided to use no archival footage, and instead to focus solely on interviews with eye witnesses. Andrew Hebard writes that *Shoah* has often been described as the most powerful Holocaust film because of this refusal to use any archival footage but rely solely on testimony. With the release of *Shoah*, it almost seemed as if the use of archival images had become a taboo. Hebard regards this attitude as the reason why films

such as *Night and Fog* have been neglected. "Narrative explanation is problematized rather than fortified by the film's images." (223) Brad Prager summarizes:

> In early compilation films, audiences were expected to watch perpetrators, soldiers, and bystanders react at the sight of victims and survivors. *Night and Fog*, in turn, challenged that model, asking the audience not to witness witnesses, but rather to become a witness. In *Shoah*, this process of observation takes yet another turn: viewers are asked to *not* bear witness to the filmed and photographic record of violence. They are encouraged instead to look at what seem to be empty spaces – overgrown train stations, or fields where killing machines once stood – and to watch subjects conjuring up with their words and gestures crimes that happened decades earlier. (*After the Fact* 7)

Yet, the 21st century documentaries seem to have returned to archival footage while dealing with its ambiguous history at the same time; yet, they are also faced with a vastly different cultural context. Most of the survivors and eye-witnesses of the Holocaust have since passed, and with them our access to their immediate experiences. Instead we grow up in a context of *postmemory* which Marianne Hirsch initially defines as "the response of the second generation to the trauma of the first." (8) Gerd Bayer shows in an essay how certain fiction films go beyond the concept of postmemory by showing a "noticeable decrease in the urgency to keep particular details in perpetual memory" and "a move away from a historical focus on the past and towards ethical concerns." (117) This description seems to fit the program of *Night and Fog* rather than contemporary documentaries. However, his analysis is based on Hirsch's definition which seems to have become too narrow for the current situation as we are already entering the third and fourth generation. The definition Leslie Morris suggests seems more adequate and also more encompassing in regard of depth as well as breadth:

> Postmemory, as I am using the term, is memory that cannot be traced back to the Urtext of experience, but rather unfolds as part of an ongoing process of intertextuality, translation, metonymic substitution, and a constant interrogation of the nature of the original. (293)

In my opinion, the concept of postmemory in Morris' sense is not just applicable to the Holocaust but expresses one aspect of a certain way of viewing reality as a whole in postmodernity. Although derogatorily, Sontag refers to this 'erosion' of reality in the aforementioned essay; she writes: "There are only representations: media." Prager also has a somewhat negative perspective on media in this context: "[M]ediated experience is not experience, and hearing about torture is not the same as having been tortured." (*After the Fact* 22) While, of course, an experience and its representation can never be identical, a mediated experience is most definitely still an experience. This is not an argument to relativize the suffering of the victims of the Holocaust, but to acknowledge the existence of experience beyond the directly, physically involved. Postmemory supersedes Prager's misleading idea of a hierarchy of experience, and allows the concurrence of experiences of the Holocaust on multiple levels.

Despite the skepticism towards images of the Holocaust, the availability and over-abundance of certain images persists. I argue that the three documentaries that I will analyze in the following represent a new phase of Holocaust documentaries that use postmemory as their core concept and a point of departure. Instead of rejecting the footage as the source of this crisis of perception, these films choose to return to the image. They recontextualize original footage, and allow a new access to the Holocaust through these

pictures. They fight the archive effect with strategies that evoke a feeling of artifice, and mirror the experience of postmemory.

Night Will Fall

Night Will Fall is a 2014 documentary by André Singer about a post-war film on concentration camps that was never finished. It puts the creation and distribution of certain media in a wider political context that illuminates what decisions were made for what reasons.

After the success of cinema in the 1930s, Britain and America set up a joint film department for short propaganda films for the war effort, and later to deal with the defeated Germany. In 1945, British soldiers who were trained as cameramen recorded the liberation of the camps. Head of the joint film department, Sidney Bernstein, went to Bergen-Belsen a week after the liberation; his goal was to use the footage from the liberation to make a film called *German Concentration Camps. Factual Survey*. In a film clip from an interview in 1984, Bernstein explicitly states the goal of the film to prove everything that had happened, to show to the Germans so that they could not deny they knew about the camps. It included scenes of Germans from nearby towns who witnessed the burying of the bodies by SS officers (previously, inmates had to fulfill this task). Brad Prager writes in *After the Fact. The Holocaust in Twenty-First Century Documentary Film*: "These first documentaries, filmed at the camps' liberations, were governed by the principle that it was essential to depict someone in the process of observing what had happened. The presence of witnesses was an inbuilt, even critical part of these films' approaches." (5) One editor explained that they used long panning shots that would avoid any accusation of trickery. This ensured that

nobody could suggest the film was faked. They also included maps to show the proximity of normal German life to the concentration camps. Bernstein and his editors assembled the film footage together and aimed at releasing the film in three months. Bernstein wanted Alfred Hitchcock as director but he was not available immediately but would later join as supervising director. In June 45, Hitchcock arrived in London; he was only there for a short but intense time.

In many camps, many former inmates did not want to return to their home countries, or to stay in Germany. Yet, the United States and Britain refused to take them in; many Jews fled to Palestine where they were either sent back or put in camps. The question of what to do with the survivors complicated the situation in post-war Europe as well as for the planned film. The Allies worried that a film that invoked sympathy for the survivors would undermine their policies to not take them in. At the end of June 1945, the Americans grew impatient with the project, withdrew, and had Billy Wilder produce *Death Mills*. In an interview from 1988, he explained the purpose of his film to show the extent of the German atrocities so that nobody could deny it. Yet, even though their proclaimed goal is similar, Bernstein's and Wilder's films are vastly different. *Death Mills* (a key representative of the compilation films from the first phase of Holocaust documentaries) focuses on the guilt of all Germans and its tone is solely accusatory while Bernstein's approach in *Factual Survey* was more aesthetically shaped and had a wider message about the evil potential in all humankind (it resembles much more Resnais' approach in *Night and Fog* - "Unless the world learns the lessons these pictures teaches, night will fall. But by God's grace, we who

live will learn."). Bernstein was still working throughout July until a memo in August stated the current policies about Germany: "Policy at the moment in Germany is entirely in the direction of encouraging, stimulating, and interesting the Germans out of their apathy. And there are people around the Commander-in-Chief who will say 'No atrocity film.'" By September, the edit had been shot down, all materials were labeled and filed away, and Bernstein moved on to Hollywood. The film footage was used in trials against Germans that started in the fall of 45 and in Nuremberg as powerful visual evidence.

Night Will Fall follows a loose chronological structure following the production of *Factual Survey*. It uses original film footage, photographs, interviews with eye-witnesses and experts, recordings of previous interviews, and a voice-over narrator. The footage especially in the beginning of the film is disturbing. The heaps of corpses piled upon one another, the close-ups of their faces, the emaciated survivors who barely resemble humans show the full extent of the horror the soldiers found at the liberation. These images fully satisfy the voyeurism and curiosity one might have for this kind of footage. But soon enough, it becomes harder and harder to watch. It is clear that there is no new information in any of these images; their purpose is not to give more evidence. The response is an emotional one; the overwhelming amount of images and the viewer's inability to look away mirror what the soldiers at the liberation must have felt. Even though the contemporary audience is 70 years removed from the depicted events and despite the apparent layers of mediation, the emotional reaction is still devastating. One of the editors of *Factual Survey* describes how they first viewed the footage from the concentration camp in Dachau.

Figure 22: Negatives from Dachau in *Night Will Fall*

"To see it in negative was shattering." The footage was four hours long, and everybody was hoping that they would not have to cut it. The mediation due to the inverted colors works like a very apparent filter; it is clearly not a 'realistic' image. Yet, the artifice of this mediation at the same time is a perfect reminder that beyond it, there is a truth that is still inconceivable. In a review of the film for the *New York Times*, Mike Hale concludes: "What the new film accomplishes, more than anything, is to make you wish you could see the original." I argue that it is more complicated than that – his quote, on the one hand, reveals our longing for the real, the immediate experience. On the other hand, though, contemporary viewers are grateful for the mediation and the protection it provides.

By combining the footage with interviews from both liberators and survivors, it ensures the appearance of validity and factuality of its presentation of events. One example is when soldier George Leonard provides the context of footage from the liberation of Bergen-Belsen. Typhus had broken out, and the British soldiers took the still present SS as prisoners of war. Survivor Mania Salinger describes the liberation from the perspective of the inmates. A subtitle in the archival footage informs the audience that this, in fact, is her.

Figure 23: Survivor in *Night Will Fall*

Figure 24: Interview framing in *Night Will Fall*

The archival footage is then used as a background for the conventional interview situation. This allows a direct connection between past and present, yet, the large perforations at the side of the film reel remind the viewer that the past is only accessible through this kind of media. The archive effect based on temporal disparity is especially strong in shots such as this one which is why this is a successful device in documentary to legitimize and validate one's claims.

Night Will Fall uses footage exclusively from the liberators, and none from the Nazis themselves. This decision is certainly based on the earlier mentioned ambiguity of this footage. Yet, even the liberators' material is not free from manipulation. Soviet intelligence had reported concentration camps as early as July 1944 but they had a reputation of

falsifying reports about atrocities. Only with the footage of Bergen-Belsen, Bernstein decided to use the footage from the Soviets as well. In *Night Will Fall*, a Soviet soldier provides the context of the footage from the liberation of Majdanek and Auschwitz. It includes scenes of piles of shoes, clothing, gloves, toys, scissors, human hair, dentures, teeth, brushes, glasses, suitcases, warehouses full of female hair, children's shoes, Zyklon gas, ashes. As the cameramen arrived only a few days after the arrival at the camps, they had inmates reenact scenes from the liberation. Tomy Shacham, an inmate, talks about the Soviets dressing them in striped clothes over the clothes they had. They told them to walk between the fences.

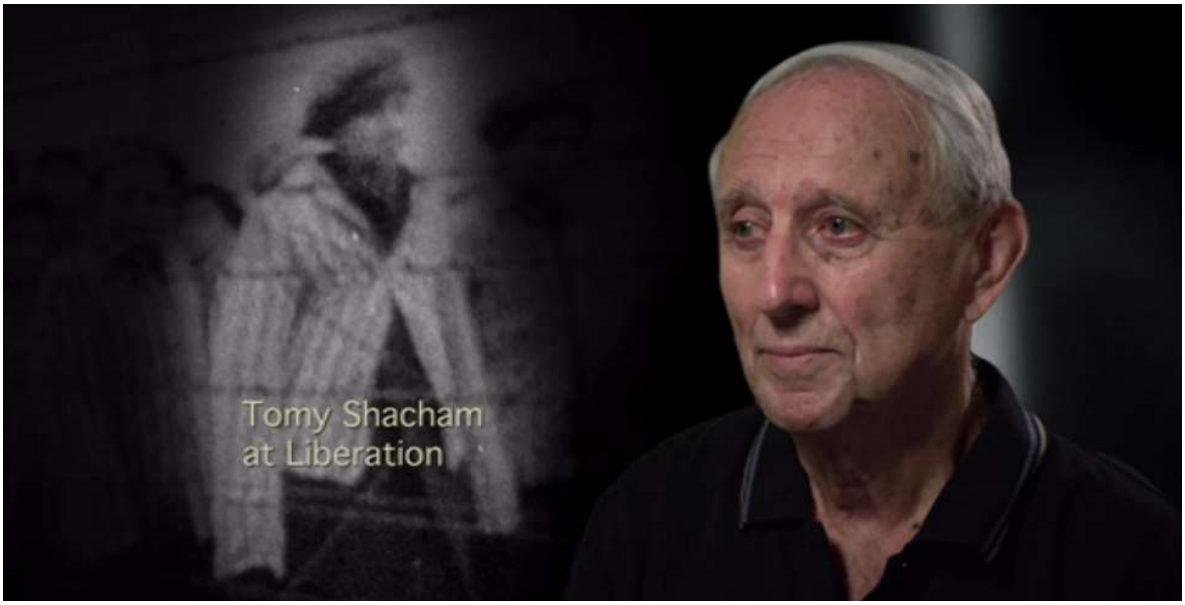

Figure 25: Staged footage in *Night Will Fall*

They tried to show everything after the event had taken place; for example, they had all the twins from Mengele's experiments march between the barbed wire fences. The still of

Tomy Shacham provides an interesting illustration of postmemory. The contemporary recording of the aged survivor next to his picture as a child allows a connection between the events of the past with the current moment of the present. The subtitle says "Tomy Shacham at Liberation." Yet, Tomy had just informed us that the pictures with the striped clothes were only made days after the liberation. Thus, even though the image does not actually link directly to the moment it aims to portray, it still works a symbol of that event. By contrasting these effects, *Night Will Fall* draws attention to the evidentiary power of an image while simultaneously reminding the viewer of the need for context for any image. The same is true for documentary films that are always produced in a certain context and for a specific audience.

