Art as a Political Witness

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Frank Möller (eds.)

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Louie Palu is an award winning documentary photographer and filmmaker whose work has appeared in festivals, publications, and exhibitions internationally. He is a 2016 John Simon Guggenheim Foundation Fellow and a 2016–2017 Harry Ransom Center Research Fellow in the Humanities at the University of Texas at Austin. Louie Palu is the recipient of numerous awards including a Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting Grant.

Preface

The ECPR (European Consortium for Political Research) Standing Group on Politics and the Arts was founded in 1996 by Maureen Whitebrook, who called the group for the first initial workshop in Bordeaux. Already at that time, the idea was to analyse art as a form of political discourse. Over the years, the activities of the Standing Group revolved around such issues as terror and art, violence and non-violence, art and reconciliation, and aesthetic representations of and interventions in international conflicts. Furthermore, the Standing Group explored the politicization of film, literature and photography; the poetic form; narrative practices; and, most recently, the art of peace.

Art as political witness was included in the Group's research agenda for the first time on the occasion of the 2013 ECPR General Conference in Bordeaux. In Glasgow, one year later, the Group intensified its engagement with the role and function of art as political witness in a section entirely dedicated to this subject. We invited panels and papers expanding the range of political science by problematizing the concept of art in connection with political witnessing; elaborating the political-ness of artistic witnessing; and exploring the concept of artistic witnessing as political activity. We were interested in the temporality of witnessing including reflection of the past and anticipation of the future in artistic and aesthetic engagements with politics and the political.

We would like to thank all friends and colleagues – those who are contributing to the Group's overall activities, and especially those who participated in the intense discussions on art as political witness in Bordeaux, Glasgow and elsewhere. Special thanks are due to the contributors to this volume and the artists who generously granted permission to reproduce their work in this book. Indeed, the Standing Group has always been interested in dialogue between scholars and artists and we are extremely happy to have Louie Palu among the contributors to this volume. We are also grateful to the School of Social Sciences and Humanities at the University of Tampere and the School's dean, Risto Kunelius, for subsidizing the language-editing stage of this project. Finally, many thanks are due to Barbara Budrich Publishers, especially to our editor Sarah Rögl, and also to Jakob Horstmann and Ulrike Schmitz for their initial interest in this project.

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Frank Möller, Tampere

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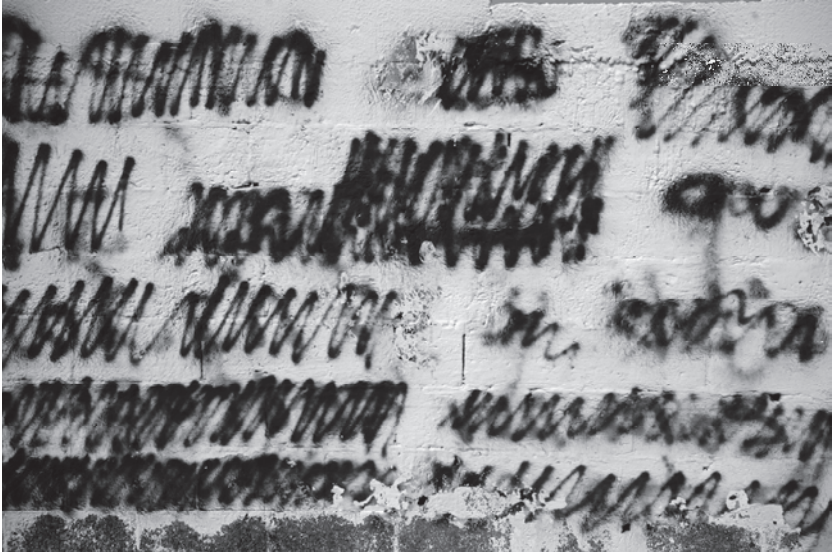
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GUANTÁNAMO Operational Security Review
LOUIE PALU

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REPLY TO
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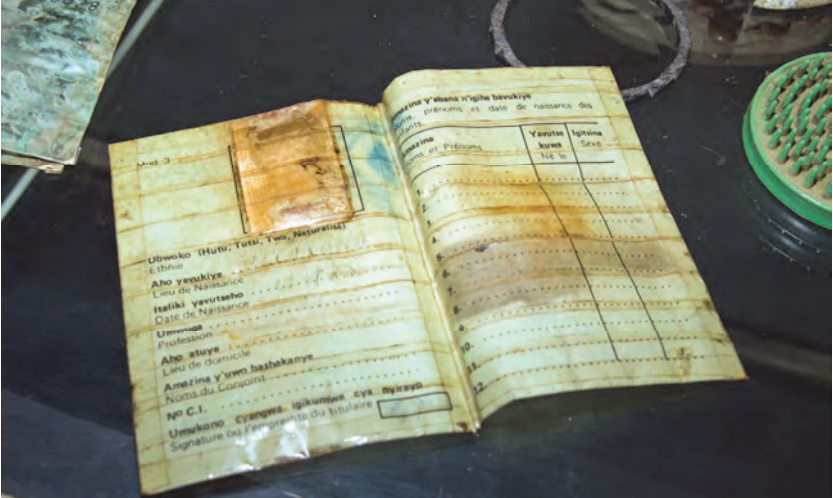
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1. Witnessing in Contemporary Art and Politics

Kia Lindroos and Frank Möller

In this book, we are exploring the practice of bearing witness to politics through art. The contributors to this volume reflect on the concept of art and selected aspects of understanding the role of art and different artistic genres in connection with political witnessing. While exploring art as political witness, the contributors focus on art or politics or witnessing or a combination of the above but, essentially, all of them utilise – implicitly or explicitly – concepts of witnessing. They acknowledge, discuss and build upon the existing literature in light of their individual subject matter, regarded from different disciplinary angles including art history and political science. They elaborate on the political-ness of artistic witnessing and explore the concept of witnessing as a form of political activity. The book addresses both conceptual and theoretical questions and presents theoretically reflected case studies, including selected artistic works.

The contributors to this volume explore the work of both professional artists and non-artists' use of artistic forms of expression when witnessing politics. The chapters reflect the current interest in the humanities and social sciences in the idea – or the question – of being a witness. They address this idea by interrogating and expanding concepts of witnessing and their uses in artistic, historical and political practice. In the present chapter, we review the existing literature on the concept of being a witness and correlate it with the following chapters.

Being a Witness

A witness is someone who is "present as a spectator or auditor".[1] If this someone is the only one who can testify from personal observation, and if material evidence with which to support this testimony is lacking, then testimony appears to be especially important because it reveals things we would otherwise not be aware of. Such testimony, however, "relies on an act of faith: we must choose whether we believe the witness or nor" (Korhonen 2008: 115).

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[1]   *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, Vol. II, p. 2562.

Traditionally defined, a witness is someone "who is or was present and is able to testify from personal observation".[2] In the criminal justice system, as well as in the social sciences and humanities, this understanding of being a witness – especially an *eye*witness – has been widely applied to testimony to violent, tragic and traumatic events such as the Holocaust. This approach to witnessing is a rather narrow one: in order to qualify as a witness, you have to see something with your own eyes at the exact point in time when this something happens. As the following discussion will show, much of the emerging literature on witnessing is interested in expanding our understanding of what it means to be a witness.

To be able to be a witness includes some form of visual and/or bodily connection to the matters witnessed. For example, Gideon Hausner, the Attorney General of the State of Israel and chief prosecutor at the Eichmann trial, wanted "people who would tell what they had seen with their own eyes and what they had experienced on their own bodies" (quoted in Wieviorka 2006: 70). Hausner adds to the *eye*-witness who testifies from personal observation the *body*-witness who testifies on the basis of what he or she experienced on their own body. Indeed, *observation* – being a spectator – is often deemed insufficient in order for a person to qualify as witness. As David Simpson notes, the "person who simply notices but does not act" – the spectator, the bystander, the onlooker, the *voyeur* – "has been deemed most intolerable" (Simpson 2006: 3; for a defence of the *voyeur* in the context of witnessing people in pain, see Ledbetter 2012: 3–14). Simpson couples two words – *simply* and *notices* – the connection between which should be carefully reflected upon (Möller 2013: 47): is noticing simple, and who simply notices? In any case, reflecting scepticism about the moral position of the spectator, Diana Taylor (2003: 243) defines the "role of witness" more ambitiously "as responsible, ethical, participant rather than spectator to crisis". Building on Taylor's approach, the *participant* witness has been introduced into the literature as someone who (self-)critically engages with the conditions depicted in an image, including his or her own subject positions in connection with these conditions (Möller 2013: 36–55). Thus, in order to be considered a witness some form of engagement beyond being present and being able to testify from personal observation is often deemed necessary.

With regard to the 1970s and early 1980s, Annette Wieviorka (2006: 96) writes compellingly about *the era of the witness* characterized by "the systematic collection of audiovisual testimonies" as regards Holocaust experiences and memories of experiences. Both terms are important here – *era* and *witness*: *witness* as understood in Hausner's sense as above (eye and body), and *era* because the issue at that time was not only one of people testifying on the basis of their own

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[2]   *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, Vol. II, p. 2562.

experience, but also one of general interest in their testimonies among a wider audience. Such interest had largely been absent during the first period after the Holocaust. It was during the Eichmann trial and thus before *the era of the witness* that "[f]or the first time since the end of the war, the witnesses had the feeling that they were being heard" (ibid.: 84). The trial helped transform *witnesses* into *survivors*, recognized by society "as such" (ibid.: 88).

However, Primo Levi (1989: 83–84) notes that "we, the survivors, are not the true witnesses". He specifies:

We survivors are not only an exiguous but also an anomalous minority: we are those who by their prevarications or abilities or good luck did not touch bottom. Those who did so, those who saw the Gorgon, have not returned to tell about it or have returned mute, but they are the 'Muslims,' the submerged, the complete witnesses, the ones whose deposition would have a general significance. They are the rule, we are the exception.

The survivors can testify to certain events based on their own experience but their testimony is "a discourse 'on behalf of third parties,' the story of things seen at close hand, not experienced personally" (Levi 1989: 84). Giorgio Agamben, when discussing Levi's writings, comments that "[w]hoever assumes the charge of bearing witness in their name" – that is, in the name of Levi's "complete witness" – "knows that he or she must bear witness in the name of the impossibility of bearing witness" (Agamben 2002: 34).

Discourses and practices revolving around the Holocaust and the memory of the Holocaust have "become, for better or for worse, the definitive model for memory construction" (Wieviorka 2006: xiv). Such construction is not limited to the ways discussed by Wieviorka. In her chapter titled *Dancing Memory*, Dana Mills looks at the Holocaust as one of the biggest catalysers of the foundation of the state of Israel, as well as one of the most formative elements in the creation of Israeli identity (chapter 3, this volume). As such, it has been hugely influential in Israeli artistic language and specifically in Israeli dance. She focuses on readings of two dance works: *Ami Yam, Ami Ya'ar*, a dance work performed by the Batsheva Dance Company in the 1960s (choreography: John Cranko) and *Memento Mori*, performed by the Kibbutz Dance Company in the 1990s (choreography: Rami Be'er). These are two works in which the Holocaust plays a central role. Mills analyses the ways in which these dance works record shifting discourses of citizenship in Israeli society, from a republican discourse to a liberal one. Rather than paying exclusive attention to the complexities of the choreographies of these dance works, equal attention should be devoted to the complexities of identity the dance works engage with. Dance, as a method of witnessing, testifies to these complexities. Furthermore, dance, as Mills argues, "cannot only witness shifts in discourses of citizenship but [also] the price hegemonic discourses bear on the moving body. The moving body remembers the price it has to pay for joining in with collective enterprises".

While Wieviorka does not explicitly address the question of art as political witness, she acknowledges that political testimony can be transformed "into a work of art" (Wieviorka 2006: 83).[3] Such transformation may not be the main purpose of testimony (see our discussion of Avishai Margalit's work below) but it is nevertheless important.

There can be observed a certain recent expansion of the concept of being a witness, illustrated by such qualifiers as *expert*, *moral*, *silent*, *transparent*, *convincing*, *secondary*, *post-factum* or *invisible,* to name but a few, all of which indicate the need for differentiation with regard to the concept of being a witness. The *expert* witness, for example, relies – and makes others rely – on the epistemological advantage resulting from specialist and exclusive knowledge based on his or her professional education. The criminal justice system and politico-historical contexts requiring specialist knowledge often rely on such a witness.[4] This approach is closely related to the *transparent* witness, a professional or non-professional documentarian who, in addition to demonstrating his or her own point of view, acknowledges the complexity of the events depicted and appears to be "fair" *vis-à-vis* the subjects and conditions depicted (Zuckerman 2014: 40–41). Here, transparency refers to verifiability and fairness.

Morality and Observation

Avishai Margalit identifies the *moral* witness in terms of "knowledge-by-acquaintance of suffering" (Margalit 2004: 149). In order to qualify as moral witness, "[h]e or she should witness – indeed, they should experience – suffering inflicted by an unmitigated evil regime" (ibid.: 148).[5] "Being a moral witness involves witnessing actual suffering, not just intended suffering" (ibid.: 149). It also involves experience of suffering, not just observing (the) suffering (of others). Recall that Levi (1989: 84), too, distinguishes "things seen at close hand" from things "experienced personally", the one attributed to the survivor, the other to the "true" witness.

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[3] Her example is Claude Lanzmann's film *Shoah*. Importantly, the "witness is the bearer of an experience that, albeit unique, does not exist on its own, but only in the testimonial situation in which it takes places" (p. 82).

[4] Wieviorka (2006: 57) reports that at the Eichmann trial, "[f]or the first time …, a historian, Salo Baron, then a professor at Columbia University, was called to the witness stand to provide a historical framework for the trial". In literature, the expert witness appears for example in James (1977).

[5] We would like to decouple Margalit's discussion from "unmitigated evil regime[s]" and expand it to all political regimes.

Margalit (2004: 149–150) stresses that an *observer* can also be a moral witness (although she or he cannot be a "paradigmatic case of a moral witness". An observer can be a moral witness on condition that, just like the sufferer, she or he is "at personal risk" (ibid.: 150) – risk both in the form of "belonging to the category of people toward whom the evil deeds are directed" (ibid.) and risk in the form of "trying to document and record what happens for some future use" (ibid.). The use of the present tense in these conditions for risk – deeds *are*, not *were*, directed towards a certain group of people, and witnesses record what happen*s*, not what happen*ed* – implies contemporaneity. Aftermath artists (see below) cannot be moral witnesses of the original event, only of the aftermath as "the authority of a moral witness comes from being an eye-witness" (ibid.: 173).

Artists who make record of their own suffering, inflicted on them by others, are paradigmatic moral witnesses. Artists can also be classified as moral witnesses if they belong to the category of people who were targeted even if they, the artists, were not themselves targeted. If they do *not* belong to the same category of people, then artists documenting or recording the suffering of others can be, but do not necessarily have to be, moral witnesses: in order to qualify as moral witness, their "testimonial mission has [to have] a moral purpose" (ibid: 151) and they have to take risks. "To be a moral witness … is all about taking risks" (ibid.: 157).

If an artist does take risks as an eye-witness, then she or he would seem to qualify as moral witness even though the production of art "for some future use" (ibid.: 150) appears to contradict Margalit's insistence on testimony's "intrinsic value", its non-instrumentality: in Margalit's understanding, testimony is not a means to an end. Indeed, the testimony of the paradigmatic moral witness is given "intrinsic value …, no matter what the instrumental consequences of it are going to be" (ibid.: 167). Thus, an artist documenting, with a moral purpose and for future use, the suffering of others at the same time that this very suffering occurs can, if – and only if – she or he takes risks, be a moral witness; however, due to both the lack of personal experience of suffering and the documentation's instrumentality, he or she cannot be a *paradigmatic* one.

Furthermore, Margalit differentiates the *moral* witness from the *political* witness who "believes that the incriminating evidence that she gathers is an instrument in the war effort" (ibid.). In light of the title of the present book, a longer quotation seems to be necessary here:

The political witness, by temperament and training, can be a much better witness than the mere moral witness for the structure of evil and not only for episodes of evil. And thus he can be a more valuable witness in uncovering the factual truth. The political witness can be very noble in fighting evil against all odds. And yet as an ideal type, although his features partly overlap with those of the moral witness, the political witness is still distinct, not to be confused with the moral witness. Both are engaged in

uncovering what evil tries to cover up. The political witness may be more effective in uncovering the factual truth, in telling it like it was. But the moral witness is more valuable at telling it like it felt, that is, telling what it was like to be subjected to such evil. The first-person accounts of moral witnesses are essential to what they report, whereas political witnesses can testify from a third-person perspective without much loss (ibid.: 168).

The distinction between "telling it like it *was*" and "telling it like it *felt*" (ibid.; italics added) is an important one. It is equally important that there is overlap between the moral and the political witness; these two subject positions are not mutually exclusive. Margalit's understanding of "political witness", however, is a very specific one – one that the contributors to this volume do not necessarily share. While it has been said that art is political on condition that it "extends the thread of recognition and understanding beyond what previously was seen and known" (Elderfield 2006: 44), any work of art is susceptible to politically informed analysis. Such analysis will reveal, for example, that art is eminently political even if it confirms "what previously was seen and known" (ibid.). Indeed, art, while bearing witness to politics, lacks criticality if it mainly reconstructs or anticipates the motives of the political elite (Krippendorff 2000: 91). Such art is political but hardly critical (Möller 2016). Art, thus, is always a contribution to political discourse, shaping "what can be seen, what can be said and what can be thought" (Rancière 2009: 103). In other words, art contributes to our understanding of what is possible, envisioning what Jacques Rancière calls "a new landscape of the possible" (ibid.) or rendering the emergence of such a new landscape difficult.

    Bearing witness to politics through political analysis of art reveals as much about art as it does about the political constellations within which art operates. Neither art nor bearing witness to politics through art is necessarily or automatically critical or politically progressive. Political analysis can reveal whether it *is* or not. Such analysis, however, "should not … aim at the closure of 'interpretation' or 'analysis' of the work, but rather aim toward a dialogue wherein the work of art retains its power to challenge the preexisting theories, be they political, philosophical, or literary" (Hyvärinen and Lisa Muszynski 2008: 20). Thus, witnessing politics through art is always an ongoing project.

    To resume our explication of Margalit's conceptualization we would like to stress that being a moral witness is linked to hope – hope "that in another place or another time there exists, or will exist, a moral community that will listen to their testimony" (Margalit 2004: 155). Applied to the artist as moralist, Alex Danchev (2009: 3) specifies that the artist hopes "that there is, or will be, an audience of sentient spectators, viewers, readers, absorbed in the work: a community, a moral community, for whom it stands up and who will stand up for it". Witnessing without a receptive audience appears futile.

Time Witnesses

A receptive audience is one that combines different temporalities of events, memories and experience. The question of the temporality of the witnessing poses the dilemma, whether or not the position of witnessing an event and artistically documenting it, for instance in war photography or other forms of witnessing violent activities, carries on throughout time, and how different temporalities of events, memories and experience are merged in the spectator. Kia Lindroos, in chapter 4, sees the manner of cinematic witness as closely related to bearing witness of controversial images of the historical and contemporary political world. The chapter discusses Chris Marker's work through selected examples of his films such as *Les Statues meurent aussi*, *Sans Soleil* and *Le Tombeau d'Alexandre*. Marker's aesthetic work is not only intertwined with rethinking cinematic political history and the philosophy of time. He also experiments with new technologies, with reproducing different aesthetic modes in order to narrate political and historical events. Marker's cinema has taken the form of personal essays, combined with the genre of documentary. Thus, as much as being an artist who documents different aspects of political history from the 1950s to the end of the millennium, he is also a personal witness of these times. His films are a combination of visual imagery with philosophical speculation and erudition. The commentaries he creates to accompany the film-images come close to streams of consciousness and they can be very poetic. The poetry of the text combines with rather subjective seeing and hearing experiences. Besides the documentary film on Alexander Medvedkin (*Le Tombeau d'Alexandre*) that is discussed in this chapter, Marker has made several cinematic portraits, for instance on Akira Kurasawa, Christo, Andrei Tarkovsky and Simone Signoret.

Different temporalities of witnessing and the inter-connection among the artistic, the historical and the political are also thematised in Sally Butler and Roland Bleiker's contribution on indigenous art in Australia (chapter 5). Indigenous art is used worldwide to promote Australia; at the same time, however, its creators are politically, economically and socially marginalized in Australia, continually exposed to stigma and exclusion. This exclusion is also reflected in the extent to which the political dimension of indigenous art, including its emphasis on indigenous rights, self-determination and social equality, is often disregarded when this art is incorporated into mainstream culture and the art market. In the chapter, Butler and Bleiker direct our attention to performance and analyse the political witnessing function of performative role-playing aspects of art, utilised by indigenous artists in their fight against the colonial legacy, or, to use Derek Gregory's (2004) apt term, *the colonial present*. The authors' focus on embodiment and performance helps divert

our attention from the visual ingredients of artistic witnessing to the body's full sensory network (see Bacci and Melcher 2013). Indeed, the visuality of witnessing cannot be reduced to that which can be seen but always involves the whole body, and this involvement transforms the eyewitness necessarily into the body-witness. Art employing the body – the body as art; the body as witness – testifies to the human condition under duress and influences the viewer's perception by means of subconscious sensory stimulations.

A recent popular British TV series (*Silent Witness*) helped popularize the *silent*, *post-mortem* witness.[6] Roland Barthes (2000), too, identifies as the essence (or 'horror', as he notes) of the photograph that it certifies that the corpse is alive. Thus, the witnessing momentum here is that it maintains the memory, trace or images of the people who have passed away: this connects the historical witness to contemporary experience. Cynthia Milton, in her contribution to this volume, pays attention to art after loss (chapter 6). Milton analyses post-conflict representations of the violence visited upon Peru, especially its indigenous population, in connection with the conflict between state security forces and *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) in the 1980s and 1990s. She engages with art's capability of contesting large-scale violence and restoring the humanity of citizens who suffered – and in case of traumatic memories, continue to suffer – from this violence. Milton not only explores the connection between art and affect; she also critically discusses the notion of art as historical evidence, noting that art can contradict official histories and represent individual and group memories that deviate from such histories. Importantly, Milton notes that "*art is not bound to truth*", i.e. the issue is not – or not primarily or exclusively – one of verisimilitude in the sense of being true or real. Rather, art interrogates competing narratives of the past, acknowledging both that each narrative may be true from the perspective of the narrator (as people remember the same event differently) and that no narrative is true (in the sense of historically accurate). Memory is always exposed to and influenced by narrative structures of other memories; and all memories evolve, especially when narrated in form of a story (see also Levi 1989: 24).

Post-mortem witnesses also appear in connection with forensic photography (see Dufour 2015) in such contexts as the (reappearance of the) *desaparecidos* – the disappeared (Sánchez 2011a and 2011b). The dead are not "required to make sense of their deaths", as Jim Crace (2000: 192) poignantly writes, but their remains can help others explain and, to some extent, cope with these deaths – bones are "the most reliable witnesses to atrocity" (Danchev 2009: 41). Forensic photography may not be capable of providing closure (Sánchez 2012:

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6   See http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b007y6k8/episodes/guide.

192). In contrast to other forms of photography,[7] however, it may provide assurance.

The *post-factum* witness depicts "the space in which [the trauma] occurred" after it occurred (Lowe 2014: 228). Aftermath photographs and photographers, thus, are post-factum witnesses. This photography and these photographers focus either on people experiencing and suffering from trauma even when the event that caused the trauma in the first place seems to be over (e.g. Torgovnik 2009) or on landscapes, built environment and ruins within which trauma-causing events occurred and which testify to such events (Lisle 2011). Aftermath artists may engage with an event that occurred before they were born – in which case they may be referred to as *secondary* witnesses (Apel 2002) or *post*-witnesses (Popescu and Schult 2015), a term derived from Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory[8] – or they may recreate an event they witnessed personally but did not artistically engage with at the time it happened.

A photographer can be a *convincing* witness if he or she uses "lenses that approximate the breadth and magnification of average human vision" so as to "neutralize our skepticism" (Adams 1994: 147) and thwart allegations of manipulation which are omnipresent in the digital age. However, photography can also appear to be convincing if it operates fundamentally differently. Referring to the satellite images then-US Secretary of State Colin Powell used in his testimony before the UN Security Council on February 5, 2003, Jane Blocker introduces the *invisible* witness. According to Blocker, such a witness is a core character in current cultural configurations because "the godlike invisibility of this witness lends it a legitimacy and authority that allow it to control in alarming ways what we understand 'the real' to be" (Blocker 2009: xvi). Powell, however, seems to have been more sceptical about the power of this witness. In connection with selected images, he explicitly referred to "a human source" corroborating the visual evidence seemingly provided by the images: "So it's not just the photo, and it's not an individual seeing the photo. It's the photo and then the knowledge of an individual being brought together to make the case".[9] One might ask: what case? Indeed, by combining image and eye-witness, Powell combined two notoriously unreliable sources. It is arguable that he did so in order to illustrate the US administration's pre-existing beliefs

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[7]   Hirsch (1997: 119) notes that the photograph normally reveals less than it promises to reveal.

[8]   "Postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated" (Hirsch 1997: 22).

[9]   US Secretary of State's address to the United Nations Security Council, February 5, 2003, at http://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/feb/05/iraq.usa.

on Saddam Hussein's Iraq as a country in possession of weapons of mass destruction.

Artists engage in the politics of witnessing by utilizing all of the above – and many other – understandings of and approaches to being a witness. They are not the only ones. For example, "the role of the photographer as witness" is regularly referenced in the literature, especially in connection with photo-journalistic representations of wars and violent conflicts (Kennedy 2014: 46). Louie Palu's contribution to this volume (chapter 2) shows why it is appropriate to refer to photojournalists as witnesses. Such photojournalists as Palu himself are eyewitnesses; they exemplify contemporaneity by being on location when something happens; and they take risks. Their work also follows strict ethical standards. They do not normally belong to the group of people originally targeted by the regime; however, as Palu's contribution shows, they become targets in their capacity as photographers, testifying visually to gruesome events for some future use. In his chapter, Palu also raises the important question of image control. Witnessing through art and visual culture reflects practices of control and selection. Palu asks: "*Who controls what you see?*" Who controls what you bear witness to? That witnessing through images is not always possible does not imply impossibility of witnessing through art, as several contributions to this volume show.

It is more intriguing, perhaps, that even soldiers are referred to as witnesses documenting, by means of smart phones, their own involvement in the politics of violence (Allan 2014: 187; see also Kennedy 2009 and Struck 2011). These witnesses document, perhaps, their own suffering but they also document the suffering they inflict on others. Can perpetrators be witnesses?

The Artist as Witness

Why does this book specifically engage with artists? After all, in many cases artists represent other people's experiences without having been invited or asked to do so; their work is not commissioned by those who it is meant to reference. Why, then, should artists be expected to be capable of representing other people's experiences adequately? Often they tell the story of things *not* "seen at close hand" (Levi) but from afar – temporally and spatially, lacking "knowledge-by-acquaintance of suffering" (Margalit). Why, then, do artists believe that they have the right to represent other people's experiences in the first place? And who can judge the appropriateness of artistic representations beyond aesthetic judgments? Some commentators insist that what matters is not the truth of the artist but, rather, "the truth of the 'victim'" (Roberts 2014: 150)

but is there any guarantee that artists are capable of grasping the victim's truth? If not, do they exert violence upon the victims by disregarding their, the victims', truth? Aesthetic judgments would ultimately be of only secondary importance in the context of art as a political witness where judgments have to be political, not aesthetic, ones.

For example, a purely aesthetic judgment of the photographs Dorothea Lange and other photographers produced while on assignment with the Farm Security Administration (FSA) would be misleading. As Jay Prosser notes, underlying their photographic work was a political mission, disguised to some extent by the seemingly documentary character of the photographs. While appearing to be a documentary "mode of witnessing", this photography "did not *portray* victims …; it *created* them" so as to help gain support for the US administration's resettlement policy (Prosser 2005: 90; italics added). The photographer's "non-neutrality" (ibid.) may explain the success of their photographs but their work cannot adequately be grasped with exclusive reference to being a witness.

This photography can also be referenced to illustrate the occasionally rather problematic relationship between artists and subjects, much discussed in the existing literature. Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites report that one of the subjects of one of the most famous photographs produced in connection with the work of the FSA, Florence Thompson, later complained about the "commodification of her image that completely divorced the woman in the photograph from the living Thompson" (Hariman and Lucaites 2007: 62) and her reduction in public perception to a *Migrant Mother*. We note the publisher's striking insensitivity when reproducing this very photograph on the cover of the book, thus contributing to the very same commodification and exploitation Hariman and Lucaites so eloquently describe in their book.

If we follow Walter Benjamin's notion in discussing the complexity of artistic representations, we would notify that beauty, thus the aesthetic value per se, is included in the secrecy (*Geheimnis*) of the work, but not necessarily in its presentation. Beauty includes the possibility that it be recovered in the moment of critique (Benjamin 1991 [1922]: 196). In the moment at which the illusion that the aura represents is becoming transparent the work might also appear differently in its perception. Benjamin positions himself in relation to the Platonic idea of art as illumination and Heidegger's idea of beauty that is connected to being and truth.[10] In his *Work of Art* essay, originally from the year 1936, Benjamin plays with the double meaning of *illumination*, as it is formed from the illusion towards presentation. Here, Benjamin also emphasises the

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[10]   Heidegger's idea is presented in *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* (1960, originally from 1935).

aesthetic polarity of the concepts of play and illumination (*Spiel und Schein*) in which the idea of the origin as truth has already disappeared.

For Benjamin, play and illumination are both included in the concept of *mimesis* (Benjamin 1991 [1936]: 668). The decay of the ancient idea of creation is to be found in the mimesis itself, which is understood as the *original phenomenon* of all artistic creation. What the imitation (the work of art) does to the subject imitated occurs only in an illusory way, like in a play (ibid.: 368). Benjamin suggests that the definition of art should find a balance between these two extreme ways of interpretation; Schiller stresses the importance of play (*Spiel*), Goethe stresses illumination in aesthetics (ibid.: 667). It is possible that a balance between these two could be found. The rethinking of art in the modern era allows the work of art to be conceived of in a way in which play (*Spiel*) and illumination are brought together, and in which art not only imitates the surrounding world, but also begins to *imitate itself* as copies are reproduced. This viewpoint also has its effects when we think in more contemporary terms, about how and in what ways art can be a witness. Thus, what is art actually witnessing in these terms? Is it the play of, illumination of or mimetic experiences of the events and their witness?

For instance, Martin Seel remarks upon the importance of Benjamin's idea in overcoming traditional philosophies of aesthetics (Seel 1993: 771–773). The idea to which Benjamin's thought leads is that here, art is not conceived of as the presentation of something else, such as 'reality' or 'truth', but is *understood as the presentation itself*. Here, presentation is actually the idea that connects to the witness: art has (or might have) the capacity to be a witness in the very act of its presentation.

Wieviorka (2006: 101) notes, in connection with the television mini-series *Holocaust,* anxiety among survivors that they might be "dispossessed of [their own] history by someone outside the experience who claims to be telling it". This someone could be, and often is, an artist. And Jill Bennett reminds us that the experience of violence – or, for that matter, the experience of anything else – "is fundamentally *owned* by someone" (Bennett 2005: 3; italics added). Artists' attempts to speak on someone's behalf and to represent someone's experiences – someone marginalized, someone silenced, someone misrepresented in official discourse or mass culture, someone victimized, even someone killed[11] – might amount to expropriation of such ownership and dispossession of survivors' intimate stories and memories. If artists engage with someone else's experience from the outside by, for example, showing up on location after the event, they

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[11] Wieviorka (2006: 101) reports that "one of the recurring themes in both oral and written survivor testimony is of a promise made to a friend or relative who is about to die, a promise to tell the world what happened to them and thus to save them from oblivion – to make death a little less futile. Survival itself is often explained and justified by this will to honor the legacy of those who perished".

enter the "event-as-aftermath" (Roberts 2014: 107), thus contributing to its discursive reconstruction (see below). In other cases, artists are themselves survivors. Rather than engaging with someone else's experience from the outside, they are themselves inside the experience they engage with. Like Edilberto Jiménez in Milton's chapter and Chris Marker in Lindroos's chapter, they are artists *and* they are eyewitnesses.

Representation necessarily transforms. It may give voice to people whose voice would otherwise remain inaudible. Indeed, the question of "who gets heard" is, "fundamentally, a political question" (Couldry 2000: 57). Furthermore, *giving voice* does not necessarily result in *getting heard* in any substantial sense. Often, however, it is the artist's voice we hear, not the voice of the people the artist claims to represent. This problem can be observed not only in connection with the work of artists but also in connection with the work of scholars, treating victims' testimonies as mere *data* with which to produce knowledge. Tensions occur even in those cases where no open conflict can be observed between individual memories and personal truths on the one hand and academic discourse and knowledge production on the other (Wieviorka 2006: 128–132).

Artists may speak on behalf of others – others who cannot themselves speak or who do not have access to channels of communication. However, artists may also try to give voice to people who would prefer *not* to speak, perhaps because they want to avoid "being trapped in an image in which one does not quite recognize oneself" (ibid.: 140) and to which one does not want to be reduced – the image of a witness, a victim, a survivor, a 'migrant mother' (see above). In any case, regardless of *Photovoice* and many other participatory and photo elicitation projects (Harper 2012: 155–206; Delgado 2015), ours are still "societies and cultures where individuals are spoken *for*, much more than they speak in their own name – and they are not necessarily spoken for accurately" (Couldry 2000: 58).

However, the issue is not primarily one of accurateness. Indeed, as Bennett explains, it is not at all a question of "faithful translation of testimony" but rather a question of art "exploit[ing] its own unique capacities to contribute actively" to what she calls "a politics of testimony" (Bennett 2005: 3). It is art's unique capacities to serve as a political witness that this book is interested in exploring.

The Politics of Witnessing

In the context of being an eyewitness, Susan Sontag has extensively reflected on the ways in which the *camera* is a part of witnessing. In particular, she notes, photography has captured the moments that remain parts of our memories of the vanished past and the departed: keeping company with death (Sontag 2003: 24). Quoting Virginia Woolf's *Three Guineas* (1938), Sontag notices that photographs are not arguments; rather, they are "a crude statement of fact addressed to the eye" (ibid.: 26). (The facticity of photographic statements has, however, been controversially discussed in photographic discourses, establishing that a photographic representation is never identical with the 'fact' it seems to represent.) The brain registers as memory the connection between the photograph and a certain kind of testimony experienced through the eye and in the human nervous system. The memory also becomes a moment that connects present and past times. Thus, the photograph as a 'witness' is also a temporal witness.

Sontag's discussions of Holocaust photography are well-known and often referred to. However, she also pays attention to war photography, including differences between the eras that are being documented. Sontag claims that we are living "in a world saturated, no, hyper-saturated with images" (ibid.: 105), but that not all wars are documented equally; for instance, the long civil war in Sudan, the Iraqi campaigns against the Kurds or the Russian invasion of Chechnya are relatively under-photographed (ibid.: 37). Similarly, Rancière (2009: 96) has directed our attention to processes of selection in connection with the publication of images of violent conflict and human suffering indicating that, while we may be over-exposed to images of some conflicts, other conflicts may very well be invisible to the public. This assessment, in tandem with Sontag's claim (2003: 89) that people "remember only the photographs", raises the question of how to witness conflicts that cannot be seen. In this volume, several contributors pay attention to forms of artistic witnessing other than narrowly visual ones (poetry, literature, dance, theatre and performance).

The dilemma is that although it is problematic to trust media images and war photography as witnesses of certain conflicts and political events, the lack of images documenting a particular conflict affects our understanding of the significance of that conflict and the human suffering it engenders. It also facilitates the politicization of images, as discussed by Bruno Lefort in chapter 7. Lefort explores the "politics of fear" in a 2013 short film that appeared on the Internet to commemorate the 2006 looting of the Danish Embassy in Achrafiyeh, the heartland of Christian Beirut, Lebanon, following the publication of the Prophet cartoons in a Danish newspaper. The video plays on

various temporalities – dis-articulating events to re-articulate them in a predefined chain of meaning – so as to stage a memory of communal violence and fear.

Lefort discusses how this representation is enunciated around the tropes of territorial invasion and struggle for survival, embodied by the continual evocation of Martyrs (*shuhadâ’*) whose meaning is to testify (*shahada*) the validity of the experience of intergroup violence conveyed in the film. Further, he argues that the film calls upon a political unconscious to activate an affectivity of communion addressed to the Lebanese Christians. Indeed, the images work as witnesses of their past suffering, of the memory of their internal strife, and of their precarious common fate in a region politically dominated by Islam. Conceivably labelled as political propaganda, this representation ultimately sustains a present day actualization of politics as factionalism: it witnesses the composition and mediation of an alleged resilient existential confrontation between everlasting identities.

Video (from the Latin *videre*, to see) combines both meanings of being a witness – testifying and seeing (see below) – and invites a double act of witnessing: video, as a "social act […] asks that we bear witness to its act of witness" (Saltzman 2006: 30). Photography is said to be uniquely qualified among the visual arts to contribute "to the pathetic understanding of an *other*" (Thompson 2013: 78). "Pathetic" here refers to *pathema* – "an experience passively received: acquiescence to what is seen" (ibid.: 14) – but is the experience of looking at a photograph entirely a passive one? Film and photography are capable of visualizing "the commonalities of being human" (MacDougall 1998: 246). By so doing, they may interrupt stereotypical constructions of 'us' and 'them' evoked in processes of witnessing and help viewers *empathetically* but *partially* identify with the people and the conditions depicted in film and photography – 'empathetically' because "*feeling for* another … entails an encounter with something irreducible and different, often inaccessible" (Bennett 2005: 10) and 'partially' because one's own *mediated* perception of an other's experience is necessarily different from the other's *personal* experience and should not be identified with it. In photographer Diane Arbus's laconic words (quoted in Dyer 2005: 47): "somebody else's tragedy is not the same as your own". You can *feel for* an other but you can neither be this other nor feel what the other feels. Art can evoke this *feeling for*.

Poetry "is the most explicit engagement with the very essence of who we are and what we do: language" (Bleiker 2009: 4). Poetry, thus, can be seen not only as a witness of certain events but also, as Tommi Kotonen shows in his contribution, as a witness to the language with which these events get constructed. In chapter 8, Kotonen analyses different linguistic tools and theories on language and communication that Charles Bernstein brings to the play when trying to register and deconstruct US-American politics and

mythology after 9/11. Indeed, the question of language – "where does one testify from, and what does one testify to?" (Wieviorka 2006: 32) – is as crucial in the context of political witnessing as is the question of what language one uses when testifying. American poet Charles Bernstein was coming back from LaGuardia airport on September 11, 2001. He was one of the millions who witnessed the attacks on the World Trade Center. During and after that day he wrote several poems where he reflected on the mood in Manhattan, and pondered hate and differing personal and political reactions. As one of the so-called *language poets*, Bernstein has for his entire career been opposing the presence of the lyric, first-person voice in poetry. When 9/11 unfolds in front of his very eyes, he becomes an unwilling "witness to the unspeakable" (Kotonen, in this volume), to events which also affect his poetry. In his first poems after the attack a witnessing poetical 'I' providing personal knowledge is present. The rest of the collection can be seen as a commentary to this 'I' and his reflections; a commentary that refuses to impose a singular 'I' as a connecting element but instead dwells on insecurities and ambivalences, and tries to talk with no 'voice'. From the first reactions, and from their prosaic poetry to more distanced, formalistic pieces, Bernstein deciphered the events and their politics and, in the end, the reader, too, becomes one of the witnesses.

The concept of being a witness, traditionally connected with "public recognition of atrocities" (Kaplan 2005: 122), is increasingly decoupled from tragic events and applied to the everyday: people *witness* a football match rather than *watching* or *attending* it. This application is in accordance with another dictionary entry defining witness, in "loose writing", as "a synonym of 'see'."[12] A certain trivialization of our understanding of being a witness may follow. However, this tendency can be valued positively as an indicator of the increasing appreciation in public and academic discourse of the everyday lives and everyday experiences of ordinary people (Sheringham 2006). These experiences, while often decoupled from tragic and traumatic events, are important to people's sense of place and identity. The "temporality of the everyday" can be, and has been, represented in artistic work, including work by such photographers as Robert Capa, which is often reduced to representations of "the everyday overturned" (Dell 2010: 46).

An 'everyday' witnessing might also happen in unexpected spaces. In her chapter, Suvi Alt reflects the role of abandoned places that have received increasingly popular and academic interest during the past decade (chapter 9). Drawing on research that examines the ways in which derelict spaces enable contestation of capitalism and power, Alt combines an auto-ethnographic account of visits to several abandoned sites with a theoretical elaboration of

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12 *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary of Historical Principles*, Vol. II, p. 2563 (all quotations).

Giorgio Agamben's concepts of 'witnessing' and 'play'. In discussing 'urban exploration' as a practice of bearing witness to and playing with abandoned places, she deploys a notion of *onto-poetics* as a site of transformation connecting poetics, life and the political. *Onto-poetics* draws on a Heideggerian conception of art, which does not prioritise a preference for the aesthetic, but refers to the happening of being, and which is here understood as opening up a new space for politics. In this chapter, a twofold political argumentation is searched for. First, Alt argues that urban exploration is a practice of witnessing the past in the present, yet not in the form of recounting an event as a result of having been present as a spectator, but in the form of listening to absence through the materiality of the site. The second argument is that urban exploration is a free and common use of the order of places and identities: a playing with and using what used to be sacred. The *onto-poetics of abandoned places* lies in the ruins' potential to effect change in the way in which one conceives of life as well as one's environment beyond the ruin.

Being a witness is also disconnected from a given person who is a witness. Time periods appear as witnesses: the 1970s and early 1980s, for example, are said to have "witnessed an extraordinary craze for ethnological 'life stories'" (Wieviorka 2006: 97). Material objects such as photographs can also be witnesses. Ariella Azoulay, for example, notes that it is not a person who is doing the witnessing but a photograph: pictures "witness the moment of the outbreak of disaster" (Azoulay 2014: 129). Paul Lowe (2014: 213) refers to photographs as "social agents … bearing witness to past events". He explores "the possibility that the act of bearing witness to past atrocities can be located in the photograph itself, rather than in the photographer". Here, the photograph appears as "secondary witnessing", an "independent artefact in and of itself as well as serving as the visual testimony of the photographer" (ibid.). Both, then, the photographer and her photograph are witnesses, inextricably linked with one another but simultaneously separate from one another, both serving as social agents. Monuments, quintessential vehicles through which and with which people collectively remember, can be witnesses, too, as Lisa Saltzman (2006: 25–47) shows in her discussion of Krzysztof Wodiczko's work.

The concept of witnessing is also separated from presence on location when something happens. This is probably the biggest step away from the traditional understanding of being a witness, requiring, in one form or another, presence: contemporaneity. Photography, Sean O'Hagan (2015) writes in a review of a Jeff Wall exhibition, is seemingly "an act of instant witnessing". Wall's work, however, remakes something from memory – something that lingers in the photographer. Wall does not photograph something instantaneously but recreates it later from memory, insisting on "imaginative freedom" (Wall) as being "crucial to the making of art" (O'Hagan 2015). Recreating from memory amounts to the creation of something new that is

linked with, but simultaneously decoupled from, the witnessed event, as memories invariably change over time. Wall's work, then, testifies to the artist's memory at a given point in time of a given event, not to the particular event.

Aftermath, post-factum and secondary witnessing all call into question the formerly defining identification of (eye-)witnessing with being personally on location when something, usually something tragic or unexpected, happens. Artists often arrive on location only after an event; they – and their works of art – nevertheless witness not only the aftermath of this event but also the original event. They witness – and reconstruct – "the event-as-aftermath" (Roberts 2014: 107). Recipients of these artworks also become witnesses, *distant* witnesses, remote in space and time, not only of the work of art and that which it represents – the aftermath – but also of the original event referenced in the artwork. Thus, testimony can be transferred from one person to another, transforming, for example, the beholder of an image or the observer of a theatre play that witnesses the *aftermath* of an event into a witness of the *original* event.

Combining the above observations with Butler and Bleiker's focus on the body, Susanna Hast's chapter elaborates on war experience: on the ways in which such experience touches us and we are touched by it (chapter 10). For Hast, the study of being touched by war means looking at war with the body as the locus of war experience. Children are important witnesses to war, consuming images and narratives of war even when they do not experience it directly. Through a theatrical play – *Wij/Zij* – Hast discusses the experience of war through a past time and place. The theatre play, performed in Belgium, is on the Beslan hostage crisis, which took place ten years earlier. The chapter discusses the variety of emotions involved in witnessing war and, in particular, witnessing war from a child's perspective. It addresses the potential of the theatrical play in representing new perspectives to experiencing war from a distance through the movement of the actor's bodies and the sound of their voices. Hast discusses the lack of typical emotions of war such as fear, anger and resentment and, also, the lack of social emotions such as compassion within the play. Her analysis reveals how awe and wonder of the hostage crisis are represented in children's matter-of-fact approach to war, and how suffering is represented through physiological needs rather than psychological states identifiable to the viewer. Being a witness may also imply reflection not only on the act of witnessing violence but also on the violence inherent in the act of witnessing.

In chapter 11, Frank Möller critically explores the space of architecture as a means with which to trick viewers into engagement with the conditions depicted in a given image. The space of architecture engages vision by creating obstacles, and obstacles create the wish to conquer them. The process of conquering obstacles can be understood as a process of reflection, in the course

of which hitherto neutral and passive observers transfigure into participant witnesses who engage with the conditions depicted. However, the space of architecture also makes viewers wish to enter a space that is not their own and that has to be respected as someone else's. To respect someone else's space appears to be pertinent especially with regard to people in pain: intruding upon their space would seem to be an act of violence which disregards a person's most intimate sphere – and his or her right to intimacy – even if the intention is to empathize with this person and to acknowledge his or her experience. Witnessing human suffering through artistic representation utilising the space of architecture, then, can in itself be an act of violence. The problematic issues are not only gratification and pleasure, identified in the aestheticisation debate as parasitical, unethical, and unproductive. The issue is also one of intrusion and violence: the violence of the photographic act is followed by the violence of the act of witnessing. A discussion of engagements in film and photography with the 1994 genocide in Rwanda serves both to substantialise this assessment and to show that both acts of violence are ultimately necessary.

"Witnesses are vital not just for enlarging the scope of observational knowledge but even more for elucidating the significance of human actions, symbolic acts, and language itself" (Margalit 2004: 181). Art witnesses – and makes others witness – politics. As the following chapters show, it does so by shaping our vision of both life and (what we regard as) reality; by carrying time and thus connecting memory and immemory with our current situation; and by partly seriously, partly humorously, and partly ironically inviting audiences' active engagement with the conditions referenced in a given work of art. It does so by interrogating the authentic, the aesthetic. and the aesthesis as well as by employing the whole body. It does so by referencing not only that which is present, visible, and audible but also that which is absent, invisible, and inaudible. It does so by engaging with politics and political discourse in unique ways: art's language games direct our attention to the ways in which language conditions our perception of 'reality' just as art's visual games alert us to the intimate connection between what we see and what we believe this 'reality' to be. Art creates imaginary – and also utopian – alternatives reflecting that *what is* always includes (as yet unrealized) alternatives, marginalized in political discourse for a variety of reasons. Art, thus, is a political discourse, and bearing witness to politics through art is a political activity.

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2. Image Control in the Age of Terror

Louie Palu

The act of witnessing war, violence, documenting them and for what purpose any resulting photographs are used for can determine the outcome of political understanding and decisions on every level affecting a war.[1] For example most if not all high-level politicians and civilian diplomats representing countries with western soldiers fighting in Kandahar, Afghanistan where I worked between 2006 and 2010 relied on series of witnesses for their understanding of the conflict. These civilians and policy makers were not allowed beyond a certain sized secure military base cut off from the communities they might be located in. This resulted furthermore in most civilian employees of any government not being permitted anywhere near the true frontlines where their policies may count most because of the high risk of them being targeted by opposing forces. Terrorists and militants in many areas attempt attacking any representative of a foreign government for the high propaganda value some insurgent groups placed on killing western civilians especially representing governments such as the United States and Canada. In addition, they were not allowed on patrols or out on combat operations with soldiers. They relied on journalist's and soldier's interpretations and reports on what the war looked and sounded like. The situation on the ground in the war was interpreted for them using still photographs, writing and including some video. However, even the witness is limited by what they can convey by these methods of documentation and representation as details such as the smell of war which includes dead bodies and what all the senses experience including the weather can never be documented as real as the an in person experience.

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[1]   This essay is derived from a series of lectures on the relationship between editing and censorship in war photography. The lectures were delivered from 2014-2016 at George Mason University, the Rochester Institute of Technology, the University of Toronto, the Center of Creative Photography at the University of Arizona and the *Ethics of Storytelling* conference hosted by Turku University in Finland.

Fig. 2.1: Screen capture still photograph from video made by the Taliban in Kandahar, Afghanistan as it appears in Louie Palu's documentary "Kandahar Journals" (76 minutes 2015). 2015 Photo © Louie Palu

Current conflicts like those that involve ISIS (aka ISIL) have become near impossible to photograph by journalists and include environments much too hostile to work in as an independent witness, as ISIS has made it their message within their videos to perform grotesque killings of members of the western media and create their own content. It is now the sophisticated manner in which militant groups such as ISIS create visual content and control what is visually documented that has changed the manner in which we see and don't see what is going on in the world's new battlefields.

When I see a photograph, the first thing I do is figure out who took it. But the name of the person who pressed the shutter button is just the first stem: for what purpose was the photograph taken? In printed newspapers and magazines, the photographer's byline is often more discrete than that of the author of a news article the photograph accompanies. The photographer is identified by fine print in the margin of the page. Next, I turn to the caption: the *who, what, when, where, why and how* of the image as described there is critical to understanding the photograph as a photograph.

In the years dominated by the printed page, the photograph, its caption if any and the credit were printed on the same sheet of paper. They were inseparable. In the digital age, images are embedded online in social media apps without credit or caption Authorship and context are stripped away, and the viewer is left to make assumptions. Most of the students whom I have spoken

to who have come of age in the internet era say they do not look for the author of the photograph or for its caption.

Fig. 2.2: Screen capture still photograph from video made by ISIS of the murder of American Journalist James Foley in 2014.

When photographs are presented as digital files, they are often downloaded without the text containing the photographer's credit. This has a long-term cost. Archives, libraries and schools end up with photographs whose provenance is lost to time. This exacerbates the long-time practice of newspaper copy editors, who often replace the caption a photographer writes with quotes from the story the photograph accompanies, always over the photographer's objections. Now many images on social media photographs have no text accompanying the context of the image, they are there to simply "illustrate" the story.

Though non-professional bystanders can sometimes take images that are inarguably newsworthy, this does not, in my view, make them journalists. I've always had a problem with the term "citizen journalist". As a working journalist, I've always followed a code of ethics that, among other things, calls for independence and impartiality.[2] Professional journalists may fall short of ethical aspirations, but they consider the impact of their images in a way that amateurs might not.

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[2] I follow the National Press Photographers Association Code of Ethics, which can be found online at https:/nppa.org/code_of_ethics.

This became clear to me when covering the drug war in Mexico between 2011 and 2013. I came to the realization that all parties with a vested interest in a war zone utilize photography to control what can be seen. Independent witnesses like myself vie over audiences and views of the war. In one month in Mexico, I covered over 100 murders in two cities: Ciudad Juarez and Culiacan. I also spent months of fieldwork covering drug addiction, mental health, and the daily life of Mexicans and Americans affected by the drug war.

First, there were members of the Mexican and American government and business community I spoke to who felt that dwelling on the conflict gave a distorted view and painted a negative image of Mexico—images of thousands of murdered Mexicans in the news didn't adequately reflect the complexity of reality, in their view. The rise of Mexico's middle class, for instance, was neglected. Then there were many people on both sides of the border I spoke to who gave an opposite view: every person murdered should be shown in the news, so that the people responsible for their deaths—including those in government—could be held accountable. It became very difficult to reconcile these views when working in the field. How much time should I spend covering murders? They happened every day, but so did the rest of life

Studying images of the Mexican drug war, I categorized their creators in a rough schema:

1. The Government or Corporate Handout

A photograph created and released for free use by the media taken by a photographer working for the government, special interest group such as a agricultural association, or a corporation. These images usually gave an image that painted the government in a positive light or of them arresting criminals and capturing weapons and drugs. The Mexican economy and tourism also figured quite prominently in the high number of images that dominated the conversation away from the drug war.

2. The Photojournalist

Photographs made following straightforward journalistic practices, which in most cases are associated with news media outlets such as Reuters, the Associated Press, or numerous Mexican news outlets. Many organized crime groups found some of the coverage negative and revealed some of their activities resulting over the years in the murder of numerous journalists in Mexico. In some areas of Mexico, such as the state of Tamaulipas, news photography of anything drug-related was and remains impossible.

3. Independent Photographers, Known to Some as Citizen Journalists

If you search for the Mexican drug war online, you will find hundreds of images of murders circulating on blogs and elsewhere. Some photographs have been taken by police officers or soldiers, or by individuals who simply arrive at the murder scene before the authorities and take a picture with a mobile phone. Some sites have writing; some don't. Some combine their own content, while others mix it or copy and paste the work of professional journalists with theirs. Many individuals who operate these sites use pseudonyms, due to the level of violence and threat against the lives of journalists in Mexico. Many of the images I have seen from these sources are very graphic, usually too gruesome to publish and have no credit or context to the photograph. One such blog I followed is *Borderland Beat*. It was useful for me, but also very unreliable, because I never knew who had taken the photographs they were showing or why.

4. Organized Crime Groups and Drug Cartels

Narcotraffickers follow in the tradition as many armed groups in the past such as the Irish Republican Army in using photography and video to communicate their ideas and to project their message and power. However, the *Narcos* have developed the use of something unique called a *Narcomanta*, which is usually a large sheet or banner with their message painted or printed on it, hung in a public place. This is a new development. Narcomantas are generally only text – a photograph isn't printed on the banner.

Narcomantas have two lives – the first in the world where they hang, and the second when they are photographed by news photographers or the public, and circulate again, as a photograph of a set up scene with a written message made to be photographed. Sometimes *narcomantas* are laid on top of bodies, or in some cases affixed to a fence or wall above piles of bodies or body parts. They typically have written messages against competing cartels or government figures. This practice has to some extent replaced the traditional use of graffiti by street gangs or organized crime.

Whereas graffiti was location specific, Narcomantas can be placed anywhere to suit the message or amount of people walking or driving down a road to see it.

Fig. 2.3: "Detainees in orange jumpsuits sit in a holding area under the watchful eyes of Military Police at Camp X-Ray at Naval Base Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, during in-processing to the temporary detention facility on Jan. 11, 2002". DoD photo by Petty Officer 1st class Shane T. McCoy, U.S. Navy.

Drug traffickers are not only killing photojournalists, but they are competing with them in trying to dominate what the public does or does not see through the use of visual devices.

Narcomantas are not sophisticated in their production values. Their force, such as it is, comes from the stark brutality of the message they convey. But other groups, such as Islamic terrorists in the Mideast, ISIS/ISIL in particular, have also coopted the techniques of photo and video journalists. The videos ISIS creates of executions use traditional and classical forms of composition, color and design. They use filters, silhouettes, lighting and romanticized scenes

where the militants perform for the camera to spread their ideology. They took the orange jumpsuit first used by the American military and used it to clothe hostages. Many of their videos are so brutal that screen captures of less graphic segments of their videos are created as still photographs by news media for publishing.

The first photograph I ever saw of detainees from Guantanamo Bay was of a group of detainees in orange jumpsuits with U.S. soldiers standing over them in a fenced off area. The first time I remember seeing an image (which was a frame capture as a still photograph from a video) of a member of ISIS acted as an aesthetic mirror to the Guantanamo image but in reverse as an image with a American journalist in an orange jumpsuit on his knees and a member of ISIS standing over them before killing him. The photograph as a symbol of power and the color orange have been used as a visual response to the U.S. Government's hand out photograph. I have been to the U.S. Naval Station in Guantanamo Bay where the infamous detention center is based several times on media tours organized by the U.S. Department of Defense. The manner in which photographs are taken is highly controlled. In response to this I created a concept publication, one which I have shared with numerous students in classrooms as an exercise in image control, censorship and editing. As an ongoing exploration of the subject of image control I wrote the following instructions on the rear of publication for any students who interact with the publication:

GUANTANAMO Operational Security Review is a concept publication; it has no headlines, competing articles or advertising. It is an editing project, which uses photographs taken by Louie Palu at the U.S. detention center in Guantanamo Bay where detainees captured after the attacks of September 11, 2001 are being held. These photographs were taken while on several media tours organized by the U.S. Department of Defense between 2007-2010. The tours and access to take photographs is strictly managed and controlled by U.S. military officials. Photographs can only be taken with a digital camera.

At the end of each day of photography at the detention center, an official from the U.S. Department of Defense conducts an "Operational Security Review". This is a process in which digital photographs deemed to have classified content or imagery that does not follow the guidelines for media coverage of the detention center are deleted from the photographer's memory cards. The only traces that remain of the deleted images are file numbers listed on an official Department of Defense form given to the photographer. These forms have also been included in this publication. This publication can be dismantled and re-edited to your view of what you think the story should look like. It is also an exhibition that can be displayed anywhere you choose without the formality of a gallery or museum.

GUANTANAMO Operational Security Review is the second publication in a series exploring image control in the media. The first, "Mira Mexico", examines the Mexican drug war and the optics of drug-related violence. The goal of both projects is to position the

user/viewer as editor, curator or censor. The central question of this project is, "who controls what you see?"

The response by many of the students who have attended my lecture and participate in this exercise in editing the *GUANTANAMO Operational Security Review* concept newspaper always respond with shock and sometimes anger when they read about the deleting of images after every day of photography. However, what I ask them and what I confronted myself about is we all control what people see and don't see even in journalism.

In my profession as a photojournalist, we edit photographs. I might take 500 photographs on an assignment and only select 15 of them to submit to my editor at a newspaper, which publishes one of them. What happens to the 499 images the newspaper didn't print? How is the newspaper's process of selection distinct from the government censors?

We have entered an age where learning visual literacy is as important an exercise as it is to read words. Millions of images are produced everyday. Learning to understand who produced them and for what purpose is more crucial than ever as people's ideas of what is real and what is not. Photographs influence how we think about this world socially and politically. So the question I constantly ask myself and try to imagine is what are we are and are not seeing and or understanding in this new world visual order?[3]

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[3] Editors' note: for a sample of Louie Palu's work, see the plate section (plates 1–9).

3. The Body Remembers: Dance, Discourses of Citizenship, Phenomenology and Memory

Dana Mills

> Time that withers you will wither me. We will fall like ripe fruit and roll down the grass together. Dear friend, let me lie beside you watching the clouds until the earth covers us and we are gone.
> — Jeanette Winterson, *Written on the Body*

> Now the world of nature is to be expressed in symbols; a new world of symbols is necessary, a symbolism of the body for once, not just the symbolism of the mouth, but the full gestures of dance, the rhythmic movement of all the limbs.
> — Friedrich Nietzsche, *the Birth of Tragedy*

> To me, the body says what words cannot. I believe that dance was the first art. A philosopher has said that dance and architecture were the first arts. I believe that dance was first because it's gesture, it's communication. That doesn't mean it's telling a story, but it means it's communicating a feeling, a sensation to people.
> — Martha Graham

This chapter will look at the specific way through which dance, as an embodied art, carries memory and inscribes it on the bodies of spectators and performers. The chapter argues that dance is an embodied way of witnessing memory. Through the conceptual lens of discourses of citizenship it will discuss the changes in the relationship between Israel and Germany,[1] and the witnessing of the holocaust, from the 1970s till nowadays, as they are reflected in three dance works. It will argue that Israel has shifted from an essentially republican discourse of citizenship towards a liberal discourse, that that this discursive shift has affected the perception of the Israeli- German relationship and its perception in the Israeli society. In the 1970s, the common good was central to the discursive dynamics, and the remains of the state- building process were

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[1]   Whereas the focus here, for the sake of conceptual clarity, is on the significance of the holocaust for Israeli identity as narrated through discourses of citizenship, I draw the chapter to a close while reflecting on the consequences of the offered account for memory in Israeli identity more broadly.

intermeshed in the citizenship discourse. The 1990s saw a shift towards individualism, influenced by globalization and economic liberalization. The conceptual dynamics change from creating a discourse to its deconstruction. This decade marks a search for a new discourse which will go beyond these two discourses always in contest with each other. At the same time, the use of the term citizenship discourse enables a fluid, multi-layered conception of citizenship. The relationship between the body and conception of citizenship is never single layered and linear. Finally, the chapter will offer a phenomenological account of memory in motion; representing the un-representable; pain and trauma. The methodology of the chapter intertwines conceptual accounts borrowed from comparative government; methods of interpretation invested in dance studies; and ultimately, a philosophical-phenomenological account. The core assumption underlying this chapter is that in order to understand dance as an art-form witnessing political turbulence one must expand the prism of investigation and go beyond linear, single-faceted method and ideas.

Conceptual Framework: Discourses of Citizenship

The term *citizenship discourse* draws on the assumption that citizenship is not a monolithic entity, and its internal dynamics provide a vista into the dynamics of the polity. It assumes that the concept of citizenship is rooted in movement, thus cannot be wholly captured in static concepts. Citizenship discourses are moulded and mould their underlying social processes hence capture the never-ending dynamicity of these processes. Consequently, any lived experiences narrated through the concept of citizenship should be registered and analysed through manifold discourses, exemplifying and exhibiting its multifarious nature. Hence this conceptual framework would be sympathetic to communicative articulations that cannot be consolidated in language, such as dance. Thus the chapter offers a political account of the transitions of the perception of memory in Israeli society and yields a philosophical account of what dance can offer the conception of art as a witness.

Michel Foucault (1991: 83) famously wrote that "the body is the inscribed surface of events". Language can be written on the body; language is inscribed on the body. Language cannot be understood merely as verbal communication; it is any method by which human beings register constitutive events of their lives; further, it is any method by which they communicate those events to others. The body is not a one dimensional entity. It is a symbolic web of meanings which create intersections and conflicts; it enables methods of

signification to become intertwined but also to struggle over power of inscription. The body, as understood through dance, hence, is not only the surface upon which discourse writes; it is also the mechanism of inscription.[2] Thus I see dance, throughout the chapter, as an art form that provides both the mechanism of inscription, the body, with its power; and the material upon which this mechanism of inscription writes. This duality of the body as witness will be teased out throughout and elaborated in the conclusion of the chapter.

Rogers Smith discusses the political dynamic of language in a specific conceptual understanding, that of a *discourse of citizenship*. This conception distances the concept of citizenship from a cohesive, linear and one-dimensional interpretation and supplies it with theoretical vibrancy. The way human beings understand themselves as citizens enables multiple interpretations that can either act in tandem with each other or contradict each other, in different moments in time. Smith argued that the American concept of citizenship is formed of different discourses creating internal dynamics. Smith uses this argument to shift the focus from the discourses to the power relations that make them appear as they do. He discusses three competing interpretations of American citizenship: Liberal, Republican and Ethno-cultural. These interpretations were part of the American founding moment yet the dynamics between them shift and change. The liberal discourse of citizenship draws on ideas of the enlightenment, and its core characteristic is its emphasis on the space that the state should grant for fulfilment of private needs in addition to contributing towards common projects. People are conceptualized as free, independent and equal. The government role is to protect man's life, liberty and property. The state exists in order to serve the needs and wants of the individual and provide security, both physical and metaphysical. The American Republican discourse of citizenship follows the re-interpretation of Rousseau and Aristotle, especially in the thought of Thomas Jefferson. The focus is on institutions which are aimed at acquiring and securing the common good. The individual gains its being and importance from his or her participation in political institutions. The individual gains superior freedom by partaking in communal activities which enable him or her to become part of the body politics. The Ethno-cultural discourse of citizenship identifies the American identity with a certain ethno- cultural identity. The emphasis is on the ethnic community into which the individual is born, rather than either his other contribution to the collective or how the collective may serve him or her. His interpretation will seek the dominant ethic community which will be able to characterize its interpretation of citizenship as the   superior one.

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[2]   This conceptual approach is indebted to core works in dance theory which bring together dance and politics, and specifically Franko (1993 and 1995*)*, Martin (1998) and Lepecki (2006).

These three discourses place different concepts in their analytical limelight: the liberal discourse focuses on the individual; the Republican discourse focuses on the collective and its constitutive political institutions and how the individual may contribute to them; and the Ethno-cultural discourse focuses on the Ethnic community into which the individual is born. Thus, shifting power dynamics between those discourses of citizenship – which are multifaceted in themselves – also implies shift in conceptual focus and prism through which the concept of citizenship is viewed (Smith 1997: 6; 13–35). Israeli political scientists Shafir and Peled deconstructed this conceptual framework and used it to understand the particular dynamics of Israeli society. From here on, I the discussion will draw on their interpretation of this conceptualization of citizenship in the Israeli context (until the 1990s).

Israeli Discourses of Citizenship

Gershon Shafir and Yoav Peled follow Smith when they discuss a possibility of multiple traditions of citizenship which are simultaneously part of social and political dynamics in one body politic. Once again, the analytical focus is on the *dynamics* between the different traditions rather than on the traditions *themselves*.

The liberal discourse of citizenship emphasizes freedom and private property as in this interpretation only the individual is a bearer of rights. The individual strives to fulfil his or her own good and does not owe anything to the community. According to the Republican discourse of citizenship, the moral community should cultivate the civic virtue as the centre of human existence and as the highest telos for human life .According to this interpretation, human beings gain their political importance from their participation in public life as well as their identification with its goals.

Hence whereas the Liberal discourse of citizenship focuses on sustaining and protecting the private sphere, the Republican discourse of citizenship will seek to demarcate spaces of participation and contribution to the common good. Shafir and Peled's historical assumption is that Israel was founded with a discursive dominance of the Republican discourse, striving to constitute a perception of the common good. The contestation of the centrality of the Republican discourse and the call for liberalization of the Israeli society came out of the labour party in 1965, when a sub-movement was formed by David Ben Gurion, Moshe Dayan and Shimon Peres. Due to the flourishing that followed the Six Day War in 1967 the demands for liberalization were quieted till after the Yom Kippur War in 1973 that ended this period of economic growth. At this point, the Republican discourse became less central to the

Israeli concept of citizenship and the Liberal and Ethno- Cultural discourses of citizenship competed for power over discursive dynamics.

The Liberal discourse in particular became much more noticeable in Israeli discursive dynamics in the 1990s. The peak of instability and fragmentation in the conceptualization of citizenship around that era was in 1995, following Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's assassination. The liberalization of the Israeli society drew on increasing Globalization and the Liberal discourse legitimized itself in the aim to integrate Israel into the international economy. The first attempt for liberalization of the Israeli market can be traced back to 1985 and this process is deepening till this day. From the 1930s till mid 1970s of the twentieth century the ideological centrality of the Labour movement in Israeli public life influenced the discursive dynamics in Israel. Up until the mid 1970s, the discourse of citizenship evolved around the collective and the ways thorough which individuals can contribute towards it, from the mid 1970s the discourse focuses on the individual and the societal and political implications of public participation for him or her. Accordingly, the public dynamics move towards satisfaction of the needs of the individual rather than the individual submitting itself for the needs of the polity (Shafir and Peled 2002: 16–23).

After tracing these discursive dynamics, I would like to proceed to the dance works which will be discussed in this paper and their manifestation of these dynamics and the implications that may be drawn concerning the relationship between Israel and Germany in these works.

The Dance Works

a. Ami Yam Ami Yaar, the Bat Sheva dance company[3]

Choreography: John Cranko. Soundtrack: Uri Zvi Grinberg, Tuvia Robner, Chaim Nachman Bialik, Shlomo Tanay, Yizhak Lamdan, Y.Z Rimon, Elza Lasker Shiller, Natan Zach. Music: Ruth Ben Zvi (original score). D. Zeltzer, E. W. Sternberg. Reading: Hannah Maron. Costumes: Ya'akov Sharir, Yair Vardi. Lighting: Chaim Tchelet. First cast: Rachamim Ron, Ehud Ben David, Ya'akov Sharir, Yair Vardi, Yechiel David, Robert Pomper, Zvi Apt, Rina Sheinfeld, Nurit Stern, Yael Lavi, Dalia Levi, Esther Nadler, Lori Friedman, Pamela Sherni, Gabi Bar.

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[3] All these sources have been analyzed in their original Hebrew format; translation is author's own.

Second cast: Rachamim Ron, Roger Briant, David Dvir, David Oz, Proaluf Perlond, Martin Kravitz, Zvi Gotnhiener, Lea Avraham, Lori Friedman, Pamela Sherni, Ruth Kleinfeld, Nurit Stern, Tamar Zafrir.

In the fall of 1971 celebrated South African born choreographer, John Cranko, arrived in Israel to restage his work "Concerto of the tree of knowledge" and to create a new dance for the company: *Ami Yam Ami Ya'ar*. *Ami Yam Ami Ya'ar* was an epic dance, accompanied by readings of Hebrew poetry, which focused on the Holocaust and the founding of the Jewish state in the land of Israel (Gluck 2006: 116). The work emphasized bravery and courage, which were core themes of the Holocaust narrative in that period. The dance work is accompanied by poetry readings (delivered by Israeli actress Hannah Maron) which is delivered with referential movement: when Maron says "ocean", the movement resembles waves, and when Maron says "forest" men carry women as branches (Manor 1978). The piece deals with the relationship between individual and collective along two circles: the larger one, the destruction and regeneration of a nation, and the smaller one, focusing on the individual (portrayed by different dancers in different parts of the work) which changes from being a specific individual to becoming "everyman" (Gluck 2006: 117; Manor 1978).

The de- individuation of the dancers is an underlying theme throughout the work. They wear uniform simple black costumes, and gradually lose their identities, as if preparing themselves to the massacre, in which all names and faces will be erased. Cranko's work starts with a group of men who walk towards their death. It goes through various scenes of torment and ends with the "Hands of Israel" scene. The ballet is comprised of 13 scenes (in the first version; seven in the second) which all focus on the theme of suffering (Sodin 1975). The movement is dramatic and there are obvious references to lamentation and grief. The movement is repetitive but does not infer the repetitiveness of the everyday, but rather the ritual movement of grief and distress.

The spatial organization uses references to mythic imagery of the Holocaust; massacre, a group of corpses, etc. There is a choreographic connection between the ceremonial movement, grief and regeneration. The grief is not individual; it loses its specific characteristics and is in the background of the heroic deeds and re- constitution of the nation, inferred in the end of the work. The republican discourse can be seen in the movement language and the use of space. The grief at that point is still new; the individual cannot appropriate the grief for themselves; it is part of the nation and state building process, of a collective trying to build itself out of the ruins. Death and grief become the building blocks of that project and become unavailable to the individual. Connecting grief and heroism displaces the process of overcoming the death of a loved one from the private sphere towards the common good.

We see here the undoubtable prominence of the republican discourse of citizenship; the one, singular body is subdued to the common good, the ethos of togetherness; cohesiveness of the community is prioritized to the ontological and moral position of the individual; and the moving singular body understands itself by its relationality to group dynamics. Art is witnessing a founding moment, a turn from grief to nation-building, a shift from genocide to creating legal and political systems of recourse for the Jewish people, who, for the first time in history, start imagining themselves as a *people* or a *nation*. The body is inscribed with this nation-building process, documenting the moments of upheaval as well as the moments of rejuvenation; crisis and new beginnings, rupture and rapture. All those processes, though, are narrated through a collective discourse of citizenship, the group inscribing upon the body of the individual its communal ethos.

b Memento Mori

The Kibbutz dance company. Premiere: 7.7.1994 Choreography: Rami Be'er. Soundtrack design: Alex Claude. Lighting: Nisan Gelbard. Costumes: Lilach Hazbani, Efrat Roded (Reich 1994).

According to Rami Be'er: "Memento Mori isn't a work about the Holocaust….it's a work that uses associative, emotional and rational connections to our current lives and reality. The private and collective memory are always there in the background" (ibid.). This work deconstructs the modern individual and tries to examine how the Holocaust, among other collective Israeli experiences, moulded Rami Be'er's own conceptualization of citizenship.

Rami Be'er looks at the way we perceive the Holocaust, how current experiences shape our collective memory. Be'er refers to the Holocaust as a starting point to question the memory of the Holocaust in Israel and the tension between individual and collective memory (ibid.). The focus is on the individual, trying to mould themselves among societal and political forces. Be'er uses the work to reflect on his own experiences as the son of Holocaust survivors. He unravels the family experiences he's been through, his intimate relationships and private associations. This memory is always grounded in the collective memory, drawing on myths, popular narratives, the education system and generally, the public discourse.

The staging allows for the spectator's eye to be drawn to the depth of the stage; which in turn makes them feel alienated and lonely, dislocated in space. The spectators' eyes focus is on the group, moving together, between the front and back of the stage, and an individual, breaking away from the group, creating their own narrative, different from the unison movement (ibid.).

Thus the focus is in itself fragmented, creating a sensation of further alienation, separateness. The individual experience draws on the collective narrative but stays in the private sphere as a singular narrative. The emphasis is on the singular dancer, how she or he she is influenced by group interactions of which he or she are part; the contradiction between loneliness and the quest for belonging; processes of creation of the self in a community that seeks to strengthen the common good. The emphasis is clearly on the individual, trying to resist being moulded by the collective. The choreography moves between unison movement to individuals breaking out, creating their own narratives in movement. The self is always trapped between the will to belong to a community and trying to protect the unique, the individual, the private.

Be'er uses many movements drawn from everyday experiences such as running and walking. The stage is dark and the dancers are lit from above. The soundtrack is a musical collage. The work draws on fragmentation, isolation of its constitutive subjects. The references towards the everyday allow manoeuvring in a limited space of movement; construction of the stage in simple formations. There are large squares on the stage, referring perhaps to the trains used by the Nazis to take Jewish people towards their death. In a sharp contrast to that, the dancers move in round, spinning paths, resisting the aim to place them in these squares and limit their movement to them. These stylistic features show the aim to deconstruct, to question, to move into the constitutive registers of the individual. The movement and stage design draw on the everyday, on the casual, and move away from monumental events and mythic references. There is an attempt to demarcate the spaces in which the individual moulds his or her own narrative but that space- and its boundaries- are always contested. Be'er doesn't try to convey a coherent message; he strives to illuminate the core themes of the work from various angles. The work focuses on the price the individual pays for belonging to a group; the price the individual pays for separating from a group; and the constitutive tensions of the formation of a narrative about the self.

In the second half of the work, while three dancers move, looking downwards, there is narration of Kohelet. The individual is posed as helpless among greater forces that move – and shape – him or her (Rottenberg 2000: 13). In another part of the work, a female dancer moves when her back faces the audience, while in the background the audience can hear a whip (Reich 1994). The contradiction between the sacred and the cruel becomes enmeshed in a greater distinction, between the inner and the outer, the self and the other. Be'er starts and ends the performance with the sentence: "ma shehaya hu shyihiye". Although not always discussed as the central narrative of the work, the collective ethos is there in every image on stage.

The dominate discourse of citizenship here is undoubtedly the liberal discourse of citizenship. The individual struggles and rejoices, fails and

succeeds, shifts and re-structures itself; as a result the group, the nation-state, becomes re-aligned. The epistemic, ontic and moral starting point is the individual moving body rather than the collective ethos; shifts in the latter are consequences of changes in the former. Further, this work present further implications in the shift between discourses of citizenship; it shows the price the individual pays for participating in group dynamics. Concepts such as alienation, loneliness and estrangement are interpreted as a result of participating in groups; the individual may pay a price for contributing to collective ethos and that price may be heavier than the cohesiveness generated by processes such as nation-building or ethos formation. Thus this is a critical appraisal of the price participating in republican discourse of citizenship bears on the individual moving body. Dance here witnesses the costs individual bodies pay for their political participation.

A Comparative Discussion: Memory as Foundational; Memory as Ruptured

The two above presented close readings may be used to show that these two works start at different, perhaps even opposite, presumptions. Whereas the earlier work looks at processes of cresting a common good, a civic virtue, the later work looks at its deconstruction, at the efforts the individual makes to resist social and political dynamics and their constant strife to mould the independent *I*. The interpretation of the Holocaust as a monumental event is with regard to the individual and not the collective. The speaking, moving and moved *I* becomes the centre of the choreography.

The underlying theme of alienation hints towards moving away from the Republican discourse of citizenship; not only does the human being find his or her narrative by subjecting themselves to the common good, they pay a heavy price for partaking in social dynamics. Trying to distance the individual from the narrative of suffering and bravery is a way to recover the private self and its underlying dynamics. The individual questions the price he or she pays for belonging to a group; for submitting the private grief and trauma to collective interpretation. Dance, as a primarily spatial art form is a highly efficient and potent method of witnessing this shift. The differences in organization of the stage and the choreographic use of the moving body, shifting it from a building block of communal structures to the focus of the spectator's gaze enables it to register those shifts in a powerful way.

Another characteristic which sets these two works apart is the place the Holocaust takes in Israeli public discourse and more specifically in the

understanding of Israeli-German relationship and their place in it. At first sight, it seems that the themes underlying both works haven't changed since the 1970s to the 1990s; both works deal with the relationship between the individual and the group, alienation, dealing with death, grief and mourning, striving to build personal relationships such as love and friendship while dealing with trauma, and trying to create a normal personal life when history poses the individual within an abnormal historical context. At the same time, the differences between these two works highlight changes that have taken place in Israeli society over these two decades. The holocaust becomes re-interpreted, moving from the foci of the founding moment of Israel as a nation-state as one factor among many which contribute to identity formation among young Israelis. Let us discuss the specific philosophical- choreographic features which differentiate the two works, allowing Israeli dance to witness shifts in dynamicity and the construction of the speaking self, the moving body, as an inscribed and inscribing surface of events.

First, the distinction between the self and the other-than-self, the external space to the self fundamentally changes between the two works. Whereas in the first work the self is subsumed into the collective and the other is placed externally to the collective, in the second work there is otherness inside what has been as a coherent collective. Moreover, one can trace questions regarding the price paid by the individual for being part of a collective, for giving up some of the most private moments of his or her life, such as dealing with loss of a loved one. The relationship between the body as a space – inscribed and inscribing – and the space occupied by the body becomes re-negotiated. The ontic and moral position of the body within its web of meanings is interpreted anew, and thus the understating of the body itself becomes negotiated. Dance witnesses the shift in relationality between moving bodies.

Second, there is a difference in the choreographic elements used in both works. In the first work there is an emphasis on building, on creating coherent spatial forms, of merging individuals into entities which are larger than the sum of the individuals comprising them; in the second work there is an emphasis on deconstruction, on finding the individual within the spatial organization, on moving from the monumental towards the everyday, the building blocks which make history what it is. Not only does the relationship between bodies shift, and that witnessed in the dance; the actual processes by which bodies become inscribed are re-envisioned and re-interpreted. From processes of building *Ami Yam, Ami Ya'ar* witnesses, the process of disintegration, alienation and disengagement becomes witnesses through *Memento Mori.*

Third, the method of narration gains different foci in each work; whereas in the first work we see a collective narrator created out of individual voices the second work is a puzzle of individual voices telling their own narratives. The collective voice gains prominence over the individual embodied voice. Both

works exhibit clear features of embodied storytelling though the composure of the narrator is very different. The voice which is inscribed as well as inscribes shifts from a collective voice to an individual witness, who in turn, also witnesses the effects of group formation has on individual moving bodies of which it is part. The storyteller is always a singular, moving I in the latter part of Israeli history as documented in Israeli dance.

Last, the use of space is fundamentally different between those two works. Whereas in the first work the stage becomes a space built from individual bodies, embodied narratives, the second work is a space continuously broken by new, entangled narratives that disrupt it and create diverse spaces. Every moment of dance creates a different space, to be interrupted and presented with a new spatial organization in its stead. Thus the emphasis is on disruption of space rather than building it; competing narratives that do not necessarily reside comfortably together within the same body but continuously challenge each other. The idea of a communal space shared by bodies is negotiated and critiqued. Consequently, the actual ability of communities to provide space for moving bodies in which they share rather than contest over it becomes critiqued. It seems every body occupies a space of its own, and one body's self-interpretation can bear a heavy price on other's use of space. Let us move from this choreographic analysis of the two works to conclude about the significance of citizenship discourses and their shift to embodied memory.

The Body Says what Words Cannot: the Agonism of Citizenship Discourses

We have seen that through dance the body can and does witness. We have seen that Israeli dance records the move from what Rogers Smith, and Shafir and Peled, term republican discourse of citizenship to a liberal discourse of citizenship. The dancing body records the shift from the emphasis on the collective to a more liberal, individual focused prism. But the dancing body remembers more than that. The dancing body remembers the undoing of identity; the conflict between languages, discourses, ideas; the histories that are always shifting, always transcending the moment of their telling. The dancing body remembers the struggle of power over the force to inscribe upon it; but the dancing body registers the struggle itself, the quest for power. It allows for more than one language to write on the body. The body remembers joy and pain; triumph and loss; grief and exhilaration. The body remembers sacred and holy; one and many; love and war. The body remembers fire and ice; scars and ecstasy.

The use of the analytic prism of citizenship discourses allows for careful examination of the fundamental multiplicity of political identity. This multiplicity means that at any given point we cannot trace one way of understanding the way human beings relate to their polity. This multiplicity does not only occur across different time spans; at any given moment the body can remember contradicting discourses; differing opinions; varying influences. The shift towards understanding citizenship as a multifarious concept – here across time – allows for this multiplicity to exhibit itself in a singular moment. Political identity is never homogenous. The body is never homogenous. The dancing body remembers, above all, the many temporalities, many spatiality modes inscribed upon it. The chapter started by revisiting Foucault's statement that the body is the inscribed surface of events. It always records many events, sometimes conflicting, sometimes torn apart. Dance serves as a method of witnessing not only the complex nature of choreography itself, which operates, as the analyses here have shown, on many levels and in many ways; but the complex nature of political identity itself. Through the conceptual prism of agonism, as allowing for contesting voices to occupy one space, this account shows the multiplicity of discourses inscribing on the moving body at every given moment. Dynamics between discourses are outcomes of power relations; multiple voices write upon moving bodies, which in turn document not only the voices but the dynamics between them. The organization of communal space depends on how shifting bodies document shifting politics and shifting narratives. Dance as an art form which is both in constant flux and always embodied witnesses the shift in narrators, stories and voices; but it also witnesses the shift of organization of shared space. This chapter argues that an interpretation of always competing voices allows for inclusion of more speaking Is as well as the interpretation of price politics bears upon the individual. Hence this chapter has shown dance can not only witness shifts in discourses of citizenship but the price hegemonic discourses bear on the moving body. The moving body remembers the price it has to pay for joining in with collective enterprises.

In her now canonical account of pain and torture, *The Body in Pain*, Elaine Scarry discusses the making – and unmaking – of a world through the body. She argues that pain is unsharable; it is derived from an epistemic contradiction (Scarry 1985: 4). "To have pain is to have *certainty;* to hear about pain is to have *doubt*" (ibid.: 13). Thus, experiencing pain creates a void in language; it is essentially inexpressible. But what we have seen in the discussion of the two above works, and their relationship to the discourses of citizenship, is quite a different epistemic position. It is the pain – either the pain of the victims as articulated by Cranko, or the pain of the memory as shaping relationships in the public sphere as articulated by Be'er – that creates the essence of dance as a language. Horror, destruction of many worlds, that has shaped the founding

moment of the state of Israel, creates the unique embodied language of both those dance works. But that language in itself is fluid; different discourses of citizenship take different foci at different times. What we have seen, in both works, though while accentuating different emphases, the body allows to witness pain, suffering and grief; it inscribes it on the bodies of the spectators; allows it to be shared, if also not through verbal language. The body remembers, and speaks; it sometimes shrieks with pain. It allows for the narration of the unccomunicable in words; for voices which usually do not get heard to claim their space in the public sphere. Dance as witness allows the body to generate alternative discourses which are shared; they inscribe upon other bodies moments of pain and trauma that sometimes are defied by words. Dance can transcend language. In the words of dance pioneer Martha Graham: the body says what words cannot.

Throughout this chapter I have focused on the memory of the holocaust within Israel's foundational narrative and its breaking up in the 1990s. Gershon Shafir and Yoav Peled, who provided the chapter with its conceptual structure, note a third discourse, that of the ethno-national citizenship. This discourse, perhaps, more than both discussed, is paradoxically both underpinning and absent from the discursive dynamics elaborated above, and witnesses through moving bodies. However, the conceptual account of agonism of discourses as inscribing upon a moving body, but also intertwined in the politics of spatial dynamics, which determine which discourses can be heard and which are silenced, allows us to turn our conceptual gaze towards this discourse of citizenship and its absence from the two choreographic works discussed. Consequently, bringing together the phenomenological account of the body as always registering with power dynamics that negotiate the ability to inscribe those discourses allows us to critically examine not only those discourses which are present, written on th body, but also those which are absent. The moving body can also witness collective repression of voices. The conceptual framework offered here always asks beyond the present.

Art, we have seen, is a witness. Dance is a shifting witness; never stable, never ceasing to move and change. The complexity of the choreographic method as well as the density of the human body, inscribed by many discourses, allows for details to become visible. Those details do not always express themselves in language. Thus dance, as a form of art that draws on contradictions and disagreements, on the body's ability to be the home for more than one way of being, can provide a unique form of witnessing. It can witness those moments that are too complex, contradictory, dense to be expressed in words; those which are in danger of going under the radar; those which defy a singular narrative, either derived from the bottom down or pushed from the bottom up.

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4. Chris Marker as Cinematic Witness

Kia Lindroos

Chris Marker's work is bound with rethinking questions of political history and the philosophy of time. In and through his own work, he creates new ways look at global temporality through single pieces of history; drawings, images, pottery, sculpture. This raises the question: how could we recognize authentic historical moments *without* these individual, seemingly insignificant, yet time-preserving pieces of our culture?

Events witnessed by artistic activity and through artistic representation, are links between documents and their audience. The documentary cinema not only represents fragments from the political past, it also intervenes in our thinking, our understanding of political history, and the political meaning of time, and as a consequence, it has the effect of producing knowledge in cultural, artistic and theoretical spheres. The events simultaneously represented by cinema emerge from different times. Cinema has the potentiality to reflect on controversial images of history and the political world.

The cinematic witness portrays the position of a witness as someone who is present, and thus shares the presence of the artist and his/her experiences. This art of witnessing may testify from personal observations, but has a larger effect in extending individual experiences to a global audience. Chris Marker's cinema is an example of personal essays that are combined with the documentary genre, and with the co-operation of several meaningful directors of our time. My chapter mainly discusses the documentary films *Les statues meurent aussi*, *Sans Soleil* and *Le Tombeaux d'Alexandre*. In his film *Le Tombeaux d'Alexandre / The Last Bolshevik* (1993), Marker uses a motto from George Steiner: "It is not the literal past that rules us: it is images of the past". In this way, I understand Marker's artistic activity as temporal and political witnessing, where the role of images and the visual past has the core role. The 'digital past' becomes a part of our knowledge and understanding of time.

Besides being a film director, Marker has also experimented with new technologies; for instance, in 1978 he designed a video wall evoking the memory of WWII and the Soviet revolution through a montage of films for the exhibition *Paris-Berlin* at the Centre Pompidou, Paris (*Quand le siecle a pris formes*). In 1989-90, he presented *Zapping Zone* for the exhibition *Passages de l'ima*ge (also at the Centre Pompidou) in which Marker took the step that lead him away from screen and projection, to installation and monitors. Here, he delivered an image that he had been searching for many years. This is not only one image,

but simultaneously represented multiple images that each includes their own narratives within the space of the individual image. In its voluntary disorder, its fractured zones represent ways of relating different historical and personal experiences into one viewing experience that can never be repeated again (Bellour 1997: 16).

I regard this work as an example of Benjaminian montage, including interactivity between the viewer, the viewed and the monitors.[1] The *Zapping Zone* exhibition was subtitled 'A Proposal for Imaginary Television'. It is the installation that was commissioned for the exhibition *Passages l'image* that was to examine interfaces between film, video and photography in audio-visual art.[2] The history of world capitalism, Russia, Cuba, Hiroshima, Scandinavia or the ex-Yugoslavia are illustrated as parts of the story that do not construct only one historical narrative, but in fact construct different links to the beginnings and endings of political narratives.

Here a space of subjectivity is constituted as a network, opposing its logic to that of the institution which inspires it and which it ransacks. *Zapping Zone* is one of the foregoers of new digital technology as it was a work in which Marker effectively committed to electronic multimedia and its possibilities. He elaborated the possibilities of the digital technology of the 1990s, and also persisted in examining the interfaces between private recollection and collective remembrance (Lupton 2005: 178). In this manner Marker's work is also per se witnessing the effects of how a single artist experiments with the potential included in different technologies, and at the same time he re-presents technological changes, as well as changes in personal and collective memory technologies.

Marker has created various aesthetic modes in order to narrate political and historical events and illuminate their aesthetic elements. His work is holding onto the moment of avant-garde as much as it brings us to peculiar confrontations between aesthetic and politics. The strength of his work is embedded in the fact that neither of the different aspects of art, aesthetic or political, are subsumed under each other, and its definite value is that he does not compromise the aesthetic quality nor political and philosophical depth.