To conclude, while *Night Will Fall* uses conventional documentary strategies to tell the story of a film never made, it also addresses the contemporary audience that watches this film from a context of postmemory. By recontextualizing well-known footage, it reveals the simultaneous evidentiary power of the image and its need for context. Although the Holocaust is only accessible through layers of mediation, a strong emotional response is still possible.

A Film Unfinished

A Film Unfinished, a documentary film by Israeli filmmaker Yael Hersonski from 2010, also focuses on a film that was never completed. The film starts out by displaying an array of different signs of sponsorship (e.g. German federal TV stations like arte, and mdr but also Yad Vashem) which immediately validates its authority and validity. It continues with a tracking shot through shelves in a dark basement hallway followed by archival footage displaying an archive. This scene immediately conjures up the tracking shots through the hallway in the barracks in *Night and Fog*.

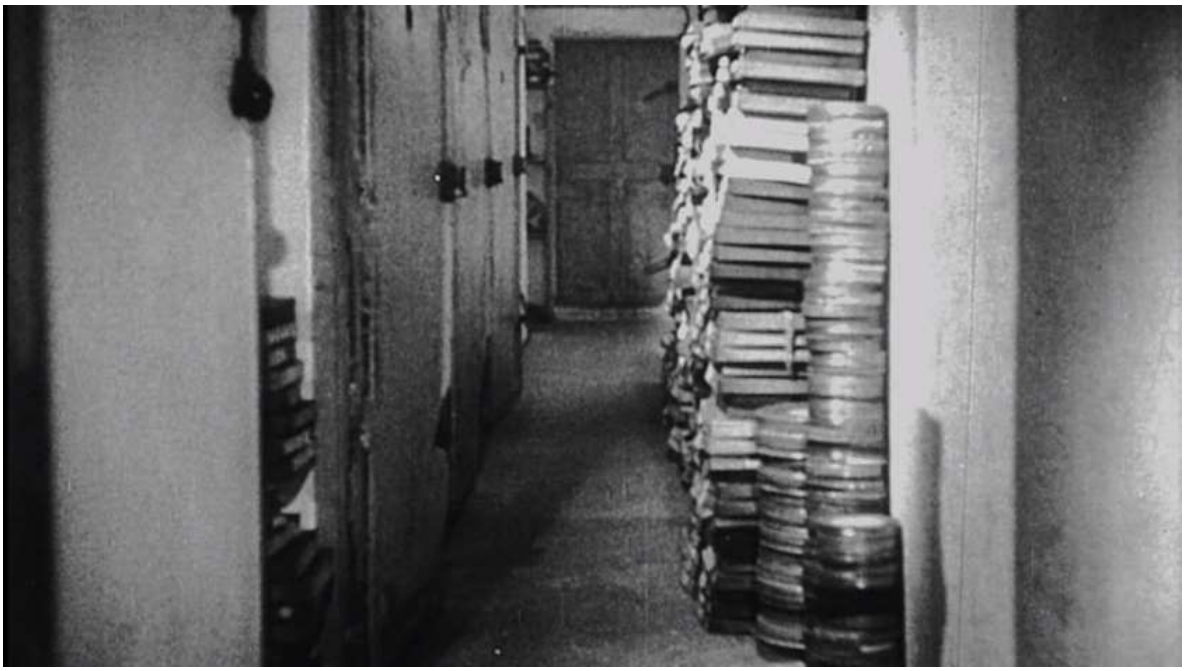

Figure 26: Archive in *A Film Unfinished*

A Film Unfinished tells the story of the production of the never finished propaganda film *Das Ghetto*. In May 1942, a German film crew came to the Warsaw Ghetto and filmed different everyday scenes over a period of thirty days. Although the official purpose of this footage is unknown, there are speculations that it was to be used for educational purposes about the Jewish population for future generations in the Third Reich. The film juxtaposes scenes of extreme poverty and famine in the ghetto with the supposed luxury and glamour of the Jewish upper-class; for example, images of starving children and corpses lying on the street contrast a scene showing a decadent banquet, suggesting that Jewish wealth is based on morally corrupt behavior and selfishness. Despite its dubious origin, documentary films about the Third Reich and World War II have been using scenes from *Das Ghetto* as authentic material showing the life of Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto. In 1998, new found footage from an archive in Ohio, however, revealed how many scenes of *Das Ghetto* had been staged and orchestrated: "What the film doesn't tell…" *A Film Unfinished* aims to recontextualize the widely-known images from *Das Ghetto*.

The archival footage has clear signs of age and decay. It was used widely to illustrate life in the ghetto in other documentaries, "engraved in memory as historical truth." At the same time, many of the shown scenes are still horrifying and produce an immediate strong emotional response. The director of *A Film Unfinished*, Yael Hersonski, says in an interview:

> Sobald man die Aufnahmen sieht, ahnt man, dass es sich um Propagandamaterial handelt, dennoch ist es nicht leicht sich von den Bildern zu lösen und zu reflektieren, was 'außerhalb' dieser Aufnahmen passiert ist.

> As soon as one sees this footage, one suspects that it must be propaganda material but it is still not easy to free oneself from these images and to reflect what happened 'outside' of these recordings. (bpd.de)

A Film Unfinished uses the new-found footage from the archive in Ohio to show different takes of the same 'documentary' scene to produce a certain effect. It also uses eye-witness reports to rectify the wrong impression the Nazi footage conveys. One source for this purpose are diary entries from people inside the ghetto. The voice-over narrator talks about the archival project of historian Emanuel Ringelblum. Ringelblum wrote:

> Everyone wrote: journalists, writers, teachers, public figures, the young and even children. Everyone was aware of the value of the work being done and its importance for future generations. Our guiding principle was that the work should be multifaceted. Our second principle was objectivity. We aspired to present the whole truth, as bitter as it may be.

The placement of this quote right in the middle of the film makes it central to the agenda of *A Film Unfinished*. Yet, the different diary entries are read by people different from the original author, and while in the language of the author, the viewer has to read the English translations unless they speak Polish, German, Hebrew, and Yiddish. Being exposed to the words of eye-witnesses, albeit fascinating, becomes a somewhat frustrating experience when being confronted with these layers of mediation. The fact that one does not have access to the original is blatantly obvious. The use of these sources lacks transparency and accountability, for example, when it is unclear who the author of these journal entries is.

Brad Prager writes:

> In Hersonski's film, memory is given priority over history, and historians have treated her apparent lack of factual fervor as a provocation. Although *A Film Unfinished* contains some new historical information, Hersonski is more concerned with documenting the subjective response of those who were there at the time. (*After the Fact* 192)

One of the major strategies of the film are scenes of five survivors of the Warsaw ghetto watching footage from *Das Ghetto* in an empty movie theater. *A Film Unfinished* records their reactions to the images as well as their stories. Sometimes, they correct or rectify a shown scene. (e.g. When a funeral is shown, one of the survivors cries out that the Jewish do not even bury their dead, revealing the fakeness of the scene.) As a viewer, one can see the projector right next to the survivors, and the lights from the projection dancing around them. The otherwise empty theater reminds of all the other people from the footage that were once neighbors, friends, and family, but did not make it out of the ghetto. It is almost as if the theater is filled with the ghosts of the victims. "The older film, the history of its reception, and the voices of survivors interact and speak to one another, fashioning an echo chamber of cinema historical contexts." (Prager, *After the Fact* 190) By keeping the living survivors anonymous until the credits, they are not just individuals but speak for all the inhabitants of the ghetto. What further strengthens this effect is the unclear relationship between the spoken words and the images shown at this moment. For example, in one scene, one of the eye-witnesses recalls a story from her childhood in the ghetto. As her family was forced to move, her father rented a horseless cart to move their belongings. While she tells this story, a clip of a scene with a cart from the archival footage is displayed.

Figure 27: Cart in *A Film Unfinished*

Yet, there is no indication in her recalling that this is actually her family, that this is the scene she is describing at that moment. We do not know if these images depict the female survivor's family or not. We also do not know if the witnesses' narration is even a reaction to the images we see. Even the use of the Nazi footage itself is ambivalent (beyond its status as propaganda material). *A Film Unfinished* does not always make clear what scenes are taken from *Das Ghetto* and which ones were part of the new-found material that was not meant for use in the propaganda project. Additionally, the material is largely further edited: *A Film Unfinished* uses freeze-frames, zoom-ins, and slow motion to focus the viewer's attention to specific parts of the footage. The frustrating experience for the viewer to make connections reminds of the slipperiness of memory.

In her paper "Regarding the Recording," Caroline Wake analyzes the discourse on viewing video testimony. She argues that, beyond the three different perspectives of viewing video testimony as primary, secondary (the spatially present interviewer), or no witnessing, there is tertiary witnessing based on the paradoxical combination of spatiotemporal distance and emotional copresence. In recent years, there is a new mobility of video testimony from the Holocaust through its availability online through YouTube and digital archives. Wake uses the Classroom Scene from an essay by Shoshana Felman as a point of departure to explore what can be called witnessing. To avoid the inflation of spatial, temporal and emotional copresence, she proposes immediate and hypermediate tertiary witnessing as models: During immediate witnessing, viewers experience themselves as spatiotemporally copresent due to the medium's transparency which creates emotional copresence. During hypermediate witnessing, the medium remains in view, and viewers are aware of the spatiotemporal distance; yet, emotional copresence still occurs. Wake argues that the live encounter is already thoroughly mediated by it being staged, and performed even before the recording starts. In *A Film Unfinished*, that staging is clearly visible. However, it is in some ways a continuation of a live encounter. "Rather than framing video testimony as a transparent document or as a separate medium, I propose reframing it as an instance of remediation." (124) The recording of a live performance is not only a document but a remediation that allows an experience of liveness for the recipients. The presence of the camera alters the testimonial encounter; it relies on the witness to continue testifying, and the interviewer becomes a surrogate for all listeners. During hypermediate tertiary

witnessing, spectators remain aware of the medium and thus do not feel spatiotemporally copresent. "[T]ertiary witnessing comes to operate not simply through affect, but through an additive or meta-affect […] To put it otherwise, it is the spectator's spatiotemporal distance, and acute awareness of that distance, that *causes* emotional copresence." (130-131) These thoughts urge the question of ethics when it comes to tertiary witnessing. The separation of the witness and their experience performs three ethical function: witnessing for the witness so further repetition is not necessary; spectators can act out and work through without burdening the primary witness; it provides a space for the secondary witness to enable rehearsal and become a better listener. I argue that *A Film Unfinished* creates hypermediate tertiary witnessing by making the survivor interviews the central component of the film while also making it impossible for the audience to ignore the medium. One illustrative example is the theater scene when Nazis forced inhabitants of the ghetto to pretend a joyful night at the theater. The audience in the movie theater watches the survivors in an empty theater watch the Jewish victims of that grotesque theater scene. This also undermines the notion of cinema as entertainment, and of the theater as pleasure.

Besides the original footage and the survivor interviews, there are also scenes that are neither. Mostly, they work as a visual filler while the voice-over narrator is talking, or a visual representation of something mentioned. For example, when the narrator talks about Czerniakov's diaries, the diaries (one assumes) are laid out by gloved hands. One motif that keeps coming up is the display of the footage, hands handling the film stock, etc. (which represents a common practice in documentary film and goes back to Vertov's *Man With a*

Movie Camera from 1929). Showing the production method anchors the documentary in reality rather than an imaginary world.

Another kind of scene is the reenactment of German cameraman Willy Wist. He tried to cover his Nazi tracks but was called to testify in court after the war. We see a recorder being set up and running, and well-known German actor Rüdiger Vogler speaking Wist's words. In this reenactment, he talks about what they filmed; street scenes, houses, etc. For example, he recalls a huge pile of human feces, and guesses that the sanitary infrastructure must have broken down due to winter or overcrowding. This scene cuts to one of the survivors stating that people would throw garbage out of their windows because they were too weak, and the hunger made people apathetic. Yet, the reenactment has a clearly different status in comparison to the survivor interviews. *A Film Unfinished* gives the audience a German body to remind us that all the Germans were people as well – that they must have had thoughts and feelings towards the work they were doing in the ghetto; and that they also had a responsibility. That even though, according to Wist, he was just a body carrying a camera, he saw all the misery with his own eyes, and recorded it. On another level, it also connects to the forced reenactments and staging of the scenes in *Das Ghetto*, e.g. one of the survivors tells the story when the Nazis had some of the people in the ghetto that still looked somewhat healthy to walk by the corpses on the street. They were told to not look at the corpses. Yet, she continues to explain that nobody looked at the corpses anyway, that they had to become insensitive to other people's lives in order to survive. While the scene we see in *Das Ghetto* is staged to portray the rich Jews' coldblooded

disregard for their fellow humans, it happens to coincide with how things actually were. The only difference is only the assumed attitude which is invisible in these images without further context. The Nazis assigned this rejection to arrogance and a feeling of superiority towards the poor, while the survivor makes it clear that the proximity to the victims ("It was so horrifying because I could be next in line.") caused this compartmentalization. This story also refers to the experience of any recipient confronted with images from the Holocaust: on the one hand, we are suspicious of the authenticity and validity of these images considering the origin but at the same time, the depiction of these events does not allow a complete denial. Or as Prager puts it: "What we see is connected to the truth, but it is false; it is *at once* a genuine document *and* a counterfeit one." (*After the Fact* 190)

Figure 28: Eye witness in *A Film Unfinished*

The survivor then continues to recall an event when she tripped over a corpse and landed right face to face with him. This experience made her realize that it was a person which led to an emotional breakdown.