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[1]   Earlier I examined Marker's work more carefully in connection with Walter Benjamin's philosophy (see Lindroos 1998 and 2003).

[2]   The exhibition was curated by Raymond Bellour, Christine van Assche and Catharine David. The installation was constituted by televisions and computer monitors. Different monitors reflected images to the walls and created collages of Marker's *imaginaries* (see Lupton 2005: 180-181).

Christian François Bouche-Villeneuve alias Chris Marker was born in *Neuilly sur Seine* on July 29, 1921.[3] In addition to being a director and screenwriter, he is a novelist, poet, playwright and journalist. He formed the SLON film co-operative (*Société pour le lancement des oeuvres nouvelles*, 1967), which is one of the leading political film co-operatives still operating in France. At the 1961 Berlin Festival for *Description d'un combat*, he was the recipient of the Golden Bear, and he also received the International Critics Prize for *Le Joli Mai* in 1963.

His career began with writing poems, essays and translations, and he also worked as journalist. He founded the *Edition du Seuil's petit planete series*, which is series of books, each devoted to a particular country, combining subjective experiences and historical fact. Marker writes his films himself and he is also the cinematographer in many of them. The films combine verbal and visual images with philosophical speculation and erudition. The commentaries he creates to accompany the film-images come close to streams of consciousness and they can be very poetic. The poetry of the text combines with rather subjective seeing and hearing experiences.

When World War II broke out, Marker was a philosophy student, and he fought with the Resistance under the German occupation. His critical and philosophical background is apparent in many of his films; for instance, the script of *La Jetée* includes aspects of French philosophical and literary tradition surrounding the reflection on human memory. Marker especially draws from the philosophy of memory and time, which are central issues in works from Henri Bergson to Marcel Proust, and in the *noveau roman*. After the war, he joined the staff of *Esprit* journal, where he wrote political commentaries, poems, articles and film reviews. He formed the so-called *Left Bank* group of New Wave French directors together with director Alain Resnais, novelist Jean Cayrol and co-editor Henri Colpi.

In 1952, Marker made his first full-length 16mm movie *Olympia 52,* about the Helsinki Olympic Games. The next year he co-directed with Resnais a study of African art and its decline under colonialism (*Les statues meurent aussi*). The film sketched one of his central topics of concern, namely the question of a man considering himself as the 'master of the world'. In 1955, he worked on two films, the first one being a film about Nazi death camps, *Nuit et brouillard (Night and Fog,* directed by Resnais) and the second was a short film essay, *Sunday in Peking,* together with Armand Gatti. *The Koumiko mystery* (1965) refers to the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, but is actually the story of a woman, Koumiko Moroaka, and of her city of Tokyo, of Japan and the Far East as a whole.

Marker is especially interested in transitional societies, and his films are not only representations of certain chosen places, they also represent cultural and

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[3]   More on Chris Marker and his works can be found in *International Dictionary of Films and Filmmakers* 2, 1991; *World Film Directors* 1988. Volume Two 1945–1985; and Marker (1996).

political differences. In 1967, Marker organised a collective project to protest America's involvement with Vietnam, with segments contributed by Resnais, Godard, Joris Ivens, Claude Lelouch, William Klein, Agnes Varda and Michele Ray. The film is called *Loin du Vietnam,* a specific approach to political film-making that continues in his four-hour montage film, *Le fond de l'air est rouge (The Base of the Air is Red, 1977). The Base of the Air is Red* shows the 'Odessa steps' massacre from Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*, an ironic commentary on the power of image, since the massacre – in the form in which he describes it – was Eisenstein's own creation. This film was the subject of much critical acclaim, in part due to the fact that it focused on the post-1968 generation, yet still examined Marker's own earlier generation.

Since 1973, Marker had been working with a variety of political issues such as Chilean refugees, the feminist movement, sexual liberation and ecological questions. Marker has made cinematic portraits of, for instance, Akira Kurasawa, Christo, Tarkowsky and Simone Signoret. His film *Le Tombeux d'Alexandre* (1993) was prompted by Alexander Medvedkin's death. In the late 1970s, Marker travelled to Japan, resulting in the photo-film *Les depays* and finally, *Sans Soleil,* 1982. *Sans Soleil (Sunless)* reached a broader audience than any of Marker's previous films, and it received the British Film Institute award in 1983. Both of the films play with the juxtaposition of image and commentary. Images do not only illustrate the text, nor does the text comment on the images; one has to take them in 'disorder' or just as individual narratives, happening in the dialogue within the cinematic time and space.

Marker's aesthetic work combines two major topics that are of my interest here. Firstly, he is experimenting with possibilities of cinematic temporality and temporal politics, and secondly he is playing with possibilities of new technologies connected with the issue of memory. *Immemory* is the title of Marker's CD-ROM that was made during 1993–1997 for an installation at the Centre Pompidou. In the work, he continues to engage with images, temporality and memory that are reflected by possibilities provided by new technologies. Marker collects pieces of global and individual history, making them characteristic in a form of a personal collection, witnessing events by combining photos, texts or historical documentation in a virtual space. Marker concentrates on dialogue with the computer-memory destined to include words and images. It leads towards the image of human and virtual memory. However, *Immemory* already represents the transformation of the 'original' images as they are replaced. It could be said that *Immemory* finds a way to represent a 'missing dialogue' in the Foucauldian sense, at the borders of world history and personal memory.

The Cinematic Art of Storytelling

Thinking about temporal forms of literary narrative, we might take the suggestion of a narrative that involves "the linear organisation of events, selected and arranged in a particular order" (Whitebrook 1995: 2). This approach is supported by several other definitions of narrative, such as: "narrative is opposed to temporal laws that depict what is, whether past or future", or "the distinguishing feature of narrative is its linear organisation of events into a story" (Cohan and Shires 1988: 52). In this chapter, I will look at the various ways in which Marker plays with this kind of narrative cinema.

The film-narrative resists, as for instance Seymour Chatman (1990: 124) notes, the language-centred notions of the narrator. In Marker's films, the narrator is present in many of his films, adding layers to the original storyline. This differs from Edward Branigan's idea, which understands a filmic narrative as "a perceptual activity that organises data into a special pattern which represents and explains experience" (Branigan 1992: 3). Hence, the narrative is a way of organising spatial and temporal data into a cause-effect chain of events with a beginning, middle and end. This is the universal framework of a linear narrative and of the 'traditional' linear art of storytelling.

Film-narrative combines singular events in their spatial and temporal surroundings, and at the same time it illustrates and witnesses historical events in the new way of chosen visual discourse. The variation of the events is re-presented in narrative that corresponds to every processes of film making and editing. The causality on a screen involves patterns that are purely visual, and the events on the screen might not necessarily appear connected to one another. Light and sound may create different systems of space, time and causal interaction, and one of the tasks of the narrative is to reconcile these systems (see Branigan 1992: 34). Temporality and its course are essential features in the film narrative, since they hold the outer and inner 'levels' of narrative together. All this makes us aware that the idea of 'witnessing' any real event in time is here edited, produced and re-produced. Thus, it is temporally multidimensional and reconstructed.

According to Rudolf Arnheim's classical film theory, every object that is reproduced simultaneously in film appears in two different or distinct frames of reference. These are the two-dimensional and three-dimensional frames, and one identical object fulfils two different functions within the two contexts (Arnheim 1957, original 1933: 59). On the other hand, in Edward Branigan's theory, the film narrative rests on the ability to create a three-dimensional world out of a two-dimensional wash of dark and light. Graphics on the screen, colour, angle, line, shape etc., must be transferred into an array of solid objects,

and a texture of noise must be transferred into speech, music and sounds (Branigan 1992: 33).

Cinematic temporality is embedded, for instance, in the technical, semiotic, narrative or diegetic levels of a film, and each of them may consist of different ways to be bound with time. Following the discourse of the film, or the way in which the story is narrated in the each case, the film also has the ability to *transfer* or rearrange any temporal and spatial context of the events or the 'story' itself, as it implies the possibility of arranging and rearranging 'original' (or chronological) elements of which a film-story is made.

Regarding the spatial and temporal differences within the film's 'story', film theory distinguishes between diegetic and non-diegetic worlds. The diegetic world is the one that surrounds a character, and it presents events that occur in a particular manner, in a certain sequence and within a certain time-span. This world has a set of laws which appears clearly to the viewer. However, it also contains non-visible elements of this world, such as other persons who are assumed to be present but who are not explicitly presented as characters. The diegetic word also extends beyond what is seen in a specific shot and beyond even what is seen in the entire film: it is an implied spatial, temporal and causal system of a character. The non-diegetic elements are, for example, those which are directed toward the spectator. Like the music in a film, they are elements *about* the diegetic world of a character, and as such they are not intended to aid the spectator in the organisation of events and the specific film world (see Branigan 1992: 35–36).

The film-technology has thus created cinema as a medium *par excellence* for any 'representation of time'. Its potentiality is well used in the modern narrative technique; such as in Jean-Luc Godard's films, for instance in *Weekend* or *Two or Three Things I Know About Her*. In the latter, the cuts, overlapping sound and the fragmentary nature of the film are documented in a story, a narrative about 'her', which is obviously only one of the many possible narratives. This means that in addition to the presented version there also exists countless other potential stories of the same event. The textual narrative does not seem to have anything in common with the visual narrative.[4]

In a film such as Chris Marker's *Sans Soleil*, the events are selected and arranged in an order which does not seem to follow causality. The story is neither teleological nor continuous. The textual narration is presented in the form of a woman's voice-over, which presents fragments from letters written by an invisible traveller. In a way, single images create their own narrative events,

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[4]   See Marker and *Sans Soleil*, an excerpt, at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= LGDu7YOIVuE. The first minute of his film depicts the specific art of narration in his work.

which are separate from the letter-fragments, as if they were part of a larger diegesis, that of a human life.

"When men die they enter into history. When statues die, they enter into art" [5]

Above, I have outlined some of the ways in which Marker uses the possibilities that film technique creates. Playing with temporalities, for instance, between the connections of individual and collective history and memory, are ways to witness events and re-produce them to future viewers.

Les Statues meurent aussi actually marks the beginning of Marker's career as a film director. Co-edited with Alain Resnais, *Statues* was originally commissioned by the French government as a film about African Art.[6] However, as the film included direct political critique, it was banned for twenty years. Marker and Resnais opened the question of the role of art as something that is mainly for the pleasure of white people. As the film script announces, the film describes the faces of the 'lost' and of the sufferers in political history. In this way, they portray the experience of otherness in the 1950s.

"This botany of death is what we call culture" is a statement from the film script. Here, African art is represented as something "where the whites project their demons". African masks and African art are represented as becoming part of Western commercialisation. Playing with the hegemony of white Christianity connected to colonialisation, the film focuses on racial questions. Besides the racialised idea of art heritage, the film actually witnesses aspects of French neo-colonialism in the form of art criticism. The filmmakers argue that these two influences destroy one another, portraying the image of a black Madonna parallel with more traditional images as representations of white Christianity.

The politically constructed hegemony of Western 'culture' is apparent in Marker's critique. The film claims that statues 'die' when they become detached from their initial meaning and become objects of art in opposition to art as inseparable from life. This mortality is a profound sign of life. Throughout the film, it becomes clear that the cinematic critique against colonialism is not emphasized by racial differences and cultural diversity, but by the ways in which Marker and Resnais emphasise the *similarity* between human beings and the

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[5]   *Les Statues meurent aussi* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d5Pb9nykjQA).

[6]   More specifically, the film was commissioned by *Présence Africaine*. Resnais was the editor, and Marker wrote the commentary, read by Jean Négroni. It also won the *Prix Vigo* in 1954 (see Cooper 2008: 12).

significance of the old traditions in Africa, Europe and other forms of civilization.

The Romans were actually the first to begin to differentiate between culture and *barbarism/wildness*. The original connotation of barbarism was spatial and concrete, and thus culture and barbarism were not general oppositions. The division was used to describe militaristic aims, in which Romans saw themselves as defending culture against barbarism. A critique of the attitude of 'defending' Western civilization still appears strong, even though the documentary is over fifty years old, as a record of suspicion, and the efforts to exclude diversity and legitimise its exclusion.[7]

The linear image of time and history is also constructed as opposing the 'pagan' ideas of temporal cycles. In this sense, the meanings of culture are more or less reflected within the boundaries of this linearity of history, in which the understanding of the course of time acts as making a difference between linear Christianity and the pagan/barbarian idea of temporal cycles. In this context, the term *cultus* gains new meaning as defining the cult in terms of the 'right' and 'wrong' gods. Thus, the idea of culture is inherently a political concept, especially in the ways it creates differences between Western and non-western cultural values.

For St. Augustine, *cultura* characterises the ways in which people's actions are separated from nature and animals. The linearity of the course of history also describes a progressive move toward the 'cultivation' of a human being. A human being and *cultura* now become positively connected with each other, and human minds – not only elements of the natural world – are considered to have the capacity for cultivation and progression. Instead of representing cultural harmony, Marker's *Les statues* witnessed cultural diversity, conflict and resistance, as well as non-European values of culture. The political statement by the French government was to ban the film.

Refusing to make a strong racial division, Marker and Resnais emphasised the equality of human beings by pointing toward the fact that in facing death, humans are always equal. There is no discrepancy between African civilization and that of the West. The filmmakers regarded the statues as witnessing the historical context: "Art of the present time, between a lost greatness…Art of the provisional, whose ambition is not to last, but to witness" (Marker in *Statues meurent aussi*). Witnessing momentum here does not refer to the role of art as part of the progress, but the preserved piece of art as a document of the time and place of a specific culture. A man, here specified as an African man, is represented as being separated from his own culture. The African Man can be seen as existing in-between the both cultures, without anything but a poor salary, in a land of "gift and exchange" (Marker in *Statues meurent aussi*).

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7   On different stages in the history of culture, see Lindroos (2004).

The film effectively questions whether art (and culture) means only the preservation of the past in objects. The question here focuses on ways in which we (as viewers of the film) look at the cultural heritage and 'govern' this passage of the living into history What kind of temporality is that which the museum preserves? Marker wrote in *Statues meurent aussi*: "When men die they enter into history. When statues die, they enter into art", referring to the way in which – after the statues are preserved in museums – they no longer have their original, vivid life as an artefact of culture. Further, by Marker: "Man affirms his reign over things" – a statue is in danger of becoming, more or less, part of Western domination and governance of the (aboriginal) object, its meaning and its historical position.

Marker and Resnais pay constant attention to connections between man and nature through the idea of god. As art is creation, art in its most efficient task is infinite. The directors are skilful in using the idea of simultaneity and montage in linking together different elements: faces and masks; and in showing the creation moment of African art: tree bark, pottery, textures of earth and textures of skin. *Everything is art* means here a parallel to the idea that everything is creation, and that in fact life and culture is woven together from the same materials.

The African mask is portrayed as an artefact in-between life and death. Death means losing one's memory; it is paradise lost. However, death is not understood as a temporal end of the individual journey. Parallel to the idea of taking someone's life, or losing one's life, the meaning of death is in this film portrayed by another perspective, namely that one *gives* death. This is the direct link to African cultural meanings of death. Death becomes a part of creation; it is not an end of times. The anti-Western idea of accepting death into the midst of life and the everyday celebration of the moment of disappearance in images that remain after the individual life is gone. Death constitutes inter-filmic reference points in Marker's later films as well, such as *la Jetée* and *Sans Soleil*. He points out the different ritual/symbolic ways to understand the meaning of death, such as the figure of a giraffe in the African Savannah (in which Marker uses the extract from Daniele Tessier's film) or a Japanese funeral rite. From my viewpoint the reflection on different cultural ways of understanding the temporality and rituals of death actually sums up the possibilities of understanding cultural differences through their core issues.

Presenting several examples of portaying social resistance, riots and fighting, the documentary forms a visual political statement: "Art witness here, far from the appearances of black art: for the art of communion, the art of invention finds accommodations within the world of loneliness and the machine" (Marker in *Statues*). There is no actual rupture between the two civilizations discussed in the film, although several notions on 'African' or 'Western' might appear as too unifying and simplifying from today's

perspective. Despite the critical tone of the film, it ends up with a certain promise of humanity, equality and hope; art both maintains its role as a form of creation and preserves the elements of the magical and the ritual. In this, it is a significant witness of global culture in age of colonialism.

Sans Soleil – Do We See the Black?

Sans Soleil [8] (1982) is built on fragments from post-war events, combined with the critique of the European left. Dealing with a time span of more than twenty years, the film opens the space of collective memory from the 1950s until 1980s. Here, the viewers witness moments that happened in various places, such as Hiroshima, Iceland and Guinea-Bissau, presented in a way that had not previously been seen. This reminds us that seeing history as a montage, aided by the narrative voice-over, brings us yet into another layer of events: the personal level. Besides its insightful content, *Sans Soleil* is an example of how non-linear form in narrating historical events can function as political critique.

This 'collection of memories' is narrated by a female narrator. We may assume that the 'traveller' behind the camera is Marker himself, and it is most probably his personal experiences that are documented here in forms of letters and images**.** The image of history does not follow the ideal of Hegelian world history, that is, an act of the reason, proceeding towards the realisation of freedom of Man. Instead, the 'freedom' within memory and montage means to reach out from the known and the rational, to also regard unknown and irrational elements, silence and emotions as part of history and memory.

I view Marker's images as a political and critical instrument to combine moments of political history and their understanding in the viewer's present time. By juxtaposing image and text, Marker simultaneously experiments with alternative ways to represent the past. *Sans Soleil* illustrates the simultaneity and difference of African, European and Asian concepts of time. In this film, we return to the African continent of the *Statues meurent aussi*, yet now Marker expands on chosen historical events into the European and Asian continents. History is constructed as succession of moments and events that do not necessarily relate causally to each other. Instead of a succession, Marker represents the moment-images as being dispersed in time: "he liked the fragility

8   *Sans Soleil* (Sunless): Director: Chris Marker; Production Company: Argos Films; Conception: Chris Marker; Assistant Director: Pierre Camus; Editor: Chris Script, Chris Marker; Narration: Alexandra Stewart (English version), Florence Delay (French version); Music: Moussorgski, Sibelius (treatment by Isao Tomita). Running time 110 minutes.

of those moments suspended in time, those memories whose only function had been to leave behind nothing but memories" (Marker in *Sans Soleil*).

The multiple layers in the film narrative reminds us that besides, beyond or parallel to this story, there exists another view, another story, told by other people and cultures. It is a provocation to become connected to the social critique, the remembrance of this possibility, the other realities and histories that exist simultaneously to the narrated one. Yet, there are no personal notions that could help the viewers to trace the identity of the letter writer, nor is there any closure of the story that would explain why we come across exactly these images. The viewer is set in a triangle between the images, the invisible letter-writer and the woman's voice-over. Described fragments include the possibility not only of 'explaining' reality, as in the textual narration, but they also include a critical view of the reality described.

Here, the 'knowledge' of history is presented through fragmentary phrases and pieces of narrative. Marker's narrative and his 'I' are implicated as constituting an active political and cultural memory, with which it maintains simultaneously a relation of both visual playfulness and complicity. The geographic places described through Marker's 'I', vary from Africa to Ile de France, Iceland, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, San Fransisco and Japan. Extracts from different films by directors such as Alfred Hitchcock, Daniele Tessier or Horoun Tazieff are included throughout the film (Cooper 2008: 115). At the same time however, the films 'happens' in none of these places, since it only shows the places of digital memories, described by Marker's camera and script.

The beginning ten minutes of *Sans Soleil* is a montage that combines the epigraph from T.S. Eliot's *Ash Wednesday;* a shot of three children on a road in Iceland in 1965; a sequence of a train in Hikkaido; shots of women on the Bissagos Islands of West Africa; a prayer for the soul of a lost cat in an animal cemetery near Tokyo; a dog in a deserted beach; and a bar in Tokyo.[9] The film narrative does not have a clear 'diegetic zero' before the actual story time begins. Instead, there are many beginnings of narratives that are almost simultaneously documented, as if each of them would characterize the core narrative of the film. This implies that actually, there are *many* narratives included in the film, and the combining subject of these stories is the camera. The camera wanders among the crowds as well as through the silent and deserted places, documenting the vision like a sole traveller who wants to share his or her experiences with a larger audience.

The cinematic narrative experiments with several diegetic and non-diegetic elements. Marker includes commentary, sound extracts, radio and television broadcasts, and music that is altered with different technologies. The film

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[9]   See also Rafferty (1996: 242). To be notified, Wim Wenders' film *Tokyo Ga* (1985) pays homage to *Sans Soleil.*

witnesses Marker's own travelogue, and also Marker himself as watching television, in which images change from horror to pornography. He includes historical and critical documentary shots, including intercuts of crashing aeroplanes, and synchronised images of something that is apparently a revolution. All of this can also be seen as a cross-reference to the *Statues meurent aussi*, since Marker expresses his ideas on colonialism, political protests and the consequences of industrial capitalism.

Marker made a montage in which he testifies to fragments of history from his own viewpoint, as well as testifying to the decline of the global world, governed by global capitalism. The places described show us a plurality and diversity of events without an obvious order between them. Hence, there is not posthumous hierarchy that would have been constructed between the memories and the 'real' events, between associations and the real consequence of happenings. The *montage* becomes alive, and it demands an active intervention from the viewer to make the film 'work', to connect the different stories and different historical events. Each sequence of images seems to contain an access to another, independent story that accidentally comes together with other stories in the film, confronted by a sole traveller, who beholds the reason we actually come to view these stories.

From my perspective, Marker's editing shows ways in which cinematic representation expands and extends the classical idea of narration to encompass the politics of narration. He witnesses events; however, he also allows the others, each viewer of the film, to join this witnessing. Stories are not closed with 'closure', but instead, the endings are open, non-synthetic. Simultaneously, Marker composes a political narration that expands the understanding of politics and connects the visual cinematic witness to people's individual experiences and existence. The document describes causes, effects and action of politics that cannot be forgotten but have to be re-experienced.

If one takes account of Giorgio Agamben's (1998) distinction between political and 'bare' life, some of the people described by Marker represent the *zoe* against the *bios*, bare life against political existence. However, a possible alienation from politics might force us to look at the *bios* again as one source and target of politics. Marker describes people who are witnessed from the basis of a curiosity and interest of their 'bare being', by looking directly into their eyes via the camera lens. Here, we see the cinematic eye at the same time as we look at the witnessing eye. The people documented, such as the women of Bissagos Island, are not represented in the political status of refugee, objects of colonialist power or as survivors of the war. Taking account of Homi Bhabha's (1990: 297) argument, people documented in images are neither the beginning nor the end of national narratives. Rather, they represent the cutting edge between the totalising powers of the social and the forces that signify the more specific address to contentious, unequal interests and identities within the

population. 'Life itself' is not explicitly politicized spectacle, but it is composed through people's rituals and habits. The ways in which Marker is argumenting through his film, could be understood as visual political communication as it uncovers a sphere in which the collectively experienced images of history can lead to their individual interpretation.

According to Rafferty, *Sans Soleil* is a diary of a return (1996: 245). By viewing the film, we return to politics of history, but since the returning happens during the time in which the film is viewed, it also points out the importance of the present viewing situation. As such, it creates the beginning of any history as a displaced and represented event. Recognising these moments as constellations of fragments, Marker simultaneously produces an idea that the film might start a history of its own; it is the other history that is legitimated when it is documented. This retrospection does not follow, nor respect the presentation of official 'world history'. The official history is now a marginal point of view, present in fleeting commentaries of the actual narrative.

The documentary images, represented in a constellation, alienate us from creating a 'true image' of the past as they bring forth a question about factual history and its reappearance (and disappearance) in the third world. The issues of the African Man, being caught in the wheels of capitalism as well as the effects of colonialization, reappear in *Sans Soleil* as a culture and history misused and almost 'lost', as was portrayed in *Les statues meurent aussi.*

The metropolitan involves not so much a concentration of population as in the traditional metropolis, as the hyper-concentration of the 'world-city', the city to end all cities. In the way Marker represents Tokyo, the beginnings of a 'world-city' is already apparent in the tele-network and in the accumulation of temporalities, combining the layers of old and new, traditional and contemporary ties. Marker describes the electric trains as the veins of Tokyo, as if the city would be a huge figure of Leviathan. The metro is a collective dream of this virtual city. The 'have nots' are *excluded from the virtual cities, and they are located in the real space of local cities,* even more abandoned than those living today in the metropolitan suburbs.[10]

According to Roth, one could speak of these photographs as a series of gestures, which Marker invites us to rediscover by moving pictures. The images are detached from the flow of time's duration and the arrested pictures might be simultaneously frightening and delicious (Roth 1997: 44). However, these are part of witnessing the rise and collapse of the described political events and people involved in them. Do these ecstatic images mimic the end of history? Alternatively, are they the 'seeds' of a world to come? Do they testify that after all, history, philosophy, politics and aesthetics are not in their end state, but that

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[10]   In this paragraph, I have modified the thought presented by Paul Virilio (1997: 74).

we are constantly discovering the new possibilities of political and historical experience by returning to this imagery?

Imaginaries of Past Times

Marker's film *Le Tombeaux d'Alexandre/The Last Bolshevik* came out ten years after *Sans Soleil*, and it was primarily a television production. The film is basically a cinematic biography about Aleksandr Medvedkin, the Russian filmmaker who was born in 1900 and who died in 1989. Besides being a personal friend of Chris Marker, Medvedkin is portrayed in this film as a *historical witness* of the period of Russian Perestroika; he is the witness of the failed utopia of Soviet communism. According to Yuli Raizmann, Medvedkin had a tragic career. However, he was discovered again and again, as he stepped beyond most of the Soviet rules of film-making. In this, his films were rooted in a folk culture that give the film audience vivid images of the Soviet history from the beginning of 20th century.

As a cinematic structure of film, Marker obviously favoured the form of anonymous letters. Both *Sans Soleil* and *The Last Bolshevik* are written as 'letters' whose addressee is not alive any more. We, as viewers, are confronting death again, yet here through Marker's personal loss. Both films address issues that were left unsaid during an individual life as well as during the political period in history. Thus, they are also representing the aspects of silenced or 'ignored' aspects of history. The technical realization of the documentary film is a montage, consisting of special effects, such as bordered inserts, freeze-frames, slow superimpositions and graphic devices laid on top of single images (Lupton 2005: 187–188). Aleksandr Medvedkin was said to be able to maintain a certain idealist trust for the Soviet regime, and he also succeeded in pursuing his career with Soviet Realist dramas. Eventually, he won the *Lenin Prize* in 1970 (ibid.: 191).

In *The Last Bolshevik*, the letters are divided into six different parts. The first part consists of old film-clips (the film as a whole consists of several interviews and collections of photographs). In this, it is apparent how Yakov Tolchan, a camera operator, is one of the core figures of Medvedkin's life. Looking back to the early state of Russia in 1913, Marker pays attention to the militaristic rule and exploitation. This era before Lenin and before Stalin also encompasses the life of Medvedkin as a boy.

Interviews with the people who worked with Medvedkin include Nikolai Izvolov, who as an historian and cinema researcher developed an innovative method for reconstructing films in the 1990s. Izvolov says in *The Last Bolshevik*

that "we are educated by Brezhnev that ideology and talent do not co-exist". But he claims that in the specific case of Medvedkin, these did co-exist. Medvedkin's films were strange and fascinating, but unlike most of the Russian films of the 1930s they had the courage to be very contradictory, and also to play with religious beliefs, for instance in *Happiness*.

Marker portrays Medvedkin as living a "tragedy of a pure communist in the world of would-be communists" (Viktor Dyomin). An example of the play of cinematic witnessing/reconstructing historical imagery could be the well-known scene from Sergei Eisenstein's film *Battleship Potemkin*. Marker used a photograph that showed the storming of the Winter-palace in 1917 and compared it to the commemorating event in 1920. This became one of the most well-known visual conceptions for this era. Seemingly, it is possible to 'remember' the Odessa massacre through the way it is represented in film, but this memory is fake. In this film, the images do not come to life, but they make the legend of the Odessa alive. In reality they were never shot in the film-screen but were Eisenstein's own invention. It is said to have been among the biggest lies in the history of images. There never was a real massacre upon those steps, although in the film, the massacre scene takes altogether as much as seven minutes. Eisenstein re-edited *October*; he did not witness any massacre.[11] Thus, although images might carry on the view of the past, the digital past is carrying the potentiality of reproducibility.

By playing with replicas, Marker also plays with historical time – reminding us also that "artifice can preserve a vanished reality" (cf. Lupton 2005: 189). Certainly, sometimes artifice can replace a reality. Looking inside the reproduced images might actually take the viewer to the reality that is unfolded little by little from a small detail.

Another significant filmmaker of the Soviet era besides Eisenstein was Dziga Vertov. Vertov's cinema was called 'Cine-eye essays' – they were opposed to fictional films, what Vertov called 'cine-vodka'. Strongly rejecting fiction, Vertovian *cine-eye* intended to construct the cinematic work from natural and "everyday raw material and relay it on the screen in a strictly calculated MONTAGE" (Vertov in Taylor and Christie 1994: 105). His method was witnessing the 'reality' that was developed in bringing together the cinematic work and reality. In a speech from July 1924, Vertov represents the cine-eye group and distinguished it from the other 'so-called art'. Vertov described the group as being directly engaged in studying the phenomena of life all around.

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[11] Eisenstein's scene is relived in cinematic history, as it was referred to in many other films and by several significant films-makers, including Terry Gilliam's *Brazil*, Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather,* Brian De Palma's *The Untouchables*, George Lucas' *Star Wars: Episode III – Revenge of the Sith* Tibor Takacs' *Deathline*, Laurel and Hardy's *The Music Box*, Chandrashekhar Narvekar's Hindi film *Tezaab*, Shukō Murase's anime *Ergo Proxy* and *The Magic Christian.*

The Vertovian cinema was trying to help people see, to open their eyes, to clear the vision and thus, witness reality through the eyes.[12].Vertov's film *Man with the movie camera* (1929) claims that *Truth is in the eyes, society is in the eyes*. Paradoxically, during the 1930s in Russia, 'reality' was already reproduced, and even Vertov had given up showing life 'as it is'.

During the 1930s, Medvedkin and his colleagues did continue making films that became controversial in the political situation of the time, but it was thought the films had vanished. Film researchers started to search for these films in the archives, especially Nikolai Izvolov, who tried to find any material from Medvedkin's film *oeuvre*. Eventually, he found nine films. The films had not been seen since 1932, so in finding these recorded memories, the film researchers saw reality 'as it was'. At this point they suddenly saw documentary clips that showed, for instance, events in Russian Kolkhoz and Kulaks, recovering the potentiality of being an eye-witness, and recovering documents that had been already been put into archives. However, these clips found their way into Marker's *Last Bolshevik* and as such, the film addresses questions of Russian politics as well.

In the last letters of Chris Marker's film, we come across a reflection on events in the 1940s, and Medvedkin's criticism of Nazism that resulted in his imprisonment. In the film, we also find Medvedkin on the front line with his camera. He films burnt houses, and people escaping the war. *The Last Boshevik* closes with at the end of the 1980s, with the end of Perestroika. The picture book is closing, the temporal circle with the rich content of the political history of 19th century Russia, which was portrayed by the film, is now getting toward its end. However, the film is left open-ended, as it also describes on a personal level the friendship between Medvedkin and Marker. In the last letter, we see an old man who listens to music. Music is the final letter to us, something to believe in, something that remains after the politics, after the narrative has been silenced (cf. Cooper 2008: 150).

"My work is to question images" is the sentence we hear in connection to Medvedkin. Throughout his work, Chris Marker points out the question of how do images such as cinematic images, photographs and stills actually shape our vision of life, of reality, of memory. Using George Steiner's epigraph "It is not the literal past that rules us; it is images of the past", Marker keeps on questioning – yet also experimenting with – various images and shots and their consequences in life that happens after specific images, after moments of the past have been put in to digital archives, and after some moments never find their status in 'global' historical narrative.

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[12]   Vertov (1924): '*Fiction Film Drama and the Cine-Eye. A Speech*', in Taylor and Christie (1994: 115–116).

Memory, the Land of Contradictions

The film *The Last Boshevik* was made in the memory of Jacques Ledoux who appears in Marker's early short-film *La Jetée* and the happy moment when we first saw *Happiness*. This very short dedication combines Marker's films from the 1960s to the 1990s, and includes a dedication to the political history of the intellectual Left. However, Marker also leaves his testimony with individual experiences and expressions of happiness in the midst of political and historical events. Happiness and Death are, from my viewpoint, bound together in the core temporalities of Marker's films. Happiness in *Sans Soleil* describes the memory without an image, the black space without narrative. If we do not see happiness, do we see the black? Do we understand the meaning of the loss, of the sunless spot, the cleavage, the gap without an image and the aspects of history without the memory of it?

Discussing the artist as a witness, I would claim that despite his documentary power and eye-witnessing activity, Marker is also the witness who understands the meaning of the 'black' as described above. There are things that are not possible to witness; there are empty spaces that never have been witnessed in the course of political history and art history. By recognizing the power of this blackness, Marker's significance and greatness as an artist unfolds.

Playing with images and visions also includes interruptions and black spots as a part of the film-discourse, and refers to the actual witness of a certain period of technological development. Black spots also show that the forgetting and the unknown can be intertwined with the representation of the known and memorized. In his later artistic creation as an exhibition and CD-rom, Marker memorises time as an *Immemory (Immémoire)*,[13] the land of contradictions (*Mémoire, terre de contrasts*). The concept of memory, linked with the idea of immemory, disguises again the forgotten contradictions within the homogeneously treated idea of 'One' memory. The contradiction happens between order and disorder, and it intends to also bring out the arbitrary and accidental elements of history. Immemory does not only mean a contradictory event, but it is consistent with the 'other memory', referring directly to digital technology (Rutsky 1999: 15).

Marker's working hypothesis is that memory is actually more structured that what it appears to be. Similarly to photos that are taken by accident, moments that are documented in films and postcards that are chosen in a certain moment, memory forms a cartography of the imaginary places. *Immemory* was to present a visitor's guide to one memory (of Marker's own) and at the

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[13]   Chris Marker's CD-ROM (1998). *Immemory* was made during 1993–1997 for an installation in the Paris modern art museum Centre Georges Pompidou.

same time to propose the visitor an aleatory navigation through his different memory images and through his films.

In the end of 1990s, Marker developed a kind of personal language on his computer, and he began confiding ever more of his memory to the machine. The virtuality of *Immemory* stems above all from the vertiginous relation between the limits of the work and the limitlessness it opens up (cf. Bellour 1997: 120). Marker has shown us one way to tackle the heterogeneity of global historical events and history by using new technology in representing it. As much as a CD is not only a filmed document, it is capable of simulating certain effects of real presence. The question here lies in the way in which technological and personal memory combine our abilities to deal with the reality that has dispersed and left us to deal with the abilities to construct individual realities and history.

Immemory offers an intimate experience of time and history: simultaneously, the images that are documented by Marker are brought into the space of later experiences. The images are not 'closed', they are not testimonies that would be only testimonies of the time of their occurrence, but rather, these image spaces are open and multiple ways to document and witness events in present and future. For a moment it allows us to step across the boundaries of 'us' and the others, of the geographical places, communities and individuals that are momentarily represented as detached from their alienation.

Pace Raymond Bellour argues that this feeling stems from the technical apparatus, its free and available address, whereby we lose ourselves with the author in new pact between viewer and reader (Bellour 1997: 112). The space is a technological and virtual space that is still widely disputed, as the character of the photograph is constantly changing in the era of digital photography. Yet, in this 'space' of image, as versatile as an image might be, nothing moves or is understood without the interference of the spectator. The spectator becomes the final navigator, whose actions lead him or her from one image-experience to another, making an individual route and connections between them that may never be the same.

The idea of representing cinematic witnessing is just one of many art forms through which we can understand the variety of the political in history. The artist him- or herself becomes a witness, whether or not it is accepted as legal witness, or mainly as individual, subjective witness. It might be that sometimes an artist is acting as a 'judge' of the events (s)he witnesses and presents – in the eyes of the spectators or artistic audience. Cinematic witnessing is, however, happening at both levels, as the description of the narrative presented in films, and also, through its technical possibilities, recording and editorial work. In Markers early film *The Statues Also Die* he wrote a sentence that is relevant to this whole issue: *it shows art that is not made to last but to witness.* The fact is that art carries time in itself, several corners of human memory and immemory are embedded for each time we confront the contents of it.

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5. Embodied Witnessing: Indigenous Performance Art as Political Dissent

Sally Butler and Roland Bleiker

We examine how Indigenous art interferes with and challenges the legacies of colonial violence that still persist in Australia. The types of witnessing involved here address a fundamental paradox. One the one hand, Indigenous people remain marginalized in Australian society. They constitute less than 3% of the national population and they have minimal political self-representation. A long legacy of stigma and exclusion persists. On the other hand, Australian Indigenous art has been embraced by the country. It has become a major part of mainstream culture; it is exported and celebrated; put on display at museums, sold at art auctions and reproduced ad infinitum, from tourist brochures to airport lounges.

This paradox revolves around an aspect of Indigenous art that is much less recognized and understood: that it is not just a form of decorative art but, in fact, contains direct and often very radical political messages. Artworks often feature indigenous rights, self-determination, and social equality as overt messages. There is also a more subtle dimension of the art that seeks radical change in political thinking about indigenous issues. It involves stimulation of viewers' sensory intelligence and appeals to psychological conditions of memory, desire and fear. This acutely sensory mode of political aesthetics comes to the fore when artists call upon the body's full sensory network of sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste to communicate at a more fundamental level of political consciousness. Subliminal triggers of recognition and empathy seek to psychologically situate viewers within an indigenous experience of disadvantage and injustice. Alternatively, viewers are positioned within a profound context of guilt; beneficiaries of ill-gained social and political privilege.

The objective of this chapter is to explore this political dimension of Indigenous art. We examine, in particular, how the performative role-playing aspects of art serve a political witnessing function. We do so by focusing on performative features of several key artworks and show how our ideas and thoughts are always mediated by how the body's sensory network conveys messages. We show how this form of aesthetic witnessing helps to contextualise local Indigenous rights within a global context of human rights. Art's mode of

embodied politics thus stands as a witness to the humanity that often escapes political debates.

The Cultural Politics of Indigenous Lives and Indigenous Art

Before we explore the specific political function played by Indigenous art it is necessary to set the context and consider the odd contradiction between how Indigenous people are treated in Australia and the kind of cultural status that is given to Indigenous art.

Australian Indigenous art is revered within Australia and around the world. It emerged in the 1970s as something of an artistic revolution because it appeared seemingly out of nowhere as a readymade art movement (McLean 2011; Carter 2004). This was because few people considered the visual culture of Indigenous people to have any aesthetic relevance to the modern world. There was also a perception that Indigenous people were incapable of cultural expression about the world today. Conservative ideas about indigenous cultural traditions and rituals perpetuated an impression that their aesthetic values derived from a static repetition of inherited designs and themes. This perception changed in the early 1970s for a variety of reasons, but mainly because a new federal government – led by Gough Whitlam – adopted progressive policies on Indigenous affairs. A national policy of assimilation was replaced with a new emphasis on rights for Indigenous people (Bramston 2013). Other radical initiatives included bicultural education in remote communities and new indigenous land rights policies. These policies provided a framework that allowed the Indigenous art movement to emerge and thrive.

Indigenous art also emerged in a highly political context and was linked to the counter-culture movement (Sutton 2009). The African American civil rights movement also influenced Indigenous political activism in Australia (Clark 2008). A mode of Black Power stimulated the idea that cultural expression provided a platform to voice protest and exercise self-determination (Foley, Schaap, Howell 2013). Artists and educators seeking alternative lifestyles flocked to remote Indigenous communities to help establish self-sufficiency initiatives following successful land claims. Indigenous artists in the cities established their own co-operatives and collectives that operated outside of conventional art institutions and commercial markets (McLean 2011).

The impact of this politically-inspired artistic activity produced a climate of recognition that previously did not exist. Indigenous canvas paintings from Australia's central desert region (commonly referred to as Papunya Tula paintings) were the first to galvanise international attention in the 1970s. They

have been referred to as "Australia's only artistic revolution" (Rothwell 2004: R12); "the most significant corpus of art made in Australia during the twentieth century" (Green 2004: 597); and "perhaps the greatest single cultural achievement of Australia's post-white settlement history" (Carter 2004: xiv). In 2005, an Australian federal government minister described indigenous art as "Australia's greatest cultural gift to the world" (McLean 2011: 17).

This celebration of Indigenous art stands in stark contrast to how Indigenous people are treated in Australia today. The legacy of colonial violence is very much alive. Life expectancy for Indigenous Australians is approximately ten years shorter than the national average. Indigenous people experience double the infant mortality and have educational and employment standards well below that of their non-indigenous counterparts (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2015; Campbell et al. 2012). A long quest for autonomy and self-determination continues to be denied by Australia's political system. Numerous scholars write of a so-called 'denialism' about the on-going impact of colonisation of its Indigenous population. As early as 1968 the anthropologist and Indigenous rights activist, W.E.H. Stanner, described "the great Australian silence" and its "cult of forgetfulness" about its history of injustices against the Indigenous population (Stanner 1969: 25). Damien Short's 2008 study titled *Reconciliation and Colonial Power: Indigenous Rights in Australia* provides ample evidence that the silence endures in the present day. One of the country's most respected historian, Henry Reynolds (1999), explains how generations of Australians grew up with a very distorted and highly idealized understanding of their past. History textbooks in schools presented a largely peaceful settlement story. They neglected to tell how settlers violently suppressed the Indigenous population and how Indigenous people fought back whenever they could. Textbooks also failed to convey the rich cultural traditions of Indigenous Australians. Reynolds simply asks: "why weren't we told?"

Performance Art as Political Protest-in Sam Watson's *Maiwar Performance*

Indigenous artists and authors contribute to the vanguard of cultural protest against this denialism. They play a key role as witnesses, bringing out voices and perspectives that can no longer make it possible to say "why weren't we told?"

We now examine this political witnessing function. We present Australian art here not as the kind of pleasant and decorative art form that often shapes admiration. We present it as a political protest movement that challenges our understanding of the past, present and future: as an important form of

witnessing that reorients our understanding of the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. We focus in particular on performative aspects of art and we show how the body is often the weapon of choice by artists who want to engage political themes. The genre of performance art itself emerged as a significant contemporary art movement in conjunction with political activism of the 1960s and '70s. Feminist artists in particular used their own bodies to make radical statements about gender inequality, and involved the bodies of the audience as 'witness' to these social conditions (Jones 1998). The locations of these performance events often occurred in public places rather than the conventional spaces of art institutions. Art was thus taken to the site of politics and everyday spaces of the populace.

The body arguably invokes sensory recognition of the human condition under duress; conditions that are poorly serviced by conventional political debate. Viewers are forced to confront a reality and as witness they implicitly endorse the fact of an otherwise avoidable event or attitude. An artwork cannot, of course, exert mind control over the viewer but it can to some extent exert control of the body through subconscious sensory stimulation.

Numerous Australian Indigenous artists of the current era include performance art as part of their practice, placing a focus on racial politics. Performances occur regularly in major civic spaces and at significant historical sites, at political events and exhibition openings. Such performances are often ephemeral but retain an enduring impact through photographic and video documentation. The power of the original performance lies with its capacity to physically involve audiences and to metaphorically implicate them in political situations.

We now focus on Sam Watson and Dave Hullfish Bayley's *Maiwar Performance* (2006–2014) as a poignant example of an artwork that embarks on a witnessing process that opens up political debates (see Fig. 5.1 and Fig. 5.2). Watson is one of Australia's leading Indigenous political activists, as well as a noted novelist, playwright, and artist.

Maiwar Performance is part of a series of collaborative performances created by Watson and Dave Hullfish Bayley, a conceptual artist from San Francisco. The performance consists of a series of 'interventions' into the scheduled route of a commuter ferry in Watson's home city of Brisbane. Watson and Hullfish Bayley approached the local government authority in 2006 for permission to slightly redirect the path of the local river ferry known as the CityCat.

The artists' aim was to disrupt the everyday schedule of commuters with an artistically interpreted political event. The ferry was directed to pause during its normal route and turn to face the riverbank so that it pointed directly towards the site of Boundary Street. This street is thus named because it marks the boundary of a former curfew that restricted Indigenous people from entering the inner city precinct after nightfall. (de Vries 2013) Very few local citizens are

aware that this local landmark is an enduring symbol of the city's history of racist politics, and this was the point of the 'intervention' performance. Watson's family members contributed to the performance as representatives of traditional owners of the land and raised the Aboriginal flag in a gesture of reclaiming sovereignty of land once restricted to them. The ferry then gathered these family members, and other commuters, and travelled to the opposite river bank where a similar performance ensued.

Fig. 5.1: Dave Hullfish Bailey + Sam Watson, Maiwar Performance 2014 (stills). Video, colour, sound, edition of 5. Duration 0:12:00, looped. Courtesy David Pestorious Projects, Brisbane (see also plate sectin, plate 11).

As is common in performance art, Maiwar Performance was unscripted. The actions involved no speech. Commuters were not alerted to the intervention, nor were they engaged in any dialogue throughout the performance. The artworks' audience became an involuntary witness to the political act of reclaimed sovereignty without many being aware of the history of Boundary Street nor its political significance. The apparent futility of performing an event involving a largely unaware, although curious, audience is redeemed in the act of documentation. The filmed record of this performance encapsulates the metaphor of a denialism surrounded by evidence to the contrary. Maiwar Performance implies that colonialism's settler societies are on a journey to

political accountability whether they admit it, or not. The artwork also makes a point about the fragility of the concept of witness. Viewers might literally be taken hostage to the truth, but the truth may yet remain invisible. It metaphorically describes a contrast between the moral intent of the artist and the fragile causality of the artwork's reception. The horse is taken to water, but will decide itself whether to drink.

The point is that this art form involving real people (bodies) in everyday spaces amplifies the human capacity for action (activism) in political debates. In her study on human rights education and performing arts, Andrea McEvoy Spero describes how the physical involvement of students in human rights based performing arts activities represented a critical pedagogy that enhanced a sense of activism (2012). Similarly to theatre, performance art often involves people playing a role although it blurs the boundaries of theatrical illusion. McEvoy Spero's study demonstrates that performance art exploits this ambiguous space between artistic illusion and political reality, creating a critical distance for reflection and potentially nourishing new thinking. Performance art's physical involvement of artist and audience in public interaction, rather than the private viewing more common to art, is crucial in creating a context for empathy and developing our sense of humanity.

Fig. 5.2: Dave Hullfish Bailey + Sam Watson, Maiwar Performance 2014 (stills). Video, colour, sound, edition of 5. Duration 0:12:00, looped. Courtesy David Pestorious Projects, Brisbane.

One's body is never entirely lost to illusion in performance art as there is always a residual sense of social reality. Physical presence has an inescapable immediacy that is akin to the role of witness. In McEvoy Spero's case study, students acted out human rights principles as opposed to simply acknowledging and learning about them. *Maiwar Performance* was a little more double-edged in its impact. The audience became an involuntary witness to Australia's racist past but the performance also made the point that witness, or acknowledgement, is insufficient in creating political change. People need to acknowledge *and* act for political change to occur. Art is a powerful trigger for radical transformation in political thought, but the thought still needs to translate into political action. The curious silence of *Maiwar Performance* appears to echo this chasm between thought and action.

Role Reversal as Witness: Richard Bell's *Uz vs Them*

Performance art is very attuned to the fact that people adopt roles in their lives; in society; and even in their own imagination. Role reversal is a common strategy for politically-motivated performance art and is particularly effective in reorienting racial politics thinking with a sense of shared humanity. Role reversal places focus on the quality of empathy by encouraging participants to reflect on what they have in common in addition to how they differ in terms of social and political circumstances. Performance art's appeal to the breadth of sensory perception potentially engages audiences in more profound dimensions of empathy. We share common experiences of touch, taste, and smell, in addition to communicating by visual and auditory means. In terms of the sense of touch, physical violence to the body is an almost universal symbol of injustice. It is an injustice that is both political and deeply personal.

We now look at a performance art work called *Uz vs Them* (2006) by Richard Bell, a prominent Indigenous Australian activist/artist. He employs an elevated sensory impact in his performance art to appeal to a sense of common humanity in Australian race relations. In his piece titled *Uz vs Them* Bell appropriates that most inhumane act of physical violence in the boxing ring to metaphorically align Australian race relations with ritualised assaults on the body.

In the performance the artist and a white protagonist swap blows whilst making stereotypically racist declarations about Aboriginal and white Australians. The pain and physical affront of being hit is a fundamental tactile

sign of injustice but it is also sanctioned within society's institution of sport. In this way Bell underscores how social and political institutions continue to harbour and implicitly justify racial inequality; a form of political violence. The artwork's appeal for empathy is crafted through a strategy of role reversal. Derogatory comments about socially dysfunctional behaviour that typify racist commentary about Aboriginal people are uttered by Bell about white people. The white protagonist equally regales against an Aboriginal political elite. Role reversal creates a neat twist whereby the racist mind-set takes the impact of its own blows. Bodies become physical witness to the violence of racism.

Fig. 5.3: Richard Bell, *Uz vs Them*, 2006. Single-channel digital video, edition 2/5. Duration 0:2:20. Collection of The University of Queensland, Gift of Richard Bell through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2009. Reproduced courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane (see also plate section, plate 12).

Indigenous performance art gains even more political potency when viewed in the context of recent studies in political aesthetics. Scholars increasingly attend to how the sensory multiplicity of art conditions political consciousness. Jacques Rancière writes of the so-called "distribution of the sensible", of how a regime of visibility and audibility surreptitiously censor the ordering of political awareness (2004). Rancière draws attention to how we are persuaded to think politically about something by means other than the written and spoken word.

The regularity and habits of visibility shape a certain kind of awareness, as do sounds and movements such as dance. Reggae, for instance, is regarded as an intrinsic political sign of a black self-empowerment and a rejection of western social conventions (King 2002). Rancière's work is an extension of Merleau-Ponty's writings that develop sensory concepts of political aesthetics through the model of a mind/body duality (1996). In his rejection of a Cartesian notion of a disembodied consciousness Merleau-Ponty presents instead the idea that inseparable processes of mind and body responses to the world around us determine how we understand the nature of our being. The body, or matters of the flesh, are conceived of as a mode of knowing, and a mode of expressing concepts and ideas. We cannot separate the body's mode of knowing from the mind, but nor can we separate our mindfulness from our embodied awareness (1996). Merleau-Ponty argues that relationships between the meaningfulness of the senses and that of words are inextricable, and draws attention to how the performances of the senses "torment static language, opening or narrowing the meaning of words" (Landes 2013: 28).

This mind/body duality conditions political thought and experience in very profound way; or so Merleau-Ponty highlighted in his later writings (Davis 2001). His text titled *The Visible and the Invisible* extends Karl Marx's concept of a commodity-body objectified by a capitalist economy (in *German Ideology*, written in 1845) into a critical social theory grounded in the human body. David Levin argues that Merleau-Ponty's political phenomenology adopts a method of radical reflection that situates us within more fundamental dimensions of human nature that are beyond the historical political ordering of the body politic (1975/6). Levin contends that even Michel Foucault's approach to the human body as a crucial site of powerful political investment lacks attention to the substance of the body as such (a substance that Merleau-Ponty maintains through the term of 'flesh').

Erotic Bodies as Witness: Fiona Foley's Native Born

The sensory codes of the human body in art are most obvious where it involves erotic reference or an appeal to sexual desire. Merleau-Ponty regards the existential structure of sexuality as "an originary mode of consciousness", referring to sexuality's fundamental role in self-understanding and the nature of our existence (Landes 2013: 89). Art's capacity to manipulate sexual desire exploits this psychology of self-awareness, and political concepts of injustice and inequality readily emerge in imagery conveying the sexual objectification and exploitation of indigenous subjects. In Australia's culture of denial

regarding its history of race-relations, irrefutable evidence of sexual slavery and objectification provides artists with the means to articulate an on-going legacy of racism and social disadvantage.

We focus on a work of art called *Native Blood* (1994) by Fiona Foley, a prominent Australian artist/activist. This example demonstrates how performative bodies in art maintain a witnessing function when viewing a body taking on a role in photography as opposed to audiences being present during a performance. Foley's *Native Born* series uses photographic self-portraits where the artist adopts the pose of the bare-breasted 'dusky maiden' stereotype. In *Native Blood* (1994) the artist lies on a studio floor, naked to the waist and wearing a grass skirt, gym pants and running shoes. Beneath a studio backdrop of dreamlike clouds the 'dusky maiden' stares directly at the camera; her body a contemporary witness to sexual exploitation of the past.

Throughout her career, Foley has focused on how photographic representations of the body fuel erroneous stereotypes about Aboriginal people. Similar to Richard Bell's Uz vs. Them, the *Native Blood* series performs a role reversal of these stereotypes, empowering the Aboriginal subject with a returned gaze. The imagery's partial nudity, once regarded as erotic, is transformed in the return of the artist's gaze into a witness of power relations. Empowered white voyeurs who found cheap sexual gratification in the fantasy of primitive 'free love' are coerced to reflect on the body's impulse of sexual desire as a political act of colonial (and postcolonial) exploitation.

Foley's work has continued to depict sexual exploitation and violence on the female body as acts of political witness. In her 2011 series titled *The Oyster Fishermen*, the artist again uses her own body to perform as witness. In this instance, the artworks are based on historical events in the 1890s when Aboriginal women from the artist's traditional homelands were kidnapped by oyster fishermen and held as slaves on the boats. (Foley 2013) Tied to a tree and about to be whipped, the artist no longer faces the camera. The forthcoming violence and look of erotic pleasure on the male captor's face create the required shock of recognition. Photography's apparent reality effect in these images helps to disturb and discomfort the viewer, and presents a challenge to self-examine subconscious ideas about race and social privilege that operate in a cognate co-dependency with bodily impulses.

Embodied Witnessing and Political Eroticism in Literature

Fiona Foley's artwork demonstrates the capacity to invoke erotic impulses so that they become political and illuminate historical cases of racial exploitation

and social inequality. Even in a mode of photographic representation an artwork can arguably exert control of the body through erotic sensory stimulation that triggers a political unconscious framed by the context of the artwork. In this last section, we describe how artistic representations of the performative body in literature also achieve this erotic political aesthetics. Literature's textual articulation is more explicit in its aims and effectively underscores the embodied witnessing of performative and visual arts.

We examine a literary work by the previously discussed Sam Watson. Watson is a performance artist but he is also a noted author and playwright and the subtitle of his novel, *The Kadaitcha Sung, a seductive tale of sorcery, eroticism and corruption* (1979), signals this political use of eroticism. Watson's literature effectively puts words to the silent act of witnessing experienced in *Maiwar Performance*, but the political message is identical.

Whilst the tale of *The Kadaitcha Sung* is indeed seductive, it is nevertheless a confronting insight into race relations in Australian society. The novel draws on Watson's work with the Aboriginal Legal Service where he was instrumental in implementing recommendations of the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (1987–1991). *The Kadaitcha Sung* was written during the early period of this Royal Commission and shortly after the Australian Government's 1988 bicentenary celebrations of European settlement. The latter event was widely regarded as controversial in terms of how it celebrated the colonisation and political disenfranchisement of indigenous Australians. Protests were common where both indigenous and non-indigenous Australians marched in unison, however much of the Australian population could not understand indigenous perspectives in refusing to celebrate (Pettman 1988; Meadows & Oldham 1991).

Watson's novel sought to address this lack of understanding by channelling readers into an Aboriginal way of thinking about politics and social injustice. He spoke of this intention in an interview:

I had a very clear idea of who I was writing for. In much the same way that Jimmy Cook (*Captain James Cook*) and his minions invaded the land of the Murri (*Aboriginal*) tribes, I wanted to get out there into those brick houses, those living rooms and explode into people's minds. I wanted to put a black boy into a white neighbourhood and point a black finger of accusation. I wanted to say this is what has happened in Australia and this is who is responsible. So be aware of it because somewhere down the track, answers will have to be given. (Dean 1995)

The novel's suffusion of sensual mysticism within contemporary Australian life reinvigorates Aboriginal cultural traditions, but it is also a persuasive political weapon in seeking acknowledgement of an autonomous Aboriginal authority that frames present day demands for self-determination and social justice. The concept of witnessing permeates the novel in its repetitious physical violations that demand inevitable accountability. Central Australia's mystical figure of the

kadaitcha is a principal metaphor of accountability in the novel. The term *kadaitcha* (also spelt *kurdaitcha*) derives from the Aranda language and refers to a ritual executioner whose mission is to track the guilty across all obstacles of time and space in an infallible act of justice. *Kadaitcha* never fail to execute justice and their pursuit of accountability is both inevitable and relentless. *Kadaitcha* are traditionally ordinary members of an Aboriginal community who secretly adopt the role of executioner when required, and thus manifest in the Aboriginal cultural imagination as both flesh and moral idealism. In the context of this novel, these manifestations take the form of a performative body and convey a clear political message.

The Kadaitcha Sung principally aims to engage outsiders in an Aboriginal experience of injustice and Watson achieves this by harnessing the metaphoric complexity of an Aboriginal sensual language for political purpose. The novel is instilled with a pervasive mind-body consciousness that encourages emotional and psychological involvement in demonising the corrupt assault on Aboriginal moral order. Circular rather than linear dimensions of time interleave events occurring in the modern 1970s, the earlier history of so-called Aboriginal Protectionism, and the ever-present time of the Dreaming. Readers are perpetually disorientated in time and space, never in control of the 'when' or 'where', and instead adopt the role of student or initiate; waiting and wanting to learn. The narrative takes place mainly in urban Brisbane and nearby Fingal Mission, and centres on the character of Tommy Gubba, a young man of mixed heritage who is the last descendent of the ancient clan of *kadaitcha* sorcerers. Tommy is called upon to kill his rival *kadaitcha* Booka (his uncle) and restore the heart of the Rainbow Serpent in its proper place at Uluru so that Baimee, the greater being, can return to his beloved land Australia and protect his people against the whites. Brisbane's modern population thus become protagonists in a good versus evil epic of Biblical proportions that presents a very disturbing perspective of an Aboriginal experience of Australia's 'shared' homeland.

The Kadaitcha Sung's sensual register is visceral and tangible; events feel real although at times they are horrific. Through recurring references to bodily sensations of sweat; feeling hot and cold; and erotic impulses; the reader is compelled to feel as though physically involved in a scenario of moral order under siege. Watson initiates the psychology of political accountability amid a scenario of violence of rape. Worimi, the sexually-exploited servant of two notorious Mounted Police officers, experiences a flashback to the murders of her husband and daughter during the early stages of the narrative:

Her warrior husband and tiny daughter had sent words of love and longing to her, and she smiled at the sweet memories that flooded her.

The migloo (white man) had cut her man in half at the waist, his blood and guts spilling onto their beloved tribal land. Her daughter had only just begun to walk on her chubby

little legs when the migloo had smashed her head with a club. Her daughter's brains had spattered onto her breasts as she lay almost senseless beneath the heaving loins of the white rider (17).

Watson explicitly links the violent history of indigenous suppression to the global effects of English colonialism, and makes the reader feel the physical impact of this violence. In a modern day scene in an Irish pub in Brisbane, Tommy identifies a kindred spirit with the Irish in their exploitation by the English:

Watching the whites with a wry smile, Tommy again thought about the incredible damage that the English race had done to the world. The Irish people had also developed a noble civilisation, but the likes of Cromwell had crushed them without mercy, taking their land and reducing them to enslavement. The tribes of Uluru were not the only victims. But Tommy was committed to ensuring that the English blood paid dearly for their crimes against his people (182).

Decolonisation is figured as a form of exorcism in the novel that potentially benefits all Australians. When Tommy's persona of the *kadaitcha* performs an exorcism on the *migloo* (white person) Sugar, it symbolically purges colonialism's corruption of Australian society. Again, corporeal intimacy and sensuality have a profound psychological affect of a weight of guilt that lies deep within the white self-consciousness:

The intervention only took a short time. Tommy carried his poorie bag with him everywhere and he only needed a single bone to break the spell and free Sugar. He sang a low song, burnt a pair of red leaves and passed the bone over the pale flesh beneath him. In a matter of seconds Sugar's body relaxed and her breathing steadied. Her life was again her own. The broken piece of stingray-barb, now cold and completely harmless, popped out of the woman's anus…
… Sugar awoke, fully dressed and completely refreshed. She looked about the office, beaming. 'I feel so good!' she exclaimed … 'Oohh! I just feel … so great!'. She leapt up off the couch and hugged Tommy. 'Thank you Tommy! Thank you so very much! You freed me.' She held him close (108).

The almost uncontrollable sensual responses invoked by the novel metaphorically situate readers within an Aboriginal perspective of this history. Multi-sensory stimuli tap into the body's natural rhythms and instinctual desires and make the body 'witness' political realities that have hitherto remained silent or invisible. Tommy delves deep into the body of Sugar's flesh to retrieve the bone of Australia's political guilt, and suggests the promised freedom of facing the past. This literary representation of the performative body as embodied witness is similar to Foley's photography in that it invokes physical responses almost despite the reader's will. The represented body is an embodied witness

but the real power of this political aesthetics is in how it makes the body of the audience/reader a witness to their own political unconscious.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have sought to explore how art takes on the form of political witnessing. At first sight, applying the term 'witness' to art infers an almost involuntary response. We sometimes involuntarily witness events that preferably remained invisible, but looking at art is implicitly a matter of choice. To be a witness also implies a form of acknowledgement where looking at art is conventionally understood as a private subjective experience. A concept of witness thus somewhat alters the social contract of art. It infers that the viewer in a sense becomes a hostage to the truth.

We have looked at how performance art and sensual physical representations use the body as a weapon in a protest movement against the legacy of colonial violence. Performance art in particular is powerful because in today's world it easily transgresses the physical location of its performance. With mass communication growing in volume and sophistication, the body politic reminds us of the need to understand and appreciate how the sensory mechanisms of the human body can serve as a method of political ordering and potential agents of political transformation.

The political impact of performance art can perhaps best be understood in reference to Rancière's theory of political aesthetics, which explores how we negotiate the sensible world, and how an epoch's 'distribution of the sensible' determines what is arbitrarily but self-evidently accepted as thinkable, reasonable and doable. Art and politics, for Rancière, are intrinsically linked because they both revolve around this struggle to determine "what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak" (Rancière 2004: 13; see also Rockhill, 2009: 199–200).

Art becomes political because it can challenge how we see and conceptualize the world around us. Works of art held in museums, for instance, can shape and reshape public taste and modes of perception and collective expectations. Or so Rancière (2004: 9) believes, stressing that art is a potential meeting ground between existing configurations of the sensible and attempts to reconfigure our sensory experience of the world (Rancière 2004: 9; Rockhill 2009: 200).

While the Indigenous artworks we examined in this chapter fundamentally challenged the prevailing distribution of the sensible, it will inevitably take years until this challenge filters through and has an impact on public perceptions and

political discussions. Art works differently than more direct forms of political activism. A painting might function how Paul Celan (1986: 186, 198) described the journey of a poem: as a "message in a bottle", a plea that is sent out with the hope that someday it will be washed onto a shore, onto something open, a heart that seeks dialogue, a receptive political reality. Alex Danchev (2009: 3) speaks of the artist as "moralist" or "moral witnesses" who thrive on hope – hope that "there is, or will be, an audience of sentient spectators, viewers, readers". Indigenous art will continue to serve this function as a moral witness – and in doing so, it will continue to shape how we understand issues of social justice.

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6. Art as Remembrance and Trace in Post-Conflict Latin America

Cynthia E. Milton

One of the foundational stories in the discipline of art history is that of the Corinthian Maid.[1] According to the tale, as told around 77 AD by the Roman natural philosopher Pliny the Elder, a Corinthian potter's daughter traced on the wall her lover's shadow, cast by candlelight. The soldier was about to leave for war and his future was uncertain. Moved by the sadness of his daughter upon the soldier's departure, the father made a sculpture of the young man, based on the drawing that she had done. In art, this technique is that of the trace or indexical sign of what once was present. In Latin America, after the decades of Cold War, civil wars, military incursions and dictatorships, this trace is known as the silhouette, the outline of a loved one disappeared, in most cases, by the state, which grew into the *siluetazo,* a movement to demand their return.[2] Yet, while similar in technique, the meaning of the act of tracing differs slightly. The Corinthian woman made a reproduction of her lover in anticipation of longing, and possibly in anticipation of the profound sorrow upon his loss. As art historian Lisa Saltzman notes, this story is of "a daughter

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2   Siluetazo started as an artistic happening conceived by three Argentine artists in 1983: Julio Flores, Guillermo Kexel, and Rodolfo Aguerberry. The initial concept was to erect 30,000 silhouettes, which was the estimated number of people imprisoned and killed by the dictatorship between 1976–1983 in Argentina. The operation became a major popular event, and the silhouettes are a regular presence at subsequent rallies (Camnitzer 2007: 74).

who determines, with her anticipatory gesture of grief, the link between representation and remembrance" (Saltzman 2006: 3).

As an analogy or point of entry to discuss trauma, art and affect, this tale is not quite appropriate, for the Corinthian daughter made the art *before* the loss. Yet, much of the art produced in Latin America since the 1970s is *after* the loss: in Argentina, we find the silhouettes of loved ones who were disappeared that change from drawn outlines of figures into the grainy black and white identification photographs throughout Latin America that represent the dead and missing loved ones. These artforms and images are used to remember those who are no longer here, and for some it is the silhouette alone that remains, anchoring the memory of an individual – and in the case of Argentina, a generation – in the present.

Traces and silhouettes, and artistic and visual engagements with the past abound thus indicating what appears to be a near universal response to violence – art. In her seminal study, *The Body in Pain* (1985), Elaine Scarry posits that art in its many forms may express that which verbal language cannot.[3] This is a theme picked up by Jill Bennett (2005) in her notion of empathic vision, by Dominick LaCapra's (2001) concept of 'empathetic unsettlement' and Katherine Hite's reworking of the same (2012) – that art can express emotions otherwise left unspoken and elicit from the spectator an embodied response; Lisa Saltzman argues that art links us to non-verbal memories of the past through the trace or indexical sign of what once was.

Indeed, it is this ability of art to evoke for spectators other people's memories of a traumatic past that in part explains why art lends itself so well to memory studies. For as Marianne Hirsch has written, "it is this presence of embodied and affective experience in the process of transmission that is best described by the notion of memory as opposed to history. Memory signals an affective link to the past – a sense, precisely, of material 'living' connection – and it is powerfully mediated by technologies like literature, photography, and testimony" (2012: 33). I would add to her list of technologies visual representations and artistic practices more broadly.

That is, art offers a powerful means for recounting the past and for reaching a kind of understanding that otherwise remains beyond comprehension. The ability of art to speak about atrocity has been debated since Theodor Adorno famously remarked that to write poetry after Auschwitz was "barbaric" (Adorno 1981: 34). This remark has often been interpreted to mean that it is impossible, both actually and morally, to represent the Holocaust, and perhaps, more broadly, any atrocity, via art. Yet Adorno later in life acknowledged poetry as an important means of communication, for "perennial suffering has as much right to expression as a tortured man has to

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[3]   See also Friedlander (1992: 5).

scream" (Koch, quoting Adorno, 1989: 15). Over the half century since the Holocaust, a plethora of artworks has emerged to broach the 'difficult' – in the meaning of both sensibility toward and comprehension of – thus allowing us, decades later, to move beyond the taboo of representing and giving expression to shameful and horrific pasts. Indeed, we should recognize the significant role art can play in making difficult pasts comprehensible, even if only in part. Thus, in a reworking of Adorno's famous words, the historian Steve Stern suggests that to *not* produce art in the aftermath of suffering would be to allow barbarity to reign unchecked (Milton 2014a: 2).

Indeed, in Latin America, one of the intended aims of art in response to atrocity seems to be this: to contest the barbarity committed and to restore the humanity of citizens who have been harmed, the hundreds of thousands dead and disappeared since the 1970s and the millions of people affected and displaced. In the transition from state violence to democracy and the years following, issues of representation and memory have come to the forefront of political and cultural analyses and debates about conflict and repression in Latin America, especially since justice seems slow in coming, if at all. Protest art against authoritarian regimes and violence has made way for memorial art. In Argentina, *siluetazos*, which stood out as silent protests and evocations of missing citizens in the early and mid-80s, now adorn public state-sponsored memory sites dedicated to the *desaparecidos* (disappeared) (Bell 2014). Yet art may maintain continuity in its role regardless of regime type: whether under dictatorial or democratic rule, art *contests any totalizing vision of state power*. During dictatorships, to make art could be an act of resistance, as when Chilean women stitched picture appliqués (*arpilleras*) whose imagery denounced the Pinochet regime's human rights abuses (Agosín 2008). So, too, in post-conflict democracies, art reminds audiences of the ongoing tensions of the unresolved past in the present: for instance, post-civil war novels in Central America reference the violence of earlier decades in the context of today's insecurity (Moodie 2010); and the creativity of the *escraches* (happenings to denounce perpetrators) by Argentine and Chilean youth "remind us that while the dictatorships and even democratic regimes have tightly controlled our understanding of the real, cultural practices constantly subvert that discursive order" (Masiello 2001:7).

Art may help to achieve a fuller expression and better understanding of violent pasts. In a conversation between the historian Gonzalo Sánchez and the artist María Elvira Escallón, who made a photography exhibition after a fire in a nightclub in Bogota, called 'Desde Adentro', Sánchez reflects on the limits of written texts in recounting the Colombian violence: "a text can not say everything about the pain that covers our daily tragedies. We need to turn to images, and the multiple possibilities of artistic language" (Sánchez and Escallón 2007). Art may help not only those who have gone through traumatic events to

put shape and give meaning to their experiences – to express something about the pain, to paraphrase Sánchez – but art may also help those who have not directly experienced such events to come closer to a sympathetic awareness of them. As Kyo Maclear has written in the context of post atomic bombings Japan, art can move viewers "emotionally and intellectually toward the unknown" (1999: 24). For some survivors, art came out of necessity and a desire to record what happened for future generations: "even now [thirty years later] I cannot erase the scene from my memory. Before my death I wanted to draw it and leave it for others", said Iwakichi Kobayashi, a seventy-year-old survivor of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima (Japanese Broadcasting Corporation 1977: 105). Thus, art also asks contemporary and future others to bear witness to the artists' acts of witnessing.

It is this connection between *art and affect* that may bring us to a closer understanding of the unknown – of something which we ourselves did not experience but as the post-generations (whether directly descendant or not) have a moral obligation to remember in the aspiration of a global future of 'Never Again'. In this way, a drawing about Peru's conflict of the 1980s and 1990s *Tras la sombra del dolor* (Fig. 6.1; see also plate 10) elicits compassion and, perhaps, a sense of not wanting to repeat, igniting both emotional and moral awareness.[4] A lone woman walks as she wipes tears from her eyes with one hand. In her other hand, she holds absent-mindedly a wool spinner. One of her shoes is broken. Her back is slightly hunched forward, not from the weight of her satchel but from her sadness. This drawing, done in either pencil or pastel, is entitled *Behind the Shadow of Pain*. While there are no direct scenes of violence, the pain of this woman and of her community is inscribed on her body. Her pain is visible to us such is the capacity of art to recount experience.

But what of art as *evidence* to the past, beyond that of eliciting empathy or affect, or the advancement of a normative argument of remembrance so as not to repeat the past? What can art tell us about the past that we would not know otherwise? Can art be used as a primary source, as 'forensic truth', by historians who by disciplinary training are more likely to read a text, words etched on paper, than an image – even if we say a picture is worth a thousand words? Few historians have used art as historical evidence, most often historians use art as illustrations to arguments formed or reached by other means. A notable exception being historian Peter Burke's book *Eyewitnessing* (2001) whose work, as the title indicates, envisions the artist as witness to his historical surroundings. One has only to think of Francisco Goya's famous painting *El Tres de Mayo, 1808,* as a testimonial account to the invasion of Napoleonic troops into Spain, or Picasso's *Guernica* of 1937. Such images – by Goya,

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[4]   Colectivo Yuyarisun (2004: 17).

Picasso, and that of Peru – 'dar testimonio', or give testimony, to human rights abuses.

Fig. 6.1: *Behind the Shadow of the Pain* (*Tras la sombra del dolor*) by Luis Cuba Arango (Pampamarca, Vinchos). Reprinted with permission from Servicio Educativos Rurales, Colectivo Yuyarisun, *Rescate por la memoria*, 17.

Indeed, art can contradict official histories, and in so doing tell us about events otherwise left in the realm of "loose" or "scattered" memories (Stern 2004) that have not yet made it into the national frame as the 'official past'. Take for instance a series of art works done during the end of the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CVR after its Spanish acronym) in 2003 as part of an art contest run by a group of non-governmental organizations called *Rescate por la memoria* (Recovery/Rescue of Memory). The artworks presented as part of the *Rescate por la memoria* contests illustrate principally two agents of violence: the state security forces and Shining Path (*Sendero Luminoso)*. For the most part these works depict alone either the state security forces or Shining Path. This is similar to the findings of the Peruvian CVR that found Shining Path responsible for 54% of deaths and disappearances (calculated at over 69,000 from 1980–2000) and armed state actors (principally the Armed Forces and the Police Forces) responsible for 36% (CVR 2004: 10).

Here, the art entries for the contest *Rescate por la memoria* differ from the CVR's findings. It is noteworthy that these artist-witnesses made severe abuses by the state armed actors more often the subject of their submissions for the *Rescate por la memoria* contest rather than those committed by Shining Path. Of the 44 drawings and paintings in the Ayacucho 2003 contest, 32 depict massacres, torture, battles, or other human rights violations. Of these, 17 entries testify to abuses by the armed forces, six to Shining Path violence, eight to both agents, and one to *ronderos* (local defense groups). The remaining drawings are general scenes of suffering and community. The emphasis on the human rights abuses committed by the 'forces of order' (a much-used euphemism for the military, navy, and police) stands in contrast to the findings of the Peruvian truth commission (Milton 2014a: 59–61).

Why *Rescate por la memoria* artists would choose to depict more scenes of violence by state actors over Shining Path is complicated, allowing for many possible interpretations. Participants might have seen the non-governmental (NGO) contest organizers and judges as agents who could transmit their grievances to the state. Participants might have considered the audience (including fellow community members) as more likely to hold the armed forces accountable for their acts than trying to bring elusive Shining Path to account, or to make reparations. Or perhaps communities made decisions internally to not bring up openly possible Shining Path connections in their past. Or perhaps the violence committed by the state seemed a greater injustice than those committed by Shining Path since the armed forces were supposed to protect citizens rather than harm them, as suggested in the title of another painting form the same series, *The Shadows of Injustice* (*Las sombras de la injusticia*).

Yet, we could also ask if perhaps the artists and this art could be telling us something that we might not know otherwise, if we only read the Truth Commission's Final Report: that is, abuse by the military may have been greater

and could have been underestimated by the CVR. In a recent re-coding of a portion of the nearly 17,000 testimonies collected by the Truth Commission, researcher Michele Leiby (2009) finds that the armed forces committed more acts of violence than Shining Path. The Truth Commission's original underestimation was the result of the decision to not include in the calculation as 'victims' individuals whose full names were unknown and of the decision to separate the dead and disappeared from other forms on non-lethal violence, including acts of sexual violence. But looking at the artworks submitted for the *Rescate por la memoria* contest, such acts and scale of violence were already clearly indicated, independently of the official account.

While Ralph Buchenhorst (2012: 221) may be correct that "historical images [here he is referring specifically to photographs] can only be adequately understood by relating them to a combination of other images, elucidating texts, and the comments and statements of witnesses", images may also stand alone, like loose memories and photographs placed in a box rather than an album (Stern 2004: xxviii). Though alone the story they tell may only be partial, difficult to corroborate, and thus dependent upon the will and desires of the spectator, what Ulrich Baer calls the "spectral evidence", to reveal "the striking gap between what we can see and what we can know" (2002: 61). Despite the limitations of visual representations (a point to which I return later), they may stand alone – a witness or voice against atrocity – waiting for the corroboration of other texts (such as in the case of the *Rescate por la memoria* works) and/or as liberating counter-narratives against the backdrop of dictatorship, torture, intimidation, disappearance and death. Furthermore, they are also producing a visual source all the more important and pressing in the absence of justice for those harmed.

Yet the problem of artistic representations to shed light on the past is not just that of an incomplete account, waiting for corroboration, but is also one of the limits of who has access to the production of knowledge, by what forms, and what is indeed considered knowledge, mirroring the very exclusionary practices that brought about the violent events therein depicted (Franco 2002; Richard 2007; Mignolo 2000). The "coloniality of power" (Quijano 2001) in Latin America brought to the foreground during the Cold War-induced conflicts, makes it difficult for certain individuals and groups to have their knowledge understood as such. Artistic representations in Peru, for instance, tend to be understood as folkloric, artisanal, or 'popular art', rather than belonging to the art world (Ulfe 2014).

As an example of the richness of visual sources to document the past, as well as a call for restorative if not retributive justice, I turn here to the work of Edilberto Jiménez Quispe. Jiménez is author to a series of drawings reproduced in the book *Chungui: violencia y trazos de memoria* (Chungui: Violence and Traces of Memory, 2005; 2009). He is an artist and journalist with a degree in

Anthropology from the Universidad Nacional de San Cristóbal de Huamanga (in Peru's Department of Ayacucho). As an artist, ethnographer, and a Quechua-speaking *ayacuchano*, Jiménez applied his skills to bear witness to the violence suffered in the remote district of Chungui (also in the Department of Ayacucho).[5] Chungui, with some 17% of its population killed and disappeared, and half of its population who fled, was one of the worst hit regions by the internal war.[6]

Based on his own observations and on testimonies gathered from Chungui residents while working in the region with an NGO, Edilberto Jiménez presents a visually disturbing and powerful account of the violence.[7] Moved by the stories he heard of the internal conflict of the 1980s, and seeing the ruin of the communities, Jiménez swiftly drew visual representations of the previous years *in consultation with witnesses and survivors.*

Chungui: violencia y trazos de memoria starts by providing insight into the community and culture before the conflict as a means to place in context the subsequent war years and its continued legacies.[8] Through the drawings and testimonies that include the dates and location of events described, we learn of local traditional dance by which the town's youth sing and dance so that they might fall in love and get married, known as the 'Llaqta maqta' (Fig. 6.2). We learn of how by the mid-1970s teachers came to Chungui and taught new ideas, a mixture of Mao Zedong with Peruvian philosopher José Mariátegui that lay at the center of Shining Path ideology to build a 'new society'. Next the drawings give explicit accounts of Sendero Luminoso's violence wreaked upon communities and their attempts to defend themselves, and the brutal response by the military. The images are searing: Shining Path retaliating against a small, isolated, highland community for having formed self-defense committees (Fig. 6.3); the assembly of community members at gun point into the central plaza to

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[5]   The remoteness of the small hamlets that make up Chungui is further emphasized by its nickname, 'The Dog's Ear', because of its geographical shape wedged between the rivers Pampas to the west and Apurímac to the east. Chungui is hard to reach, a voyage that takes some ten hours from the departmental capital of Ayacucho on a series of difficult roads.

[6]   Between 1983 and 1994, 1,384 Chungui community members were killed and disappeared.

[7]   Jiménez knows well the community of Chungui having travelled there on many occasions: he first went to Chungui in the 1990s as a member of the Centro de Desarrollo Agropecuario de Ayacucho (CEDAP, an NGO dedicated to agricultural development). Chungui had been one of the beneficiaries of the agrarian reform of 1969 when the state expropriated hacienda landholdings and turned the land over to peasants to cultivate.

[8]   Prior to publication of his drawings, Jiménez used to hand out photocopied versions. This speaks to his urgency to bring attention to Chungui's plight, a region in which he continues to work as a member of an NGO.

name local authorities to uphold their ideology (Fig. 6.4); mothers being forced by Shining Path to give up their children to serve Sendero Luminoso (Fig. 6.5); and people were in a constant state of fear and distrust for Shining Path had a 'thousand eyes' (Fig. 6.6); the cruel and gratuitous violence of the armed forces in their 'anti-subversion' campaigns (Fig. 6.7); the self-defense groups (*rondas*) who joined the armed forces in their assault, yet who also provided much-needed refuge for those communities that sought to escape the conflict. For Chungui residents who hid in the mountains fearful of both Shining Path and state security forces, these years are remembered as ones where they lived and died like animals.

Fig. 6.2: Edilberto Jiménez Quispe, *Llaqta Maqta (A Dance)*. Reprinted with artist's permission from *Chungui* (2005), 71.

Fig. 6.4: Edilberto Jiménez Quispe, *When Sendero Arrived* (Chungui, 1983) Reprinted with artist's permission from *Chungui* (2005), 79.

Fig. 6.5: Edilberto Jiménez Quispe, *They Would Have Killed Us If We Didn't Go with Them* (Chungui, 1985). Reprinted with artist's permission from *Chungui* (2005), 151.
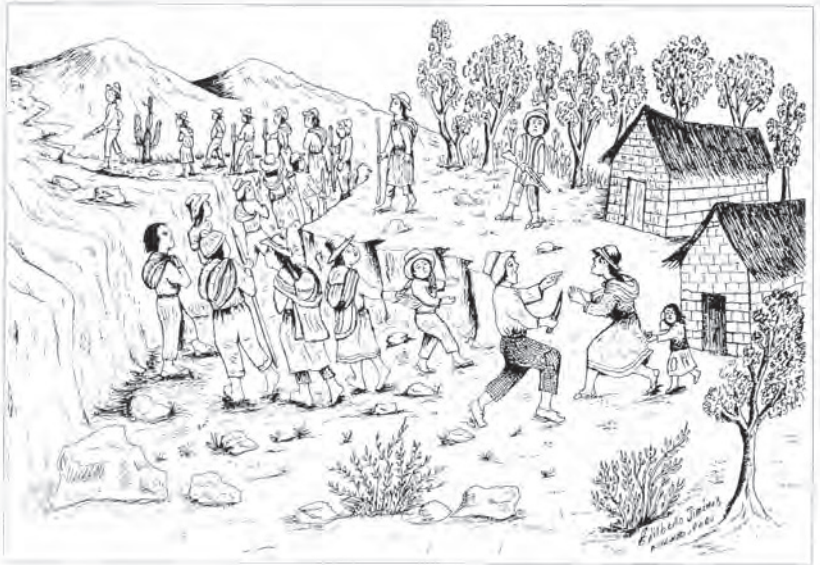
Fig. 6.6: Edilberto Jiménez Quispe, *They Said, "You Must Obey Those in Charge"* (Chillihua, Chungui, 1984). Reprinted with artist's permission from *Chungui* (2005), 85.

Fig. 6.7: Edilberto Jiménez Quispe, *As Day was Night,* (Oronqoy, Chungui, 1984). Reprinted with artist's permission from *Chungui* (2005), 181.

At the methodological level, Edilberto Jiménez's work employs a unique approach of visual ethnography and participant observation. Unable to capture the gestures of survivors when they demonstrated how people were killed, he put down the tape recorder and took up his pencils.[9] Jiménez made his drawings *in consultation* with local residents and revised them according to their comments. His drawings are a unique collaborative effort between himself as artist/ ethnographer/regional neighbour and Chungui community members. His artistic representations reach a level of empathy, of understanding, few others could attain. As the truth commissioner Carlos Iván Degregori noted, "Peru and Peruvians have an unresolved debt with Chungui. This book [*Chungui* by Jiménez] is a form of repayment through ethnography and art" (Degregori 2005/2009: 16).

Jimenez's images are powerful. The feelings produced upon the spectator are wrenching, horrifying, shocking, and perhaps risk, at times, being sensationalistic – in terms of producing senses in the absence of meaning or

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[9]   Vergara (2005/2009: 18n8). For further discussion of Jimenez's Chungui series (and other artwork by this artist) see Saona (2014) and Lambright (2015).

knowledge. Yet, I would argue that what they provoke rather is *deep empathetic unsettlement* as well as give concrete documentation of human rights abuses that might otherwise remain scattered and loose, outside of official registers and narrative, and outside of any trials against perpetrators. These images tell us not only of the brutality but the complexity of subjectivities. We are hopefully moved beyond simple horror to act, to attempt to understand these complexities and to seek retributive justice for their occurrence (though slow and incomplete, the Peruvian judiciary has handed down some important sentences condemning state and Shining Path perpetrators).

Yet art as a means to bear witness poses different challenges from the ones involved in nonartistic processes of historical clarification such as the gathering of oral testimonies. Oral testimonies might hold a privileged place as evidence, since they are considered closer to the body of the sufferer, whereas art seems more distant and removed by dint of the process of production.[10] In other words, the truth value of art is brought into question by the very medium of expression – the fact that art is born from the imagination. For art to bear witness to the past, it must be seen to possess authenticity and accuracy, exigencies perhaps unrealistic considering the passage of time and the medium of expression. These tensions may appear irresolvable: art is imaginative and creative while the legal discourse of 'evidence' necessitates the burden of proof and veracity.

Even when direct witnesses themselves generate art, does art witness accurately? Artworks are, after all, made, fabricated, created and are not direct traces or artifacts of the past. Today everyday viewers distrust photographic images that had once held a privileged trust as direct observation, what Virginia Woolf described as "crude statement[s] of fact addressed to the eye" (cited in Sontag 2003: 26). Today any created representation, if its maker wishes it to serve as an expression of memory and history, has to prove its veracity or factual worth. Can we 'trust' art and images to recount the past?

Yes and no. The vicissitudes of memory are present in artistic representations, just as they are in oral testimonies. The well-known debate over psychological and historical truths recounted by the psychologist Dori Laub is illustrative. In a testimony recorded in the Yale Holocaust Testimonies, a woman narrated her witnessing of a rebellion in Auschwitz, which, according to her recollection of events, resulted in the explosion of four chimneys. In fact,

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[10] Part of our mistrust of art and images is the primacy that we have granted the written and spoken word in the act of bearing witness. As Francis Guerin and Roger Hallas (2007: 7) have pointed out, "it is true that words are more frequently considered closer to the communication of feeling and experience. Words, particularly those of oral testimony, are still connected to the body of the sufferer while the material image implies a separation (spatial, temporal or both) from that which it captures".

only one chimney was blown up, not all four. In this debate, scholars questioned the historical validity of this survivor's testimony because she remembered specific facts incorrectly. In contrast, Laub stressed the importance of respecting what the witness did not know (or could not know) and what she felt she "*knew*" (1992: 61). A similar debate erupted over the veracity of Rigoberta Menchú's assisted autobiographical account of the Guatemalan genocide: she was taken to task for inconsistencies in her story and her accounts of events that she herself had not witnessed but recounted as though she had been present (Arias 2001). Such strident demands for accuracy ignore her use of an inclusive 'we' in her efforts to offer a collective testimony. Like that Auschwitz survivor, Rigoberta Menchú recounted what she *knew* as someone who had survived to tell what had happened; for both, memory is the meaning they attach to the past (Stern 2004: 105).[11]

Like oral testimonies, art may break old frameworks and build new ones. Indeed, because art is perhaps less tethered to the past and to historical facts than other media of truth-telling, art makes the 'unimaginable' imaginable, the ability to make "an affective link to the past" or a "'living connection'" (Hirsch 2012: 33), as well as provides new frames – *marcos* or *cuadros* – with which to construct new narratives. Art does not necessarily result in a singular narrative or even a coherent one. Rather, art may inscribe and promote multiple memories and meanings and implicitly counters the homogenizing tendencies of institutional memories. As Jelin and Longoni note, it is through words and images that the traces of horror overcome the limits of expression, even if incomplete or fragmented. It is through these traces that art becomes "the triumph of the word over the silence of absence" (2005: xvii–xviii).

Art has the potential to help us, the audience, get closer to an understanding of what happened (emotional, moral, and historical awareness). Perhaps it is the only medium that allows us to hold in the same frame many of the complexities of this tragedy. Yet *art is not bound to truth* (Milton 2014a: 23). It is a medium in which competing claims to the past emerge and are recounted. The stakes for cultural productions of the past are high. The images and narratives of the past presented through popular media may be more important for establishing collective or, potentially, a national memory of the past than even a truth commission, programs for reparations, and court cases. In Latin America, cultural forms of (re)presenting the past are the present-day battleground for memory narratives, where armed state actors may appropriate the tools, language, and imagery of the human rights movement in order to

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[11]   Stern writes that "memory is the meaning we attach to experience, not simply recall of the events and emotions of that experience. This aspect of remembrance, especially crucial for the study of collective memory, clarifies the distinction between the content (as in specific narrated events) of memory, and the organizing framework that imparts meaning" (2004: 105).

propagate a different version of the past, one that does not reflect the reality of their involvement in the conflict. In Argentina, for instance, relatives associations of fallen military men, civil organizations sympathetic to the military, and media coalesced into a group called *Memoria completa*, a name that indicates that other memories (namely, human rights memories) are incomplete, partial, and sectarian (Salvi 2011). Through publications, interviews, parades and the like they attempt to advance a narrative that recasts Argentina's security forces into a positive light. In Peru, the military has built museums in which the past is exhibited, produced films, and published novels that portray the heroics of the Armed Forces against the savagery of Shining Path (Milton forthcoming). One of the reasons why Adorno's quote about poetry after Auschwitz remains salient today is that it points to the importance of culture in these memory battles.