The most lasting emotional impression occurs when corpses are thrown into a mass grave. This scene at the end of *A Film Unfinished* represents the climax of the narrative. As the peak of this emotional manipulation, the grueling scenes alternate with the shocked and moved faces of the survivors. When confronted with the grueling pictures of the mass graves, one interviewee says: "Today I can watch this. I am no longer immune. Today I am human, today I can cry. I am so happy that I can cry now that I'm human." While the Nazis' intention was to dehumanize Jews in their propaganda, their treatment had precisely this effect.

To conclude, *A Film Unfinished* mirrors the confusing and unsettling experience of postmemory. Instead of presenting a more accurate, unmanipulated view of the events, the audience reads the translation of texts spoken in another language read by a different person from the author, while looking at images which might or might not relate to the narrative, while being fully aware of – once more – being deliberately manipulated into an emotional response to images and music. All these aspects accumulate to a rather unsatisfying and frustrating viewing experience that makes one aware of the distance of mediating layers between oneself and the depicted events. The Holocaust documentaries of the first and second phase (although very differently) have provided the viewer with closure and one version and message for the viewer to take away. *A Film Unfinished* does not offer this

comfort; instead of giving a full account of what 'really' happened in the manner of a historian, the film manipulates and mediates the footage even further. Confronted with contradictions and less clarity than before, the audience is forced to question their own perception of *any* Holocaust footage. Despite an overabundance of available media, the event itself remains inaccessible to us. *A Film Unfinished* mirrors the experience of postmemory in which all there is is media.

Harun Farocki amplifies this effect with *Respite* by exclusively using archival footage without any contemporary interviews.

Respite

As another critic of the use of atrocity images, Susan A. Crane echoes Sontag's concern for the reiterated harm for the victims, and the questionable gain for the viewer who cannot intervene past damage. She even suggests the general avoidance and controlled availability of photographs depicting atrocities, warning about a numbing of the senses, about 'compassion fatigue,' about the omnipresence of these images making depicted instances more likely to happen again. The lack of intrinsic "meaning-making or historical truth-fulness" (316) within the images requires the imbedding in a certain context. Crane stresses the importance of teaching the public "how to look." (324) She suggests a thought experiment in response to the lack of meaning within an image without any context:

> Try this thought experiment: think of a famous picture, whatever comes to mind, and ask yourself, who are these people? Why are they there? Who took the picture, and why? Where was it developed and first published? Who owns the copyright today? (325)

This picture shows ten-year-old Sinti girl Settela Steinbach on the day of her deportation from the transit camp Westerbork in the Netherlands to Auschwitz. It is a still from film material about the camp shot by Jewish photographer and inmate Rudolf Breslauer.

Figure 29: Settela Steinbach in *Respite*

It has been used in countless documentaries on the Holocaust (not least in *Night and Fog*) and the depicted girl became the epitome of the genocide of the Jews by the Nazis before her name and ethnicity could be determined in 1994.

None of this is visible in the picture, and yet, the cultural knowledge about this context evokes the full problematic concern of representations of the Holocaust. Harun Farocki shows this picture twice in his film *Respite*; he programmatically questions the use of footage from the Holocaust, our memory of it and their impact. With the exception of some photographs in the beginning of the film, *Respite* exclusively uses footage from the 90-minute film about the Westerbork transit camp, commissioned by Nazi officer Albert

Gemmeker, only interrupted by comments on black intertitles. The story of Steinbach picture becoming the face of the Holocaust represents this decontextualization of certain images. With her photograph, the whole scene of the train has been used over and over as emblematic for the horrors of deportation without ever discussing the production of these images. While Farocki tries to recontextualize Steinbach's image, he does not refer to the issue of decontextualization directly; i.e. there is no explicit mention of the issue of appropriation.

As already mentioned, *Respite* shows Steinbach's image twice – in two different parts of the film, with different emphasis, and a different purpose. The first time is after about 17 minutes into the film; the camera focuses on the number on one of the cars and then tracks to Steinbach's face. This instance is not even mentioned on one of the slides. At this point, the scene serves solely the purpose of documentation. Farocki uses the first half of *Respite* to call into question the use of filmic footage to access historical truth. The educated viewer does not usually go into the trap of naively believing in finding truth in an image, especially when it can be considered propagandistic material from the Nazis. Yet, Farocki uses a portion of *Respite* to show us the literally evidentiary power of film: How one can reconstruct a historical context by clues in the prefilmic reality; even if footage is not a document of historical truth, it is still a document of something.

Moreover, one should not forget that original footage is still widely used as evidence in contemporary Holocaust documentaries on TV for example.

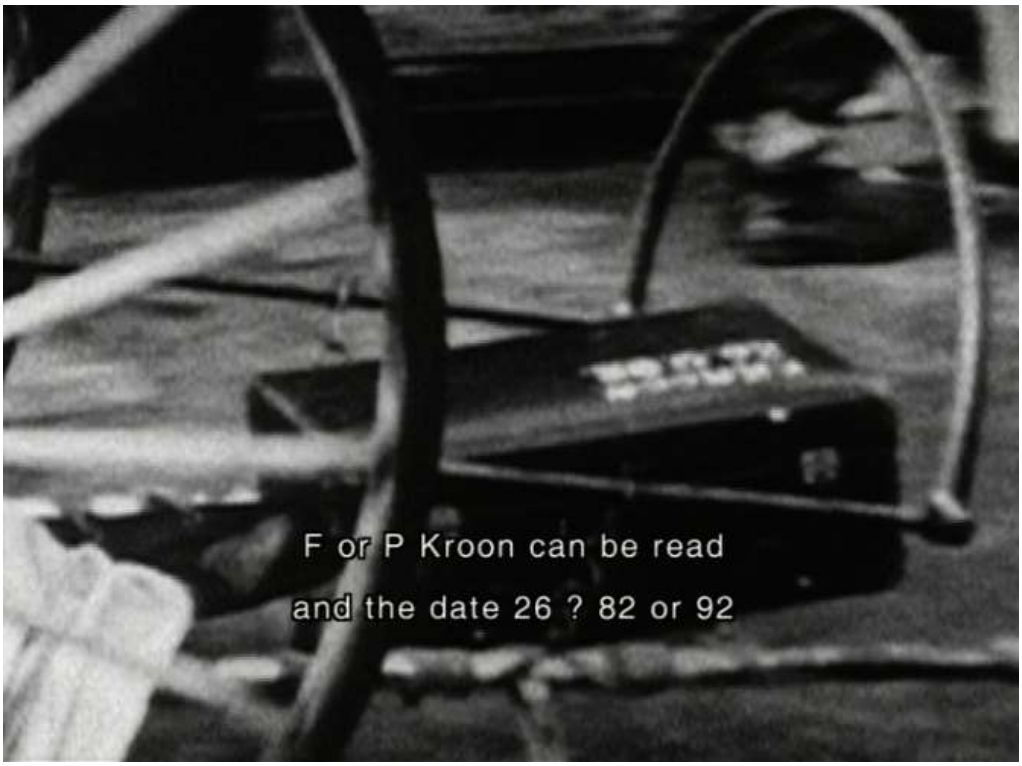

Figure 30: Suitcase in *Respite*

This picture suggests that Farocki himself made this observation and consequently found the name of the woman, and identified the date. Yet, what he does here is simply recreate (and appropriates) the process of such an investigation.

Steinbach's image returns again towards the end of the film; this time, the number of the train car is shown but not mentioned in slides. Instead, the narrative focuses on Steinbach who is mentioned by name and that she is the only close-up in the original footage. It is followed by the only use of 'I' in the slides throughout the film when the narrator wonders if Steinbach's expression of fear or premonition of death is the reason the director avoided other close-ups. In this second part of the film, Farocki interprets the images by the method

of a reiterative close reading. (Kramer 42) Thomas Elsaesser calls this a literal and metaphorical rewind which represents the major strategy of the film: in a literal way, many scenes are shown two or more times; in the second part of the film, the intertitles talk about the superimposition of these scenes by other Holocaust images that depict atrocities. One example is the dental clinic which is shown once in the beginning, and again toward the end with the reminder of medical experiments by Mengele. The rewind is also the overall project of the film as a whole which tries to show us the footage as if we saw it for the first time. (64-65)

This is accomplished by the use of different strategies: as far as one can tell, the image has not been digitally altered or modified as it shows obvious signs of decay. Unlike many other documentaries about the Holocaust, all footage comes from one single source, and the film shares the circumstances of its production with us. *Respite* goes without other authenticating strategies such as eye-witness accounts, interviews with historians, or the filming of original documents. Additionally, there is no soundtrack and no voice-over narration. This allows the viewer to experience the footage in its original state; no music or words direct or distract from the visual image. Instead, the use of intertitles depicts the contrast between the moving images and the stationary slides, and therefore the interdependence between the two. Additionally, as the intertitles are not spoken by a voice, the connection to the writer of the narration is completely abstract. However, the interruption of the moving image with the black intertitles follows a kind of poetic rhythm

in certain scenes. One example is the sequence of film material and intertitles with a waving child.

Figure 31: Waving child in *Respite*

The first showing of the scene with the child at the train's window is followed by an intertitle "The day when a child waved good-bye – ," and a repeated display of the same scene. The intertitle turns the attention of the audience towards the child that, if watched closely, does not wave itself but whose hand is moved by another person. Only the repetition reveals the heartbreaking moment of this scene.

These strategies evoke a feeling of transparency for the intention and production of *Respite*. For some viewers, this feeling might even go too far: Ralph Buchenhorst even denounces this excessive transparency as too didactic: "Viewers want to carry out this comparative, critical scrutiny work of their own accord, and not be called to do this as if by a school teacher." (232) While I recall this irritating feeling of things being spelled out for me from my first viewing of the film, I do not think that the main objective of *Respite* is to teach us 'how to look' (to echo Crane's demand from the beginning of this paper) but to give an example of 'how one might look.'

> *Respite* is not (yet another film) about the Holocaust; it is about our knowledge of the images of the Holocaust, and how the memory of this knowledge (and of these images) has forever altered our sense of temporality and causality, and thus how we see an image from the archive. (Elsaesser 65)

Elsaesser sees in *Respite*'s rewind a 'counterstrategy' which aims at a turning back of our knowledge to its point zero in order to give it a different direction. (65) I agree with Elsaesser about *Respite* employing a counterstrategy but I cannot agree with his suggested objective of this approach. The first problem is the idea of a point zero of knowledge; knowledge and our memory of knowledge is not a linear hierarchical process with a definite starting point. The other issue I see in the proposed suspension of knowledge. The film does give us new knowledge in the sense that it expands the envelope – it shows us familiar scenes in their context of production; yet, *Respite* plays with the forced linearity of its structure. When the viewer first sees Settela Steinbach and the scene, it evokes the context – or rather the de-context – of this image; this can include the horror of the

deportation, the horror of the concentration camps, the horror of children within these sites of horror, the underrepresentation of the genocide of the Romani people, the wrong assignment of a Sinti girl for the genocide of the Jews, etc. These contexts pop up like rhizomatic bubbles over the viewers' heads endlessly connected to their specific memory network. The counterstrategy in *Respite* consists of the opening up of a space of possibility, and the invitation for and acknowledgment of individual readings and individual remembrance. Farocki refuses to give us the background of misappropriation of Steinbach's image; instead he calls attention to pictures which are not generally known such as the footage of sports activities. In place of Elsaesser's notion of rewinding to a point zero, I want to suggest a notion of rewinding which forms an endless chain. What Farocki does is rewind the material and start it over (not starting fresh) and shifts his focus on entirely different aspects of the footage. "And for us, the viewers, *Respite* means that there is no ultimate acceptance of the images captured, that the conclusive significance is being postponed with every additional bit of information produced." (Buchenhorst 234)

The ambivalence that Farocki invites is already part of the 90 minutes of footage about the camp as some parts of *Respite* reveal: Foremost, the relationship between the two people responsible for its production, the Nazi Gemmeker, and Jewish inmate Breslauer, is unclear. It is unknown how Breslauer would have edited the material or if Gemmeker would have been content with his work.

Figure 32: Intertitle 'Transport' in *Respite*

Respite tells us that Gemmeker intended the film to prove the effectiveness of the camp, both in terms of its main objective 'transport' and the productivity of the inmates. For the inmates, work means a *respite* of their deportation, for Gemmeker, the proof of their work means a *respite* of a possible transfer for him. This original intertitle shows the program of the initial propaganda film. It was aimed to show its maximum efficiency in terms of transporting people to the East.

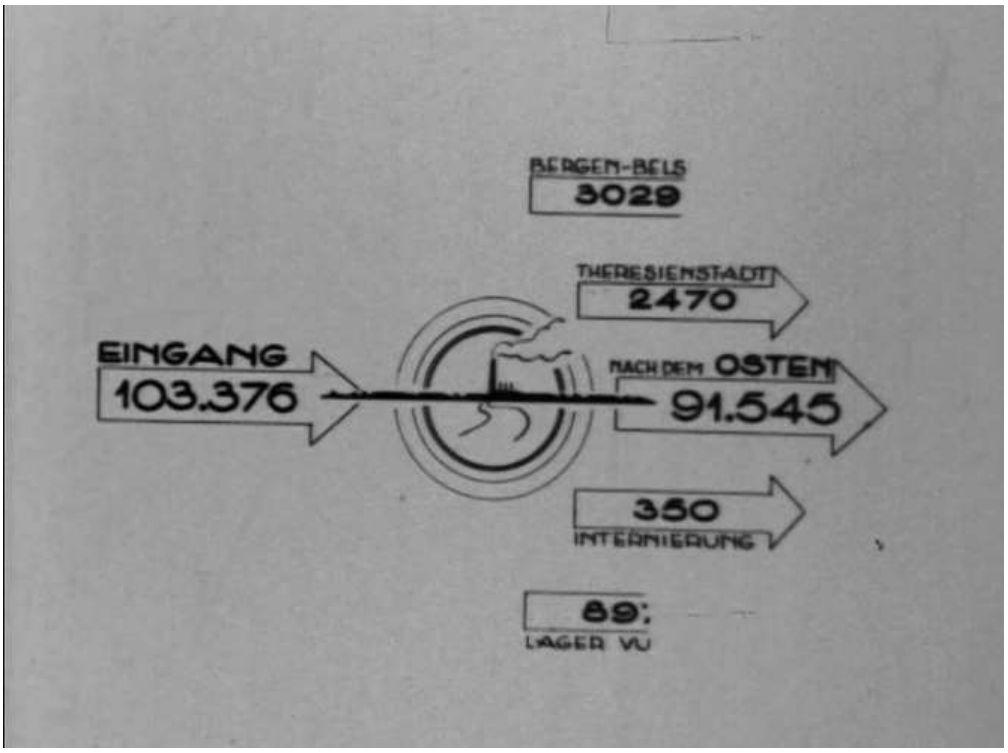

Figure 33: Intertitle 'Eingang' in *Respite*

Another ambivalence rises out of the status of Breslauer as an inmate which gives a different perspective than most other footage from the camps which is either shot by the perpetrators or the liberators. Breslauer as a victim himself can hardly be accused of a double-victimization of the other deportees. Yet, as the one with the camera he is the one who sees all and knows all. A different interpretation for the lack of close-ups presented in *Respite* could be that the gaze of Settela Steinbach acknowledges the man behind the camera as a member of the same group on the same level. Filmmakers and photographers often admit the feeling of invulnerability behind the camera; this gaze shatters the illusion of immunity. The presence of a camera has also an effect on the people around it. For

example, Farocki wonders if it might have had a calming effect for the deportation scene. On the other hand, we are aware of the probability of staging; other footage e.g. from the Warsaw ghetto also includes scenes from supposed entertainment which had been coerced by force and fear. Farocki carries over the ambivalence of the original footage to a structural element of *Respite*.

Nathan Atkinson writes about the dual temporality of nonfiction film and its public. Addressing a public means creating a world which people imagine themselves already inhabiting as a public. He argues that the success of a nonfiction film does not depend on its fidelity but the investment of the viewer with the material and with the world of the film. Grierson's 'creative treatment of actuality' is expanded to the extent that the audience and the film together engage in the creative treatment of actuality to make a public. A defining feature of the medium film is its dual temporality – the time of its recording and the time of the filmic flow (its performance). While the fiction film aims to make the audience forget about this tension, it is the rhetorical strategy of nonfiction films to consciously manage this tension. The status of a record works as a truth claim for its fidelity and epistemic authority. "[T]he nonfiction film derives its epistemic authority from photography's indexical relationship to the past, but to create a public, it must move its audience to experience it as a performance in the here and now."(678)

In the case of the first phase of Holocaust documentaries, Atkinson's notion of the public explains the rupture which the first confrontation with the visual images of the Holocaust atrocities created. These films failed (or had to fail) in 'creating a world which people

imagine themselves already inhabiting as a public' due to the unprecedented nature of these kinds of pictures. *Night and Fog*, on the other hand, understood the posttraumatic experiences of its public and could address them in a certain way. The dual temporality within the film mirrored the innate dual temporality outside of the film. *Night and Fog*'s success is based on its effective address of the viewer and their joint creating of a public. The initial scandal surrounding the cancelled showing of the film at the Cannes film festival due to a protest of German officials was followed by a very positive reception of the film in Germany, which illustrates the mechanism of the creation of public by film and its viewers.

The audience of *Respite* is described as a public with a particular perspective on the past, a perspective which is saturated with images of the Holocaust and in a period of postmemory. Like *Night and Fog*, *Respite* calls attention to the dual temporality by employing a dual temporality within the film. Yet, its strategy is very different. The absence of contemporary footage besides the intertitles and of a bodily narrator complicates the present of the film. While the past of *Respite* is firmly set in 1944, the present presents itself oddly timeless.

Figure 34: Gemmeker in *Respite*

The only trace of color is used for the identification of Gemmeker in the footage. Once, it serves as a tool for identifying Gemmeker as the one who commissioned the film. A second time, this shot with the red circle is shown to prove that Gemmeker was aware of the shooting of the film. This serves to refute Gemmeker's claim that he had not known of anything.

The temporal location of the present is only determinable by the availability of knowledge which is time-specific such as the name of Settela Steinbach. Nevertheless, the setting of the film in an era of postmemory is omnipresent and conjures up a third temporality. This threefold temporality also exists outside of the film in the form of a performance of a record but also the performance of a record of public address and the performance of a vast

accumulation of records of public address as postmemory. The viewer's public address also changes the position of the viewer in comparison to *Night and Fog* in which it transforms from a position of a spectator to the position of a witness. In *Respite*, the viewer loses its status as witness faced with the complete absence of visual atrocities. The viewer as spectator is directly addressed in the intertitles and the project of the film call upon the viewer to become active. What Farocki shows is the infinite multitude of possible interpretations and readings and the necessity for each viewer to recall their own vast envelope of postmemories in order to form a reading which is meaningful to them. This call for active participation is made very clear when intertitles ask "Are these prettifying images?" and state "These images can also be read differently."

Victor Burgin uses the expression 'everyday environment of images' (or 'envelope') in which we in wealthy nations live. A good share of our cultural experience derives from this environment. The cultural experience of these images provides us with a set of patterns and narratives which we do not only recognize but also use ourselves. On the one hand, this means that we will be able to identify characteristics of e.g. a detective story even if we have never studied them; on the other hand, this also leads to a fragmentation of our memories which connect with other memory fragments. They build seemingly random associations and combinations. Thus, the 'remembered film' is in its fragments always embedded in a highly individualized net of other memories and experiences. "Consciousnesses may be synchronized in a shared moment of viewing, but the film *we* saw is never the film *I* remember." (110) This emphasis on the subjectivity and uniqueness

of our memories align with Farocki's project. What we share is the (at least theoretical) access to the envelope as a source of hypothetical knowledge, how and what we remember is entirely dependent on the individual.

At the same time, this address of the viewer also represents a self-reflexive critique of one's own medium. The rewinding of the footage and starting over with a different perspective shows the general position of a documentary filmmaker. Faced with a subjective selection of material, she has to focus, interpret, and give meaning within her own values and view of the world. Farocki shows how even focusing on two different seconds of a tracking shot can open up entirely different spaces of interpretation.

Figure 35: Sequence in *Respite*

This self-questioning also goes as a warning to the viewer to not forget about the inherently subjective and biased nature of documentary.

I find the following picture emblematic for the program of *Respite* in several ways:

Figure 36: Cardboard girls in *Respite*

The row of cardboard girls is designed to imitate real girls while the real girl tries to be indistinguishable from the fakes. This works as an allegory for real experiences and their representations as memories, or the real memory and its multiple representations in postmemory. It certainly also reflects on the status of documentary as a nonfictional genre genre which aims at the representation of reality. In a way, one can see an ironic self-referential moment for *Respite*. At first sight, all representations of reality are indistinguishable but *Respite* chooses '*aus der Reihe zu tanzen*.' This is not only true for *Respite* but also for the work of Harun Farocki in general as the following quote by Jan Verwoert shows:

> While the aesthetical effect of this repetition and variation is often not unlike the improvisation on a theme in jazz music, the political implication for the

> general economy of film production is a clear critique of the expectation that a film should be a self-contained product that always serves up something new. The consequence of this becomes evident when you see a film by Farocki in the context of other more conventionally produced documentaries (in a film festival, for instance). (68)

The aesthetical effect of repetition and variation and the rejection of a film as a self-contained product Verwoert mentions are at the core of Farocki's counterstrategy that he employs in *Respite*. The Holocaust documentaries of the first and second phase (although very differently) have provided the viewer with closure and one version and message for the viewer to take away. *Respite* does not offer this comfort; its close readings of the original footage generate an unsettling experience for the viewer as it juxtaposes the vast extent of the cultural context of postmemory and its implications with an appeal to actively reexamine one's own memories or postmemories of the Holocaust as well as to investigate and analyze the images one feels used to. Additionally, the film suggests an exploration of available material which has not been overused like that. *Respite* proves that a revisiting of maybe on first sight 'prettifying' images can reveal deeper underlying issues and avoids the problematic task to 'top' the horror with more horror.

These contemporary Holocaust films mirror the experience of postmemory in order to adequately react to the ambiguous status of the image. While they return to the image in this fourth phase of Holocaust documentaries, the films of Indirect Cinema aim at a recalculation, a rendering of the image.

III. Rendering the Image. Indirect Cinema

According to documentary film scholar Eva Hohenberger, when Robert J. Flaherty's *Nanook of the North*, one of the first feature-length documentaries, came out in 1929, a clear differentiation between fiction and nonfiction films was not yet visible; even during World War II, documentary and fiction film were still formally almost indistinguishable. Until the end of the 1950s, the production of documentary films resembled the production of fiction features in many ways: Due to heavy equipment, scenes had to be carefully planned and staged for filming, which meant that the storyline had to be created before filming could start. Sound was recorded in the studio and only added later in post-production which had led to the predominance of voice-over narration in documentaries.

At the end of the 1950s, technological innovations made camera and sound equipment lighter and more portable and allowed the synchronous recording of image and sound. These improvements made it possible for documentary filmmakers to change their production methods, and to film scenes more spontaneously. The two major movements that followed were Cinéma Vérité in France, and Direct Cinema in the United States. Among others, Hohenberger sees the emergence of these developments as a turning point for documentary film. At this point, the discussion surrounding documentaries solidifies but also gains a more normative tone. She sees two major approaches dominant in the following decades: the interview-oriented approach as the successor of the narrative

documentary that addresses the audience directly, and the observation documentary that addresses the audience indirectly.

Yet, there is a new development in documentary film that goes into a completely new direction apart from interview and observations. Arsenal Berlin has called this new development 'performing documentary.'

> Der Dokumentarfilm öffnet sich für Inszenierung, Schauspiel und Performance und entwickelt daraus einen Zugriff auf die Wirklichkeit, der sich von (oft trügerischen) Authentizitätsstrategien verabschiedet, aber gerade durch seine bewusst eingesetzten performativen Elemente Wahrnehmungsklischees aushebelt und einen Erkenntnisgewinn befördert. Damit werden nicht zuletzt Themen angegangen, die durch ihre starke Präsenz in den Medien bereits in Darstellungs- und Denkmuster förmlich eingesperrt sind und aus diesen herausgeholt werden sollen.
>
> Documentary film opens up for staging, spectacle and performance and, taking this as a point of departure, develops an access to reality which dissociates itself from (often misleading) authenticating strategies; the conscious use of performative elements allows to dissolve clichés of perception and to support new insights. Finally, they focus on topics whose overrepresentation in the media literally shuts them in in certain patterns of representation and thinking that ought to be overcome. (5)

In the following, I will focus on one approach in this development that Birgit Kohler has called 'Indirect Cinema.' (Seehusen) Analyzing three exemplary films (*The Missing Picture*, *Hat Wolff von Amerongen Konkursdelikte begangen?*, *Kurz davor ist es passiert*), I will develop this new category that Kohler only mentions in passing. Using Direct Cinema and Cinéma Vérité as a framework for a comparison with conventional documentary filmmaking, the juxtaposition of the three films will reveal shared properties of Indirect Cinema.

Direct Cinema

One of the first and most influential Direct Cinema films is *Primary* by Robert Drew and Richard Leacock whose names became synonymous with Direct Cinema. *Primary* which was released in 1960 follows the presidential candidates Hubert Humphrey and John F. Kennedy throughout the primary elections in Wisconsin. The protagonists do not only appear in their official roles but the film also includes more private scenes that show them preparing for events, and discussing with their advisors. Drew and Leacock use the technological innovations to create a perspective that appears to be entirely observational.