But we also have to be careful about which memories are being expressed through art, perhaps less sinister than former armed actors seeking grace (rather than pardon) through contorted versions of the past. Trauma is not isolated in time and place, and the experiences of one trauma may inflect the interpretation and understanding, and even the memories of a completely distinct trauma. In his path-breaking book, *Multidirectional Memory* (2009), Michael Rothberg shows that memory – that is the past in the present – is not always a contest or competition between traumatic experiences (for instance, an exclusionary position whereby an individual or a collectivity can identify itself with the Holocaust, or slavery, or colonialism, but not two or three at the same time). Rothberg argues otherwise: these isolated pasts mix and inform each other. That is, a traumatic experience might mark or structure the experiences of others, provide analogies, frameworks, points of reference and tools for translation, and as such these memories of experiences become 'multidirectional'.

Borrowing from this idea that memories and their narratives may influence and indeed inform other memories from other experiences and contexts, we can also see how art structures and frames visual representations elsewhere. That is, memorial art (in the sense of art as emerging from memories) may as well be *multidirectional* (Milton 2014b). If this is the case, we need as well to be aware of reading art too literally, for the memories we may be reading may be of another traumatic event all together, but with local content. For instance, we may encounter Goya's Napoleonic soldiers referenced in a painting of Peruvian soldiers or Picasso's Guernica-like figures looking skywards in entries to the *Rescate por la memoria* contest.

Though at times the images of Goya's *Disasters of War* come to mind when looking at Edilberto Jiménez's drawings, they seem to be largely absent of external motifs, such as reproductions of Goya or Picasso's iconic images of war. Yet, this corpus takes in another influence, that of transitional justice.

Despite these cruel memories and depictions, hope emerges from atrocity's embers. In *Chungui* (2005), the narrative ends with a final picture and text, that of 'Concertación' ('Reconciliation', Fig. 6.8), that is a call for working together with the Peruvian state to address their most basic of material needs and rights as citizens.

Fig. 6.8: Edilberto Jiménez Quispe, *Working Together* (Concertación). Reprinted with artist's permission from *Chungui* (2005), 209.

In the 2005 edition's final image, villagers, noticeably poor in their tattered clothes, march in the thousands to protest against poverty, illiteracy, the lack of attention to basic health, underdevelopment, neglect, and the practice of forgetting by the state.[12] There is no historical evidence that such a public display of attempted engagement with the Peruvian state took place. Yet, the

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[12] Their present situation stands in stark contrast to their memories of a more peaceful and well-off pre-war period. Yet, despite Jiménez's call for recognition and the demands of Chungui residents, their needs remain unanswered: in 2006, malnutrition affected 55% of the population, 34% of women remained illiterate, 93% of the population did not have access to potable water, and 100% of the region had no electricity (Degregori 2005/2009: 15).

language of transitional justice that soaked public discourse at the time, and the context in which Jiménez produced this book (though most of the drawings had been done prior to the Truth Commission's conclusion), also influenced the very framing of these memories. To fit the spirit of the time, one image had to evoke the Truth Commission's (and transitional justice's) notion of 'reconciliation'. Indeed, this context changes dramatically the framing and narrative order, and thus interpretation, of these drawings: while in the first edition (2005), the book began with the image of highland youth participating in a traditional mating dance, the 'Llaqta Maqta' (Fig. 6.2), in the second edition (2009), the book ends with this very image, suggesting the ability of the pueblos to continue on despite their hardship. This image, which had in the earlier edition appeared to be heralding back to a more idyllic time, now looks forward to a more difficult future. With distance to the Truth Commission, reconciliation appears harder to attain, and the dancers sadder.

Beyond the registers of the past as remembrance and as a present confrontation with our different difficult pasts, art may also illustrate a hoped-for future, one of democracy, against racism, for tolerance and for peace (though not necessarily reconciliation). And a route to this all is remembrance. For as Peruvian sociologist Félix Réategui Carrillo has eloquently stated in response to what he sees as widespread efforts in Peru to ignore the past, "Are we supposed to forget this? It is possible, but it impoverishes us and is obscene. Our public dialogue demands fiction. We need to be able to imagine in order to understand" (2006: 449). It is this necessary imagining that art allows us to do so powerfully. But we also need to remember, to keep history in our present consciousness, so as to assure a different future from our many difficult pasts, whether North America (as in the case of my own country, a settler society), Latin American or elsewhere. It is this optimism, a hoped-for future that art in the aftermath of violence holds most in common with that of the early Corinthian maid, and her shadow drawing of her soon departing soldier. These are memories of a remembrance of a lost love as well as gestures towards a hoped-for return, and also for a future promise of Never Again.

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7. *Achrafiyeh Invaded* – The Politics of Fear in a Visual Representation of Lebanese Factionalism

Bruno Lefort

In February 2013, a short film appeared on the Internet commemorating the 2006 looting of the Danish embassy in Lebanon, in the district of Achrafiyeh, considered as the heartland of Christian Beirut. Officially entitled 'Memory of the February 5 events – the invasion of Achrafiyeh [*Dhikra ahdâth 5 shbât – Ghazwat al-Achrafiyyah*]', the video was at the same time posted on the Internet platform *You Tube*,[1] and directly sent to personal emails, including my own, through the networks of one of the prominent Lebanese political parties I was studying at the time, the Free Patriotic Movement [*al-tayyâr al-watanî al-hurr* – FPM]. The movie proposes to investigate the violent demonstration against the cartoons of the Prophet Mohammad and the subsequent violence in the streets surrounding the building, hence staging the event as a testimony of the precarious position of Christian populations in the Middle East, a region demographically and politically dominated by Islam. Explicitly political in its intention, the short movie depicts a brutal, xenophobic image of Muslims. While it appears to exemplify the idea of propaganda, *Achrafiyeh Invaded* – as the movie was tagged – nonetheless falls into a broad definition of art, a work produced by human creative skills and imagination. As such, it provides important insights into the role of visual creations in generating political experiences in sites like Lebanon, where the recurrence of violence seems to never come to an end.

The notion of propaganda has been the object of a vast range of definitions and analyses (e.g. Ellul 1973). Simply put, it describes "the manipulation of symbols for the sake of controlling public opinion in contexts characterised by power, influence and authority relationships between people and groups of people" (Bryder 2008: 102). Aiming at managing collective representations by the use of "significant symbols" (Laswell 1927: 627), propaganda has hence often been discussed in connection with art, especially against the background of strongly articulated ideological political projects such as Soviet communism (e.g. Brown 1998). It is, however, pivotal to keep in mind that an artistic creation, including one for propaganda use, does not communicate alone, nor does it convince its viewers mechanically. It rather evokes for its viewers' specific experiences and attitudes toward the reality that surrounds them, thus

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1   See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wfNe56uScgg (last accessed in June 2015).

inspiring identification with the mediated significations among a predisposed audience. Accordingly, dismissing such productions as *Achrafiyeh Invaded* because of its biased and simplistic depiction of the 2006 events, does not enable a grasp of the foundations upon which it draws to instigate a perception of social and political bonds and boundaries for its targeted audience. In a word, the short movie does not aim at convincing of its realism, but rather at making its viewers recognise its meaning in the resonance of their own living memories. It suggests a kind of "knowledge-by-acquaintance of suffering" evoked by Avishai Margalit (2004: 148) in the definition of a moral witness. As such, it goes beyond representation to present itself as an affective testimony, witnessing perceptual and experiential imaginations of the *political*, i.e. a set of power relations – and the attempts to modify them (Balandier 1967) – concerned with the experience and organisation of *interbeing*, the 'living together'.

Practically, I approached the movie from the perspective of what Gillian Rose describes as 'critical visual methodology', i.e. an approach that focuses on "the visual in terms of the cultural significance, social practices, and power relations in which it is embedded; and that means thinking about the power relations that produce, are articulated through, and can be challenged by, ways of seeing and imaging" (Rose 2012: xix). Accordingly, my intention is to consider the material in terms of the three sites of its production, its content, and its targeted audience so as to understand what social relations produce, and are produced by, the short movie. To address this key issue, I rely on what John Berger (1972: 9) called "ways of seeing", i.e. the kind of perception images invite to compose. "We never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relations between things and ourselves" (ibid.). *Achrafiyeh Invaded* consequently acquires its signification in reference to the imagination of *interbeing* it draws on and inspires. It participates in the construction of the "political spectacle" (Edelman 1988: 3), the public staging of power relations (Balandier 1992) existing between the various components of Lebanese society. In that perspective, the short movie operates as a dramatic demonstration of a political culture, a "horizon" (Gadamer 1985: 271) made of networks of shared significations, articulating power and meaning (Augé 1977) in a specific emplotment. Through the study of this cultural production, my objective is to explore the formation of the dominant political culture in contemporary Lebanon. Hence, I ask: how is *Achrafiyeh Invaded* visually producing a routinised way of experiencing reality in Lebanese society? What 'regime of truth' (Foucault 1972) is embodied in the movie? How does this way of seeing witness the crafting of politics in Lebanese plural society?

To answer these questions, this chapter explores how this short movie articulates connections between on the one hand experiences of violence and, on the other, the actualisation of these experiences in the reification of social

and political bonds and boundaries in a plural society such as Lebanon. The film, I argue, not only pretends to represent these experiences of distress, but becomes a generative mode of social understanding of solidarity, rejection, and coexistence. It relies on an affective memorialisation of past sufferings of the Christians in Lebanon and the Middle East, putting forward figures of martyrs, presented as "the true witnesses" of the Christian condition in the region, to paraphrase Primo Levi (1989: 83–84), all the more efficiently since the Arabic term '*shahîd*', a martyr, also designates 'a witness'. In doing so, the movie mediates a sense of identity and alterity composed in reference to religious antagonisms. Nonetheless, the short movie remains part of a local political competition. As such, it witnesses the politics of communalisation at play within the Lebanese polity: the re-composition by political actors of an alleged existential confrontation between everlasting identities. For this reason, beyond the immediate picture of religious antagonism, *Achrafiyeh Invaded* echoes the supremacy of factionalism in Lebanese politics, in which the significant other is identified not as much in terms of sectarian divides but rather along partisan storylines. It works as a powerful demonstration of the political culture dominating in contemporary Lebanon, highlighting how the affective register serves as a key mode for tracing the linkages between memorialisation, identification, and politics.

After presenting the movie, its sponsor, and the context of its diffusion, I first describe the key scripts along which *Achrafiyeh Invaded* is composed: the tropes of the territorial invasion, statehood, and martyrdom, whose meaning is precisely to testify the significance of experiences of inter-religious violence. Then, I discuss how these themes rely on an affective memorialisation produced in the movie through the mobilisation of various techniques and effects, aiming at instigating a sense of communality of suffering. Finally, I demonstrate how this memorialisation actually witnesses a political horizon dominated by factionalism: beyond the images of religious strife, the movie endorses a political antagonism between two organisations competing for legitimacy among the same constituency.

Introducing *Achrafiyeh Invaded*

Achrafiyeh Invaded lasts approximately thirteen minutes and thirty seconds. If the film remains anonymous, it was posted on the internet under the account of Ziad Abbas, an eminent member of the Free Patriotic Movement. Officially established as a political party in 2005, the FPM has its roots in one of the last

episodes of the Lebanese wars[2] (1975–1990): the 1988 appointment of its leader, Michel Aoun, at the head of a transitional military government. Facing strong opposition, inside as well as outside the country, Aoun engaged in a struggle against the Lebanese militias, especially the Christian Lebanese Forces [*al-quwwât al-lubnâniyyah* – LF], before being evicted from power on October 13, 1990. Returning to Lebanon after years of exile, Aoun founded the FPM in September 2005. Officially, the FPM campaigns for a secular, unified Lebanon, although it recruits and maintains its popularity mostly among Christians. The history of the party and its political stance thus appear at odds with the content of the movie, emphasizing religious differences. On the other hand, the FPM's position toward the February 5 incidents in Achrafiyeh is heavily determined by a major political shift in the country that immediately followed the sack of the Danish embassy: on the very next day the FPM celebrated a political alliance with Hizballah, leading to a complete re-alignment of the party in national and regional politics. The circumstances of the diffusion of the movie have also to be considered. Five year after the attack on the Danish embassy, Lebanon was preparing Parliamentary elections for the summer of 2013. It is in this climate of political competition that the film has been released. Its circulation was therefore closely related to the forthcoming electoral battle, which ironically would never take place as the authorities decided to postpone the polls in a context of growing national and regional violence.

Visually, the movie opens on images evoking old photographs taken at the time of the beginning of the Lebanese civil wars, probably at the turning of the 1980s. These photos picture Bachir Gemayel, a prominent political leader, along with militia fighters in the street of a destroyed Achrafiyeh. Bachir Gemayel was the son of Pierre Gemayel,[3] a notable born in an important Christian Maronite[4] family. Born in 1947 in Achrafiyeh, Bachir inherited the political leadership of his father to become the political and military leader of the Christian nationalists, also called 'Lebanonists', waging war against the Leftist coalition backed by the Palestinian forces in Lebanon. Bachir's growing authority and power enabled him to become the first leader of the Lebanese Forces' militia before being designated President of the Republic in August 1982. Symbol of the omnipotence of the paramilitary organizations in the country, Bachir was, however, assassinated on September 14, in the heart of Achrafiyeh, before his official inauguration. His violent death conferred an iconic, quasi-mythical aura

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[2]   I use a plural form to describe the succession of multiple and distinctive episodes of violence.

[3]   Influenced by the fascist ideology then gaining hold over in Europe, in 1936 Pierre Gemayel founded a youth movement that soon grew into one of the main political parties in Lebanon, the Phalanges [*al-Kata'eb al-lubnâniyyah*].

[4]   Maronite is an ancient oriental Christian rite. The Maronites are mainly present in Lebanon, as well as in Syria.

to his character (Haugbolle 2010: 179–180), all the more since he adopted a renewed stance in the last weeks of his reign, calling for national unity and emphasising his Christian attitude to encourage reconciliation with the Lebanese Muslims.

This opening nostalgic scene lasts for around one minute, accompanied by partisan songs glorifying the dead leader. The sequence then comes to an abrupt end with a succession of written slogans exalting the resilience of the district of Achrafiyeh and its population during the Lebanese wars:

'Achrafiyeh is the beginning' [*al-Achrafiyyah al-bidâyyah*]

'The war of one hundred days⁵ – and did not fall'
[*harb miah yûm – wa lam tasqut*]

'Bombed with heavy weapons – and did not fall'
[*qasafat bil-mudâfi´a – wa lam tasqut*]

'Thousands of martyrs – and did not fall' [*âlâf al-shuhadâ' – wa lam tasqut*]

'Its leaders assassinated – and did not fall' [*Ughtîla qâdatahâ – wa lam tasqut*]

The texts are immediately followed by the first images of the Danish embassy in flames, sacked by demonstrators before an interrogation appears: *who took the street to the gates of Achrafiyeh in February 5, 2006?*

The next sequence focuses on a statue erected in honour of the martyrs of the Lebanese army, filmed against the light of a rising sun. Again, an abrupt transition occurs as the viewer finds herself watching images from the news presenting political figures from the main Sunni Muslim party in Lebanon, the Future Movement [*al-tayyâr al-mustaqbal*], led by the Hariri family. The scene evokes the decision to grant amnesty to political prisoners, following the fall of the Syrian tutorship over Lebanon in the spring 2005. As a consequence of the decision, the leader of the Lebanese Forces and main adversary of the FPM, Samir Geagea, who was imprisoned in 1994 for a series of crimes committed at the end of the Lebanese wars, was released. Footage of the demonstrations of joy are visible. But the former commander of the powerful LF militia was not the only one liberated. As the movie shows, radical Sunni militants, arrested after violent clashes with the Lebanese army in the region of Deniyeh, in the Northern part of the country, were also liberated. in the year 2000. To fulfil its effect, the movie then goes back to the monument of the martyrs of the army before staging the interview of the mother of one soldier killed in the fighting between the radical groups in 2000, as testified by the mortuary plate pictured.

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⁵ The 'war of one hundred days' is an episode of the Lebanese civil wars that took place in 1978.

Images of the combat are then presented, followed by the interview of the father of a dead soldier, whose fate is emphasized by the filming of a coffin covered by the Lebanese flag.

At his point, the movie has run for four minutes. It returns to the images of the demonstration against the Danish embassy. The spectator can see views of intimidating protestors chanting the *shahâda*, the creed declaring belief in the Islamic faith: *There is no god but God. Muhammad is the Prophet of God.* Immediately, the film shifts to stage a succession of events: the fighting of the Lebanese army against radical groups in the Palestinian camp of Nahr el-Bared, near the northern city of Tripoli, once again followed by testimonies of the relatives of the soldiers killed in the operations; the assassination of an officer of the army, Francois el-Hajj, known for his role in fighting fundamentalist organizations; a gloomy evocation of the situation of the Copts in Egypt; images of attacks against churches in Libya in 2012; the bombing of an abbey in Syria in September 2012, followed by the abduction of a priest and a video of a radical leader of the Front al-Nusra–al-Qaida branch in Syria – identified as Abu Hafez al-Libyî, threatening the *kuffâr* [non-Muslim] with a sword; and finally, back in Lebanon, images of a demonstration organised in Tripoli by radical groups in support of the Syrian uprising, as well as a mention of the events in Ersal, a village at the border between Syria and Lebanon, around which several army soldiers were abducted by armed groups claiming their affiliation to jihadism. The final images of this long sequence present a Sunni religious leader threatening the Lebanese army and the photo of one of the kidnapped soldiers assassinated shortly after his capture, before yet another return to the statue of the army's martyrs.

The final three minutes of the short movie then focus more closely on the February 5 demonstration, showing threatening bearded protestors vandalising cars, vehicles of the civil defence, and ultimately, the gates of a church. These images are mixed with the voice of Samir Geagea, calling for his supporters not to intervene in the streets of Achrafiyeh. A final text is then displayed, claiming that 'Achrafiyeh will not fall' [*al-achrafiyyah lan tasqut*] and that no one can govern this territory without the supports of its population. The closing sequence presents a moving diaporama including, among other things, pictures of radical militants, army soldiers, portraits of some of their killed comrades, and the Lebanese flag.

Overall, the movie adopts a mixed genre of political video – through its explicit use of political symbols and messages – and documentary, showing news video, images captured live, testimonies, as well as the suggestion of a key emplotment to decipher the meaning of the succession of events presented in the movie.

Invasion, Statehood, and Martyrdom

If the message communicated in *Achrafiyeh Invaded* appears as much explicit – the threat from radical Islam against the Christian populations in Lebanon and the Middle East – as hyperbolic and inspired by a political strategy, it remains essential to understand how the short movie operates. The film, I argue, intends less to convince the viewer that it offers an accurate description of the situation of Christian populations in Lebanon than to re-activate affective identification originating in past experiences of fear and violence, hence instrumentalising a form of 'knowledge-by-acquaintance of suffering'. To do so, it relies on three main interconnected tropes: the territorial invasion, the attack against the protection incarnated by the State, and the cult of the martyrs.

As suggested in the name of the video, the first theme refers to the idea of territorial invasion.[6] Beyond the title, this idea of incursion is nourished by the opening sequence, with in particular the written texts that associate Achrafiyeh with the image of a military position, which did not fall during recent Lebanese history, but whose gates were crossed during the February 5 events. Moreover, the visual depiction of protesters, with their traditional Islamic clothes, their beards, or their 'red-neck' look, burning papers and breaking computers as well as cars, aesthetically suggests the idea of barbaric hordes surging into the civilized city. It evokes the district of Achrafiyeh as an identity basis, symbolising the Christian presence in Lebanon and beyond in the Middle East as the affirmation 'Achrafiyeh is the origin/beginning', made in the opening of the movie denotes.

Because of its situation in the national capital, Achrafiyeh could be presented as the political symbol of the Christian, and more precisely Maronite, presence in Lebanon, while the valley of the Qadisha remains its spiritual emblem, and Mount Lebanon its foundation in the history of modern Lebanon. The image of Achrafiyeh, then, is a rather recent construction, which took all its meaning during the civil wars. The beginning of the video clearly illustrates this, showing pictures of Bachir and his militia, as well as of devastated streets, while playing some partisan songs celebrating the departed leader. Such insistence relates to the construction of partisan and sectarian strongholds during the first year of the 1975–1990 civil wars. Indeed, after the collapse of the central government, militias consolidated autonomous sectarian territories through the forced unification of the population into a unique homogenised communal territory, as well as the expulsion of populations belonging to other sects, and the solidification of the borders dividing the sectarian forces (Picard 2000). In

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6   The email address used to post the short movie has also been chosen accordingly: achrafieh.invaded@achrafieh.com.

this understanding, a territory is a strategic, military position that must be defended against conquest.

This also echoes the vision of barbaric hordes, trespassing into the city. The image reverberates with Ibn Khaldun's classical model, presented in *The Muqaddimah* (1958). In what he labels "an introduction to a universal history" (ibid.), Khaldun argues that power is continuously disputed between solidarity groups, nourished by the opposition between the civilization, the city (*Hadâra*), and the country-side (*Bâdiyya*), pictured as a hostile area. Many analysts have tried to transpose Khaldun's model to describe the processes of state formation and political conflict in the contemporary Arab and Muslim worlds, forgetting on the way that the author did not limit his theory to the Arab countries. Building on Khaldun's model, Albert Hourani (1976) explains the Lebanese civil wars by the opposition between the city and the Mountain. Even more interestingly, Michel Seurat (1985) described a group of militants originating from one particular district in the city of Tripoli (North Lebanon) that had been fighting against the same rival neighbourhood for almost three decades. Although the struggle was successively waged in the name of the Nasserism in the 1960s, of the Socialist revolution in the 1970s, and of political Islam in the 1980s, the conflict emphasizes the permanence of locality as the foundation of social groups, federated by their antagonism and fighting for the control of the same resources. A social group, Seurat argues, is intrinsically linked with its territorial basis, which becomes the place where politics is played out. As Maurice Halbwachs (1997) has also shown, space is central in the affirmation of group identities as it enables the inscription of social groups in a stable environment, allowing them to recognise themselves, an affirmation strongly highlighted in *Achrafiyeh Invaded*.

The final slogan, stating that 'Achrafiyeh will not fall', builds upon this idea of there being a territorial stronghold to defend. It represents a classic trope in the Lebanese political tradition, as very similar examples can be found, for instance, in Lebanese Forces posters published during the war of the Mountain in 1983–1984 (Maasri 2010: 550–551), which opposed the Christian militia to the predominantly Druze Progressive Socialist Party, leading to the fleeing of thousands of Christians from 'their Mountain'. The discourse presented here therefore relates to a form of Christian irredentism that claims the necessity of staying in territories Christian populations have historically occupied. In a country where the electoral system is designed according to the local origins of the family of the voters, there is little surprise that this thematic has become central in political creations.

The second trope is strongly interconnected with this idea of territorial identification, although in an ambiguous manner. It has to do with the notion of State, and more precisely how the existence of a unified, secular Lebanese state acts as a safeguard for its Christian populations. At first sight, the

argument might seem contradictory. So is the relation between the emphasis on Christian identity and the call for a strong State, both presented in *Achrafiyeh Invaded*' However, the contradiction is only shallow, and in fact relates to a profound ambiguity in the very construction of the State in Lebanon.

The evocation of the State in the movie is mostly provided through the images of the Lebanese army and its soldiers, endowing the army with the status of the national institution par excellence. It builds upon the pivotal role granted to the national army in the construction of the State, which has almost become a myth in the Lebanese political landscape (Dupont 1999). While the Lebanese army never played a central role in the country, its emergence coincided with the attempts of building a strong state apparatus in the 1960s, inspired by President Fuad Shehab, himself former General in Chief of the army. Although the civil wars revealed the weakness of an army that rapidly collapsed and fell into the pitfall of division that swept all the other state institutions, the Lebanese army was able to maintain its image of a key actor in the construction, and the re-construction, of national unity. Identification between nationhood and the army is such that the Lebanese commonly address a soldier by calling him *watan*, which is 'nation' in Arabic. The strong presence of military forces in the short movie hence evokes the role of the army as a symbol of a unified Lebanese state, and the struggle to maintain it. Michel Aoun, the leader of the FPM, promoter of *Achrafieh Invaded*, is a former general who built his ascension on the army and placed the military institution at the centre of his strategy between 1988 and 1990. Still today, many high-rank officers are still favourable to the FPM.

Though hailing the role of a national, secular institution might look contradictory in a film that plays explicitly on religious opposition, it actually echoes the strong articulation between what is referred to as "political Maronitism" (Khalaf 1976: 44-45) in Lebanon and the construction of the modern State from its origins. The two apparently conflicting stands – that could be summarised as 'Achrafiyeh is and must stay Christian' and 'the national project shall prevail' – are in fact complementary. Historically, the creation of the modern state in Lebanon sponsored by the French mandate in 1920 was built upon the original cluster of Mount Lebanon, and inspired by the Maronite elite who dominated it (Salibi 1988). The privileged bonds tying the Maronite elite with the Western powers had a strong impact, in particular in the domain of education, with the opening of a vast number of schools from the eighteenth century onward, thus fuelling a sense of superiority over its Muslim environment. Several myths came to reinforce this asserted superiority, associating the Maronites with Phoenicians or Marmaic – a mythical people allegedly originating in present-day Turkey – ancestors (ibid.). These views, without any historical foundation, strongly participated in the construction of a self-centred Maronite political identity strongly differentiated from the out-

group, in particular the Muslim world, defined as a threat (Beydoun 1984) but identified with the Lebanese national project, carried by the same Maronite elite and made possible by its connection with European states, France in particular.

In these conditions, the Lebanese state project has been envisioned as a mean of protection for the Christian populations against an Islamic environment perceived as hostile. The partnership between the Maronite and the Sunni elites, sealed in the National Pact (1943) and constitutive of the independent Lebanese state, has been constructed accordingly among many representatives of the Maronite political class. These views have persisted today within the FPM milieus as well as in other predominantly Christian political groups. The triptych *Hurriyeh, Siyyâdeh, Istiqlâl* [Liberty, Sovereignty, Independence] that constituted the political program of Michel Aoun during his 1988–1990 term endorsed a comparable understanding of a unified, secular state, inspired by the Maronite tradition (Davie 1991), and that the Phalange and Bachir Gemayel, with his famous slogan of *10452 square kilometres* (in reference to the total surface of the country), had already advocated before the FPM.

Finally, the last dominant trope in the short movie refers to the threat of death and martyrdom. Again, this theme is constructed in close connection with the previous ones, as the martyrs mentioned in the movie are predominantly soldiers of the Lebanese army, killed in the fighting against radical Sunni militants. It means that they are national martyrs, both Christians and Muslims – though keeping in mind the close articulation between Lebanese nationalism and its influence from the Maronite elites discussed above. However, the video introduces another kind of martyr, explicitly Christian, in presenting the victims of crimes against Christian populations and religious people perpetrated by radical movements in Syria, Egypt, and Libya. Both the Lebanese soldiers and the Christian civilians are presented as martyrs – or potential victims.

Before going further, it seems necessary to mention the specificities of the idea of martyrdom in the Lebanese context, all the more since the thematic of *Achrafiyeh Invaded* may accentuate the confusion between the local understanding of the notion and the contemporary, more Western or globalised perspective identifying martyrs with Islamic radical operations. The term 'martyr' originates in the three religions of the Book, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, to designate those who die to testify of their faith. In the Islamic tradition, the idea has acquired a pivotal importance (Cook 2007). The word '*shahîd*', a martyr, also means 'a witness' and the *shahâda* is the testimony of faith pronounced by the believers to claim their belonging to Islam. Historically, there are three main understandings of the notion: people persecuted for their faith, those killed in fighting for the expansion of the religion, but also innocent victims of tragic death (Volk 2010: 30). In Lebanon, these acceptations have been routinely used and have become a habitualised part of the political culture of the country

(Dabbous, Nasser, and Dabbous 2010: 600). Most political groups, whether Christian, Muslim, or secular, have built their legitimacy on a politics of remembrance constructed around the figure of the martyr. An omnipresent figure in Lebanese political iconography (Maasri 2009), a martyr can designate a militant killed while fighting for a party, a civilian killed in attacks, assassinated politicians, or even victims of tragic accidents, especially when they were affiliated with some political group.

Overall, the term 'martyr' refers to an honorific title, marking solidarity and attachment to a group. That perception elucidates the constant reference to the dead victims of radical militants in the movie. As Lucia Volk writes (2010: 31): "Martyrs live on in the memory of subsequent generations not only as 'lesson' but also as a profound reassurance of group survival against the odds". Nonetheless, it seems necessary to make a distinction between the two types of victims presented in 'Achrafiyeh Invaded'. The first one relates to the military men, both Muslims and Christians, killed during armed clashes against militants. They died protecting the country, in an act of national solidarity. In a word, in the perspective of the film, they lost their lives 'for' the safeguarding of Lebanese Christians. The second category of victims are innocent civilians. As Christians, they are presented as targets of the barbary of Sunni radicals. They did not die to protect Christians, but because they were Christians, which instigates a sense of identification between the victims and the audience to which the movie is addressed; that is, the inhabitants of Achrafiyeh. As such, it intends to bridge the difference between denunciation of violence and the experience of violence, between an instrumental memory of 'political witness' and a lived memory of 'moral witness' to reuse the notions crafted by Margalit (2004).

The 'martyr' trope produces Christians as victims, suggesting a doomed fate for all Christian minorities in the entire region. Interestingly, this way of constructing Christian subjects present them in a passive posture, while radical Islam is envisioned as the driving force at play in the contemporary Middle East. Thereby, it appears that the very existence of Christians is under threat in Egypt and Iraq, as well as in the streets of Achrafiyeh. Yet, the statement, made unequivocal in *Achrafiyeh Invaded* does not pretend to be realistic, or at least can be clearly dismissed as exaggerated and definitely prejudiced. In my view, and without endorsing in any way its xenophobic accent, it rather intends to suggest, through an act of identification, the experience of victimhood, which remains residual among shattered Lebanese society. In other words, the reality constructed in the visual creation does not present itself as descriptive, but as significant. It is therefore in connection with an affective memorialisation of past violence and suffering that the short movie intends to activate group feeling.

The Memorialisation of Fear: an Affective Communion

Achrafiyeh Invaded relies on the tropes of territorial invasion, statehood, and martyrdom to actuate experiences of inter-religious violence, in which Christians are produced as the victims of radical Sunnism. The actualisation of these images of violence serve the construction of bonds and boundaries built upon sectarian lines and realised through an act of memorialisation that tends to present these experiences of religious strife as perpetual. The short movie hence appears as a site of creation of a collective memory[7] addressed to Lebanese Christians and defining their reality upon an alleged status of threatened minority facing fundamentalism.

To perform this vision of reality essentially based on religious differences, *Achrafiyeh Invaded* mobilises technical tools. The video format enables ellipses and gaps in time and space. The narrative on the past is produced from breaks and missing links in history, through the rapid succession of images created from the montage of the film. It realises a re-emplotment of the different events presented in the movie so as to reinsert them in a unique sequence: the fighting by the Lebanese army in Deniyeh in the year 2000, in Nahr el-Bared in 2008, and today in the mountains of Ersal are agglomerated together as an inevitable resurgence of a similar reality, fuelling fear about the fate of Lebanese Christians. In doing so, it also emphasizes affects and perception over thorough knowledge of these past events. Spatially, the montage similarly associates events in different parts of the world to articulate these various scenes in a trope of threat. In other words, *Achrafiyeh Invaded* mirrors contemporary elements happening in other parts of the Middle East with past events that took place in Lebanon, hence blurring the conceptions of time and space to create an impression of perpetual resumption. It stages a cyclical, timeless history, centred on the victimhood of Christians in the region. The territory is at the same time primarily defined by its ability to elicit memorialisation, as the opening sequence of the movie acknowledges: Achrafiyeh is viewed in reference to wartime memory at the centre of which stand the symbolic figure of Bachir and his combatants. Therefore, the main motive of the movie seems to lie in an affectivity of communion, i.e. the construction of a joint community of destiny, gathering all the Christians in Lebanon, and beyond in the Middle East, around an alleged common history of suffering. It is essentially an affectivity of resemblance, envisioned as a context reappearing at different stages of history

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[7]   The notion of collective memory here refers to a shared social framing of the past, originally described in the work of Maurice Halbwachs (1997) and materialised in the forms of narratives.

under different forms, and insinuating an imagined relationality between all Lebanese Christians, confronted with a common menace.

Such construction of memory depends on past experiences of violence that erupted on various occasions in the history of Lebanon. As a cultural creation, the movie reflects upon episodes of violence to re-activate internalised experiences of fear and instigate the affectivity of communion it calls for. By doing this, it transforms physical violence and its memory into symbolic violence, intended to materialise sectarian divides. The first resonance refers to the nineteenth century massacres, known as the *harakât*, resulting from a growing political and economic competition between the two main populations living in Mount Lebanon, the Druzes and the Maronites. The unrest reached its climax in the massacres of 1840 and 1860, which deeply impacted the modern political identity of the Maronites (Picard 1996: 5) and its link with Lebanese nationalism (Salibi 1988), summarised in a famous quote by Istfan al-Duwayhi (1629–1704), a clergyman and historian: "The Maronite community's history is a continuous struggle to maintain national and religious identity in a dominant Muslim environment" (cited in Khalaf 1976: 43). In turn, the imprint of these episodes were symbolically re-injected in the 1983–1984 war of the Mountain, opposing the Christian militia of the Lebanese Forces to the predominantly Druze Progressive Socialist Party. Again, the fighting resulted in the defeat of the Christians and paved the way to new massacres. The parallel between the two experiences, separated by more than one hundred years, was cultivated by political organisations. The memorialisation of the rivalry was used to mobilise against the Druzes fighters through the reprint of books relating the 1860 massacres and partisan publications such as *al-'Amal* and *al-Massîra*, a daily newspaper and a magazine affiliated with the LF (De Clerck 2010: 62–63).

A second imagined heritage relates to the outbreak of the 1975–1990 wars and the conflict opposing Lebanese nationalists to the Palestinian armed groups, whose presence in the country had grown from the end of the 1960s. Again the same fear of extinction of the Christians within an environment dominated by Sunni Muslims, the dominant religion among Palestinians, is convoked. The figure of Bachir Gemayel is here particularly symbolic in bridging the two episodes as he embodies what Lebanonists framed as a struggle for the survival of Lebanon. Violence and the fear of extinction work as the common denominator between these otherwise distinct historical incidences, essentialised into a demonstration of antagonistic identities. The negation of the extremely divergent historical contexts, as well as the silencing of alternative motivations in the fighting, fuel the construction of the Maronite community, and beyond those Lebanese Christians with whom the Maronite elites tend to identify themselves, upon a syndrome of perpetual persecution from other social groups, especially Muslims, perceived as hostile. The relation to others is accordingly defined in terms of religious identity or alterity,

inspiring Pierre Gemayel's famous words: *the psychological fear experienced by Christians is internalised, visceral, and enduring. We cannot get rid of it. It is up to the Muslims to reassure us.*[8]

These developments did not intend to *explain* the meaning of *Achrafiyeh Invaded* but rather to understand its condition of possibility, i.e. the symbolic and social horizon in which it is constructed. The movie produced a unified vision of history associating – in the same historical movement – the massacres of 1840 and 1860, the struggle against the Palestinians in the 1960s and 1970s, and the contemporary threat of jihadist militants. None of these episodes are explicated. They are reduced to the form of perceptions, affective experiences of violence and fear, upon which they inspire social relations.

The act of memorialisation which operates throughout the film does not stand out as an isolated example in Lebanon. Indeed, after the end of the civil wars, public authorities tried to obliterate the era of violence by prompt reconstruction. A law of amnesty was rapidly adopted on March 1991 to implement the famous formula propagated at the end of the hostilities: *lâ ghâlib, lâ maghlûb* [no winner, no vanquished]. However, this system of selective public amnesia has favoured the maintenance of private traumatic memories (Haugbolle 2005: 194). In this context, exclusive narratives on coexisting identities have thrived, mostly constructed upon partisan storylines, fuelling wars of symbolic interpretations. Political forces hence emerged as the main *entrepreneurs de mémoire*, each of them celebrating its own calendar of commemorations and its own heroes. The result is the coexistence of extremely fragmented 'memory-scapes' (Volk 2010: 154) in which every collective sketches a particular mode of knowing and experiencing the world, thus composing what Michel Foucault defines as an episteme (1970). In that perspective, *Achrafiyeh Invaded* stands as an "organised secretion of memory" (Nora 1997: 32) that contributes to compose 'a regime of truth' built around the traumatic memories of inter-religious violence, and playing on the fear of extinction. It inscribes concrete and well as symbolic experiences of violence into a rigid definition of sectarian boundaries.

Interestingly, the vision of inherently hostile identities promoted in the movie matches orientalist perceptions of the Middle East, and more generally the dominant narrative about Arab societies in the West. During the Lebanese civil wars authors like the American journalist Jonathan Randal (1983) published books framing these complex and multiform episodes into a struggle between communal groups. A comparable phenomenon resurfaced after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and is perpetuated today in many discussions around the worsening situations in the whole region, reduced to a place of conflict between everlasting identities. These views in fact confuse the local use of symbolic

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[8]   Quoted in De Clerck (2010: 48).

references to past experiences of violence as mobilising tools, of which *Achrafieh Invaded* provides an example, with the power dynamics they are serving. Edward Said (2002: 251) rightfully notes that memory is a field of activity endowed with political meaning. Memorialisation is an act of storytelling, whose "authority can, indeed must, be analysed" (Said 1979: 20). Lebanese and Middle Eastern people in general are able, after all, to "challenge and contest their histories, create and recreate memories, and seek to answer contemporary questions by engaging in symbolic battles over the meaning of the past" (Volk 2010: 201). It is toward this politics of 'world making' that the last part of this chapter now turns.

The Politics of Communalization

By taking for granted the practice of memorialisation and the identity boundaries that come with it as they are composed by, and in, *Achrafiyeh Invaded*, a reading of the movie would presume their pertinence and leave their naturalisation unquestioned. Drawing on Brubaker and Cooper (2000), I maintain that identities are categories of practice – people rely on them in their everyday lives and creative actions – but not categories of analysis. Instead of using such categories as the starting point, which would inevitably lead to a tautological explanation of the social reifying identities and assigning them to the people under consideration, it seems more heuristic to explore how the references to sectarian boundaries are used and how the experience of inter-religious antagonism are produced. Such usages are at the heart of practices that contribute to the crafting of the political culture in Lebanon.

In the background of the short movie lies the political competition between groups that do not embody nor represent communalities, but rather aim at constructing their own legitimacy and activating solidarities through the mobilisation of the symbolic weight carried by sectarian belonging. Produced in the context of a coming electoral battle, the film is addressed to the voters of the district of Achrafiyeh. From the perspective of its sponsor, the FPM, it targets the alliance sealed in the aftermath of the 2005 Beirut Spring between the Future Movement, predominantly Sunnite, and the Lebanese Forces, the FPM's main competitor among the Christian electorate. Here, the influence of the political and legal order in Lebanon surfaces, built around a reference to communities. Since 1926, the political competition has been organised within the framework of consensual democracy (Lijphart 1977), in which members of the parliament, ministers, as well as holders of all public positions are considered as representatives of one of the eighteen communal groups legally

recognised in the country. Similarly, all Lebanese citizens are necessarily registered as members of one of the sects, most frequently the one they were born in. Though these sectarian groups are confession-based, they constitute in fact social distinctions as neither belief nor the respect of religious rules determine the affiliation. Confessional categorisation is somehow an empty shell, because it does not account for the multiplicity of potential religious, political, or social practices, nor of the economic disparities of the people who compose them. However, they nonetheless play a central role in the daily life of the Lebanese. The rules organising marriage, divorce, inheritance, or, to some extent, education are determined according to the confession.

As a consequence, sectarianism, understood as "the deployment of religious heritage as a primary marker of modern political identity" (Makdisi 2000: 7) is not a natural occurrence, imposing itself on all aspects of social life. It is a 'regime of truth', produced through political as well as legal practices and institutions (e.g. Weiss 2000). Historically, these practices and institutions originate in the second half of the nineteenth century, at the time of the administrative reforms in the Ottoman Empire, and have been emphasized by the intervention of Western powers in the region, which used sectarianism as a way to shift power relations to their advantage while, in turn, local groups mobilised these sectarian narratives to draw support from their international sponsors (Makdisi 2000). This communal framing of Lebanese politics has been reinforced after the civil wars of 1975–1990, through the adoption of the Taef agreement that, in spite of marginal reformations, confirmed the preponderance of sectarianism (Picard 1997: 646): as a consequence, political imaginaries practices are strongly framed in terms of communal distinctions, which are not passively inherited but built on actively constructed memorial heritages.

Having that in mind, it becomes possible to decrypt more complex political dynamics beyond the blatantly xenophobic aspect of the movie. In terms of the denomination of the enemies, one of the main elements of political propaganda (Edelman 1988: 3), the targets of 'Achrafiyeh Invaded' are not only the Future Movement, presented as the legal cover for radical Sunnism in Lebanon, but also the Lebanese Forces. Introducing the 2005 decision taken by the government, led by the FPM, to liberate political prisoners, *Achrafiyeh Invaded* explicitly blames their political rivals for the incidents of February 5. The accusation actually echoes a wider belief, cultivated within the FPM, in a 'Wahhabite conspiracy' orchestrated by Saudi Arabia and implemented by the FPM and the Hariri clan. The thematic of conspiracy goes along with criticism of an alleged double-face of Harirism – a 'modern' superficial outlook covering a fundamentalist project. This conception can be found in many pamphlets and publications circulating among partisan networks. A good example is provided by a small book written by Lyna Elias, a Syrian born Christian activist who, during the 1970s, became a close adviser of Bachir Gemayel before joining the

Aounism movement in 1989. In 1983, she founded the CEROC – Centre d'Études et de Recherches sur l'Orient Chrétien – a research centre specialised in the Christian issue in the Middle East. Published in 2007, the book in question, emphatically entitled *The Lebanese Christians threatened of disappearance or the plan for the Islamisation of Lebanon has started,* and costing the modest amount of three dollars (4,500 Lebanese Pounds), intends to resituate the current political position of the Christians into an historical perspective. It proposes to demonstrate a conspiracy, orchestrated by the Saudis in cooperation with the United States, to ensure the implantation of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon at the expense of the Christians. It is worth noticing that more serious analyses also echo the growing influence of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Lebanon (Corm 2003: 319–320). *Achrafiyeh Invaded* is hence not an isolated creation. This discourse is fuelled by a longstanding political rivalry between the FPM and the Hariri clan. Today being members of antagonistic coalitions, whose views on the national and regional agenda seem incompatible, the two groups were also strongly at odds at the time of the Syrian tutorship in Lebanon, between 1990 and 2005. At that time, followers of what would become the FPM organised a clandestine civil movement that Rafiq Hariri and his party, the dominant political actors of those days, severely repressed.

However, beyond the FPM and its relations with radicalism, the main target of the movie remains the Lebanese Forces. The association between the LF with Islamic militants is suggested through the staging of the demonstrations held by both groups following the liberation of political prisoners, which included both Samir Geagea, the leader of the LF, and some of the radicals who inspired the upheaval of Deniyeh in the year 2000. The long lasting opposition between the FPM and the LF dates back from the 1990 violent confrontations between army units sent by Aoun's government and the militia of the Lebanese Forces led by Samir Geagea. The episode became the core of a patterned dualistic representation, a "narrative syndrome" (Farrugia 2009: 269) composing an irreducible rivalry between two political projects: the militia versus the State, isolationism into a militia-held statelet versus national integration. *Achrafiyeh Invaded* hence also voices another version of a more general narrative crafted from an enduring opposition between two leaders, whose destructive armed struggle escalated into a traumatic episode, constitutive of a now habitualised boundary between political forces that still compete today for the same constituency. Using the soundtrack of Samir Geagea's interview on February 5, 2006, when he called on his supporters to restrain from intervening against demonstrators in Achrafiyeh, the short movie is here to stress once more how much his choice to ally with the Future Movement is leading Lebanese Christians to disaster.

On the contrary, the FPM clinched a strong alliance with Hizballah, the dominant political actor among the Shia population in the country. The

document on 'national understanding' sealed by the two parties has been cleverly imagined in contrast to the dramatic events at the Danish embassy. The day following the violent demonstration, both Michel Aoun, leader of the FPM, and Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah, secretary general of Hizballah, appeared on TV. They came together to officialise their alliance, within the walls of the Mar Mikhaïl church. The choice of this site is particularly symbolic. Situated in a Southern Suburb of Beirut, it is precisely located on the demarcation line between the Shiite neighbourhood of Chiyah and the Christian district of Ayn al-Rummaneh, marking what was known as 'the Green line' during wartime: a fighting interface between two spatial bastions held by rival armed groups. By choosing this location, Hizballah and the FPM played on the symbols of reconciliation and coexistence. The aim was to strongly reassert Christian presence in the country. The thematic of the 'alliance of the minorities', which supposes a common interest between all religious groups that do not belong to the Sunni orthodoxy, strongly framed the readings of the alliance. Yet, this trope itself is a political construction, mobilised to legitimate political options.