Ellis and McLane summarize their approach in their book *A New History of Documentary Film* as follows: "Leacock thought he could capture […] reality by photographing people without intruding; that subjects would reveal what they really felt and were like when unselfconsciously relaxed or deeply involved in some activity. [He] tried to expose this reality through capturing unguarded moments of self-revelation in the movement of actual life." (217)

The use of lighter equipment allows a more spontaneous, almost more natural presence of the camera. One example is the ability to physically follow people around without long preparations for new shots. As the camera can move around almost as a person can, Drew and Leacock also first called their approach 'Living Cinema.' The filmmakers attempt to minimize the effect of the presence of the camera, ideally, to make subjects forget they are

on camera at all, thus, there are no interviews or otherwise staged scenes in the film, and the filmmakers try to be as invisible as possible. "This form of performance within documentary film has been summarized in the paradoxical phrase 'acting naturally', and the artificial code is elaborated in the phrase 'acting to play oneself'." (Beattie 28-29) They believed that this fly-on-the-wall view allowed them to represent reality directly, unadulterated and unmanipulated. Another important aspect is the ideal of a collapse of director, cameraman, and editor into the film-maker. The audience is put into the position of an observer, observing through the perspective of the filmmaker. The previously predominant method of voice-over narration that was used to fill in the gaps of what the camera could not convey becomes obsolete and is seen as obstructive. Instead, structure becomes a guiding principle of these films. Issari and Paul write that the success of the Living Camera method depends on firm rules: "the nature of the subject; the deep involvement of the people in the film in something which precludes concern about the presence of the film-makers and their equipment; a structure so that the film takes on a natural rather than an enforced continuity; and an unavoidable conclusion." (97) The requirements for structure usually involve the filmmaker to choose a subject based on its crisis potential; e.g. in the case of *Primary*, the upcoming primary in Wisconsin provided a frame with a certain climax and definite conclusion. (Other examples of Direct Cinema that didn't follow this crisis structure, were usually less successful.)

Direct Cinema is based on the belief in the possibility of a completely objective observer. This ideal of objectivity has often been criticized as naïve, as the presence of the camera

unavoidably alters the reaction of the subjects. Documentary film scholar Stella Bruzzi writes: "Most practitioners recognize, by now, that documentary film can never offer a representation of real events indistinguishable from the events themselves." (68) Although that might be true, Direct Cinema is still a method used in contemporary documentaries and, a certain belief in the evidentiary power of the moving image is still pervasive in many films. Grimshaw & Ravetz conclude in *Observational Cinema*:

> Ever since its appearance, observational cinema has provoked fierce discussion. In nearly every respect it has been deemed inadequate – methodologically, epistemologically, and aesthetically. At best, it has been understood as an early or naïve documentary approach superseded by more advanced techniques (Nichols); at worst, it has been viewed as the obstacle to innovation in ethnographic filmmaking (Loizos). Despite these generally negative perceptions, observational cinema has not, in fact, been rendered obsolete by other forms – indeed, quite the opposite. Filmmakers have continued to work observationally – not out of some misguided view of superior truth claims but because to do so offers a particular way of engaging with the world. (130-131)

Cinéma Vérité

At around the same time, Cinéma Vérité emerged in France. In contrast to Leacock, one of its most prominent figures, Jean Rouch, denies the possibility of the camera to be unobtrusive. After he had previously interviewed Africans for ethnographical films, he found his French subjects to be much less at ease in front of a camera. These experiences made him aware of the stimulant nature of the camera, and he further insisted on the positive and productive effect on the subjects.

The most paradigmatic work of the Cinéma Vérité is Rouch's *Chronicle of a Summer* (1961) in which various Parisians talk about different aspects of their lives. The interview, that has no place in Direct Cinema, is the focal point of Rouch's approach. Drawing on the new technological innovations, these interviews take place spontaneously on the street with passersby. The film consists of an amalgam of opinions, attitudes and values of the interviewed Parisians. Although the goal of Direct Cinema and Cinéma Vérité is the same - revelation and discovery - here it shows one major difference. Cinéma Vérité is ultimately continuously self-reflexive; an awareness that Direct Cinema tries to avoid completely. While watching *Chronicle of a Summer*, one cannot forget that a film is being made, that one is watching a film, and that a camera always has impact on the displayed subjects. This is brought to the surface by e.g. explicitly discussing with the interviewees their performance and appearance on camera, and ending the film with the directors discussing the scope and goal of their movie. While Direct Cinema tries to eliminate all signs of a film being made, Cinéma Vérité insists on it. What they both have in common is a belief in truth revealing itself. Direct Cinema wants to be simply observational while Cinéma Vérité provokes the truth to come out in the encounter of people that can be captured by a camera. The camera works as a stimulant that makes people self-aware and configures its confessional nature. Rouch does not believe in an objective observer or an unobtrusive camera.

Ellis and McLane summarize the differences and similarities between Direct Cinema and Cinéma Vérité in their book *A New History of Documentary Film*:

> Both of them were hoping to find 'the reality of life,' 'the truth in people' hidden under the superficial conventions of daily living. Rouch sought to pierce the observable surface to reach this underlying truth by means of discussion, interview, and a fictional sort of improvisation. Leacock thought he could capture this same obscured reality by photographing people without intruding; that subjects would reveal what they really felt and were like when unself-consciously relaxed or deeply involved in some activity. Rouch attempted to unmask truth through a process of deliberately encouraged self-revelation. Leacock tried to expose this reality through capturing unguarded moments of self-revelation in the movement of actual life. Rouch wanted to explain the raison d'être of life, whereas Leacock wanted to let life reveal itself. (217)

It is important to differentiate between these two movements because they are more different than they are alike but the terms are often used interchangeable (possibly due to their similar date of emergence).[12]

I believe that the technological innovations at the time allowed documentary film as a whole to focus more on capturing rather than reproducing reality. Yet for my classification of Indirect Cinema, it is necessary to be as precise as possible in defining its point of departure, its subject of delineation. What Cinéma Vérité and Direct Cinema have in common is a belief that people will produce natural drama that is more interesting than anything fabricated. Rouch believes that the most important ability of cinema is to be an "instrument of communication between the director and his actors, among the actors

[12] Even contemporary documentary scholars like Stella Bruzzi keep inflating the two movements, reducing them to the ideal of objectivity. Her definition of what she calls 'journey films' for example ("Journey films are structured around encounters and meetings – often accidental or unplanned, they are about not necessarily knowing where they will end up." (99)) almost perfectly describes Rouch's Cinéma Vérité. Yet, she sees journey films as an evolvement of Direct Cinema which itself had set back documentary film by decades.

themselves, and between the audience, and the screen." (Issari & Paul 105) while camera is a mere tool for Leacock that only "records." (ibid.)

Isaari and Paul summarize the differences between Leacock's and Rouch's approach as follows:

> They seek to uncover the truth in people that is hidden under the superficiality of their daily lives. Rouch wants to pierce the surface truth to reach underlying reality by means of discussion, interview, and improvisation. Leacock wants to capture the same underlying reality by photographing people, without intruding. […] Rouch seeks to unmask truth through a process of deliberate self-revelation, while Leacock seeks to convey truth through capturing unguarded moments of self-revelation in the moment of real life. (108)

There is one more distinct difference to be mentioned which concerns the question of narrative. Ellis and McLane argue that "the Cinéma Vérité/direct pull toward individuals, toward continuous recording of their words and actions, is a pull toward narrative," (221) that as these documentaries follow "life as it is being lived" (ibid.) more closely, they are automatically closer to a narrative form.[13] Yet, I argue that narrativity requires more than a mere sequentiality of 'this happened, then that happened, then that happened.' Accordingly, Direct Cinema with its very specific crisis structure distinguishes itself significantly from Cinéma Vérité that is not dependent on such a structure.

[13] Ellis and McLane also see the lines of fiction and documentary blurred due to this closer relationship to narrative which is based on the false premise that fictionality and narrativity are inherently connected. Yet, their short remarks on the topic hint at a still underdeveloped core discussion in documentary scholarship: The relationship between fictionality, narrativity, and the documentary beyond the, at this point overcome, term of representation.

Despite the critique on both these approaches, they provided the framework for documentary filmmaking of the following decades with the observational mode on the one and the interview-based mode on the other side. Regardless of their differences, they both shared the belief that truth (whatever that concept means for the individual filmmaker) can be captured by a camera, a belief that still persists even among critics of Direct Cinema. Stella Bruzzi, for example, suggests to view documentaries as "performative acts whose truth comes into being only at the moment of filming." (7) Although she clearly rejects the idea of an objective representation of reality, she still claims the concept of truth as something recordable as a guiding principle for documentary film. What becomes clear in her argument is the sill prevailing focus on the relationship between the camera and its subject which has dominated the discussion for the past decades. Fritz Wolf argues that the documentary image has lost its special quality due to its omnipresence. He sees the development of documentary film based on technical innovations (as it did for Direct Cinema) at a new turning point with the everyday availability of affordable devices with the capability to record one's surroundings.

I argue that Indirect Cinema reacts to this technical innovation with its proliferation of the documentary image by shifting the focus away from what happens in front of the camera. Instead of repeating and reproducing the same worn images, the films of Indirect Cinema count on the production of new images that resist direct representation. The moments of truth that for both Direct Cinema and Cinéma Vérité happen in front of the camera are replaced by a meaning-finding process in the space between film and audience.

The Missing Picture

Rithy Panh's film *The Missing Picture* from 2014 is a film about the Cambodian genocide under the Khmer Rouge regime in the 1970s. In order to achieve an agricultural revolution, the communist and autocratic Khmer Rouge evacuated Cambodian cities and relocated people from urban areas to rural labor camps. They were forced to give up their personal belongings, their families, religion, and socioeconomic status. In order to eliminate any resistance, they foremost targeted people "with the most pre-revolutionary memory," (Schlund-Vials 288) such as academics, lawyers, teachers, etc. About 1.7 million Cambodians died between 1975 and 1979. Many of the perpetrators were never prosecuted and have been living among their victims, now dying of old age. Scholars and historians have called this an 'autogenocide' which made justice even more elusive.

This resembles the situations of more recent genocides like Rwanda much more than the situation of the Holocaust that neither lacks a prosecution of guilty nor medial representation. The focus of representations of such genocides is therefore located in an entirely different stage of remembering and forgetting; e.g. In *Earth Made of Glass* (2010) by director Deborah Scranton, Jean-Pierre Sagahutu, a survivor of the genocide in Rwanda sets out to find the murderer of his family. What becomes clear over the course of the film is his desperate need for a truth that is irretrievably gone. Only when he finally finds the man, he understands that the truth by itself is meaningless and does not provide the anticipated relief. Director Rithy Panh was one of many Cambodians that fled to Thailand

and Vietnam after the Vietnamese 'liberation' as there was still hunger, no infrastructures and political uncertainty in Cambodia.

Although not at a stage of postmemory, Panh also does not follow a truth-finding mission like Jean-Pierre Sagahutu; instead, *The Missing Picture* is a memory project in which he tries to come to terms with his past; in a personal but also in a collective way. The first voice-over that is paired with images of incoming waves proclaims: "I seek my childhood like a lost picture." The waves crashing around the camera symbolize the disturbing, nonlinear, disorienting, and sometimes threatening nature of memory. This effect of memory and of searching one's own memories also provides the structure for the film. There is not one linear narrative that has a beginning, end, and conclusion. Instead, we follow the director's own exploration into his own memories that are achronological, illogical, and disconnected. Only the voice-over narration (that is not spoken by the director himself but by Randal Douc) provides guidance through the images, and connects them.

Figure 37: Clay figure with archival footage in Background in *The Missing Picture*

While Direct Cinema aimed at an authentic effect based on complete absence of (obvious) manipulation, *The Missing Picture* pursues the opposite goal. Most images are multimedia dioramas that combine a multitude of different materials and sources. To speak with Bolter and Grusin, Direct Cinema's main approach is an effect of immediacy while *The Missing Picture* relies mainly on hypermediacy. The predominant visual mode displays clay figures in front of archival propaganda footage.

This market scene from the beginning of the film shows the overall approach of the film.

Figure 38: Market scene in *The Missing Picture*

It is a panning shot over a stage full with the clay figurines, set up like a market. The sound as well does not originate from only one source. Besides the voice-over narration, we hear chatter, laughter, street noises, music. It is clear that every part of our perception is directed and manipulated while the audience remains highly aware of due to the intentional use of artifice.

Panh weaves through episodes from before the revolution and after, in different camps sometimes highlighting specific events. Nobody in his narration has a name; they are only distinguishable by their roles 'father,' 'mother,' 'little girl.' The expression of suffering on one of the clay figurine's face is static and does not change.

Figure 39: Suffering girl in *The Missing Picture*

The voice-over tells the story of a girl in the camp that stole corn out of hunger; she is caught and forbidden to eat the corn. Despite the rudimentary facial features on the clay figurines and their lack of movement, the sad story invites the audience to empathize. It is almost as if the visible texture of the faces makes them more human and more personable than the propaganda images of the archival footage. Yet, one cannot forget the apparent unnaturalness of the figurines and so the audience can observe itself trying to empathize with clay objects. These figurines whose production by artist Sarith Mang is shown in the film as well, are made from Cambodian clay, from soil that is stained by the suffering of its people. They stand in for the trouble of representing the magnitude of history and the still current experience of trauma. Schlund-Vials writes: "[T]hey mimetically reflect, refract, and embody the experiences of those starving, suffering and dying under the

regime." (290) The little girl dies of hunger during the following night, and her two siblings die soon thereafter. We see the following sequence:

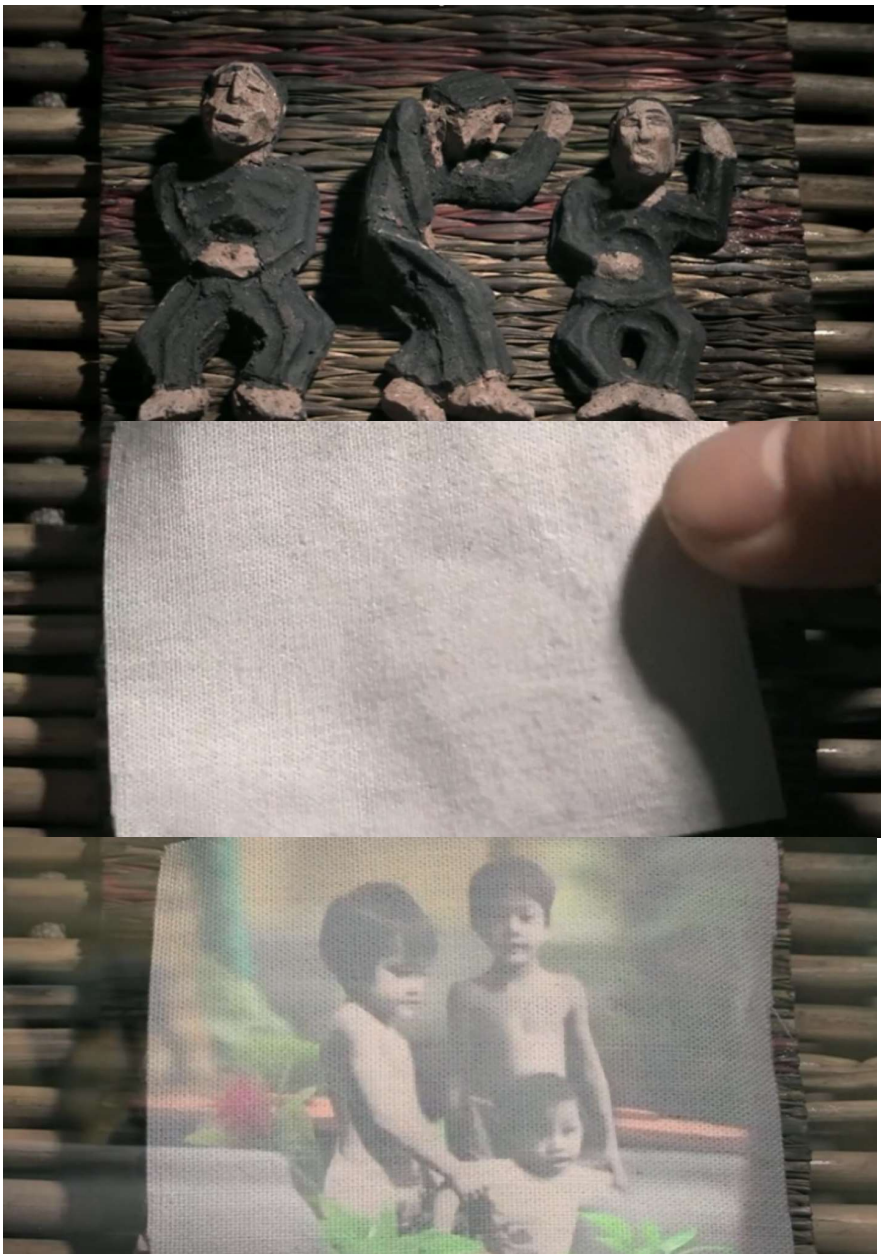

Figure 40: Sequence in *The Missing Picture*

A hand covers their bodies with a white sheet of fabric. The narrators says: "I wish to be rid of this picture of hunger and suffering. So I show it to you." An apparently private photograph of the three siblings is superimposed over the white sheet. This scene is significant in several ways: The hand comes in from outside of the frame; it is not part of the narrative. Yet, the way in which it almost lovingly covers the three figurines, the three starved children illustrates the meaning of these individual fates not just for the immediate relatives but also for the future. When the voice-over narrator says that he wants to pass on these images to the audience, he wants to establish this situation in a collective memory rather than his personal one as only collective remembering can allow personal forgetting. This idea about transferring, and owning images and memories provides a constant theme throughout the film. The act of covering suggests a restoration of peace for the children, the victims of these arbitrary rules. The superimposed image contains parts of an archival photograph (which is noticeable by the sepia effect of the children) but is surrounded by colorful, bright artificial plants and a colored background. In this shot, the peculiar brightness of the surroundings gives the scene an almost supernatural glow, a peaceful heaven-like atmosphere, a token of remembrance of these children beyond their suffering. This is one of the very few instances of the film where individuals and their faces are brought together.

The Khmer Rouge on the other hand tried to make all people the same, to eradicate any individualism.

Figure 41: Archival footage in *The Missing Picture*

In archival footage like this one, they seem to be successful. Even though these are recordings of 'real' humans (in contrast to the clay figurines), there is an insuperable distance that prevents any empathy. The narrator says: "I'm one of these children at the worksites. Looking closely at this movement, one sees the fatigue, the falls, the gaunt faces; one sees the cruelty. One sees that some can no longer work. Yet, there is a camera."

By reminding us that Rithy Panh himself was one of these children, one has to reexamine one's own relationship to these images. Even though the audience is aware that these recordings were made with a specific propagandistic purpose, they still document a real moment in the lives of its subjects. When the narrator tells us to look closer, and we might see that some children are too weak to work, he reminds us of the multitude of different information one can find in one and the same picture. (This scene reminds of Harun

Farocki's reiterative reading in *Respite* that also brings the evidentiary power of original footage back into focus.) He also points out that the presence of the camera influences the scene it records, that Direct Cinema can never be as objective and unadulterated as it would like to be.

It would be easier, prettier, sleeker, more convenient for *The Missing Picture* to condemn all archival footage from the Khmer Rouge as pure propaganda without any claim to truth. But it won't give us this closure, this convenience; instead we are forced to accept the power of an image despite its origin. Being painfully aware of the tension between an image's need for contextualization and its status as a document, Indirect Cinema is suspicious of any image. Its self-reflexivity goes beyond the mere showing of a film being made, and questions and examines the boundaries of what documentary film can say at all, what the truth value of any image ever can be, and if we should trust any visual representation. Documentary film relies on an establishment of trust between the audience and the filmmaker. Direct Cinema used to achieve this trust by being as authentic, natural, unadulterated, and unmanipulative as possible. In Indirect Cinema, this trust relationship is given up entirely. It does the exact opposite by shaking the audience's expectation of an authoritative message and instead making them apprehensive of any images. Strategies like the clay figurines are used to produce an effect of artifice that puts the audience in a self-reflexive state.

The narrator says: "There is no truth. There is only cinema." And "We understand the Khmer Rouge by watching their footage." These statements are a point of departure for the

project of *The Missing Picture*; Panh tries to recreate memories of scenes that could not be captured on film at the time when they happened. This production of testimony represents a personal as well as a collective quest as testimony has the power to reunite and rebuild communities, and reinforce their relationship to the past and their country. According to Schlund-Vials, cinema can offer an alternative site for reparation. Panh's failed search for the 'one missing picture' that would show all the misery and destruction of the Khmer Rouge led him to recollecting all missing pictures in order to keep these memories alive. Documentary film scholar Leshu Torchin writes: "Both medium and shifting temporalities [are] gesturing to the elusiveness of memory and the necessity of its preservation and transmission." (34) The clay figurines stand in for the issue of representing the magnitude of history while the experience of trauma is still current. The transmission of this reproduced missing picture to us represents the stated goal of the film that will prevent forgetting. He uses fictional aesthetic strategies to fuse past, present, and future, resonating the trauma that still persists and the dynamic processes of rebuilding and remediating history.

This still from *The Missing Picture* symbolizes the power of cinema to empathize with images and representations as if they were real; a power that can be viciously abused but can also have a healing effect.

Figure 42: Dancing woman in *The Missing Picture*

The Missing Picture restores images of scenes that have not made it into collective remembering of the genocide through the Khmer Rouge. It does not achieve this effect by mimicking complete objective authenticity but by revealing the personal and individual processes that come into play when dealing with memory. By making the audience question their own empathy with clay figurines, it exposes the manipulative impact of cinema and forces the audience to acknowledge the impossibility of an objective truth or an all-encompassing history, and accept the subjective individuality of every human artefact.

Hat Wolff von Amerongen Konkursdelikte begangen?

Instead of using reenactments, Austrian filmmaker Gerhard Friedl chooses to evade the replacement of a missing image. In his film *Hat Wolff von Amerongen Konkursdelikte begangen?* (2004) about white collar crime, he opts for a much more abstract visual depiction. The film starts out with machine noises and a black screen; it cuts to a green rural landscape with birds in the background. The camera pans for 180° and ends with the view of a town. The voice-over narration begins:

> Alfons Müller-Wipperführt beginnt 1931 mit sieben Arbeitern und drei Nähmaschinen. Er verkauft die Ware vor Werkstoren von der Ladefläche herab. Später hat er für jede seiner Filialen einen je eigenen Schlüssel. Nach Dienstschluss kommt er in die Verkaufsräume; ist er unzufrieden, hinterlässt er eine Visitenkarte.
>
> Alfons Müller-Wipperführt starts out in 1931 with seven workers and three sewing machines. He sells the product in front of factory gates from the loading space. Later, he has a key for every branch. After closing time, he comes into the sale rooms; when he is unhappy, he leaves behind a business card.

This is the beginning of the story of Müller-Wipperführt, one of over ten individual stories of economic leaders told over the course of the film. It continues with Müller-Wipperführt's business's expansion to different countries; he cannot remain in Austria for too long because that would mean that he would need to pay private taxes. The narrative also provides some private details, for example: "Müller-Wipperfürth trennt die Nähte der Kostüme seiner dritten Frau auf; er zeigt ihr, wie schlecht die Ware gemacht ist. Die Frau verliert jede Freude an ihrer Kleidung und trägt Lederkostüme./Müller-Wipperführt unpicks the seams of his third wife's suites; he shows her how badly the product is made.

The wife loses all joy in her clothes and wears leather suits." When Müller-Wipperführt's private plane crashes in Germany, he is arrested at the hospital. Some of his colleagues went to prison. This narrative is accompanied by seemingly unrelated images; we see storage rooms, a tractor on a field, an airfield, streets, the inside of factories, and cities. The different stories all are about the lives of powerful economic figures in Austria and Germany, their success, their crimes, but also, a lot of the time, their sicknesses, ailments, and death; the film includes some well-known names like Thyssen, Quant and Oetker. Sometimes the stories expand to other family members or the story of the company and crimes beyond someone's death; connections between the different major corporations become more apparent with the different stories. Most of them address taxes, fraud, and criminal prosecution. The connection between economy and politics, and economy and war becomes more prevalent over the course of the film. Otto Wolff von Amerongen only appears in the 51st minute of the film. He seems to be the most vicious and unscrupulous of all of them: "Wolff von Amerongen profitiert von den Aktien enteigneter Juden./Wolff von Amerongen benefits from the shares expropriated from Jews." The voiceover is a male reading in German, devoid of any emotion, speaking at the same volume and same speed; nothing is produced in great affect or emphasis. There is no difference when he talks about companies and markets or people. The style is completely descriptive without judgment or evaluation. The emotions and feelings of the featured persons are described in a declarative manner, yet, it is unclear if this is available knowledge or conjecture. The stories weave naturally together; sometimes they are connected directly, sometimes not. It shows the

weaving of the market with few key players. Needless to say that they are all men; the women in the stories are wives or relatives like daughters and sisters; they do not ever seem to play a major role in anything. The film ends with:

> 1987 ist die PWH bankrott. Rohwedder beobachtet den Zerfall. Zwei Jahre später kommt es zu einer Stahlkonjunktur. Otto Wolff von Amerongen verkauft seine verbliebenden Stahlindustriebesitz vor 1990, da später der volle Steuersatz fällig wäre. Der Verkauf wird als Eingeständnis des Scheitern beurteilt. Oetker gibt ebenfalls seine Anteile her.
>
> In 1987, PWH is bankrupt. Rohwedder observes the decay. Two years later, the steel economy rises. Otto Wolff von Amerongen sells his remaining steel industry property before 1990 because later the full tax rate would apply. The sell is judged as an admission of defeat. Oetker also sells his shares.