Remarkably, these creations are not without ambiguities and ambivalences. No culture is monolithic and fully consistent. In the case of *Achrafiyeh Invaded*, and even without mentioning the presence in the February 5 demonstration of groups politically allied to the FPM, it is noteworthy to point out that the party's position regarding Hizballah changed radically following the signature of their agreement. What was once critically considered in terms of an extra-state militarised entity, became praised as a potential protector for the Christian minority in the Middle East. This change of framework is not only due to a tactical move operated by the FPM, but also to its progressive insertion into the Lebanese political system from 2005 onward. This integration led a party born from a secular civic movement to play the game of communal politics. The very memorialisation of the district of Achrafiyeh, as a stronghold of Christian political forces, is also not without contradictions. Not only is the movie celebrating a narrative centred on a former militia, an idea a priori incompatible with the historical stance of the FPM, but it also stages a territory that escaped from the control of Michel Aoun's government in the late 1980s and had remained under the influence of the Phalanges and the LF all through the wars. The figure of Bachir Gemayel, honoured as the hero of Achrafiyeh, is similarly problematic from the perspective of the sponsors of the movie. Within the FPM milieus, the memory of Bachir is shattered. His legacy divides within the FPM according to different repertoires: familial, local, partisan, or even generational. While some, especially among the new generations who did not live during the wars, celebrate a mythical figure symbolising a dream of political reunification and a climax for the influence of Christian politics in the country, others rejects the militia leader, heir of a notable family who did not hesitate to compromise with Israel so as to satisfy his lust for power.

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In the end, the meaningful opposition inscribed in *Achrafiyeh Invaded* is not exclusively religious but rather regards the political. It relates to strategic choices differentiating two partisan projects in competition for the same constituency. The memorialisation of sectarian conflict and the emphasis on the primary bonds it creates are used as political resources: they are a stock of knowledge that social actors mobilise to activate political (and electoral) solidarities. As such, the short movie offers a glimpse of the factionalist nature of Lebanese politics. Indeed, the opposition between the FPM and the LF implies a dual antagonism, defined in relations to a third entity, here the Muslims, and the relations that tie with it. This threefold interplay is constitutive factionalism (Rivoal 2004: §4). Stirred by their inscription within the same ensemble of reference in the sectarian political order prevailing in the country, the competition between the FPM and the LF stimulates recourse to visual composition as part of an organised creation of competing narratives about the social. The result is the multiplication of cultural productions sponsored by the two groups, which allow the relocation of their strife within a symbolic and memorial space. Ultimately, *Achrafiyeh Invaded* arose out of a factional political rivalry rather than everlasting religious antagonisms. In effect, it sustains and cultivates a mode of constructing political relations based on affective ties, emphasizing imagined relational bonds and boundaries defined in symbolic reference to memorial heritages that recomposes and performs the signification of past events through the mobilisation of affects and emotions, to signify a shared experience of religious and partisan divides. This "politics of communalization" (Lefort 2015: 115) nurtures the cognitive process of group attachment at the heart of political culture in Lebanese pluralist society.

Conclusions

Art, the creative work produced by human beings, is a witness of the invention of the political. It is the factional dynamics of Lebanese politics that inspired *Achrafiyeh Invaded*. Beyond the prejudiced references to seemingly immutable categories, lies a political negotiation that pretends to articulate cognitive and practical experiences. Far from the image of political relations depending on primordial identities, the exploration of the forces at work behind the movie reveals how much the deployment of boundaries is actually labile, crafted along narrative emplotments inspired by ongoing political struggles. If, in turn, these storylines compose a reality dominated by religious boundaries, the Lebanese political culture of sectarianism is not, however, the initial cause of this 'regime of truth', but rather its consequence. It has been crafted from the arrangement

and rearrangement of imagined heritages, constructed by fluctuating political activities. Uncovering the political dynamics at work in creative practices is not an endorsement of the discourses produced by the actors. On the contrary, it enables the rediscovery and exploration of cultures in the making, liberating the analysis from the aporia of identity discourses.

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8. Witnessing Language: Charles Bernstein and 9/11

Tommi Kotonen

> One always acts without conscience; only the observer has conscience.
> — Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

The aftermath of the 9/11 attacks was a heyday of public poetry. Poetry was published in newspapers and new forms of media in an amount unseen since the 1960s. Reminiscent of the public poetry of the beat era, poetry slam, or public poetry reading happenings were reawakened. Since then, several anthologies of 9/11 poetry have been published (e.g Johnson and Merians 2002; Cohen and Matson 2002; Heyen 2002), and during the last fifteen years the term *9/11 poetry* has become almost a cliché in American literature.

In its own terms, 9/11 poetry also reflects the divisions and problems in representing 9/11 in general. According to Philip Metres (2011), "poems that take on subjects as public and iconic as the attacks of September 11th risk not only devolving into cliché and hysterical jingoism, but risk also, even when most well-meaning, perpetuating the violence of terror, and the violence of grievance and revenge, as mass media did by endlessly replaying images of the planes exploding into the World Trade Center towers".

Poetical responses to the attacks range from the reflective to the angry, from grief to grievance, from reactionary to radical. Poets also repeated the idea of 9/11 as a caesura, break, in the linearity of ordinary politics and language and culture: In October 2001, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, who has seen both WWII and 9/11, declared that poetry should be classified "as B.S and A.S. – Before and After September 11" (cit. in Alkalay-Gut 2005: 257). For controversial poet Amiri Baraka (2003: 51) 9/11 "signifies the end of Weimar 2". Charles Bernstein labelled his September 12, 2001 online-poem "Today is the next day of the rest of your life".

In this chapter, I explore the 9/11 poetry of New York based poet Charles Bernstein, born in 1950. As a representative of so-called *language poetry*, Charles Bernstein has, since the 1970s, been dubious of any presence of the lyrical 'I' and subjectivism in poetry, and has stressed *textuality* as an alternative to what the language poets call the fake naturalness of language prevalent in expressive and confessional poetry. When witnessing 9/11, personally seeing the events unfold, Bernstein's theories on language and writing were put into the test. I analyze shifts in his language and in his ideas on subjectivity by juxtaposing his poetry with what has been called *witness poetry*. I explore first the concept of

'witness poetry' and the different modes of writing alluded to by it, and then focus on Charles Bernstein's 9/11 poetry and his take on witnessing and subjectivity.

In their poetical efforts, Bernstein and his co-artists leaned heavily on theories of French structuralism, and the Barthesian idea of the *death of the author, birth of the text* was deeply embedded into their poetry. The poet's own experience and persona was for them *not* what poetry should be composed of; instead of a medium for personal expression, the language poets saw poetry as text and as a field of interaction between writer and reader. Witnessing, however, may be seen as a deeply personal act. From the perspective of language poetry the problem is how to record a personal experience by maintaining the distance between oneself and the text and without repeating the violent act and jingoist rhetoric within the text itself.

The American writer and scholar Carolyn Forché coined the term 'witness poetry' in the 1980s. The term promotes poetry that stresses personal experience and subjectivism as important aspects of poetical witnessing. As will be shown, several poets positioning themselves among the witness poets have argued against the relevance of language poetry. Accused of being too formalistic and not taking a clearly stated political stance, language poetry has been seen as politically impotent, and useless in the post-9/11 poetical landscape. However, as I will show, language poetry as a way of an approach to poetry is way too flexible to be put under an umbrella of pure formalism, and critics miss its basic principle: poetical resistance, that is not subjugated to any preordered principles but acts on the basis of innovation, and advances encounters between reader and writer.

The Theme of a Witness in Poetry

The poet as witness is one of the classical themes in the poetry of the Western world that traces its roots back to Plato's dialogues, where the poet, especially Homer, is often invoked as a witness for philosophical or historical claims. As Plato claims, the poet, at best, is a mystical seer with insight into the worlds of gods, and a poet sees and witnesses things we mortals are unable to grasp, thus working as a mediator between these two worlds. Without this divine inspiration, the poet is not to be trusted, and, like Plato, many considered Homer as an untrustworthy witness (see, for example, Kim 2010).

Even for Aristotle, who was much more benign to poets than Plato, poetry is opposed to history as telling what might have happened instead of what has happened. Nevertheless, the figure of the poet as witness appears to be

appealing to writers for centuries on. This figure seems to manifest itself as a special case of politically engaged poetry.

In Romantic poetry, we may also meet the idea of poetical witness enhanced with poets' special understanding of the sensual world. The poet was seen as able to bridge the gap between personal and universal, and, as Jeffrey C. Robinson (2006: 69) states, take a mediating stance between "the visionary poem and the poem of social scale".

In American poetry, this role of mediator is nowhere more present than in Walt Whitman's (2001: 38) *Song of myself*, where the poem's 'I' acts as a transcendental witness above politics and daily calamities:

Backward I see in my own days where I sweated through fog
    with linguists and contenders,
I have no mockings or arguments, I witness and wait.

Even if Whitman in his poetry continued politics by other means, this early poem echoes his dissatisfaction with political turmoil. In poetry, Whitman found a way to go beyond fierce political argumentation and a route towards his vision of America as united, a vision where his United States transformed from plural into a singular unit. The demand in the motto of the United States, *e pluribus unum*, plurality in unity, was achieved by listening to all sides of the stories: *You shall listen to all sides and filter them from your self* (ibid.: 35). As a poetical witness, Whitman tried to encapsulate every aspect of the American way of life and held a mirror to the nation within its process of unification.

The Poet as Witness since the 1980s

In its modern usage, the literary term 'poetry of witness' originates from an essay by Carolyn Forché in 1981 but is more often attached to Czeslaw Milosz and his 1983 book *The Witness of Poetry*, even by Forché herself. Milosz positions himself close to the idea of the poet as a mediator present in Romantic poetry. He abandons both the Marxist idea of poetry as mere reflection of society as well as the anti-social solitude of self-centred poetry. The poet is somewhere between History with a capital H and history as personal experience, mediating between the universal and the personal. Only via mediation of a direct experience one can "touch the presence of past generations" and make present "mankind's major transformations" (Milosz 1983: 4).

According to Forché, the theme of witness poetry descends from the literature of the Shoah, the Holocaust. Associating the term with the Holocaust points to the direction of poetry as experience, and, as has been claimed

especially by Forché, we are dealing here with poetry that is produced in the conditions of extremity.

Forché (2014: 21) sees the term as a "mode of reading rather than of writing, of readerly encounter with the literature of that-which-happened, and its mode is evidentiary rather than representational". The poem itself becomes the presentation: "In the poetry of witness, the poem makes present to us the experience of the other, the poem *is* the experience rather than a symbolic representation" (ibid.: 26; italics in original). Forché draws here heavily from Derrida's writing on Celan. To a certain extent, witnessing is always encountering as it consists, according to Derrida, of a performative act in "appealing to the act of faith" in front of an addressee. But as an act of faith, as Derrida (2005: 75) points out, "bearing witness is not proving. Bearing witness is heterogeneous to producing proof or exhibiting a piece of evidence". Famously, Lyotard (1993: 204), when considering the difficulties of witnessing in general, even phrased that "the witness is a traitor". This nihilistic maxim was of course a hyperbola.

In Derrida's view, which is shared by Forché and her co-writer Wu, "bearing witness is not through and through and necessarily discursive. It is sometimes silent. It has to engage something of the body, which has no right to speak" (Derrida 2005: 77). Echoing this, Wu (2014: 3) writes of poetry as "that of which we cannot speak". The activity of writing and reading as an encounter and an experience happens between lines rather than in direct address. But as a performative act, poetry cannot escape its language, as Derrida also points out.

Referring to Celan's words "no one bears witness for the witness" (transl. in Derrida 2005: 32), Derrida seems to be alluding towards language without repetition, fatherless language, fiction in its purest as an originary event that creates its own laws in an encounter between reader and writer, and that we can only believe in. This is also a direction Forché (2014: 25) points towards, even if not explicitly. She writes that the mode of writing in conditions of extremity is explorative and probative:

Consciousness itself is cut open. At the site of the wound, language breaks, becomes tentative, interrogational, kaleidoscopic. The form of this language bears the trace of extremity, and may be comprised of fragments: questions, aphorisms, broken passages of lyric prose or poetry, quotations, dialogue, brief and lucid passages that may or may not resemble what previously had been written.

Witnessing and Poetical Subject

There are several obvious problems with Forché's attempt to establish a new genre, one of the most important being her principles of selection (cf. Vogler 2003: 181), but what is interesting here are the ideas of subjectivity. The 'return' of the poetical 'I' in this context has been stressed, especially by Alicia Ostriker.

The figure of the poet as witness has been used to exemplify poetical witnessing in extreme situations, where language is broken or muffled (see, for example, Ostriker 2001; Forché 2014). Language may move outside self-centred subjectivity even if, as Ostriker stresses, it does not abandon it entirely but situates the subject in history. In Amy Robbins's view, in times of witnessing, the lyrical or autobiographical 'I' reintroduces itself in poetry and such poetry "requires the trope of lyric speaking subject" (Robbins 2006: 76).

Countering the often repeated Barthesian view on the death of the author (Barthes 1977), new autobiographical poetry tries to go back to the poetical mirroring of the actual word instead of language games: "The poet is not simply a phantom manipulator of words but a confused actual person, caught in a world of catastrophe that the poem must somehow both mirror and transcend" (Ostriker 2001: 35). The confused subject is anyhow not mechanically reproducing the world outside, like in some strands of reflection theories of art, but mediates between personal and political.

Re-entering the subject, the lyric 'I' is also one of the projects the poet Alice Notley has undertaken. Reading Notley's poetry, Robbins (2006: 78) argues that Notley "revises and retains the lyric subject as a political necessity, to be deployed as an agent of postmodern witness". According to Robbins (ibid.: 89), Notley manages to bridge the gap between universal and personal by her "self-conscious construction of her *I,* in language that in its disjunctive materiality insists upon reader engagement with specifics of material history" (italics in original).

New poetry of subjectivity and the personal targets its criticism against poetry that it sees as politically impotent. This criticism deals especially with so-called language poetry. Language poetry, Ostriker (2001: 35) claims, is politically vacuous because it "denies that the morally responsible human subject is even theoretically possible". Postmodern poetry which relys on theories of post-structuralism treats the "subject as verbal construction" (Robbins 2006: 77) and, thus, as not being able to act politically in a persuasive manner.

As a synthesis between the political and the personal, Forché (1993: 31) looks to the social sphere: "Poetry of witness presents the reader with an interesting interpretative problem. We are accustomed to rather easy categories: we distinguish between 'personal' and 'political' poems but there is a need now

for the space between the state and the supposedly safe havens of the personal".

Analyzing post-9/11 poetry, Richard Gray has concluded, that poets "began to resolve" the problem of how to write poems after 9/11 "in terms that are fundamental to the traditions of American poetry: by acknowledging the human presence at the heart of the historical experience and announcing that presence in a single, separate voice" (Gray 2011: 192). Those going against the tradition, especially the language poets who have been against poetry based on voice, faced an obvious challenge when trying to meet the post-9/11 climate on their own terms.

On Language Poetry, and Charles Bernstein

Language poetry, often informally called 'langpo', got its start in the 1970s among a group of American poets interested in formalism and new criticism. As its name indicates, language poetry focuses its poetical efforts on the depths of language, foregrounding the material aspects of language. It tried to show that the naturalistic language of earlier movements, like poetry of speech and expressive poetry in general, had hidden underlying ideological assumptions that are created in a form of discourse and language as seemingly natural and neutral vehicles of meaning production. Using, in particular, 1970s Marxist tones, language poets claimed that the reification of language as a transparent tool hid the important role of language as a vehicle of bourgeois ideology. Language poetry works at the level of text, of signifier, and goes against the representational idea of poetry, at least in its most simplified forms.

The political aspects of language poetry are manifold. Tom Fisher (2013: 159) has summarized the four most significant political elements in their work: creating their own poetical community outside both academic and commercial venues for publication and thus claiming alternative economies of distribution and readership; challenging the expressivist model for poetic utterance; stressing the collaborative and democratic relationship between reader and writer; and being aesthetically committed to "intervening in or undercutting the conventionalized mechanisms and procedures for making sense" (ibid.)

To some extent, all these aspects are tangent with the essential aim of language poetry: to create an alternative to hegemonic systems of signification. The 'collective imperative' is resisted by linguistic innovations, by a do-it-yourself mode of production, and by opening up the relationship between reader and writer. Their theoretical innovations are to a great extent derived from the post-structuralists, Derrida and Barthes being the most relevant

sources of inspiration. Marxist ideas were also present in their early writings. When Barthes (1975: 50) wrote in his *Pleasure of the Text*, that "any completed utterance runs the risk of being ideological", this statement was later reiterated in language poet Charles Bernstein's work *A Poetics*: "The violence of every generalization crushes the hopes for a democracy of thoughts" (1992: 113). Resistance to closure of thought and Western logos can already be found in the work of Charles Olson, who is also considered by some language poets as an important predecessor. In his idiosyncratic and tentative style, Olson's resistance to any closures is echoed for example in a 1959 letter to Elaine Feinstein where Olson (1997: 250) wrote: "the attack, I suppose, on the 'completed thought', or, the Idea, yes?"

Barthes celebrates the incompleteness, the gaps in the language, the sublime that transgress the boundaries of pleasure of reading, 'bliss', texts that repudiate the 'Political Father' who controls grammar. In the bliss of the text "everything comes about – indeed in every sense everything comes – at first glance"; that is, text as an event. Barthes (1975: 53) compares event in text, as text, to political choice in quasi-Schmittian style: "In the intellectual field, political choice is a suspension of language – thus a bliss. Yet language resumes, in its consistent stable form (the political stereotype). Which language must then be swallowed, without nausea. Another bliss (other edge): it consists in de-politicizing what is apparently political, and in politicizing what apparently is not".

Finding any closures and stable subject position suspicious, observing the world and witnessing its events is also problematised in language poetry. Language, not personal experience, is at the centre of their observations. According to an early statement by Charles Bernstein, the poet observes not so much the physical world but the language:

A friend recently sd that one of the strongest characteristics of my writing was a sense of witness…looking at yr life go by at the same time being in it is the way i've expressed it at times – wch actually is the attitude twrd language itself, the thing thru wch we experience, see things as one thing or another, as meanings… "The record of observation" is not the "world" at least in the sense of the naïve concept of the physical world…but an observing, a looking out onto, language (a 1977 letter by Charles Bernstein to Steve McCaffery, original spelling, quoted in Prevallet 2001: 120–121).

Charles Bernstein developed a variety of figures from the late 1970s onwards, who observed the world in an anti-absorptive manner, challenging the reader to decipher the modes of cultural production and distancing by overtly aesthetic means. His technique has often been called Brechtian (cf. Peterson 2008).

Typically in Bernstein's poetry, a poet acts not as a carrier and arbiter of emotions but as an analyst of the structuring of those emotions and their wordings. For Bernstein, poetry has been about 'showing the ladders': writing non-naturally, with visible structure, and with styles and tropes also easily

spotted as sheer rhetorical devices. Creating distance to language often happens in Bernstein's poetry via parody, satire, juxtaposition and irony.

Charles Bernstein and 9/11: Death of an Author, Birth of a Witness?

A New York based poet, Charles Bernstein was coming back from LaGuardia airport on September 11, 2001. It was 8:23 in New York. He was one of the millions who witnessed the WTC attacks, directly or via television. During that day and after Bernstein wrote several poems reflecting the mood in Manhattan. Those poems, which were first published online soon after the attack, are published as a part of his collection *Girly Man* (2006), which also deals with the so-called War on Terror.

In his poems, Bernstein pondered the hate people felt, and the differing personal and political reactions to the attacks. As one of the so-called language poets, Bernstein has for his entire career been opposing the presence of the lyric first-person voice in poetry. When 9/11 unfolds in front of his very eyes, he becomes an unwilling witness to the unspeakable, to events which also affect his poetry. These poems seem, at first glance, to be very personal, reflective and written from a position of the lyrical 'I', and thus conform to the 'typical' witness poem.

At least momentarily, Bernstein indeed lapses into subjectivity in his poems, which are presented in prose style. There are also elements of 'realism' or 'the illusion of realism', which include descriptive and narrative elements. These elements go against the principles of language poetry, as langpo tries to restore the tangibility of words, a principle which stresses the materiality, audibility and sensitivity of language itself, instead of language being just a vehicle for referring to 'reality'. In this view, the language is a – or even *the* – constituting element of reality, not its mere mirror (cf. Fisher 2013).

However, what Bernstein describes is not the actual 'event', but what happens around it, how people react, and how it is all over the news. The description is thus not on the attack itself, but its effects and its media coverage, as the event comes forward as indescribable and what is present cannot be observed directly but only via kind of 'negative description'. Even the very first lines of Bernstein's 9/11 poems express the hesitation the 'I' feels when representing reality: The first poem starts with words *I can't describe* (Bernstein 2006: 17).

One may note similar hesitation in one the most well known 9/11 poems, Galway Kinnell's *When Towers Fell*. In Kinnell's poem, the collective witness,

presented at the start of the poem as 'we', shifts towards a more ambiguous 'someone' saying, and in the end the poem's 'I' starts to doubt even one's own words and states: *I wish I could say* (Kinnell 2006). According to Ann Keniston and Jeffrey Gray (2012: 8) several poets writing post 9/11 indeed try to "evaluate the authenticity of the voice".

In Bernstein's poem, the event is present in this moment: *This could not have happened. This hasn't happened. This is happening* (Bernstein 2006: 19). The poem's 'happening' comes close to the Lyotardian idea of an event as a break in the linearity of history, a moment which defines before and after but can only be judged post-event. It is also notable that timing and placing are central to the poem; it is not, and does not try to be, universal but happens 'here and now', and even the exact clock times and geographical details are given. The event, 'now', is without obvious structured meaning, which could only be recreated via perspective and linkage, through post-event conceptualisation. 'Now' is, in Lyotard's (1993: 90) words, "stranger to consciousness and cannot be constituted by it" and can only be "approached through a state of privation".

Bernstein plays here with the dual meaning of 'is happening'. The poem's 'I' is hinting at something that happens in front of his very eyes and petrifies one like Medusa's gaze, but simultaneously calls for an analysis as an already-structured event, alluding to 'happening' as artistic and artificial, as something that is made. The poem's 'I' points also to mystical, hidden elements of what is happening, its strange attractiveness but also indescribability: *Uncanny is the word. What I can't describe is reality* (Bernstein 2006: 19).

'Reality' in Bernstein's poem was already fed to the people by constant flux of news coverage, and appeared as a staged drama with readymade explanations or as an event so powerful that it is actually beyond reality. The poet sees on television what is already known, "over and over". This repetition is in no way soothing: *I don't find the coverage comforting but addictive* (ibid.: 17). As many observers noted, the staging is like that from a movie: *It was hard not to feel like it was a movie, and one with an unbelievable plot at that* (ibid.). Visuality, which television stresses, clouds reality:

the image is greater than reality
the image can't approach reality
the reality has no image
[--]
our eyes are burning. (ibid. 22)

Space and perspective for the creation of meaning disappear as the burning towers are merged with eyes; the perceiving subject becomes one with the event and absorbed into it. The collectively experienced event, the poem's 'I' as an eye-witness, hits the retina and witnesses become just passive recipients of an image, and movement is in one direction only. Image itself lacks being an image

and becomes only a burned trace. To regain a grasp of 'reality' one must look away. 'Reality' is semantically constructed, whereas pure, trauma-causing image escapes it. The event is therefore not 'readable' directly, but only by its trace.

The poem's 'I' tries to distance itself amongst the flow of media coverage and easy explanations. Resistance is awakened in the face of simplified demands for the USA to talk with 'one voice': *I am just trying to get by talking with no voice* (ibid.: 21). This alludes rather directly to theories on language and subject, which Bernstein had toyed with since the 1970s: there is no such thing as natural voice or language, but one may always find them constructed. Therefore the idea of the poet's voice is already dubious, as well as is the transparency of language. On the other hand, the poem expresses an urgent need to dismantle the newly awakened flow of generalizations with their simplifying rhetoric of 'us against them'. *No voice* is one possible answer to this.

For Bernstein, language itself is never a neutral tool. It is a part of the process of witnessing. Catherine Prevallet (2002: 121) has summed up this intertwining of language with the experience as: "Language used to witness is simultaneously a witness of language". When transforming the experience into language, using the tools of language given beforehand, Bernstein warns that "we find ourselves in the grip of [...] the attitudes programmed into us by phrases etc, and their sequencing, that are continually repeated to us – language control = thought control = reality control" (Bernstein 1984: 140).

To escape 'reality control' one must try to take distance. Focus should be on the modes of production, i.e. on language. When describing another language poet, Ron Silliman and his way of work with his classic language poem BART, that is too a 'real-time poem' written during a train trip, William Watkin has aptly stated that "what he is transcribing is not a description of the experience of that day but the experience of description itself" (Watkin 2007: 518). Those words fit at least partly to what Bernstein's 9/11 poems are also trying to do, especially the first ones written on September 11, which demonstrate the most struggle with the problems of representation. An example of this are numerous references to movies by Bernstein (2006: 17) (*it was hard not to feel like it was a movie)*, which exemplify the underlying idea of not describing the event itself but what occurs to one during the perception of it.

Who Do the Saying: Aftermath

Discussing Adorno's famous statement on the impossibility of poetry after Auschwitz, language poet Lyn Hejinian has argued that poetry is actually something that is especially needed. For her, "the task of poetry" is "not to

speak the same language as Auschwitz" (Hejinian 2000: 326). In Bernstein we see a similar intention: not to speak the same language as 9/11. In his infamous 'litany' poem *Somebody Blew up America*, Amiri Baraka (2003) asks: *who do the saying?* – but Bernstein is taking the task a bit further by asking whose language it is that saying is done with.

The primary distinction as regards their ideas on witnessing between the attitudes of language poets and expressive poets, among which Baraka may be counted, lies in their ideas on language. Bernstein's own summing of these views stresses the language as an event itself:

Compare / these two views / of what / poetry / is.
In the one, an instance (a recording perhaps) of reality / fantasy / experience / event is presented to us through the writing.
In the other, the writing itself is seen as an instance of reality / fantasy / experience / event. (Bernstein 1984a, 41)

Baraka's "Who do the saying?" is answered: language is doing the saying, but language by whom? The event is inescapably linked to language, or lack of it; the interpretation and representation is guided by language's omnipotent presence. Diagnosis of what has happened therefore requires a diagnosis of language.

In a letter written on November 22, 2001 which was also immediately published online and included in his 9/11 poems, Bernstein stresses again the need for distance from the immediate and emotional reactions and starts to shift his witness position towards one of an analyst; he expresses the need to put the event into perspective: "One has to fight ferociously with oneself to take the time our [sic] from 9-11 consciousness. But without taking break, there can't be any perspective" (Bernstein 2006: 31). Typically for Bernstein, there is a play with the term "time out" which is here typed as "time our". One can never be quite sure if it is a typo or not.

The aftermath was, for its political and mental effects, as important as the attacks themselves: '9-11 consciousness' looms large in Bernstein's poems, as an "official period of panic set in" and "we were told expect anything" (ibid.: 24). The poems' 'I' notes that this "official panic" may have "a more profound effect than the initial events" (ibid.). Poems describe the city as a "war zone", caused not by the attacks but by panic: "We have occupied ourselves" (ibid.: 27). As Marc Redfield (2009: 3) has pointed out, the actual attacks did not create a real trauma in most of its witnesses, but a 'virtual' trauma. Most of those who saw the attacks on television, protected by distance, were watching a spectacle never seen before (but already imagined in many movies), and it effected more a relaying of a possible future threat than actually damaging the psyche in real-time.

Bernstein's responses to the post-9/11 situation began to form into a sort of discourse analysis. Manichean statements like 'us against them' and the following unilateral politics were such anti-aesthetic and totalitarian tools that Bernstein (2003) focused on resisting any totalities with more openly political tones:

At these trying times we keep being hectored toward moral discourse, toward turning our work into digestible messages. This too is a casualty of the war machine, the undermining of the value of the projects of art, of the aesthetic... "Unilateralism" is not just the course the Executive branch is pursuing, with disastrous consequence, in foreign policy, but also the policy it pursues domestically, in its assault on our liberties, on the poor, and indeed on our aspirations for a democratic society.

Poetry and the arts are "a necessary response to crisis, exploring the deeper roots of our alienation and offering alternative ways not only to think, but also to imagine and indeed to resist" (ibid.).

Even if linked to the contemporary political situation, Bernstein's words echo also the 'utopian content' of language poetry which he pointed towards in his 1981 essay: the possibility for "other ways of putting things together, a different scale of values" which can only be achieved by "a total de/reorganization of the formal norms" (quoted in Fisher 2013: 161). Not digestible messages, but a new vision, or at least an opening for such. This is as direct as language poetry can get in its political message.

Bernstein and the Return of the Subject

Several commentators have argued that language poetry is politically impotent when facing 9/11 or similar events (cf. Ostriker 2001; Johnson 2003). Sarcastic formalism is not the way to deal with the new political situation and language it demands. Perhaps to some extent it went unnoticed, that language poetry itself changed too. As, for example, Tim Peterson (2008) has pointed out, Charles Bernstein's *Girly Man* represents a remarkable shift in his poetical work with the kind of narrative and even biographical tones it contains. Some may also analyze language poetry from a too formalistic point of view, forgetting its basic principle of going against the norms. If linguistic experiments are the norm, one must go in other direction. Lyrical subjectivism may be an innovation, even a radical one, in times of formalistic poetry that is directed by a Brechtian alienation effect.

Bernstein's poetry took a different direction after 9/11, which is evident when reading *Girly Man* and his later work. As shown above, there are several

moments in Charles Bernstein's 9/11 poems that still show glimpses of ideas of language poetry. But some relevant parts, especially relevant for Bernstein, are already lacking. The most important missing elements are parody and satire as well as other humoristic or nonsense elements, techniques Bernstein often uses elsewhere – for example, within the collection *Girly Man*. The only short moment that can also be interpreted as (partly) comical is in his poem *Aftershock* written from September 13–16, 2001, which ends with the conjugation of a verb bomb:

I bomb
you bomb
he/she/it bombs
we bomb
you bomb
they suffer

We're ugly, but we're not that ugly.
&, hey, Joe, don't you know –
We is they.

(Bernstein 2006: 25)

From the point of view of subjectivity, these poems are to some extent even traditional. When compared with ideas on witness poetry, they still lack strong personal presence, and the 'I' in these poems comments very little upon it's own feelings. As readers share some private matters, like bringing one's son to school, the poems' 'I' is, however, easily associated with Bernstein's own persona. These biographical elements with their geographical details enhance the testimonial nature of the poems, stressing the fact of 'being there'.

As a witness, the poems' 'I' is clearly witnessing events, and is not just a witness of/to/in language. The poetical witness Bernstein is using language that is hard to associate with the characteristics of language poetry, or even with the fragmentary 'poetry of witness' defined by Forché: stanzas flow freely, tone is sustained, and the structure is to some extent even narrative. Paradoxically, the 'traces of extremity' can perhaps be seen in exactly that: as a cool observer, Bernstein's 'I' reminds one occasionally of some classics of Holocaust literature, like that of Primo Levi.

When considering the role of the reader experience, the positions of language poetry and Forché are not that far away from each other: Forché emphasizes the experience that happens within the text, not beyond or outside of it. This point, which is based on her reading of Derrida, is aiming at a similar textual autonomy, as is essential to language poetry. Instead of textual transparency, i.e. style, that foregrounds personal experience and presents the

language used as natural vehicle for writers' own sensations and experiences, Forché stresses that the traces of the extreme are experienced at the surface of language; scars and traumas are witnessed in its materiality. The materiality and opacity of language are essential to language poetry. But, in Bernstein's words, the aim is also a language that "reveals the conditions of its occurrence at the same time as it is experienced" (Bernstein 1984a: 40). This 'meta-layer' is not, at least not directly, manifest in witness poetry as it is defined by Forché.

If we come back to Derrida's take on the lines of Celan, "no one bears witness for the witness", there is a presence of internal plurality that is also hinted at by Derrida. There is no witness for the witness, as we are all witnesses. We are all witnesses when witnessing the act of witnessing, a singular act repeated by other singular acts of witnessing the statement taking place. Derrida (2005: 88–89) opens the 'I' of the poem as pointing to multiple directions within the reader/writer constellation: "Who is the 'I' of the poem? This question displaces itself; it gets divided or multiplied, like the question of the signature, between the 'I' of which the poem speaks, or to which the poem refers, reflexively [...], the 'I' who writes it or 'signs' it in all the possible ways, and the 'I' who reads it". And in the end, as Derrida (2005a: 166) remarks, no reading exhausts all the possibilities of reading, as it cannot "exclude many other readings", and the choices made by the reader constitute one's "ethics or politics of reading". This dividedness of subject, internal frictions present in the acts of reading and writing, is also a direction Bernstein seems to be taking.

Despite biographical and narrative elements, traces of personal experience that were so much fought against in earlier forms of language poetry, Bernstein's poetry after 9/11 may be seen as having certain elements that create spaces of resistance against a totalizing or closed reading, against self-centred modes of writing. To salvage some of the non-lyrical 'I', Bernstein introduces a divided witness. In Tim Peterson's (2008) reading of *Girly Man*, "the Self that is reintroduced in these new poems is not a monologic construction but is rather internally divided in a continuous process of reflection" (Peterson 2008). The poems' 'I' acts only as "one of many possible witnesses" (ibid.), and is juxtaposed with echoes from a wide variety of personae present in Manhattan, even the terrorists. Perhaps symptomatic of Bernstein's interest in finding new spaces for resistance is his recent interest in performance poetry. Of the official urge for 'one voice', Bernstein has moved via 'no voice' towards a chorus of voices. In this way, Bernstein shows there is no single ideal objective witness but multiple different perspectives which, in their own ways, also challenge the unilateralism and politics of one voice.

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9. Bearing Witness and Playing in Ruins: On the Onto-Poetics of Abandoned Places

Suvi Alt

Decaying lace curtains covering a broken window, a lonely chair in the corner of an empty room, floorboards disintegrating.[1] Wallpaper peeling off, tiles crumbling at the slightest touch, newspapers from two decades back lying on the floor.

There is something intriguing about abandoned places, and they have received increasing popular and academic interest during the past decade. Scholarly engagements with abandoned places have discussed the ways in which ruins challenge hegemonic ways of conceiving of the past, the ways in which ruins complicate dominant ways of ordering space, as well as the ways in which ruins may enable a critique of capitalism and state power.[2] Meanwhile, ruin photography has made its way into glossy coffee table books as well as popular magazines, newspapers and blogs. Yet, the contemporary *Ruinenlust* has also begun to receive increasing critique. 'Ruin porn' arguably aestheticises destruction and closes eyes toon the social and economic realities of the people who have been affected by the processes that have led to the ruination of particular places (see Greco 2012; Cunningham 2011; Leary 2011).[3]

Attentive to this critique, this chapter seeks to discuss 'urban exploration' as a practice of bearing witness and playing in abandoned places. In the broadest sense, urban exploration "is about going to places you're not supposed to go, seeing places you're not supposed to see", and it generally involves entering ruins and other abandoned places, and sometimes the infiltration of secure state and corporate sites (Garrett 2013: 80).[4] But what is it about entering

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[1] I would like to thank my fellow urban explorers in Berlin, without whom this piece could not have been written.

[2] For an overview of recent ruin research, see DeSilvey and Edensor (2012).

[3] See also Abandoned Porn (2016).

[4] On the distinctions and overlap between urban exploration and infiltration, see Garrett (2013: 8) and Ninjalicious (2005: 4-6). Contemporary urban exploration can be dated as having begun in the 1970s, gaining increased popularity and exposure from the 2000s onwards (see Garrett 2013: 17–18). With its history of conquest and colonialism, 'exploration' is a problematic term. I nevertheless choose to use it here because it has gained overall acceptance among the people who engage in the practice that I discuss here, and its negative connotations are acknowledged and refuted by many (though not by all) urban explorers.

abandoned places that fascinates us? For many, urban exploration is about doing something forbidden: "if it's *verboten* it's got to be fun" (Abandoned Berlin 2016). In addition to the anti-authoritarian nature of the practice, urban exploration is for many also a kind of adrenaline rush-inducing extreme sport. Among the motivations for urban exploration are also an interest in history, architecture and photography. In general, ruins are seen to carry possibilities for transgression, imaginative interpretation and an encounter with the unexpected. In ruins one's interpretation of the city becomes liberated from everyday ordering of urban space, from the ordering of what should be done and where (Edensor 2005: 4).

Mapping the different uses of abandoned space involves attention to plundering, partying, graffiti and other artistry as well as crime, among other things. Artists and cultural practitioners have been using urban exploration as a way of engaging with cities, and artistic practices and urban exploration often go hand in hand (see Pinder 2005). Yet, instead of examining artistic practices that take place in ruins, I wish to draw attention to what might be called the onto-poetic character of urban exploration *as such*. I understand onto-poetics as a site of transformation that draws attention to the relations between poetics, life and the political (see Soguk 2006). Onto-poetic inquiries are directed at the political in, for example, sounds, surfaces, textures and planes of life that would otherwise be outside of traditional politics and political theory (Soguk 2006: 383). My use of the notion of onto-poetics also draws on Martin Heidegger's conception of art, which does not prioritise a preference for the aesthetic, but refers to the happening of being; the way in which being takes place in the midst of beings. For Heidegger (2012: 25–27, 58–61; 2011: 131), the poetic is a particular kind of unfolding of historical existence rather than a cultural achievement. Art is not something that is created through the subjective will of an artist but something that happens whenever being is carried into a different disposition of relations (Heidegger 2011: 131). Onto-poetics is thus here understood as opening up new spaces of being and as weaving those spaces into politics.

To this end, the chapter follows from my own practice of urban exploration mostly in and around Berlin and the eastern parts of Germany in the past three years. Two decades ago, Andreas Huyssen (1997: 57) noted that "the city on the Spree is a text frantically being written and rewritten". "Berlin-as-text remains first and foremost historical text, marked as much, if not more, by absences as by the visible presence of its past", Huyssen (1997: 60) argued. In most places – the ruins of the Kaiser-Wilhelm Gedächtniskirche being the most obvious example – absence goes hand-in-hand with the visible remains of the past in the present. Yet, in the decades following reunification, more and more of the Berlin that was thoroughly marked by absences at the time of Huyssen's writing has become the object of neoliberal urban development. The

interplay of absences and the visible presence of the past can nevertheless still be discerned in the many abandoned buildings in and around Berlin.

The abandoned places that I have visited during the past years are mainly former factories but also old hospitals, public administration buildings, community houses, military spaces, train tracks etc.[5] Drawing on research that examines the ways in which derelict spaces enable contestation of contemporary power relations, the paper combines an auto-ethnographic account of visits to several abandoned sites with an elaboration of Giorgio Agamben's concepts of 'witnessing' and 'play'. While Agamben's work does not give tools for addressing the details of the economic and social processes that have led to ruination – that is the work of economic, social and political history – I argue that his work does enable an understanding of urban exploration as a practice of reshaping life in contemporary urban space. Through the conceptual discussion on witnessing and play, the paper seeks to offer a twofold argument regarding the politics that can unfold in and through ruins. Firstly, I argue that urban exploration is a practice of witnessing the past in the present, yet not in the form of recounting history, but in the form of listening to absence through the materiality of the site. Compared to museums and other historic sites, abandoned places allow for a more unmediated relationship to the past. Yet, this unmediated character of experiencing the ruin also means that witnessing is not concerned with giving a fixed meaning to the past. Rather, witnessing absence and silence allows for an imaginative relationship to the past. Secondly, I argue that urban exploration is a free and common use of the order of places and identities: a playing with and using what used to be sacred. It is a practice that puts the symbols of former orders into new use, but which also plays with and puts to a non-utilitarian use one's body and one's time, both of which late capitalism attempts to direct towards strategic and purposeful use. Before moving on to this discussion, I begin below by engaging briefly with some aspects of the ordering of life in contemporary urban space.

Abandonment and the Ordering of Life in Urban Space

Contemporary cities are marked by increased regulation, surveillance and the privatisation of public space. Urban space is also increasingly demarcated in terms of particular practices being assigned to particular sites. The channelling

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5   The ruins that I refer to in this chapter are not caused by war, terrorist attacks or natural disasters. They are rather the result of more slowly functioning political and economic processes. On the politics of deliberate urban destruction, 'urbicide', see Coward (2009).

and containment of activities and practices in the city produces a sense of what urban space is *for* (Edensor 2005: 56), thus turning the city into what has been termed a "security-entertainment complex" (Thrift 2011) and a "fortress-city" (Klauser 2010). Ultimately, the ordering of space in the city is aimed at the governing of life. As Michel Foucault (2009: 18) showed in his lectures at the Collège de France in the 1970s, the governing of circulation has been one of the most important strategies through which life has been governed since biopolitics emerged as a modern *dispositif* of security in the late 18th century. Biopolitics refers to a modern type of government that regulates populations through techniques of power that take 'life itself' as their object (see Foucault 1990: 133–160). The organisation of circulation in urban space is key to the biopolitical governing of life. Ever since towns were no longer closed off by city walls, governing the city became a matter of organising the circulation of the 'good' and 'bad' elements in the population. Security came to refer to the maximisation of the circulation of what was deemed good and the minimisation of what was considered bad (ibid.: 18).

In the contemporary city, policies of urban development, privatisation and surveillance on the societal level translate into an apparatus of work, consumption and entertainment on the individual level. These practices are considered beneficial to the 'good' circulation of population in late modern societies. While the surveillance entailed by disciplinary power is most often associated with the model of the panopticon, which was founded on the visibility of its subjects, crucial to the all-seeing, inspecting gaze of surveillance in the modern era is that it becomes completely internalised (Foucault 1980: 155). Alongside the surveillance practices carried out by the state and various commercial actors is contemporary cities, biopolitics operates through the internalisation of ideas regarding appropriate modes of action in particular places. As a consequence, as Ninjalicious (2005: 3), the author of the urban exploration guide *Access All Areas*, writes: "for too many people, urban living consists of mindless travel between work, shopping and home, oblivious to the countless wonders a city offers".

Yet, the contemporary city also has its flipside: derelict, abandoned and ruined spaces. Useless and abandoned, it may appear that ruins are completely outside capitalism and its governing of life. However, the ruin is by no means external to capitalist dynamics. Tim Edensor (2005: 4) argues that "the production of spaces of ruination and dereliction are an inevitable result of capitalist development and the relentless search for profit". Urbanisation has become central to the reproduction of capital and the process through which new terrains for capital surplus production are sought (Harvey 2012). In the case of Berlin, the urban development policies of the past two decades are inseparable from the politics of the German reunification. Due to extensive privatisation and the destruction of formerly state-managed industry, after 1991

the process of deindustrialisation as well as real estate speculation accelerated in Berlin (Bernt et al. 2013: 23). Many of the abandoned places in and around Berlin are tied to the developments that followed the fall of the Wall (Specht 2012: 5), and most of the abandoned places that I have visited have been empty since this period. Broadly speaking, the urban development of Berlin in the wake of the German reunification has been dominated by a neoliberal restructuring of the city. This restructuring has meant commitment to large-scale investor-friendly projects that have undermined local organisational structures and advanced privatisation and commercialisation at the expense of the broader public good (Dohnke 2013: 261). The continued privatisation of public space is exemplified by projects such as 'Mediaspree' which aimed to privatise several kilometres of centrally located Spree riverbank. Although this particular project was met with broad opposition, culminating in 2007 in the '*Mediaspree versenken*' (Sink Mediaspree) campaign, a neoliberal form of urban policy largely continues to dominate in Berlin (see Dohnke 2013). Suffering from a long-standing economic crisis, the city is committed to 'austerity urbanism', the benefits of which are unequally distributed (see Bernt et al. 2013: 17; Peck et al. 2009).

Alongside "the naturalisation of neoliberal policies" in urban development during the past decades (Bernt et al. 2013: 205), Berlin has a long history of leftist grassroots politics and social organisation. While the appropriation of empty spaces for organised political struggle in the form of squatting, for example, has a long tradition in Berlin (see Holm and Kuhn 2011), in this chapter I discuss the less overtly political practice of urban exploration. The 'psychogeography' associated with the Situationist International (see Situationist International 2006; Pinder 1996) is often cited as a predecessor of urban exploration, though the contemporary variant is much less explicitly political. Urban explorers generally do not give their practice a political meaning. The people with whom I have done urban exploring generally share some form of an anti-authoritarian perspective. However, those perspectives are not necessarily anti-capitalist, nor do they necessarily conform to my discussion of the practice in this chapter. Bradley Garrett (2013: 12) also points this out regarding his ethnographic work among urban explorers in London: "Explorers constantly insisted to me that the desire to do something simply because it could be done superseded any political or transgressive impulse I might read into it". Yet, he also contends that urban exploration is a political activity *regardless* of the apolitical motivations of many who practice it: "It is […] a subversive response to the imperatives of late capitalism that encourage spectatorship over participation" (ibid.: 8).

Urban explorers rarely present a consistent and coherent critique of the system. Rather, their response is to do what they wish regardless of the system (ibid.: 18). Following Agamben, one could argue that it is precisely this character

of the activity that makes it potentially subversive. Politics "does not merely seek to occupy the places that the powers of the world endow with high symbolic value […] but rather ventures to deactivate the entire worldly order of places and the identities it prescribes, returning these to common use", Sergei Prozorov (2014: xxi) argues. I suggest in this chapter that urban exploration can contribute to deactivating the apparatuses that order life in contemporary urban space. Within dominant spatialisations, abandoned places appear as spaces that have no function and are suitable for nothing. They are effectively useless. Nevertheless, contemporary ruins are not only produced by but arguably also enable a contestation of capitalist relations of power. For Slavoj Žižek (2012), the abandoned planes in the Mojave Desert in the United States show us the other side of capitalist dynamics, and an encounter with them is a chance for what he calls an authentic passive experience – "mute presence beyond meaning" – from which something new can emerge. What is such a mute presence?

Bearing Witness to Absence

> This is an attempt to remember someone else's memories.
> – Ciarán Fahey (2015: 7)

The factory hall is empty and silent. So silent that you could hear a pin drop. The floor is cracking and I need to watch my step. I imagine how loud it must have been when the machines were still there. I think about how ruins are often described as places where time has stopped. Stepping into an abandoned house is like stepping into someone else's past. At the same time, the silence tells of the absence of those to whom the past belongs. All I can bear witness to is the silence.

Witnessing has historically taken many forms from the narration of experience to the performance of trauma, and from the viewing of others' narratives of misery to the making of bold public statements (Givoni 2014: 127–128). Such practices have often been considered as processes through which those effected by atrocities can establish themselves in politics. It is crucial especially to judicial notions of witnessing that the witness has to be personally present during the occurrence of that which he or she bears witness to. Agamben, however, understands witnessing somewhat differently. In *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, Agamben engages in a reading of the

testimony of the survivors of the Shoah[6] in order to explicate an account of witnessing that refers not so much to the recounting of empirical facts or the reconstruction of historical events, but to a complex subjective transformation where it is no longer clear who the subject of testimony is.

Agamben rehearses the accounts of Primo Levi and Elie Wiesel, both of whom indicate that there is necessarily something missing from the testimony of those who survived the camps. Agamben (2002: 13) notes that "at a certain point, it became clear that testimony contained at its core an essential lacuna; in other words, the survivors bore witness to something it is impossible to bear witness to. As a consequence, commenting on survivors' testimony necessarily meant interrogating this lacuna or, more precisely, attempting to listen to it. Listening to something absent". The absence is created by the fact that "the destruction brought to an end, the job completed, was not told by anyone, just as no one ever returned to describe his own death" (ibid.: 33). One cannot bear witness to one's own destruction. Hence, it is not possible to bear witness from the inside, but neither is it possible to bear witness from the outside. The truth must be told in a zone of indistinction between the inside and the outside. "The 'true' witnesses, the 'complete witnesses', are those who did not bear witness and could not bear witness. […] The survivors speak in their stead, by proxy, as pseudo-witnesses; they bear witness to a missing testimony", Agamben (ibid.: 34) argues.

Crucial to Agamben's notion of witnessing is that the subject-object positions become blurred, and witnessing happens in an indeterminate space. In Agamben's words (ibid.: 120), "testimony takes place where the speechless one makes the speaking one speak and where the one who speaks bears the impossibility of speaking in his own speech, such that the silent and the speaking […] enter into a zone of indistinction in which it is impossible to establish the position of the subject". Agamben wishes to emphasise that witnessing involves a twofold impossibility of speaking: firstly, it is the impossibility of those who are gone. Secondly, it is the impossibility of those who remain. In reference to Auschwitz, Agamben (ibid.: 13) argues that "some want to understand too much and too quickly; they have explanations for everything. Others refuse to understand; they offer only cheap mystifications. The only way forward lies in investigating the space between these two options". This, according to Agamben, applies not only to the memory of what happened in the camps but to historical knowledge in general. Bearing witness means placing oneself in language in the place of those who have lost it, and

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[6]   Agamben rejects the use of the term 'Holocaust'. Literally meaning a completely burned sacrifice to God, "not only does the term imply an unacceptable equation between crematoria and altars; it also continues a semantic heredity that is from its inception anti-Semitic. This is why we will never make use of this term" (Agamben 2002: 31). Instead, he chooses to use the Hebrew term 'Shoah'.

"outside both the archive and the *corpus* of what has already been said" (ibid.: 161).

Even though the Shoah may appear an extreme, exceptional case, Agamben draws a more general logic of witnessing from his reading of the testimony of the survivors.[7] The purpose of witnessing, then, is not the guaranteeing of a factual truth but the safeguarding of the exteriority that escapes memory (ibid.: 158). This is not to say that establishing an accurate narration of historical events is unimportant. Yet, the emphasis here is put on the silence that lies at the centre of testimony – the absence that escapes fixed meaning. In witnessing, "the empty place of the subject becomes the decisive question" (ibid.: 145). The absence that is necessarily present in the testimonies of those who survived the camps becomes the central problem of witnessing. How does one bear witness to absence? How does one listen to silence? These questions are also crucial for the politics of ruins. Agamben's concern with the inability of anyone to witness their own destruction, and thus the empty place of the subject of testimony, also raises questions for how we are to understand the politics of witnessing and memory in regard to abandoned places.

Ruins are the remnants of bygone or passing systems and orders. In eastern Germany, abandoned factories are the remains of heavy industrialism just as ruined state-built architecture reminds us of the fall of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). For Agamben, the remnant occupies the place of the witness. We can witness the ruin, but so also the ruin is a witness. The ruins have born witness to that which has passed through them, but they cannot speak. On the contrary, they tend to be eerily silent places. In abandoned sites, those who have lived through the processes that have led to ruination are not there to tell of it. The workers of factories, the patients of mental asylums, the visitors of local community houses and the soldiers of military camps have been long gone by the time me and my fellow urban explorers get to the places that they used to inhabit. Largely because of this, fascination with ruination has begun to receive increasing critique. Interest in abandoned places is taken to imply a disinterest in the lives and reality of those who are gone. Ruin photography in particular has come under critique for aestheticising destruction. Sean O'Hagan (2014) claims that "we seem increasingly fascinated by what is left behind – ruins, objects, crumbling facades, empty shells; the beautifully decayed surface of things. But it is the people that left who are the real context for these photographs. Without that human context, they are just bleakly and romantically beautiful, visually seductive but empty of real meaning". However, even photographs without people are often *about* people (Elkins 2011: 50–51; Möller 2015: 169). One could also argue that photographs of abandoned places are so fascinating exactly because they often depict places – factories, hospitals, army barracks – that used

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7   For a detailed explication of his method, see Agamben (2009: 9–32).

to be *full* of people. The sense of the emptiness of space is thus amplified by the knowledge that the space used to be *for* people.

Instead of being empty of meaning, or 'beyond meaning' as Žižek suggests in the case of the planes in the Mojave Desert, traces of meaning can be found in abandoned places themselves. '*Der Raum spielt für sich selbst Theater*',[8] as someone had written on the wall of one of the places that I have visited. Bearing witness to silence means, therefore, to listen to the materiality of the site. It is through the ruin itself that we can listen to those who are absent. The presence of former workers can still be ascertained by the piles of working clothes on the floor of a former chemical factory. The metal beds in an old sanatorium may be empty but they are a stark reminder of those who used to inhabit the building. The ovens in an old bakery used to bake bread first for those who worked in a nearby concentration camp and, later, for those who were just barely left on the eastern side of the Iron Curtain. "Even a room devoid of detail retains some connection to a previous life. Traces always remain […] Walls *can* talk but they speak in different ways. Their silence alone says something", Ciarán Fahey (2015: 7) writes. The places may escape *fixed* meaning, but empty of meaning they are not.[9]

Yet, the element – absence, silence – that resists fixing the place with a single meaning, is also that which draws people there. Despite the complex materiality of these sites, there is also an aspect of immateriality involved that draws one beyond the material world. In walking through an empty factory, touching the chinks on the wall, I wonder how long it will be before the spaces that now occupy the centre stage in people's lives will fall apart, cracked and empty. Urban exploration is arguably so attractive because of the way in which it brings together the real and the imagined (Garrett 2013: 57). Witnessing, then, is not about developing an accurate narration of what happened there, but about the transformation that the place effects in the one who engages with it. This can be seen as the onto-poetic dimension of urban exploration. As Garrett (2013: 64) points out, experiences in ruins tell us as much about ourselves as they do about the places we explore. This can also be seen in the things that

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8   The literal translation of the sentence is 'The space plays theatre for itself'. While this rendition is somewhat awkward, it retains the meaning of the verb *spielen* as 'playing', thus capturing the 'play' of space. Furthermore, the intention is to emphasise that 'the space acts in and of itself', instead of humans being needed as the ones doing the acting *in* the space. I thank Thomas Behrndt and Anna Stobbe for discussing the meaning of this sentence with me.

9   It should be noted that going to an abandoned house that used to be one's childhood home, for example, is very different from visiting an abandoned space one has never been in before. The ruined site also presents itself differently depending on whether one goes there by oneself, with a group of friends or with a lover, perhaps.

people write on the walls of abandoned places. Some of the texts that I have seen during my trips include: '*Ich brauche Liebe*', '*Total verliebt*', '*nichts*', '*Verderben*', '*Angst???*', '*Der innere Ort*', '*Hier leben die Reste*', 'Orwell was right', '*Die Sonne im Gesicht*', '*Der Traum ist aus, der Kampf geht weiter*', '*Stark wie die Liebe, heiß wie die Lust, verführerisch wie der Tod*'.[10] Yet, the fact that abandoned places seem to encourage one to ponder existential questions need not be interpreted merely as an expression of subjective individualism. Rather, encountering abandoned places can also entail a self-reflexive understanding of what it means that I am there now, whereas those who used to occupy the space during its original use are gone. It could be argued that the popularity of the practice of urban exploration in and around Berlin is also partly a result of the city's continued gentrification.[11] After all, one can practice urban exploration in abandoned places only to the extent that one does not have to live in them. In the light of this, urban exploration should go hand in hand with recognition of one's privilege in having a home to return to. The question, then, is not only whether the walls can talk, but what we can hear them say.

Colin Davis argues that if there is a way in which the dead can speak to us, it is through signs that emerge from gaps in signification. These signs irrupt as surprises without any signifying intention and without a conscious subject. "Perhaps they are all around us", Davis (2004: 89) suggests. I suggest, in turn, that ruins are especially potent places for listening to those who are absent. Unlike in museums or heritage sites, in ruins there is no mediation between you and the past. In respect to historic places, we too often let guides or experts explain their significance to us. "Less often do we let places speak to us directly", Garrett (2013: 33) points out. For Agamben, the museum is paradigmatic of the problems of contemporary political life. For him, the museum refers "not [to] a given physical space or place but the separate dimension to which what was once – but is no longer – felt true and decisive has moved" (Agamben 2007a: 84). The museification of the world means that the spiritual potentialities of art, religion, philosophy and politics have been lost. The museum thereby designates "the exhibition of an impossibility of using, of dwelling, of experiencing" (ibid.: 84). It is this impossibility that urban exploration seeks to turn into a possibility.

Yet, witnessing the past in the ruins of the present is sometimes interpreted as nothing more than a romantic nostalgia (see Dillon 2010). Nevertheless, I

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would argue that it is much more than mere nostalgia that drives people to ruins.[12] On the other hand, ruins are also said to conjure fantasies of post-apocalypse and post-climate catastrophe futures. Some urban explorers even argue that their skills of moving around in derelict urban space will be directly useful in a future that will be marked by different types of catastrophes and urban destruction. My interest in abandonment, however, has very much to do with the here and now. In the following part of the chapter, I turn to a discussion of ruin exploration in the context of Agamben's ideas of 'play' and 'use', which do not mobilise a nostalgia for a by-gone, more meaningful relationship to the world but seek to find new ways of relating to the present one.

Play and Use in Ruins

The *Ballhaus* closed its doors soon after the Wall was opened and it has been abandoned ever since. My friends dance a bit of waltz amid the crumbling dance hall. I watch them and smile. Urban exploration is frequently referred to as a kind of play. It involves people going to abandoned places for no other apparent reason than the joy of doing so. "When you fully embrace the urban exploration mindset, the city becomes a wonderful playground", Ninjalicious (2005: 3–4) writes. Agamben, too, is interested in what it would mean to inhabit a 'playland'.

The concepts of 'profanation', 'play' and 'use' are central to Agamben's affirmative understanding of politics.[13] Profanation means depriving something of its sacred character, where 'sacred' refers to that which is removed from the use of human beings, belonging only to the gods. Religion, then, is that which removes things and places from free use into a separate sphere (Agamben 2007a: 74). Religion, however, is not the only apparatus that effects such separations. Capitalism has also come to produce them. Overcoming such separations through practices of profanation, use and play is, for Agamben, the task of contemporary politics. It is important to note that the process that has come to be known as liquid modernity entails in itself a thorough profanation

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[12] In some cases, nostalgia may nevertheless be a convincing interpretation of the motivation of 'ruingazers'; see Steinmetz (2008). Yet the concept of nostalgia in the context of urban exploration need not necessarily be only negatively valued; see Bonnett (2009).

[13] The affirmative aspects of Agamben's work have generally been overshadowed by focus on his concepts of 'bare life' and 'the camp' which offer a rather bleak diagnosis of contemporary life and politics; see Agamben (1998).

of everything sacred – of traditions, identities and forms of life – and yet this profanation is also followed by a re-sacralisation of the object in the form of the commodity (Prozorov 2011: 78). In the form of consumption, capitalism generalises the separation of the human from free use because in order to be consumed, the object must first be possessed as property. Furthermore, in neoliberal capitalism, the human is no longer merely a consumer but also "an entrepreneur of himself", being for himself his own capital (Foucault 2010: 226). This means that one is no longer separated only from the free use of objects but also from the free use of the self. All activity becomes a means for increasing one's 'human capital' and, thereby, one's competitiveness in the market.

The ruin, on the contrary, represents a kind of limbo between the moment of the profanation of a certain tradition and order, and the re-sacralisation of the space as something useful and profitable. The kinds of places that we find in ruins are expressions of particular forms of order that have passed, which has made those spaces superfluous. Whether the order in question was industrialism, the GDR, Soviet rule or the mental asylum, urban exploration in the places left behind by those systems can be understood as a free use of the profaned. The existence of the ruin is as such a sign that there is a liminal space that has not been recuperated by contemporary order. Hence, understood more broadly, profanation "deactivates the apparatuses of power and returns to common use the spaces that power had seized" (Agamben 2007a: 77). Play, as a form of profanation, refers to an inappropriate use or reuse of the sacred (ibid.: 75). The best example of this is the way in which children play with whatever thing they can get their hands on, irrespective of the utilitarian use that the object is otherwise meant to have. Similarly, "urban exploration inspires people to create their own adventures, like when they were kids, instead of buying the pre-packaged adventures too many of us settle for", Ninjalicious (2005: 3) writes. At the same time, play has a particular relation to history. According to Agamben (2007b: 82–83), play breaks the connection between the past and the present: "while rites transform events into structures, play transforms structures into events". Whereas witnessing, as discussed in the earlier part of this chapter, is concerned with the absence at the centre of historical memory, play is concerned with reshaping the historical relation between objects and human behaviour. In a sense, there is thus a kind of tension between witnessing as a practice of discerning the remnants of the past in the present and play as a practice of profaning and putting those remnants to a new use. For Agamben (ibid.: 76), play, understood as non-canonical use, has the potential to deactivate the powers of economics, law, politics and history. On the other hand, witnessing and play can also be understood as supporting each other in that witnessing absence and silence brings to the fore that which is missing from dominant accounts of history and politics, thus opening them up to a new use.

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Agamben (2014: 67) has recently pointed out that a philosophical reflection on the concept of 'use' is largely missing. Within modernity, 'use' carries a strong utilitarian connotation. Likewise, Edensor (2005: 23) argues that in contemporary urban space 'use' has come to refer to organised function and the modern spatial ordering that sustains 'appropriate' practices. Agamben (2014: 67–69), on the contrary, traces the term to the Greek *chresthai*, which he defines as expressing "the relation that one has with oneself, the affection that one receives in as much as one is in relation with a specific being". Use, then, does not refer to a subject-object relation, but to a practice through which one, in being in relation with another, is constituted (ibid.: 69). As examples of the kind of use that he means, Agamben refers to dance and to poetry. In the former, the body is liberated from its utilitarian movements and, in the latter, language is liberated from its communicative and informative function. "Rendering inoperative the biological, economic, and social operations, they show what the human body can do, opening it to a new possible use", Agamben (ibid.: 70) explains.

Similarly, urban exploration can be understood as the use of urban space in ways that are not encouraged and allowed for by policies of urban security and development. "By creating alternative models for action […] urban explorers undermine public narratives about what can and should be done", Garrett (2013: 18) points out. Likewise, Agamben is looking for practices that render the system inoperative without replacing it with a new one. The apparatus remains in place but it is hollowed out and empty. Importantly, profanation does not restore a natural or more original use that existed before being separated into the religious, economic or juridical sphere (Agamben 2007a: 83). Urban exploration in abandoned places not only puts the symbols of former orders into new use but also plays with and puts to a non-utilitarian use one's body and one's time, both of which late capitalism attempts to direct towards strategic and purposeful use. People often ask me what we do in those abandoned places. Some of us take photographs but apart from that, when being asked this question, I cannot think of a single thing. And yet we always spend hours there, doing what appears to be *nothing*. It is this 'nothing' that the utilitarian, entrepreneurial imagination of contemporary society cannot grasp. Because their economic use value has disappeared, abandoned places offer possibilities for other types of use and value.

Yet, Agamben (2007a: 87) argues that, in its extreme phase, capitalism becomes a gigantic apparatus which captures such profanatory behaviours. Neoliberal capitalism is so successful because it appropriates the practices that attempt to challenge it. An expression of this is the way in which ruins are now also being commodified, and commodified specifically *as* ruins. Turning former industrial spaces into high end cultural venues, bars and lofts has been popular for a long time already (see Kohn 2009), but in Berlin there are now also

companies that charge entrance fees to abandoned sites and organise tours of ruined buildings. According to one such company, a tour of one of the places that I visited three years ago now costs 50 Euros per person. The tour companies, which are not even necessarily always employed by the actual owners of the property, set up surveillance systems around the ruin and seek to charge whoever they find on the premises. Whereas previously it has been argued that ruins contest the idea that all space and property can be exploited for profit (see Edensor 2005: 8), the emergence of such commercial 'ruin tourism' goes to show the flexibility of contemporary capitalism in appropriating what used to be a transgressive practice, or at least making a version of that practice that can be sold to the average consumer.

On a trip to one of the more well-known abandoned places just outside of Berlin, my friends and I also came across a security guard who told us that we were trespassing on private property. The guard was nevertheless happy to let us stay if we paid a fee which we could negotiate with one of his colleagues. Taking us to the entrance of the site, the guards gave us the option of paying or leaving. I frowned but one of my friends agreed on the price, after which they said that we were now free to explore the site as we please. We went back to the buildings and walked around for some moments but all of us seemed to agree that it felt as if something was lost. Despite having just paid to be allowed to stay, quite soon we simply left for home. The way in which our experience of the space changed after it became a commodity shows the importance of the ideas of free use and play. For Agamben (2007a: 83), "use is always a relationship with something that cannot be appropriated; it refers to things insofar as they cannot become objects of possession". The fact that ruin exploration is now also being commodified shows the ability of neoliberal capitalism to capture practices that used to be outside the logic of the market. While the commodification of the ruin *as* a ruin does not necessarily fix the space with a meaning as a museum would, it nevertheless predisposes the person who goes there to approach the ruin as the object of consumption. Whether it is possible to witness absence in a place that has become a commodity is debatable, but one can only assume that the attempt to remember someone else's memories or to listen to silence becomes quickly drowned out in the chatter of the marketplace.

In regard to the aforementioned critique of 'ruin porn', it is worth mentioning that, for Agamben, the museum and pornography are akin in the sense that they both can apply to any content, while their distinguishing feature is that they exhibit the impossibility of using and of experiencing. For Agamben (ibid.: 91), "the solitary and desperate consumption of the pornographic image thus replaces the promise of a new use". This is not a moralistic condemnation of either pornography or the museum – both of which arguably serve a certain function – but it rather points towards the idea that both of them move

experiences to a separate sphere where they are not directly accessible. Likewise, 'ruin porn' ultimately exhibits the inaccessibility of what it represents. As such, ruin photography and commercial ruin tourism have enabled the ruin to be appropriated by the logic of the market. Looking at pictures of ruins is in the end a mere consumption of an image, instead of an exploration of the uses of body, space and time. To the extent that it was argued that witnessing absence requires an engagement with the materiality of the site, ruin porn also misses the possibility of such engagement. Thus, the political potential of ruins cannot be grasped by watching 'ruin porn'. It requires a corporeal and affective engagement with space; the kind of use that does not turn the ruin into an object to be possessed, but which allows oneself to be possessed *by* the ruin. It is not only the urban explorer who plays with the ruin, but the ruin who plays with the explorer.

Nevertheless, as Agamben (ibid.: 87) points out: "play, in our society, also has an episodic character, after which normal life must once again continue on its course". After exploring ruins on the outskirts of Berlin, most of us, too, go to work the next day. Instead of constituting an event, urban exploration can also become a mere ritual where people simply wander through the same buildings, taking the same photographs of the same abandoned objects. The challenge, then, is how to retain the playful character of exploration and how to make play into something more than a day or a night here and there. Yet, I would argue that for many urban explorers it does become more than that because exploring has the potential to change the way in which one thinks about what can and cannot be done, not only in ruins but elsewhere, too. Urban exploration can awaken a more immediate sense of the ways in which one's life is weaved into city space, and of the fact that the organisation of 'appropriate' practices in the city is neither necessary nor inevitable.

Conclusion

Coming soon to this location: charming ruins
    – Situationist International (2006: 450)

Despite the charm of ruins to ruin gazers of various persuasions throughout time, John Cunningham (2011) points out that as long as it is predicated upon the aesthetic 'charm' of ruins, the theoretical and political value of abandonment is severely undermined. According to Cunningham (2011), the liquefaction of workers and their traditions of organisation and resistance is complemented by 'the image of the contemporary ruin' which is part of the

apparatuses that seek to produce neutralised and passive subjects. It is arguably because we have lost the hope of creating a better world that we now merely aestheticise decay.

In this chapter I have suggested that abandoned places can have political power beyond functioning as sites of organised political struggles. An onto-poetic perspective draws attention to planes of life, such as urban exploration, that are otherwise considered outside of politics narrowly conceived. In my view there need not necessarily be a juxtaposition between such onto-poetic notions of the political and political organisation. Yet, any contemporary engagement with ruins ought to resist staying on the level of passive ruin pornography, romantic aesthetics and nostalgia, or *Ostalgie* in the case of eastern Germany. Urban exploration can be a form of witnessing the remnants of the past in places where history is immediate. Yet such witnessing does not purport to tell an objective truth about the ruin. Rather, it is an onto-poetic engagement with historical being; with the way in which one's being is bound up with the kinds of being that have passed and become silent. Ruins tell of the disappearance or waning of particular kinds of power, which is also why they are so very appealing to the critically minded. They incite us to imagine that which was and, with it, our own being as something that is but could also not be, or be otherwise. They implicitly remind us that the contemporary order, too, will one day lay in ruins.

Yet, ruins do not merely provide an intuition of a possible post-capitalist future, but provide a space and a means to play with and thereby deactivate apparatuses of power in the present. Urban exploration opposes the securitisation and commodification of life in urban space. Whereas the factory was once the paradigmatic space of discipline and early modern biopower, now playing in the ruins of the factory is an escape from contemporary, neoliberal biopower. There is no return to the order and identities of an early modern past but their remnants can be used for something different. Urban exploration is a counter-practice to policies of urban development where 'use' refers to an organised function and 'play' is relegated to shopping malls and theme parks. The politics of urban exploration as play lies in its potential to effect change in the way in which one perceives life as well as one's environment beyond ruins. At best, urban exploration can draw attention to the ambiguity and indeterminacy of *all space*.

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10. Children Witnessing War: Emotions Embodied in the Theatre Play *Wij/Zij*

Susanna Hast

This chapter discusses the war experience of children through the theatre play *Wij/Zij*. I look at emotions embodied as the locus of war experience and ask "how does a theatrical play bear witness to war through the bodies of two actors in movement?" When we look at war as an experience (Sylvester 2012, Butler 2009) war is something that touches us, and in particular, our body. I utilise neurology and developmental psychology to analyse the politics of body movement, and I argue that children are active agents in war and their experiences need to be understood through body and mind together. What follows is an aesthetic analysis which does not attempt to reproduce reality, but as Roland Bleiker (2009) states, it brings out the insight that art's aesthetics offers through an interaction of sensibilities and thought. That means: sensibilities *and* thought – not one or the other, or preference for one over the other. Seeing emotions as embodied and as movement beyond the threshold of consciousness brings forth an aesthetic insight in which imagination, movement, and the body play the central role in children's war experience, as depicted by *Wij/Zij*. But let me first tell you how I came to the research questions.

It is early November 2014, a chilly winter day, and I wait outside *Bronks,* a theatre for young audiences, in Brussels, Belgium. I flew in the morning from Switzerland just to see a play, *Wij/Zij* (Us/Them), which is about the horrible events of a hostage crisis that took place over ten years ago in Beslan, Russia. War visited Beslan as the town became the stage for the conflict between Russia and the republic of Chechnya. But war came to Beslan not only for the three days the siege lasted, but as Milana Terloeva (2006) writes, there is "before Beslan" and "after Beslan".

I have never seen a play about political violence, and especially one for young audiences, and I am intrigued. Before the play begins I sit down to have a chat with the director Carly Wijs who explains to me that the play relates more generally to children witnessing violence through media coverage of conflicts near and far away. The play is not just about Beslan, but it is about children witnessing war. She wants to express a child's perspective, and that means looking into children's agency rather than or not only their victimhood. Children then act in their own right and influence their environments, including

social and political realities. Children act upon the world, and they are not merely influenced by the world around them. What is more, they sometimes experience emotions differently from adults.

As I sit down in the theatre as a researcher of emotions, as a mother and as a human being, I am expecting an intense emotional experience, and then bursting into tears or laughing from joy. I have no idea that something else is going to happen. I will feel numb, and empty because emotions seem downplayed by the play. I will only much later realise that emotions are not absent or neglected in the play, but they are *in the body*, pre-discursive – just like recent studies in neuroscience testify.

Neuropolitics of Emotions

In order to get to the bottom of emotions in war, and emotions (not) represented in *Wij/Zij,* I turn to neuroscience. I turn to neuroscience, not because I want to reduce human experience to biology, but because I need to connect emotion with the body more firmly than social science is able to do. The well-known neuroscientist Antonio Damasio (2012) separates the physical reaction which is emotion from the *feeling of emotion*. Emotions are automated programs of actions carried out by our bodies and complemented by facial expressions, postures and visceral changes. Feelings of emotions, instead, are "*perceptions* of what happens in our body and mind when we are emoting" (ibid.: 109; italics in the original). The feeling of emotion consists of images of action taking place in our body when emoting. The brain maps (visually and non-visually) the world outside it (including the body proper). When this mapping enters consciousness as images or memory patterns, changes in the body caused by the emotion become part of consciousness and the self-process (see ibid.: 8– 9, 15, 68). Thus, an emotion, the corporeal process, is followed by a feeling of emotion, the conscious process. It is not the other way around.

To be more specific, emotion-triggering regions of the brain are activated leading to chemical molecules being delivered to brain and the body, actions being taken in the body and expressions being assumed. For example, in the case of fear cortisol is released, the individual may flee or freeze and takes certain postures or facial expression (ibid.: 110). The changes in our body states are the necessary mechanisms through which we know how to feel and how to react to that feeling. Feeling of emotion is based on a special relationship between the brain and the body: the capacity to map body processes, others' bodies included (ibid.: 109–111). But what is most interesting to me, is that this assembling of maps of objects takes place in movement and interaction (ibid.:

63–64). The body moves in a relationship to its environment, and in this movement the mapping of internal and external body states takes place.

This separation of emotion and feeling of emotion emphasises the corporeality of emotion, and enables perceiving the body's movement as politically significant. It also explains the pre-discursive nature of emotion and helps to make sense of children's experiences of war in *Wij/Zij*as, which I will explain below. Yet if we wish to avoid separating the body from the brain, we can also rely on Floyd Merrell's (2013: 13) conception of the *bodymind* which is the body and the mind together. The mind always follows the bodymind; the bodymind *does* before the mind becomes aware (ibid.). Both Damasio's and Merrell's conception of the human being rely on an understanding already voiced by the poet Walter Whitman on the "body electric" which is *the knowing body*, not only the knowing mind (see Lehrer 2008). So from now on, I will use the concept of bodymind to capture the oneness of emotion and body; the knowing body.

Children Who Witness

The day when the siege began in Beslan, September 1, 2004, was the traditional 'Day of Knowledge' celebrated in the school by the students with their families and relatives. Thus, from infants to elderly people, families had gathered to celebrate at the school. But the celebration would soon end and change into a siege that would last three days and take many lives and leave scars and traumas for life. Most of the captives at the school were children.

When children witness war, their emotional experience is a result of both 'nature and nurture', that is their biology and their previous experiences together. Every child experiences differently, just like every adult, but it is the developing brain that makes a child's experience differ from an adult's. The younger the child the less accumulated knowledge, experiences and cultural norms there are to influence the experience, and the less developed are the brain structures that deal with feelings of emotions. So, I want to make some remarks based on developmental psychology and trauma-related studies to help situate children's experience into their agency and their embodied emotions.

First, it has to be said that *childhood* is an ambiguous concept with political uses of the conceptions of child, youth and adult (Brocklehurst 2006). Adults are considered to be agents with responsibility whereas the younger the child, the less capable and responsible, and the more innocent, the child is considered to be. Childhood is sometimes represented as feminine with physical and emotional weakness, which Brocklehurst (2006: 12) coins as the "feminization

of childhood", referring to Cynthia Enloe's (2014) term 'womenandchildren' – the unchallenged conception of women in war. Moreover, representations of children's innocence and vulnerability are produced in the aesthetics of images depicting physical qualities, and again especially feminine qualities (Brocklehurst 2006: 16). For Brocklehurst (ibid.: 19) the dichotomy of the child and the adult is also at the root of the notion of the political; even if childhood studies is slowly beginning to recognise children's agency – their ability to participate in and inform social practices.

Moving beyond the representation of children in war through feminisation, weakness and emotionality, I am interested in a child as someone with a maturing brain and body experiencing and witnessing war in her own right; not as an extension of the mother's body but a unique and insightful individual who deals with a traumatic or dramatic experience. The difference between the child and the adult is, thus, not found in a feminised, romanticised and depoliticised image of the child.

Infants' emotional development starts with feelings of pain and pleasure. By eighteen months they will experience anger, fear of social events and unexpected sights and sounds, pride, shame and self-awareness, even though there are cultural differences. Early emotional expressions start with crying, soon followed by the social smile at about six weeks (Berger 2008, 188). Berger (ibid: 189) writes, "By the age of two, children can display the entire spectrum of emotional reactions". Synesthesia – a connection between senses and emotions in brain activation – seems to be common for infants, and it means that the sensory parts of the cortex are less distinct, which leads to brain activation in which a positive emotion can come out as tears, for example (ibid: 191). As we observe infants' and toddlers' emotions we should acknowledge that they are less nuanced, less distinguishable from one another and less controlled than adults'. The way an adult feels and expresses an emotion is not necessarily the way a child does. This makes it hard to interpret what the child is feeling.

Damasio, separating emotion and feeling of emotion, refers to emoting as the unconscious body process while the expression of emotion is controllable and educable (Damasio 2012: 123). Children have less control over their feelings of emotions – the conscious and linguistic – as the brain is maturing. Between the ages of two and six the brain specialises and the cortex gets more mature, and as memory improves, emotional self-regulation develops (Berger 2008: 191, 208, 277). Temperament affects developing emotional self-regulation and so do early childhood experiences and social contacts (ibid: 2008: 197, 200). Thus, expressing emotions is a learning process, and it is culturally influenced (ibid: 2008: 189, 278). Emotions are contagious, but especially to a child whose brain is maturing. If emotional control is learnt during the play years, as the brain matures and as the child interacts with others, in puberty and early

adolescence emotions are influenced by hormonal changes, and vice versa, while the adolescent brain keeps maturing and emotional regulation further develops (ibid: 2008: 410, 439).

Trauma, mistreatment and stress affect children and their emotional development. Normal development can be hindered, even resulting in "trauma-induced developmental pathways" (Coch et al. 2007). Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms in children include those such as reliving the event in dreams or play, avoidance of thoughts, feelings, and activities and emotional numbing (Salmon and Bryant 2002). In this sense war experience affects the child's development and war is not only transmitted as social heritage but embodied in the child, who grows up with this experience. The behaviour of the child does not clearly reflect the emotional experience, and as much as it does, it is culturally conditioned. Visible reactions can be very much controlled or constrained, and the developmental phase of the particular child, together with social learning, determines the ways in which a child emotes, feels the emotion and how she expresses them. For the representation that is transmitted, through art or media, we might easily lump children's war experience into one category which is defined from the perspective of adult emotions and which has only the role of a feminised victim to offer the child. Such victimisation does not emerge in the play *Wij/Zij*; there is no humanitarian ethos, and moreover, it represents children with active coping strategies. One such strategy is imagination, and the other one is the central theme of the play: the curious role of factual storytelling as a reaction to the traumatic event. This factual storytelling makes it look as if the children do not feel, as if they are in fact emotionally distanced. Yet reflecting on emotions as pre-discursive and corporeal, and less nuanced in the younger the child, it is not emotional distancing but emotions embodied and emotions not translated to the adult's language.

While it is clear that experiencing a violent siege, and witnessing killing, injury and fear and distress, results in severe trauma and psychological symptoms in both children and adults, as Moscardino et al. (2007) state in their study on caregivers' resilience after the Beslan siege, there can be cultural and social differences. They write, "In North Ossetia, children are socialized from an early age to restrain their emotional expressions in the presence of adults, to be obedient and respectful, to be sincere, and to be modest" (ibid.: 1779). The psychological reactions reported by the interviewed caregivers (out of seventeen caregivers, most were mothers) of the children included "behavioural problems, including increased irritability, aggression, sleep disorders, lack of appetite, separation anxiety, and regressive behaviours" (ibid.). Many of those interviewed also discussed physical symptoms such as headaches, stomach-ache, and ear pain (ibid.: 1781). The pain of war experience, the emoting in the body is also represented in *Wij/Zij* through a choreography of energetic movement

followed by collapses and the overemphasis on physical needs over feelings of emotions.

Wij/Zij as a Witness

Beslan School Number One, in North-Ossetia, Russia, was attacked by a somewhat disorganised group of about thirty-two Chechen and Ingush attackers. The siege was planned by the Chechen rebel leader Shamil Basayev. Over 1100 people, mostly schoolchildren, were held hostage ending in the death of over 330 people, of which 186 were children (see Scrimin et al. 2006, Moscardino et al. 2007, Ò Tuathail 2009).[14] Hundreds were injured in the siege which ended in the detonation of one of the bombs wired around the gym where people were being held, bringing down the roof and causing a fire. Not only police, secret service and the military took part in the chaotic rescue operation but also armed parents and local inhabitants. Hunger and heat caused additional suffering for the hostages; and in a weak and confused state, the school being shelled and in flames, escaping the school was impossible for many (Burleigh 2008, 430). The reasons for the attack are unclear and Ò Tuathail (2009) explains how there were different interpretations among the people in the region, as some accepted the Kremlin's rhetoric accusing international terrorism while others saw the historical ethnic conflicts between Ingush and Ossetians behind the attack. In fact, less accepted was the explanation of the Chechen cause, even if Basayev took responsibility for the siege and the group made demands for ending the war in Chechnya (ibid.).

Ten years after the siege a theatre play was presented to audiences above the age of nine. *Bronk*s has an educative mission and invites school groups to attend to their plays, and for *Wij/Zij* a special information sheet, topics for discussion and exercises were offered as supportive material (Bronks 2014). This way the theatre acknowledges children as witnesses to war and offers them an opportunity for reflection on the war experience. The fact that the play is for children and youth means that it could not be about violence directly and visually. But children do consume images of war through the media. The director of the play, Carly Wijs, believes that we can and should talk with children about the affairs going on the world, to which they are exposed to as spectators. She explains that a theatre must dare to reflect on the world outside itself (Wijs 2014). Wijs discovered that in children's experience there seems to

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14   The numbers vary for the hostage-takers, hostages, injured and killed from one
     source to the other.

be some emotional distancing which manifests in a static and documentary-like approach to witnessing violence (ibid.). Even if the play is about the terror in Beslan, the director wants to raise questions more broadly about children witnessing war through different media.

My research methodology takes the body, or the bodymind to be more specific, as a witness which interacts with other bodyminds. Performance is alive and pulsating because the body interacts through warmth, sweat, breath, colour, skin, movement and so forth. Emotions are circulating between the performers and the audience, and not only between minds, but the bodymind.[15] Mistakes, imperfections and improvisation are part of the interaction in a performance, as well as the audience's reaction which can fuel excitement, fear or other reactions in the performers. Performance is always unique and as such unreachable after it has ended. I had to rely much on the recorded version to refresh my memory on the specifics of the play, but the original viewing is my first and foremost anchor as a source of insight into the emotional experience as played and performed to me and awakened in me that day. That insight is as much intellectual as it is corporeal.

What are we searching for with our bodies? Unable to speak for children the researcher's body attempts to sense the embodied war experience and find capacities, solutions, voices and silences; glimpses of something that does not quite fit the dominant narratives of war. By searching through art's representation, uncertainty and imperfection in a performance is welcomed because it produces insight. One of the actors in *Wij/Zij* stutters, and instead of ruining the performance it makes it more intense by exposing the vulnerability of the performer's body. Yet, the stuttering is not the voice of a person who experienced the siege in Beslan. It is the actor's as he moves and interacts, as his body communicates a story and creates art. Art, then, is not a reliable interpretation of someone's experience but a source of insight for making sense of experiences, war and agency. Art, including the stuttering, is the bridge between individuals' subjective experiences.

Art presented here takes the form of a theatrical play. The play is not a witness that was present at an event. The play is a witness to visual politics in an age of war photography and film. We all witness war through different means and are affected by war by varying degrees. The children in School Number One experienced and eye-witnessed the events, while *Wij/Zij* moves or mediates between these experiences of war – relying on witnessing witness testimonials – and the more distant witnessing of war by children all over the world. Then there is the researcher who tries to make sense of all this. The connecting thread of experiencing and witnessing is the emotion that the bodymind experiences and expresses.

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15   See Sara Ahmed (2004) for the idea of "circulation of affects".

The play is not a 'window to reality' in the way a film or a photograph is often considered an eyewitness, sometimes even a heroic one. There is no camera through which to testify to events, places and bodies. The play does not rely on images from the war zone, but creates its own version of war experience through the actor's bodies and narratives. What kind of a witness is a theatre play, which relies on some known facts about a terrorist attack on a school, but takes great liberties in interpreting war experience? The play does not even transmit a witness testimonial or attempt to capture the authentic. Rather it reflects on war experience at two levels: 1) the ways in which children *experience war* (differently from adults) and 2) the ways in which children at a distance *witness war* through the media representations of a siege. Thus, experiencing and witnessing are mixed into the art created by the play.

In the aesthetics of *Wij/Zij* one can find the political. The play makes visible that there is a private experience of a child behind the media coverage. It is an inquiry into the human bodymind in which the aesthetic-political agent is a child with a child's developing mind. International politics is being made there where the child meets the violent world. Yet the play is not a performance *about* the political. It makes the bodymind, the child, and the audience participatory *in* the political.

Social Emotions and the Lack of them

The space feels intimate and the audience feels physically close to the actors. The set up of the play is very simple and bare: Only two actors in an open space with black balloons on the side, chalk to draw with, and later strings attached around the stage. There is a girl, wearing a blue shirt, and a bearded boy, dressed in a yellow shirt. We do not know their ages, but for me the bearded male suggests they are not the youngest children. When the play begins the girl and the boy are kneeling down. They start drawing lines on the floor. They are demarcating the lines of the blueprint of the building where the school siege took place (Fig. 10.1). But they are also drawing the physical space of violence – a space visited by death and suffering. The lines they draw on the floor not only represent the walls of a school, but the walls of a site of violence: walls which would become ruins and rubble, material embodiments of trauma.

But now, the children draw casually, or rather, enthusiastically, because they cannot wait to share their story with the audience. They remember all the little details, and they want you to know all the little details too. Who stood where, what happened, where, and who said what. They share the details of the village, and mention the bordering region of Chechnya and the school system over

there. They tell, because they know and they can inform us. Their approach to the events of Beslan is factual and statistical.

Fig. 10.1: *Wij/Zij*. Actors are demarcating lines. (Photo by Theatre Bronks)

The two narrators are connected. When they draw together they cross each other and they draw in harmony. They move together and talk together, their speech is connected yet independent. They partially talk over each other and at times step back to let the other one do the talking. They also compete for the attention of being the one to give the details. They are energetic, vital and their movement is the only visible human connection to be found in the play.

Emotions are rarely, if ever, fully private experiences. Emotions are shared between the self and the environment even when experienced as inner states. Even if they are two on stage, the social element of emotion is lacking. It is not that the characters are unemotional; quite the opposite. They express plenty and richly, for example, with a sense of hurry and excitement and especially through their physical needs, which I will come back to. They move powerfully, and sometimes express vulnerability – the characters, the actors, are very human. But *them (zij)*, is missing from the visual field. *The other* is absent. The mourning, suffering, dying, scared victims are missing too; and the interaction between us and them. The roles are being played in a manner which makes it difficult to capture feelings, except for physical exhaustion. When there is imaginary interaction between the terrorists and the victims, it is statistical. Furthermore,

since the terrorists' bodies are nowhere to be seen and felt, their interaction is hard to imagine. Social emotions, those affects that we share and circulate between each other, are excluded from the visual field and the felt sense.

The role of visible bodies, friend and enemy, can be explained with Damasio's (2012) help. According to Damasio the brain is able to both map its own body states but also the body states of others. Enabling the simulation of another organism's body state is found, at least partly, in the mirror neurons. The mirror neurons operate so that we are able to place ourselves in a body state of someone else. As we observe movement, our body states become as if we were moving ourselves (Damasio 2012: 103). Ramachandran and Blakeslee (1998) suggest that perhaps our association of the self with our body is less fixed as we might think, and that we may actually feel as if in another body. As an example they mention a chess game in which you might almost feel like you are in the body of the piece you are moving or defending (Ramachandran and Blakeslee 1998: 250). Thus, the absence of the physical bodies of the victims and the perpetrators makes it more difficult to connect with them. This is not to say that language does not matter, for the spoken or written word triggers powerful emotions too. Yet, there is something unique about the way we interact in the same space, or when we see and feel bodies in movement, that is not present when we only describe these movements or relations. There is something more fundamental in the lack of visible bodies expressing social emotions: when the categorical bodies of 'victim' and 'perpetrator' or 'enemy' are missing the spectators of the play are forced to see – to really see – the two children as they navigate the space with their own bodies, resisting categorisation and resisting dismissing their experience as politically insignificant.

It is not only that the visual register is not excited enough to imagine social emotions in action but also, or perhaps, in particular, the resistance of the typical roles of war experience: the victim-perpetrator dualism, even if the name of the play itself (Us/Them) would suggest the opposite. The characters are as if 'unaffected witnesses' or observers. As if they were documentary filmmakers or photographers who testify and deliver the testimonial, but are not traumatised themselves. If we go back to both Damasio's concepts of emoting and the developing emotional control coupled with social constrains, the seeming lack of emotions such as fear, anger and resentment or compassion in the play does not mean the actors are not representing emotions, or that children experiencing and witnessing war are not experiencing these emotions. The statistical approach in which the girl and the boy express enthusiastically the details of the event without clear signs of trauma or distress could be a coping strategy, it could represent local culture, it could be the workings of the maturing brain. The statistical approach and the lack of feelings of emotions could also be explained through pre-discursive emoting.