The images that are paired with the stories do not show a direct connection. Generally, there are three types of pictures that correspond with the three parts of the economy – production, consumption, and circulation. For production, there are many shots inside different kinds of factories, from coal to clothing, of agriculture, construction sites, offices. These shots are dominated by activity, both by human workers as well as machines. As for consumption, many shots feature famous sights in major cities filled with tourists; tourism is also a sign of a certain wealth in a culture. This includes museums, entertainment parks, cultural institutions and historical sights. The images of circulation are predominant and include shots from streets, cars, planes, ships, and trains. There are even some scenes shot from a moving vehicle (probably a scooter) driving through cities, and tunnels.

Figure 43: Street in *Wolff von Amerongen*

These images, on the one hand, underline our times' mobility and are further a sign of globalization that makes these business ventures possible in the first place. At the same time, it also shows humans that are transported from one place to the next just like a commodity. All images contain signs of this economic cycle; this includes direct symbols such as brand names of banks on buildings but also indirect signs such as tourists using cameras. The easily recognizable brand logos work as a constant reminder that these global corporations are omnipresent in our everyday lives.

The images seem natural in appearance; there seems to be no extra lighting and no staging as in an arrangement of what happens in front of the camera. The camera is either still, makes a slow panning shot, or is a handheld camera on a vehicle pointed at the road ahead.

Depending on the natural light conditions, the video quality is sometimes poor. Occasionally, only the pan informs about the context of some objects. The sound of these scenes is natural and seems not to be altered; there is no music or soundtrack. Depending on how close the camera is to the depicted people, we hear conversations or rather parts of conversations; sometimes in German, sometimes in other languages. The shots are usually between 20 and 60 seconds.

The images and the narrative in the voiceover sometimes briefly connect, e.g. when we learn how Mühnemann was inspired by a revolving door for his business plan: "Mühnemann sagt, er habe sich vom Modell der Drehtüre inspirieren lassen. Die Türe ist offen; dennoch wird es im Haus nie kalt./Mühnemann says that he got inspired by the model of a revolving door. The door is open; yet, it never gets cold in the house." (The pan actually reveals that this door belongs to an airport.)

Figure 44: Revolving door in *Wolff von Amerongen*

Other times, the connection is a little more ironic:

Figure 45: Agriculture in *Wolff von Amerongen*

For example, we see this image when the narrative talks about agriculture. Of course, this is not the kind of agriculture the voiceover talks about but it certainly represents an image that many consumers still like to hold on to. It contrasts the realities of capitalism with the romantic idea of rural life.

However, there are also some instances where the connection between sound and image reaches an almost cynical level. When one of the protagonist's wife does not want to move into Schloss Charlottenhof that her husband acquired, he buys a new house with 30 rooms. This story is accompanied by a shot of, one might presume, public housing in an urban setting that is far from glamorous.

Figure 46: Public housing in *Wolff von Amerongen*

Another example is when the voice over talks about the fact that Quant was "schwach-sichtig/weak-sighted" while we see a seamstress bowed low over a garment to better see. Here, image and sound are in direct juxtaposition with the wealthy key players on the one, and the working masses on the other side.

With white-collar crime, *Wolff von Amerongen* addresses an issue that images have a hard time conveying. The perpetrators in these cases are not shady looking villains but business men in suits, the criminal act itself consists mostly of paperwork, the victims are somewhat invisible. People lose their jobs, companies go bankrupt, the global economy takes a hit; yet, the perpetrators are seldom prosecuted and punished. These crimes have far reaching consequences but cannot be captured in a photograph or a moving image. *Wolff von*

Amerongen shows the complexity of this systems and how everybody has part in it but only few key players make all the decisions while everybody else is a nameless, anonymous body in a huge machinery that keeps on going.

So then – hat Wolff von Amerongen Konkursdelikte begangen? The question of the film's title is clearly answered by all the declarative sentences of all the different stories. Yet, the film does not give us closure, it does not end with Wolff von Amerongen being arrested and jailed for the rest of his life: On the contrary, he sells his stocks (which does bring him money) as a symbol of defeat. But only a symbol. There are no actual consequences for him. We are presented with a world governed by few protagonists whose decisions have impact on all other people and their lives. When watching the film in 2017, 13 years after its release, it can easily be seen as a foreboding of the financial crisis of 2007-2008.

Wolff von Amerongen documents a complex system that lacks the possibility of any visual evidence. Friedl addresses this crisis of perception by featuring the crimes of a few protagonists and juxtaposing them with images of all areas that are impacted by their unethical decisions. The artifice of the combination of image and sound forces the viewer to reflect upon the common portrayal of these crimes. Crimes that in the news media often seems void of perpetrators as well as victims, crimes that 'not one person can be found guilty for,' crimes that impact millions of people but do seem to take place outside of the law. Paradoxically, the juxtaposition of these faceless perpetrators' stories with the masses of nameless victims allows the audience to connect these abstract bodies with their own lives.

Similar to Friedl's project, *Kurz davor ist es passiert* (2006) by fellow Austrian filmmaker Anja Salmonowitz also avoids a mere replacement of images, and, instead, removes the featured stories from their originators and channels them through different bodies.

Kurz davor ist es passiert

The film starts out with shots of different angles of a border crossing between Austria and Hungary. The setting of the scenes is straightforward, frontal and symmetrical with the border officer as the focus of our interest. We watch him carry out his duties, wave through cars, stopping others, typing a report on a type writer. Then, he suddenly looks up straight into the camera and starts speaking in a monotonous and emotionless voice.

Figure 47: Border officer in *Kurz davor*

It becomes clear that he is reciting a first-person narrative of a young woman. She describes how she came to Austria with hopes of a new life but ends up being forced into prostitution. The film consists of five episodes such as this one that are introduced with black intertitles:

'An der Grenze,' 'In der Nachbarschaft,' 'Im Bordell,' 'Im Konsulat,' 'Im Taxi.' They all feature regular Austrians that we observe as they carry out their everyday activities in their workplace and at home that are interrupted by their verbatim recitation of five different stories. The stories of five anonymous women that were the victims of human trafficking in Austria. There seems to be no direct connection between the images we see and the narrated story. Yet, in every episode there is a moment in which the story and the depicted scenes seem to coincide. In this first episode 'An der Grenze,' the girl describes how she is forced into prostitution and how her pimp takes her over the border and back to Austria every three months in order to remain legal there. One time, the border officer talks to her, and she herself recites what she has been told to say.

While Direct Cinema tries to be as natural as possible in every instance, *Kurz davor* seems to follow the opposite approach. The perspective in most scenes is frontal and symmetrical. The rigidness and stiffness of this forced architecture are highly artificial and represent the regulations of public spheres but also private lives. It symbolizes strictly defined concepts such as government, nation, and borders, that are themselves in their nature artificial and operate beyond human empathy and individual human interest. The five protagonists are encased in the almost surgical sterility of the scenes and the claustrophobic limitations of the frame which shows the insignificance of the individual in these contexts as well as its inability to escape. Just as the border officer is only a warm body signaling this context, it also is a substitute body through which we experience somebody else's story. Certain

instances signal the limitations and failures of human beings, e.g. when the border officer makes a mistake, says "Ach Scheiße," and buries his head in his hands.

Figure 48: Border officer at night in *Kurz davor*

The dark frame mirrors his exhaustion and tiredness; it works as a reminder that even larger contexts such as that of national borders are human-made conditions, instituted by humans who also make mistakes.

At the same time, the physical boundaries of the shots also hint at the confines of each protagonist's private life that follows certain regulations and routines, and is just as difficult to escape in its repetitiveness and monotony, as well as the hopeless imprisonment of the women. Episode 2 'In der Nachbarschaft,' for example, starts out with a middle-aged

woman walking down a street with a shopping basket. We can hear her heels clapping. She appears to be selling nutritional supplements as shakes and pills to her neighbors. She recites the story of a young woman who marries an Austrian and has his child. Even though it starts out as a loving relationship, the husband soon takes control of every aspect of her life; he doesn't let her work, take a German class, or even leave the house without his permission. He threatens to take away her daughter if she doesn't comply with his demands. While the young mother is forced into the confined boundaries of her immediate neighborhood, the middle-aged woman lives within the same limited space. All her tasks such as her job, singing in a choir, visiting the cemetery can be accomplished by foot; she doesn't leave her confines by choice. The rigidness of the shots underlines the repetitiveness and rigidness of her daily routines and everyday life.

Figure 49: Woman at the cemetery in *Kurz davor*

While this episode is mostly focused on the everyday life of Austrians, the next 'Im Bordell' specifically features a space in which we would expect human trafficking to be an issue as most likely. The protagonist of this episode prepares a brothel for a regular night. He counts money, cleans, does laundry, fills up containers with condoms, and replaces paper tissue while he recites the story of a young woman who came to Austria as a dancer. Instead of the dancing career she had imagined, she ends up in a night club stripping, and finally prostituting herself. In contrast to the two narratives before, she is not forced into her situation but chooses what she does in order to make more money.

Figure 50: Brothel owner in *Kurz davor*

The episode ends before any guests arrive, and the only person we see remains the brothel owner. His lonesome figure surrounded by the bright colors and party lighting in a space

meant for socializing underlines the experience of the individual that, in the end, is isolated from everybody else. The loneliness of the protagonists is emphasized by their recitation even in social events which isolates them completely from their surroundings and only establishes a connection between them and the camera.

So far, the protagonists of the episodes represent somewhat detestable characters: The border officer (the 'Grenzer'), the lady trying to con her neighbors, the brothel owner making money of his clientele's urges. It allows the audience to establish a distance to themselves, to feel superior, to remain on higher moral ground. Yet, *Kurz davor* undermines this effort of detachment by featuring the consul of Cameroon in the next episode 'Im Konsulat.' The camera follows the consul working with clients, managing her public image in the media, getting a full-body massage, getting her daughter ready for school. She speaks French and English, and her house shows signs of wealth. The exterior features of her bright clothing and the strangely 'exotic' interior of her house work as a contrast to the lives of ordinary Austrians such as the border officer and the neighborhood lady in whose episodes subdued earth tones dominate the images. While the clothing and interior design are supposed to illustrate her sophistication and worldliness, it corresponds much more with the color palette and the exuberance of the brothel; they seem tacky and tasteless.

Figure 51: Consul in *Kurz davor*

Her recitation tells the story of a girl hired by an ambassador as a maid who is continuously exploited, and eventually deported by her boss. On a basic level, this episode illustrates that even well-situated people can victimize foreigners, and abuse their power.

In one interesting scene, she recites the girl's story into a tape recorder, and then pushes a button to supposedly listen to her own recording. Instead of repeating her words, the recording continues the girl's story where the consul had just ended emphasizing the mediated nature of the situation. It reminds of the interview method in *Revision* whose intentions however are entirely different. *Revision*'s approach served as an authenticating strategy – to allow the interviewees to correct their statements as necessary – but also as a reminder of the fleeting nature of the moment and the indirectness of any recording. This

scene is *Kurz davor* has no practical purpose; it works as an additional reminder of the artifice employed in these scenes, and these stories. When the recorder doesn't even repeat what had just been said, it illustrates how far removed the actual girl of the story in fact is, and how obstructed our access to her story is.

The fifth episode, finally, ends at the border again. A taxi driver recites the narrative of a young woman that starts – differently from the others – in media res with the words "Ich wehre mich./I defend myself." She describes how her pimp threatens her, beats her, and cuts her with a knife; she finally seizes the opportunity to escape into a taxi. "Welch ein Glück, ich fahre, ich fahre./What luck, I'm driving, I'm driving."

Figure 52: Taxi driver in *Kurz davor*

After a few scenes with the driving taxi, the film cuts back to a shot of the border crossing and ends. While this ending at the border concludes the film's symmetrical structure, it does not give the audience any closure. The last episode is distinct in its explicit violence and momentary situation; the young woman is the only one that becomes active and takes the risk to try to change her situation. Yet, her escape does not lead to a happy ending but only to a desperate return to the beginning.

Direct Cinema follows almost Aristotelian principles in its structure, it requires a narrative, and ends in a conclusion. In *Kurz davor*, no drama is unfolding in front of the camera; it is quite the contrary, nothing happens in the depicted images, there are no distinct events. The disconnect between the images and the narrated stories creates an urge in the viewer to find connections and to give meaning. Koll writes in a review of the film:

> Das Dokumentarische (die Schicksale der Frauen) lebt eigentlich nur in der Fantasie (der Erzähler wie auch der Zuhörer), während die Erzählenden wiederum zum Gegenstand des Dokumentarischen werden. Immer wieder ertappt man sich, wie man Bezüge zwischen dem Gehörten und dem Gezeigten herstellt, also selbst aktiv Handelnder wird./
>
> The documentary (the fate of the women) only lives in the fantasy (of the narrators as well as the listeners), while the narrators become object of the documentary in turn. Again and again, one can catch oneself making connections between the heard and the shown, thus, becoming an active agent. (35)

By ultimately withdrawing and undermining our need for connection, the film forces the audience to question and interrogate the images one sees but also the ones one doesn't see. The coverage of human trafficking in the media has reproduced the same stereotypical

images over and over again until they have become clichés. News coverage – that in style resembles Direct Cinema very closely – doesn't have access to the stories that *Kurz davor* shares with us; it can only reinforce stereotypes that have long lost all power. The artificiality of the scenes in *Kurz davor* forces the audience to reevaluate the familiar scenes it is used to and this allows a space to open up in which we are open to these stories that usually are not heard anymore.

In her article "Direct Cinema as Rape," media scholar Vivian Sobchack argues that the visual representation of violence against women can be so overwhelming that it overshadows everything else. Sobchack focuses on the 1973 short film *No Lies* by Mitchel Block which uses Direct Cinema aesthetics to narrate a fictional story. Until the credits reveal the use of actors, the audience remains unaware of *No Lies* being fictional. The narrative features a young man who, with the use of a camera, forces a rape victim to relive the sexual assault.[14] Many viewers were upset at the end of the film when they discovered that it was not a documentary as they had believed. Sobchack's observations about how Direct Cinema aesthetics can be used to assault the audience can be applied to *Kurz davor* as well. The audience is in the position of voyeur rather than victim. "The audience watches from a safe and separate dimension." (14) It is one of the pleasures of cinema – that we can watch from a position of voyeurism without having to act responsibly - socially or morally.

[14] This method of using the camera as a tool of assault is also used in *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), a horror film whose success relied on the immediacy effect of the handheld camera, and Direct Cinema aesthetics. Fincina Hopgood argues that these aesthetics have developed from a revolution to a mere choice of style. "Nevertheless, this style is still used as a mark of 'realism' in both documentary and fiction films." (244)

Passivity is the only option. "Although the viewer may be most sympathetic and most intellectually aware of the horror of the physical rape, the viewer is also completely physically protected and emotionally distanced from the act itself." (15-16) In *Kurz davor*, the roles are reversed: The victims of these stories are removed from the audience's gaze, they are protected from a re-victimization by the act of cinema. Their stories are channeled through different bodies, more familiar, white, Austrian bodies, Austrian mouths that speak with an Austrian dialect in spaces we are used to, and not threatening to the audience. Of course, the subjects didn't utter these stories in the perfect Austrian German of the actors. But exactly that makes them easier to empathize with, easier to understand, easier to not judge. It removes all prejudices based on clothing, looks, way of speech, native language. It makes these horrible stories digestible for the Austrian palate. We get caught in the stories and in these confined spaces.

The audience becomes the target of a cinematic assault that undermines the usual feeling of removed safety. *Kurz davor* destabilizes the relationship between audience and film by forcing the viewer into activity. At the same time, it introduces Direct Cinema aesthetics to induce an almost traumatic feeling of uneasiness. The strictly symmetrical frontal perspectives of the camera are juxtaposed with brief scenes shot with a handheld camera.

Figure 53: Handheld shot in *Kurz davor*

They assume the perspective of a living person walking, stumbling towards the border during the first episode 'An der Grenze.' Eerie music reinforces the effect of a disorienting, and traumatic experience. In the following episodes, these instances remind more and more of the perspective of a stalker. The episode 'Im Konsulat' even starts out with this perspective. We first see the consul fast asleep in her bed followed by handheld shots from the outside of the house at night, looking in. The shaky footage continues in the inside, opening doors. These scenes are underplayed with a low humming that induces restlessness and an eerie, intimidating atmosphere.

Figure 54: Stalker perspective in *Kurz davor*

The shots themselves are short and one might not even notice them consciously as different from the rest of the film. Yet, they leave an unexplainable unease and feeling of threat. The detached artificiality in most other scenes create a distance between the film and the viewer; just like in *No Lies*, the audience can (and must) make intellectual connections that go beyond the frame of the film. "It seduces us into a sense of smugness, into a state of self-congratulations." (17) The stalker scenes assault the audience that deems itself safe, both by their status as a spectator, but also by the moral superiority in *Kurz davor*. "Rape becomes interchangeable with an act of cinema." (15)

Film reviewer Stefan Grissemann calls *Kurz davor* a 'stylized plan game, a documentary fiction.' Yet I argue that exactly these instances of assault against the audience remove any

playfulness from the film; the destabilization of the audience creates an uneasiness that goes beyond the intellectual admiration of an aesthetically ambitious film. *Kurz davor* is so highly disturbing because it shows that all these stories are happening adjacent to the everyday lives we see of the protagonists. The border officer, the neighbor, the consul, the brothel owner - all might and probably have had contact with one of these women. We all have. But did we ever ask ourselves if she might need help? That we might be able to help? That we are witnessing a crime being committed without us realizing? It makes us wary of our own everyday life, its quaintness, its strict confines. It shows the constriction of it as well as our impossibility to escape it.

With filmmakers like Salomonowitz, Friedl, and Leisch, Austrian Cinema contributes greatly to this new development of Indirect Cinema. According to Barbara Wurm, the "Dok-Hype" has produced films that address politically and societally relevant difficult topics with demanding aesthetic strategies. She writes: "[D]er Dokumentarfilm bleibt eine der schärfsten Waffen des Landes./Documentary film remains one of the country's sharpest weapons." (30) Stefan Grissemann suggests that although or rather because the provincial nature of Austria is tangible, the films go against the dominating relations. The audience of Indirect Cinema is provoked to resist, to reflect. In contrast to other movements in documentary film, Indirect Cinema seeks not the authentic experience for the audience but an effect of artifice. Artifice in its various forms disrupts empathy and forces the viewer into an active state of self-reflection. Indirect Cinema doesn't offer the comfort of a

conclusion, of closure but wants to leave the audience unsettled and suspicious of the image. The self-reflexivity and self-awareness it induces creates access to a space where critical engagement with the issues at hand is still possible.

Conclusion

Post-truth was the word of the year 2016, "an adjective defined as 'relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.'" (Oxford English Dictionary)

Marina Weisband argues in an essay in *Die Zeit* that post-truth politics do not pursue the goal to convince the public of their lies but rather to systematically induce a feeling of cognitive dissonance. "Das Ziel offensichtlicher Lügen ist der Beweis der Machtlosigkeit von Wahrheit; die Verschiebung des Diskurses, sodass alles plötzlich infrage gestellt wird./ The goal of obvious lies is proof for the powerlessness of truth; a shift of the discourse, so that suddenly everything can be questioned." The omnipresence of media and, with it, of contradicting information leads to a certain fatigue in which people stop trusting their own senses, perception and reason. While this development has found a new peak recently, the destabilization of the concept of truth in the general population has been the focal point of discussion for over 10 years. 2006's word of the year was *truthiness*, a term introduced by comedian Stephen Colbert in 2005. Jeffrey P. Jones defines truthiness as follows:

> Truthiness, thus, is an apt term for highlighting the ways in which American political culture is moving away from its previous journalism-centered regime of truth and is increasingly being subverted (if not replaced) by a broadly discursive, media-centered epistemology where various actors (politicians, institutions, movements, bloggers, talk show hosts, and so on) are involved in a dispersed and widespread creative construction of truth. (129)

The realization that consumers can participate in what constitutes reality and truth challenges the authority of certain media outlets and the concept of journalism in general. One more drastic example is Conservapedia.com, a conservative Wikipedia 'alternative,' that claims to present the truth from a fundamentalist Christian viewpoint beyond the 'liberal' media. Outlets such as this one imitate well-known sources in looks and style to legitimize themselves, and offer citizens sources that align with their belief system. "Journalistic production of facts – a traditional defining feature of journalism – is simply no longer good enough in the contemporary context." (Jones 138)

Yet, I argue that this destabilization of the concept of truth is only a symptom of a crisis of perception. The question asked in this 'post-truth' era is not "What is truth?" but rather "When confronted the competing truths, what do I perceive as meaningful?" One could see the development of Indirect Cinema from Direct Cinema as a similar shift in perspective.

This changed perspective on what constitutes truth and reality certainly led to a crisis in journalism, and one could expect a similar predicament for documentary film that, after all, shares certain properties. Yet, Fritz Wolf notices: "Man kann mit Fug und Recht sagen: Das Genre Dokumentarfilm in seiner Vielfalt ist heute auf der Höhe der Zeit und bildet die komplexeste filmische Form, sich mit Welt zu befassen./One can claim with complete justification: The genre documentary film with its variety is up-to-date and offers the most complex filmic form that engages with the world." (199) It seems that documentary film has never been as popular as it is right now. In Germany, the production of documentary films has quadrupled since 2000; the number of attendees of the documentary film festival

DOK.fest in Munich tripled in the past five years. Organizer Daniel Sponsel offers an explanation for the appeal:

> Ein ganz naheliegender Grund ist sicher die Funktion des Dokumentarfilms als Gegenöffentlichkeit oder als andere Öffentlichkeit. […] Es gibt die Sehnsucht nach einer Tiefe der Information, verbunden mit einer Haltung, einem persönlichen Autorenblick. Eben das Bedürfnis nach einer Auseinandersetzung, die länger dauert als ein paar Klicks oder ein YouTube-Filmchen.
>
> A very obvious reason is certainly the function of documentary film as a counterpublic or as a different public. […] There is a longing for a depth of information connected to an attitude, a personal auteur perspective. The need for an examination that lasts longer than only a few clicks or a YouTube clip. (Nicodemus)

What my analyses in the past three chapters reveal are some of the new strategies and approaches that documentary film has created as a response to the crisis of perception. Yet, there are many more; the term of 'performing' documentary for instance goes a lot further than only Indirect Cinema. Although my development of the term and elaboration of this subgenre provides an important intervention, other manifestations of the performing documentary require academic attention. As the term might suggest, a profound investigation from the perspective of performance studies might prove useful. This also provides an entryway to a discussion of the intersections between documentary film and the increasing use of documentary in art contexts. "Vor dem Hintergrund dieses Booms der Kultur des Dokumentarischen erscheint nun die Rolle, die dokumentarische Strategien und Formen in den Galerien und Museen der bildenden Kunst der Gegenwart spielen, umso bedenkenswerter./Considering the boom of the culture of the documentary, it seems that

the role of documentary strategies and forms in the galleries and museums of the fine arts is worthy of consideration." (Holert 217) Holert speaks of a 'documentary mode' in contemporary art; he argues that what Foucault did with history is now happening with documentary images. They are not only important for their potential for truth or expression but are looked at and worked at "von innen/from the inside." (220)

For example, the discussion of the works of two particular artists would provide useful comparisons to further develop my analyses of *Havarie* and *Respite*. The 90-minute video *theresienstadt* by Portuguese artist Daniel Blaufuks uses footage from the Nazi propaganda film of the same name, slows it down to last its original length and tints it red. According to the artist, he tries to find some truth in the original images. While his method resembles Scheffner's approach in *Havarie*, *theresienstadt* was exclusively shown in galleries and museums. The similarity of the aesthetic form provides a fascinating point of connection from which one could explore the different effects based on its space of reception.

Another example is the work of Omer Fast, a video artist from Jerusalem, whose multi-channel video installations interrogate the relationship between history, fiction, and memory. For *Spielberg's List*, Fast interviewed extras from Steven Spielberg's Sc*hindler's List* and combines them with footage from the original camp as well as the one built only for the production of the Hollywood film. He thereby reacts to the history of Holocaust representation both in fiction and nonfiction film, and, similar to Farocki, mirrors the experience of postmemory.

Despite these documentary forms that lend themselves towards artistic comparisons though, conventional documentaries can still achieve a wide social impact with their truth claims. In recent years, Gabriela Cowperthwaite's documentary *Blackfish* from 2013 about orca whales in captivity, for instance, had a huge effect on a social scale. Seaworld reportedly suffered major losses from its representation in the film.

Even among documentary scholars, the question of truth is still relevant. When the anti-vaccination documentary *Vaxxed* was scheduled to premiere at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2016, Bill Nichols sent an email to the documentary theory listserv *Visible Evidence* with the subject line "How to Use Doc Conventions to Perpetuate Lies." He asked the community of documentary scholars to "[l]et Tribeca know those of us in documentary film study do NOT support hoaxes, lies and frauds masquerading as 'controversy' and exploiting documentary conventions to do it." Although a long public discussion about freedom of speech and artistic form flared up (with Brian Winston leading the opposition), the length and passion of the discussion illustrate that documentary theory still does have a connection to reality whatever that may mean. The fact that prominent figures like Nichols still take part in a discussion solely based on truth claims shows that the concept of truth is not yet entirely overcome, neither in praxis nor in theory.

My concept of a crisis of perception is a first step in a theory of documentary that breaks away from the concept of truth and reality without accepting a complete relativism. What my theoretical framework suggests is a shift away from the real towards perception, a shift that finally *relinquishes the real*.

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