When social relations, social emotions and feelings of emotions are invisible, buried under the scientific rigour of the boy and the girl and their moving bodies, there are moments in the play that invite the audience to some pre-discursive emoting. Because these moments are rare, they stand out. They come, at least to me, when music is played loudly and the boy and the girl start moving with speed and intensity, and when the boy starts singing with a powerful voice a song in Russian, *Poljushkoje Polje*, from the 1930s Soviet Union, about a soldier going to war. Their narration blends with the music and it does not matter anymore what they say. The detail, the statistics of what happened where, is silenced and the music-movement takes over the space and invites the spectator to an exchange of emotions. But again, not *feelings of emotions* (the conscious) but the energy of the music-movement (the bodymind). Not feelings of emotions in the victim-perpetrator framework of judgement and pity, but through the bodies which suddenly speak the language of emotions we recognise viscerally, corporeally, but not intellectually. The embodiment of emotion is found in (e)*motion*.

The music ends and the actors utter the word "dead". The girl is physically exhausted from running and moving. The boy lies on the floor slowly dying, making a choking noise. The girl starts choking too. But they correct that the noise is not from death, but from more than a thousand dehydrated people. Their throats are dry, heads hurting, they have cramps, they are hallucinating images of food.

The Thirst and the Giraffe

The play utilises as its source of knowledge a BBC documentary *Children of Beslan* (2005), directed by Ewa Ewart and Leslie Woodhead, and contains many references to it. The film in which children are interviewed is perhaps the closest, right after person-to-person interaction, one can get to being able to see the child's perspective to experiencing war. The documentary shows colourful balloons commemorating the celebration of the Day of Knowledge. The play has balloons too, but they are black and later turn into bombs. In the documentary, children tell about the events in a factual manner, without tears. They are reserved and composed. The difference between the documentary and the play is that in the play the children are more energetic, they are less culturally represented through the value of modesty as the documentary portrays. In order to discuss further the experience of war the play represents I will turn occasionally to the documentary from now on.

Earlier, I quoted Merrell (2003: 13) on how mind follows the *bodymind*. Body and its experiences are exaggerated in the play. It is the bodymind doing – in Damasio's words *emoting* – but without expressing the feeling of emotion, or expressing it so subtly that it is easy to miss. Emotion is not lacking in children's experience of violence, but based on the play and the documentary film, along with the insight from developmental psychology on the maturing brain, emoting itself is less social, perhaps, more corporeal, more in-the-flesh than in language. In the documentary film, the children pause and slow their speech when they say something that is difficult, their bodies are still and tense. In the play, the boy and the girl do the opposite, they move, they dance, followed by intense physical reactions like fainting. Both the play and the documentary present children expressing through movement and stillness their emotional states. The calm and composure in the documentary, and the energetic-fainting children of the play, offer insights into emotions as embodied, even if we are unable to understand their experience. The practical application of this insight, I propose, is to pay attention to the body as a site of emotions, and the body as the site of healing, after witnessing and experiencing war.

What the body expresses in the play is physical exhaustion, like thirst, which was the most pressing need for the hostages deprived of water for three days. It expresses loss of freedom when being captive in the gymnasium, constrained by the commands of the terrorists. Visually, the boy and the girl are constrained by the wiring of the bombs (white strings crossing the stage) which they try to dodge as they jump and run around. The jumping and the running reminds me of child's innate need to move, which makes it even harder for them to keep still. In the gym, children have lost the freedom to move, to use their voices, to touch, to play. The heat is overwhelming and the girl removes her skirt while the boy is ashamed and unable to undress (see Fig. 10.2; see also plate 13).

I stay with this image: the wiring, the crowded space, and limitation of movement. It is an aspect of war experience not too often acknowledged because we centre around physical violence that visibly 'hurts' and leaves scars. Being unable to move also hurts, not being able to touch, or laugh or speak also hurts. Boredom hurts. So what do the children do when they are hurt by the physical constraints and inability to fulfil their basic needs? In the play, they sing and dance together. But they are not able to sing and dance in the gym, so it must be their imagination. This dance is interrupted as they hit the wiring – the wiring that constrained their movement – as if bringing them back to reality.

The movement of the terrorists is also constrained. We come back to the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim, and the play's resistance of this categorisation as clear-cut. The girl and the boy explain how difficult it was for the terrorists to keep the detonators from activating the bombs by keeping a foot on them, and changing every two hours, slowly, very carefully. The

terrorist on the detonator cannot scratch or move. He cannot play basketball, or think about the purpose of life or his purpose in the gym, or do nothing else but to keep a foot on the detonator and change it carefully every two hours – or else BOOM! The boy and the girl proceed to mathematical calculations about the number of terrorists and how many hostages are still alive. Again they attend to the perspective of the terrorist, by mentioning how one of the terrorist women is killed because she gives water to a child, blurring the victim-perpetrator divide.

Fig. 10.2: *Wij/Zij*. Detonator and wires. (Photo by Theatre Bronks)

The hostages are statistics – dead or alive, they are only numbers. The boy explains the demands of the terrorists and the girl finds it funny that *liberty* is a word that keeps repeating while they are captive in the school. They have the same objective: freedom. Offering the perspective of the terrorist, again as factual, not as emotion, and the figure of the terrorist as physically constrained too, forces the viewer to reflect on the roles we assign to people at war.

But again the children feel exhausted by the heat. In the extreme situation, hungry and thirsty in the heat, trying to keep quiet and still, the children, inventive as they are, utilise their imagination. The play takes us to the world of dreaming – the subliminal – which, I believe, is one key instrument in the play's potential for reflection. It is as if a challenge to the children's factual-statistical

reaction to the violent event, even if the scenes which refer to imagination are not always so evident. What caught my attention as a spectator were dreams of a giraffe, a *Mission Impossible* (the film starring Tom Cruise) rescue, and alternative endings presented for the audience. The girl hallucinates about a giraffe surrounded by a cloud of smoke. The audience can smell the rather strong odour of the smoke and enter the dreamworld as their visual field is clouded. The hallucination makes her excited and agitated. Such excitement of "something is happening!" takes place in between the waiting and boredom of "nothing is happening". For the child such boredom can be excruciating, and the mind is then the only rescue. The *Mission Impossible* theme song accompanies a heroic intervention by "the courageous", eliminating all terrorists. Heroism was detected by Moscardino et al (2007: 1785) as an important cultural value in Beslan affecting local reactions to the siege. This heroism also plays a role in the beginning of the play when the children describe how the fathers race to drive as quickly as possible to the school. Moreover, even if the rescuers come from the outside of the building, the children are heroic too in their perseverance and attempts to help and save others. For the men of this region, in particular, showing vulnerability and emotion is not desirable (ibid.: 1784), thus the heroic male (adult or child) shows strength.

The two children then reveal that the rescue mission did not really go in the Tom Cruise style, but rather, embracing each other in sadness, they discover parents and children dead everywhere in the gym. A third version follows in which everyone is saved and the terrorist leader kneels down, takes off his mask and cries and asks for forgiveness while Aretha Franklin's *Oh Happy Days* plays in the background. Mothers look at the terrorists in the way only mothers can. The mothers say "no big deal", "we forgive you, everyone makes mistakes". They are forgiven, they forgive. The girl is back then with the giraffe, being elevated into the sky, and the boy wakes up in hospital. This storytelling – factual, corporal, imaginative – stands out as children's agency.

Militarization of Childhood

Let me take a small excursion into the question of the militarisation of childhood as it frames the witnessing of war in the case of Beslan. In *Wij/Zij* there is a connection between the extraordinary direct experience of a hostage crisis and the more distant everyday witnessing of such events as the Beslan school siege. The play demonstrates the linkages between the two spaces where children experience and witness war. This experiencing and witnessing can lead to the militarisation of childhood, that is, facilitating a prioritisation of violent

solutions to insecurity, or military values and ideas being normalised (Basham 2011). It is important to acknowledge that in Beslan the impact of the siege – the impact of terror and the military solution to it – affected the entire community. As Moscardino et al. (2007) write, the attack severed communal ties and customs on a large scale. The attack affected the everyday traditional and cultural customs to the extent that the individual effects were accompanied with communal effects (ibid.: 1784).

Based on the documentary film and the play alike, the children of Beslan have a conception of violence in the form of terrorism. They have a conception of a heroic military, and some even have a conception of how much their life is worth in money, as compensation was offered by the Russian authorities for their suffering. They see terrorists as evil and they have first-hand experience of brutal violence, torture and the use of military force. One boy in the documentary film says they all became grown-ups, serious, after the event. Moscardino et al. (ibid.: 1781) document how a caregiver states "Before they were two very happy boys, but now they have changed radically: S. has become more adult, while A. looks much older. Something inside him has broken".

The economy of terrorism, militarisation, and a sense of good and evil are all apprehended through the experience of war in the gym of School Number One. If we listen carefully, this means that the line between the adult and the child blurs: "we have grown up, we have become serious". Their participation in the world of the political is tangible. But it is not only politically significant that the children of Beslan have conceptions and experiences of terrorism and the military. The pressing issue is how they grow into a culture of violence by these experiences, through witnessing war *in their own bodies*. The children of Beslan are not necessarily militarised because of the siege, rather, the experience of the siege can intensify the militarisation of their lives, and even create a turning point in which their interest in and knowledge about organised violence increases dramatically. The children of the documentary film dream of revenge. One young boy is thinking all houses should have missiles on their roofs when he plays with his Legos. One girl is burning pictures she draws of the terrorists. One boy dreams of cutting the throats of the terrorists open. Yet, these stories are only the surface: they are the reactions of the children expressed in words through a camera (perhaps also mediated by adults). There is likely much more the children experience in their bodyminds that they themselves are unable to vocalise. Thus, seeds of violence are planted deep, and the daily presence of armed forces guarding the school after the attack is just one example of how war continues to be lived.

In a study on Chechen suicide terrorism Speckhard and Ahkmedova (2006) found that traumatic experiences and feeling a duty to revenge made individuals more vulnerable to become recruited and self-recruited into terrorist acts. Both perpetrators and targets of violence can have a similar background of exposure

to extreme violence and trauma. This is the breeding ground for cycles of violence which can originate in childhood. Again, the categorisations get blurred as militarisation, and witnessing/experiencing violence, results in victims turning into perpetrators. Anna Politkovskaya's (2010: 269) discusses the killing of three of the terrorists (one man and two women) in Beslan by their leader due to their demands to let the children drink and leave – the same event referred to in the play. Politkovskaya asks are these three victims or fighters? Furthermore Politkovskaya (ibid.: 270) traces the siege in Beslan as one episode in the continuing Chechen slaughter and violation of human rights which creates only more resistance fighters. Nevertheless, when challenging the victim/perpetrator dichotomy (and I would rather use 'target of violence' than 'victim') one has to be mindful of ethical concerns related to it. Sometimes we need to name perpetrators as perpetrators to be clear about agency and responsibility.

Regardless of the extensive loss and trauma caused to the community and all the affected individuals in Beslan, in the same bodymind which imagines revenge and missiles, resides also the capacity to heal, help, support and imagine being lifted up high above all the suffering by a giraffe. Moscardino et al. (2007: 1785) identify resilience and healing strategies among the affected families, such as the reaffirmation of shared cultural values, affection among children and their parents, laughter and simply being together. These healing strategies are extremely important to study and discuss just as are the causes of violence and the means to end violence.

Conclusion

With regard to photography, Frank Möller (2010) raises the important question of *how* we witness, and proposes that witnessing through art can be an active engagement where the witness becomes a self-critical active observer. The play itself encourages this by media-critical references and pre-discursive emotional representation. Especially towards the end of the play, media criticism is demonstrated humorously by the girl showing the audience how her face after the siege was screened in news around the world. A drop of blood is coming out of her ear, and the image goes global but is accompanied by nationally selected music. "But what a pity they show the less flattering side of my face", she ironically states. More importantly, the play situates the child at the centre of the war stage. The children of the play are by no means ignorant; they are immersed in detailed knowledge of the event, of their surroundings, the blueprint of the school. Children who witness at a distance are not ignorant,

either. It is important that the play is *for* children because this way it promotes children's own active engagement with witnessing, and offers an alternative way to reflect on war experience besides media representations and macabre aesthetics.

The play is an attempt to represent the child, but in the end, adults make the play. There are practical and ethical problems in engaging children in presenting their experiences of violence in the public, so for quite obvious reasons we have the adult as an intermediary between the child-witness and the audience. Even if we are still somehow captives of the child-adult power relation, the play encourages an adult's engagement with the child's world, rather than adults imposing their world upon children. The play does not adhere to the 'womenandchildren' categorisation where the child is a feminised, weak extension to the mother's body. Instead, the children of the play are imaginative, moving, living, breathing – and also dying – human being.

The war experience is heavily mediated by the theatrical format: witnessing takes place through such modalities which prevent meeting the actual individuals, hearing their voices. The audience is not encouraged to feel emotions – that is, *feel for* the victims – but to reflect on children *emoting*. Curiously enough, this is exactly what makes the play invite the spectator to engage as it relies on the aesthetic rather than the authentic, and the emotion rather than the feeling of emotion. The play does not represent trauma, but the siege as a documented event, representing emotions embodied by children. *Wij/Zij* does not tap into the emotions which we typically associate with war. The play does not touch us in the ordinary sense, because we are not offered representations of feelings of emotions, but rather emoting bodies. The body and its needs become the site of the political in war.

Wij/Zij sees children with agency both in terms of experiencing and witnessing a violent event through representing the peculiar statistical, yet imaginative, approach to the school siege, and questioning the assumption of children in war as mere powerless victims, feminised, over-emotional, weak, less rational. Perhaps children are able to imagine better futures, like the girl and the boy imagine how they are rescued, how the giraffe lifts the girl up when the world has collapsed. I want to leave the reader with this one insight: the capacity for imagination that sustains and nurtures us all.

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Filmography

Children of Beslan (2005), HBO documentary film, directed by Ewa Ewart and Leslie Woodhead.

11. The Violence of Witnessing

Frank Möller

Canadian filmmaker Peter Raymont begins and ends his documentary *Shake Hands with the Devil* – a film about the return journey in 2004 of UNAMIR (United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda) commander Roméo Dallaire to Rwanda – with images of a passport photograph of a young person embedded in and floating on clouds.[1] These images are compelling and deeply moving for at least two reasons. The first reason stems from the clouds, more precisely, from the meaning assigned to clouds in art theory and history. For Ernst van Alphen, referring to Hubert Damisch's work, clouds are "signs that have different meanings in different pictorial contexts" (van Alphen 2005: 5). The cloud "always opens up another dimension than the one at first revealed by the pictorial system of which it is part" (ibid.). A cloud, thus, is never just a cloud. Rather, it is a 'cloud' or, in Damisch's work, a '/cloud/', providing access to that which cannot be represented, thus engaging – and expanding – the limits of representation. Clouds "are able to make present that which withdraws from our cognitive power" (ibid.: 9). The 'cloud' combines what van Alphen calls the space of landscape and the space of architecture as visual vehicles with which to engage vision. The space of landscape operates by seducing viewers and tricking them into engagement while the space of architecture raises obstacles, and "obstacles encourage the desire to conquer them, to do something when it is forbidden, to try something when it is impossible, to intrude on a space that is not yours and has to be respected as secret or somebody else's" (ibid.: 92). I will have more to say on the encouragement to intrude on somebody else's space below. For the moment, I would just like to note that the 'cloud' tricks viewers into the image's space and its underlying conditions while simultaneously making it difficult for viewers to get out of the image's space again.

The issue here is not one of spaces of landscape or architecture as realistic elements. Just as a 'cloud' cannot be limited to a realistic representation of condensed watery vapour, "the space of landscape" does not equal landscape, and "the space of architecture" does not equal architecture: the "depiction of landscape or architecture is … not an end in itself as a representation of space" (ibid.: 73); instead, "it is the means by which the space of representation is explored, challenged, and exposed" (ibid.). And it is explored, challenged and

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[1]   *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Journey of Roméo Dallaire*, directed by Peter Raymont (White Pine Productions, 2004), 00:00–00:36 and 1:28:16–1:28:36.

exposed in such a manner that engagement – including engagement with the unrepresentable – almost becomes inevitable. The cloud demands engagement, not (only) aesthetic gratification (although aesthetic gratification can be part of what makes the cloud irresistible). Engagement transforms spectators into witnesses – not only of a given work of art but also of that which this work of art references.

The visual artist Alfredo Jaar includes a photograph of a cloud in his *Rwanda Project, 1994–2000*. In *Field, Road, Cloud* (Jaar 1998), Jaar uses three photographs that he took after the genocide among which there is a picture of a white cloud framed by blue sky. If the issue here were only one of aesthetic gratification, then the representation of the cloud could be criticized in terms of unseemly, unethical and unproductive aestheticisation (Reinhardt 2007: 21). However, this photograph is connected with the memories of the genocide by means of a geographical sketch of where the photograph had been taken: the "LONELY CLOUD" is above Ntarama church. Viewers familiar with the *Rwanda Project* know that Ntarama church is the place where Gutete Emerita, the subject of another part of the project, witnessed the murder of her husband and sons. Viewers *un*familiar with the *Rwanda Project* probably do not know that – unless they have knowledge of the genocide acquired independent of Jaar's work. They are told only that the picture was taken on August 29, 1994 (the use of the word "SHOT" is irritating in this context but it points to photography's violent potentialities), that it was the 28th picture taken (on that particular day? of this cloud, as the arrow seems to indicate? in the whole project?), that Ntarama church is located in Nyamata, 40 kilometres south of Kigali, and that something terrible – unrepresentable? unfathomable? inconceivable? – must have happened close to the church since the words "BODIES 500?" indicate such (although the question mark undermines assurance). The task of assembling the visual and the textual pieces of the puzzle is assigned to the viewers and this procedure is more likely to result in viewers' ongoing engagement than those pieces of the *Rwanda Project* where text provides a fuller commentary (Möller 2013: 96–98). In 2006, Jaar produced an even more radical work titled *An Atlas of Clouds* – photographs of six clouds taken in South Africa, Namibia, Nigeria, Zaire, Rwanda and Angola – "stripped of all words" (Schweizer 2008: 156).

Brazilian artist Vik Muniz, in *Equivalents*, uses cotton to imitate clouds imitating famous photographs of clouds; in *Pictures of Clouds*, he produces what appear to be clouds by means of a skywriting plane – both projects less interested in a cloud than, instead, the "idea of a cloud" (Muniz 2009: 20), and in viewers' reactions and designations of meaning when exposed to a cloud that isn't a cloud. Simon Baker, photography curator at Tate Modern, chose to include in the exhibition *Conflict ▪ Time ▪ Photography* photographs by Stephen Shore from the series *Ukraine (2012–13)* showing everyday belongings of

Holocaust survivors. According to Karen Wright (2014), "Baker has chosen to hang them as 'clouds' of images, clumped together, a simple caption of the 'sitter' their only labelling".[2]

Fig. 11.1: Richard Misrach: Norco Cumulus Cloud, Shell Oil Refinery, Norco, Louisiana, 1998 © Richard Misrach, courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco, Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York and Marc Selwyn Fine Art, Los Angeles

Like Muniz, photographer Richard Misrach took pictures of what only seem to be natural clouds but his work is less playful, more disturbing than Muniz's. In a photograph titled 'Norco Cumulus Cloud, Shell Oil Refinery, Norco, Louisiana, 1998' (Fig. 11.1; see also plate 14) viewers see, according to Misrach, "natural-looking clouds" hovering over an oil refinery, but what they do not see is that these clouds are "created by the comingling of moisture and volatile hydrocarbons that originate in the process of refining gasoline, jet fuel, cooking

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[2]   *Conflict • Time • Photography* was on show from November 26, 2014 to March 15, 2015 and included Toshio Fukada's photographs of the mushroom clouds produced on August 6, 1945 by the atomic bomb dropped over Hiroshima.

oil, and other products" (Misrach and Orff 2014:6[3]). At first, then, viewers see clouds hovering over a massive industrial complex. By Damisch, through van Alphen, by Misrach, however, these clouds, as 'clouds', also provide access to that which is intangible and invisible; for example, massive pollution and health hazards. These 'clouds' are obstacles that have to be conquered in order to reveal what John Roberts calls the "thing itself" (2014: 160; see also below).

Passports and 'Passports'

The second reason why Raymont's cinematography is compelling derives from the passport photograph floating on the clouds. Rafiki Ubaldo, too, has photographed a passport but in his photograph, the original photograph is barely visible (Fig. 11.2; see also plate 15). While Raymont's images invite viewers to identify and empathize with the individual depicted in the passport photograph, Ubaldo's photograph also invites such identification but, by operating on the symbolic level in transforming a passport into a 'passport', it renders identification *only* with a single individual impossible while simultaneously pointing beyond the passport. "When I see a face in a photograph", James Elkins (2011: 70) writes, "I tend to focus on the face, and my sense of the rest of the photograph goes out of focus". When I expect to see a face in a photograph but this face is actually invisible or barely visible, I focus my attention on the rest of the photograph and the relationship between the 'rest' and the – absent – face. I also focus on what the absence of the face might indicate.

In her discussion of passport photographs of people socially constructed as celebrities, Sarah Gilbert (2013) suggests that passport photographs are "the most universal and democratic form of portraiture ever invented". They may be the most *universal* and the most *standardized* form of portraiture ever invented; from this it does not necessarily follow, however, that they are *democratic* forms of portraiture. After all, the option *not* to have one's picture taken does not exist. Passports are a means of social control exerted by the state upon the citizens; they regulate patterns of institutionalized inclusion and exclusion, rights and obligations, privilegisation and discrimination, sameness and otherness, symbolizing both the rights granted those who are in the possession of a passport and the denial of these very rights with regard to those who are not. My passport is not my property; instead, it is property of the issuing state. With property come claims to ownership.

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[3]   The photograph is reproduced on p. 7 and contextualised on pp. 152–153.

Fig. 11.2: Clearly visible on this ID are the terms *Hutu*, *Tutsi*, *Twa* and *Naturalisé*. Having a Tutsi marked ID meant death. This ID card is kept in a glass cupboard in the underground section of Nyamata Church Genocide Memorial. The Memorial is located in the Bugesera region, Eastern Province, about 35 kilometres outside Kigali, the capital. Photograph and caption: Rafiki Ubaldo; reproduced with permission.

However, a passport cannot be limited to social control and the regulation of the behaviour of individuals. Indeed, enormous hopes are pinned to 'papers' especially among those who do not have any or those who do not happen to have the 'right' ones (see Fig. 11.3).

Furthermore, there are various forms of artistic re-appropriation with which to challenge the control function of identity photographs. In the context of apartheid South Africa, for example, painterly alterations of identity photographs "transform[ed] the connotation of subjection and separation into one of aspiration and social stability" (Peffer 2016: 127). For the relatives of the disappeared of the Algerian Civil War, identity photographs of the disappeared integrated into Omar D's artworks "can often be the only [images] that families possess of disappeared relatives" (McGonagle 2014: 87). Viewers are invited both "to remember the disappeared" and to "resist state-led attempts to institutionalise their forgetting" (ibid.: 88). In this context, Susan Sontag's claim that it is a *problem* that people "remember only the photographs" (2003: 89)

appears insensitive just as does her assessment that to "make peace is to forget" (ibid.: 115).

Fig. 11.3: "Nobody is illegal – papers for all!" (Praça Martim Moniz, Lisbon, August 27, 2009). Photograph: Frank Möller

Just as a 'cloud' cannot be limited to a realistic representation of a cloud, a passport photograph cannot be limited to a realistic representation of the person depicted, and that has got nothing to do with the fact that many people do not recognize themselves in such photographs, which often resemble mug shots (Edkins 2005) rather than portraits. There are, thus, always different layers of meaning, different layers of representation, and different layers of interpretation in addition to the ones ideally – or mythologically – assigned to passports in democratic political systems.

During the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, passport photographs – in tandem with the entry 'ethnie' – served a different purpose, a sinister purpose, a purpose far removed from a political system characterized by equal rights for all citizens and also far removed from an understanding of passports as documents protecting their holders from insecurity, vulnerability and arbitrary persecution, equipping them instead with a sense of security and perhaps even community. During the genocide, identity cards and photographs, seemingly reproducing facial attributes assigned to people socially constructed as 'Hutus' and 'Tutsi', contributed to and facilitated the identification and selection of 'Tutsi' for immediate execution. Linda Melvern, introducing the work of photographer

Pieter Hugo in post-genocide Rwanda – one of several photographers who found the subject irresistible (see, for example, Jaar 1998; Lyons and Straus 2006; Torgovnik 2009) – comments on the function of identity cards during the genocide as follows:

The massacres were organized and efficient, their planning at the centre of state doctrine. Every part of society was involved: doctors murdered their patients, teachers their pupils; neighbours killed their neighbours. The militia moved systematically from house to house slaughtering anyone found to carry an identity card with the designation Tutsi (Melvern 2011: 7).

Ten years after the genocide, Hugo took a photograph at a former road-block. This photograph is titled 'SITE OF A ROADBLOCK.GATYAZO. GIKONGORO' (Fig. 11.4; see also plate 16). The photographer contextualizes the photograph as follows:

Each person's identity card was checked at the roadblocks. Anyone who was designated Tutsi was killed. After a while, cards were no longer checked and anyone who simply looked like a Tutsi was killed. Some roadblocks were well organised with corpses piled neatly alongside. Others had piles of bodies cut in pieces. Tipper trucks sometimes came by with prisoners detailed to collect bodies from the streets. Roadblocks became chaotic with drunkenness, drug abuse and sadistic cruelty. On one stretch of road in Kigali there was a barricade across the road every 100 metres (Hugo and Melvern 2011: 61).[4]

In the 1930s, the colonial administration introduced ethnicity-based identity cards, thus fixing and stabilizing a social institution that had already existed in pre-colonial Rwanda but gained "full emotive force under European colonialism" (Pottier 2002: 114). The colonial administration took "an existing sociopolitical distinction and racialize[d] it" in connection with the official census of 1933–34 by classifying its subjects according to ethnic lines (Mamdani 2001: 99). This classification system, embodied and naturalized in the personal document, is clearly visible in Ubaldo's photograph (see above, Fig. 11.2 and also plate 15):

Ubwoko (Hutu, Tutsi, Twa, Naturalisé)
Ethnie

This classification was accompanied by anthropological, seemingly scientific measurement of bodily features establishing racialised hierarchies in accordance

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[4]   The photograph is also reproduced on p. 61 of Hugo and Melvern (2011). Like Raymont, Hugo is looking back, ten years after the genocide. Raymont includes in his film original footage from the roadblocks (e.g., 18:29–18:36, 18:52–18:58 and 20:17–21:24).

with the colonizers' political ideas and interests. Visual representations of such measurements and classifications constructing human beings as "elements of difference" (Dallaire) can be seen in Raymont's film in original footage from the colonial era.[5] Numerous processes of reorganizing Rwandan society along ethnic lines followed: school curricula emphasized ethnicity; pupils and students were separated along ethnic lines; courts required people to identify themselves in ethnic terms; everybody older than sixteen years of age had to carry an identity card; and censuses (of which there were two, one in 1978, the other in 1991) required the identification of the household head's ethnicity (Fujii 2009: 108–110). On the one hand, then, the system became more rigid, less permeable. Moving from one ethnic category to the other, reflecting changes in a person's socioeconomic status or strategic adaptations, had to some extent been possible hitherto – provided that the community accepted such a move (ibid.: 115). It now became much more difficult: After the 1933 census,

neither *kwihutura* (the social rise of an individual Hutu to the status of a Tutsi) nor *gucupira* (the social fall from a Tutsi to a Hutu status) was any longer possible. For the first time in the history of the state of Rwanda, the identities 'Tutsi' and 'Hutu' held permanently (Mamdani 2001: 101).

On the other hand, there still seem to have been possibilities for the strategic employment of 'ethnicity' when dealing with the authorities. As Lee Ann Fujii (2009: 111) explains, the state "relied on a system of self-identification, which gave people space to define themselves according to current political conditions". During the genocide, however, there was hardly any space for a strategic approach to ethnicity. Of course, neither the censuses nor the identity cards *caused* the genocide but the documents, sixty years after their introduction, facilitated the technical implementation of the killings. In a cruel twist, then, a document meant to give its holder some degree of security; a document obliging authorities to come to its holder's assistance if need be and to treat him or her in a lawful manner; a document usually regarded as the condition of possibility for a safe life without discrimination, insecurity and unjust prosecution – such a document was used during the genocide to systematically maim, rape and kill people identified as 'Tutsi'. All of the above is referenced in Ubaldo's photograph of a 'passport'. It is also captured at the beginning and the end of Raymont's film. Both, the photograph and the film, turn viewers into witnesses of the genocide.

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[5]   *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 11:31–12:12. Dallaire's quote appears at 12:16.

Bearing Witness to Genocide after Genocide

As Kia Lindroos and I have shown in the introduction, a witness, traditionally
understood, is someone who is present as a spectator or auditor and who,
therefore, is able to testify from personal observation. This classical
understanding of being a witness requires the presence of a person on location
at the exact moment in time when something happens to which this person is
then qualified to testify because he or she has personally observed – rather than
being told by someone else – what happened. This understanding is reflected in
constructions such as the *eyewitness* who is supposed to be capable of testifying
to a given event precisely as it unfolded before his or her eyes. As Primo Levi
(1989: 23) has observed, however, "almost never do two eyewitnesses of the
same event describe it in the same way and with the same words, even if the

event is recent and if neither of them has a personal interest in distorting it". The relationship between witnessing, memory and truth is a complex one, full of distortions, adaptations and ornamentations, among other things, because different collective memories compete and communicate with one another (see Rothberg 2009). Levi also knew that "a memory evoked too often, and expressed in the form of a story, tends to become fixed in a stereotype, in a form tested by experience, crystallized, perfected, adorned, installing itself in the place of the raw memory and growing at its expense" (Levi 1989: 24; see also Welzer 2002: 174).

The act of testifying may unfold by means of photographs. This is the classical task of documentary photojournalism, transforming the photographer into "the photographic witness" (Roberts 2014: 165). The truth claims that are inherent in a testimony by someone combining the subject positions of eyewitness *and* photographer would seem to be stronger than those inherent in the testimony of an eyewitness *without* a camera, or a photographer *arriving late*: the pictures would seem to provide visual evidence that what the witness believes to remember actually took place exactly as he or she believes to remember the event (although the photograph, in contrast to film, privileges a single moment within the remembered chain of events rather than a continuum of moments; the photograph offers a very selective memory even in sequential approaches to photography). The photograph seems to stabilize "the raw memory" (Levi) by insulating it from external influences and narrative requirements. It undermines tendencies to adapt human memories to, and to re-remember things in light of, the requirements of the present. After all, the main function of human memory is not to adequately remember the past but to help human beings cope with the present. And if the pictures appear in tandem with language in such a manner that text and image appear mutually supportive then this testimony almost becomes irresistible. Peter Gilgen (2003: 56) calls this "an intellectual stereoscopic effect: the image gains in profile through the verbal information conveyed in the caption; from the accompanying image this information gains persuasive power". This was the standard operating procedure of photojournalism in the 20th century and to some extent it still is. The photographic document's truth claims were based upon "the photographer's existential proximity to the world" (Roberts 2014: 95). However, the works discussed in this chapter were not produced at the exact moment in time when the genocide in Rwanda took place and, with the exception of Ubaldo, none of the image-makers was present in Rwanda at that time. Are they nevertheless witnesses? And if so, of what exactly are they a witness? Are they bearing witness to the aftermath of genocide or also to the original event?

For technical reasons, war photography started with aftermath photography: due to long exposure time, movement could not be captured

photographically. Thus, early war photography was largely limited to aftermath photographs of non-moving subjects. To be sure, such photography could be very gruesome indeed and American Civil War photography was taken by some commentators to give us knowledge, not of what war looks like but, essentially, of "what war *is*" (Holmes 1863: 11; italics added). Such technological limitations do not exist anymore. Nowadays, aftermath photography challenges modern photo-journalism and its emphasis on the photographer as eyewitness. Aftermath photography essentially means arriving late, seemingly missing what Henri Cartier-Bresson (2014) called "the decisive moment" and focusing on the "ongoing moment" (Dyer 2005), on process, not moment and on a sequence of images, not the photographic icon. Aftermath photography or "post-factum witnessing" (Lowe 2014: 213), the one focussing on landscapes, the other on things and objects, is often characterized by a photographer's long-term engagement with a given subject independent of the pressures of breaking news and 24-hour news channels. By representing the aftermath, it is hoped to shed light also on the original event – or at least on those ingredients of the original event that photojournalists missed at the time. Equally importantly, aftermath photography illustrates what happens to people (and animals and landscapes and buildings) once hostilities are, or seem to be, over. It visualizes the legacies of violent conflict, acknowledging that the end of physical violence does not automatically result in closure for people formerly affected by violence. Indeed, "the event-as-aftermath can … become a space for the discursive reconstruction and extension of the event" (Roberts 2014: 112). Thus, image-makers are witnesses of the original event even if they arrive late, after the event, imaging the event's aftermath. Their absence from location during the event does not undermine their subject position and their political role of witness.

Artists may have happened to be on location when something happened but they may also have decided to make this 'something' a subject of their work without having been on location during the event. In the latter case, representation is detached from what Levi calls "the raw memory" and should not be equated with it. It should not be equated with historical truth, either: "News reporters and novelists, mythmakers and autobiographers have a fairly coherent idea of how events should be described, of what readers and listeners want to know. Everyone in our culture is at least roughly aware of these conventions" (Neisser 1982: 47). Artists surely are aware of them but often they are not interested primarily in what audiences "want to know" (Neisser) but, rather, in what audiences *should* know: the artist as witness often assumes a moral position (Danchev 2009: 3). During the genocide in Rwanda almost nobody in the western world wanted to know what actually happened; why should we assume now, more than twenty years later, the existence of an audience eagerly wanting to learn what happened? Thus, a reluctant audience

has to be seduced or tricked into engagement and this requires, for the purpose of this chapter, a return to the space of architecture (see below).

The history of social documentary or concerned photography is a history of making visible and, by doing so, making known (within limits) what should not be ignored. But it is more than that: often artists assume "the ethnographic and political responsibilities of the witness: to speak with, in dialogue with, those are [sic] who are the chosen subjects of representation in order to best represent the interests of those subjects" (Roberts 2014: 61). But how can this be done? How can the interests of the subjects be represented best? How can artists represent the interests of people who died a long time ago? How can artists speak with them, in dialogue with them? How can they represent their interests without disregarding their dignity? Put differently, "how do we keep violence at a distance in our representations in order to preserve respect for its sufferers, but at the same time expose the structures and outcomes of violence?" (ibid.: 148) These questions concern not only image-makers but also spectators, because images are ultimately made in order to be seen and responded to.

In the introduction we argued that being a witness includes people who are present on location neither at the exact point in time when something happens, nor after something had happened but, instead, bear witness to this 'something' indirectly, mediated through representation. Such representation includes artistic representation: art witnesses – and makes others witness – political events. Encountering the genocide through the artistic work of Raymont, Jaar, Hugo or Ubaldo, viewers become witnesses of the genocide, witnessing the killings through artistic representations of the "event-as-aftermath" (Roberts). The "complete witnesses" (Levi 1989: 84) who eye-and-body-witnessed their own extermination did not survive. They cannot testify from their own observation and experience. They can judge neither the appropriateness of artists' representations of them and their deaths nor the aptness of spectators' interpretations of and responses to these representations. They cannot enter into dialogue with those who, without having been asked to do so, claim to speak on their behalf or to represent their interests, either.

Works of art help, not only to remember the victims of genocide but also *reappear* those who were killed. This reappearance takes place in viewers' imagination. The disappeared – those who were not supposed to leave a single trace of their existence – were not supposed to reappear in anybody's imagination; they were supposed to vanish altogether, erased from memory. Genocide not only refers to the physical liquidation of a certain group of people; it also refers to the erasure of the history and memory of both this very group as a collective and the individuals collectivised in the aggregate term which designates this group of people (Wieviorka 2006: 4). To reappear the disappeared is what art can do, but the reappearance of the victims in the viewer's imagination inevitably implies questions of responsibility and

involvement beyond the abstract notion of "historical responsibility" with which viewers have to engage (Morris-Suzuki 2005: 25). These questions make the act of witnessing and its transformation into a process of reflection difficult, if not undesired. That they are able to raise these questions testifies to the political character of the works of art discussed in this chapter.

Art is political if it complicates, not simplifies, revealing things we would otherwise not be aware of. Looking beyond what previously was known may result in "an unsettling of vision that occurs at the viewer-image interface" (Ross 2008: 8). It may destabilize the viewer's sense of identity by, among other things, "[bringing] home uncomfortable truths that people had long had reason to suspect but which did not need to be confronted as long as they remained unproven" (Hapopian 2006: 208). Patrick Hagopian, relying on photography's evidentiary potentialities, proposes that this "is the necessary violence of the photographic act" (ibid.). Here, then, the photographic act exerts violence upon the spectators, forcing them to do things they would prefer not to do, for example, interrogating their own subject positions in connection with the conditions depicted. Confronted with the alternative of either "'looking at' [or] 'looking away'"(Roberts 2014: 148), some people, rather than enduring the tension between "looking at" and "looking away," may chose looking away and moving on.

The Violence of the Photographic Act

When we speak of "the necessary violence of the photographic act" (Hagopian) we have to start by establishing that the photographic act is inevitably an act of choice and discrimination, emphasizing and thus claiming relevance and significance of something at the expense of something else which remains un-photographed. As such, the photographic act "cannot but *be* violating" (Roberts 2014: 152). Furthermore, the photographic act is often said to exert violence upon the subjects depicted – by exploiting them, misrepresenting them, exposing them to the gaze of others, reproducing power relations and so on. This critique has become a routine ingredient of critical approaches to photography in general and photojournalism in particular since the 1980s. The term 'taking a picture' is indicative of the violence underlying the relationship between a photographer and his or her subjects, implying the removal of something from someone without adequate compensation and the taking possession of something that belongs to somebody else. This relationship is not mutual but one-directional, and as such includes and reflects unequal power relations. The use of the verb 'to shoot' in connection with taking a photograph

is an even stronger indicator of the violence of the photographic act. The spectator, by looking, is said to be implicated in the violence of the photographic act: in documentary photography, aimed at "representing an event … and eliciting the viewer's empathy" (Emerling 2012: 202), the presupposed viewer is the condition of possibility for any photograph being taken. Without viewers, the act of taking a photograph would be rather pointless. Thus, the act of photographic violence exerted on the subject depicted cannot be separated from the violence of looking at the resulting photograph. The violence *of* photographic representation joins hands with the violence of bearing witness *through* photographic representation.

The viewer's involvement in the photographer's act of violence is especially strong if the transformation of the subject position of a passive, observing and neutral spectator who watches and *only* watches, into the subject position of a "responsible, ethical, participant" (Taylor 2003: 243) follows from the artist's utilization of the space of architecture, employing obstacles that have to be conquered in order for the spectator to be capable of engaging with the conditions depicted. The space of architecture is a vehicle with which to trick viewers into engagement, make them do something they would not otherwise do or even want to do, challenge complacency and start a process of reflection on the part of viewers. The space of architecture, then, may reduce the audience's reluctance, noted above, to face certain conditions, engagement with which is likely to unsettle individual subject positions. Its utilization, however, is deeply problematic because it makes viewers wish "to intrude on a space that is not [theirs] and has to be respected as secret or somebody else's" (van Alphen 2005: 92), thus further unsettling vision and destabilizing the viewer's subject positions vis-à-vis the subject depicted. For who would dare to intrude on the intimate space of a victim of violence? Who would dare to disrespect a victim's space without invitation? Art "invites a wider audience to partake of this experience [of violence or devastating loss] in some way" but this experience "is fundamentally owned by someone" (Bennett 2005: 3). Intruding, as viewer, upon a victim's space by looking at photographic representations would seem to be an act of violence in a chain of acts of violence.

The first acts or conditions of violence reflect the social structure within which people are exposed to physical or structural violence.[6] This violence is followed by the violence committed by the photographer, acknowledged by Don McCullin, for example, when saying that his own photographic work in wars and violent conflicts is "in many respects … almost a crime".[7] These two

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[6]   As regards the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, the literature is substantial. See, for example, Prunier (1995), Mamdani (2001), Straus (2006) and Fujii (2009).

[7]   Don McCullin, in *Kontaktabzüge: Die Große Tradition der Fotoreportage – Don McCullin*, directed by Sylvain Roumette, video, ARTE Développement (2008), 3:21–3:23.

acts of violence are then followed by a third one committed by the viewer intruding, by looking, into a person's intimate space, prolonging his or her victimization and reducing him or her to a victim devoid of agency, thus disregarding all other subject positions that every person carries with them. Disregarding a person's most intimate sphere and his or her right to intimacy would qualify as act of violence even if the intention is to empathize with this person and to acknowledge his or her experience which, arguably, is part of the subject positions of a participant witness: a participant witness self-critically engages with the conditions depicted in a given image including his or her own subject positions in connection with these conditions (Möller 2013: 36–55).

When exposed to photographic representations of violence utilizing the space of architecture, then, the problematic issues are not only gratification and pleasure, identified in the aestheticisation debate as parasitical, unethical and unproductive (Reinhardt 2007). The issue is also one of intrusion and violence: the violence of the photographic act, following or accompanying the violence exerted on people in their real lives, is followed by another act of violence: the violence of the act of witnessing. Abigail Solomon-Godeau (1991: 176) writes about "a double act of subjugation", by which she references a first act of subjugation "in the social world that has produced its victims" and a second subjugation "in the regime of the image produced within and for the same system that engenders the conditions it then re-presents". Mieke Bal (2007: 95) refers to the act of looking at photographic representations of human suffering as a "secondary exploitation", the first committed by a photographer, the second by a viewer. Both statements are right; both statements are incomplete.

Representational Intolerance

John Roberts, in *Photography and Its Violations*, explains why human suffering has to be represented and witnessed all the same, despite the above critique. If we agree with him that "violation is always the precursor to the production of knowledge" (Roberts 2014: 152), then we may also agree with him that "it is the truth of violation that has to be honoured, even when this violation produces images that subvert or weaken the dignity and autonomy of the other as other" (ibid.: 153). Or, elsewhere when discussing Jo Spence's self-documentary photographs of her treatment for breast cancer: "at some point in the interest of truth the preservation of the integrity of the 'victim' has itself to be violated" (ibid.: 149). Thus, both the photographic act and the act of witnessing through photographs may be violent, but both acts of violence are necessary in the interest of truth. But what kind of truth? The violations inherent in the

photographic act seem acceptable on condition that the photographer, first, adheres to the notion of non-figural, documentary photography in search of 'truth', "(some truth, that is)" (ibid.: 153) and, secondly, generates "a respect for the moment of the *inhuman* in the representation of truth, that is, an identification of truth with the *making visible* of the truth of the 'victim'" (ibid.: 150). In photographer Jerry L. Thompson's assessment (2003: 17–48), what matters is neither verisimilitude nor correspondence between the picture and the artist's experience. What matters is not the photographer's 'truth', either. What matters is the truth of the subject depicted.

The truth of the victim is what matters and it is the photographer's task to make this truth visible even if the visualization violates the victim's dignity. Roberts calls this form of visualization "representational intolerance" which "becomes the affirmation of the inhuman in representation in defiance of a culture where the representations of direct violence are constantly being dissolved into humanist empathy and human tragedy" (Roberts 2014: 150), and equally constantly being dissociated from underlying systemic forms of violence (this in response to his question, quoted above, of how to preserve respect for the sufferers of violence, while at the same time exposing the structures of violence). The violations inherent in the photographic act seem acceptable furthermore on condition that the "photographer 'looks at' in order to look beyond, look elsewhere, look awry, so that the beholder in 'looking away', after looking at, also *looks* awry, as the active producer of secondary ostension" (ibid.: 155).[8] Finally, representational intolerance is in itself intolerable as a general rule for photographic representations of violence. Revealing what Roberts calls the "thing itself" (ibid.: 160) – be it war, be it genocide, be it famine – is not always recommended. He asks:

For example, how is revealing the 'thing itself' of the interethnic violence in Rwanda in the 1990s respectful, helpful, or protective of those who were butchered? For it is hard to think of the benefits of 'looking at' as the dead children's bodies lie on top of one another, as children's severed arms pile up on piles of other children's arms. This is why many photographers who had access to the Rwanda war zones and the aftermath of the violence took the other route and excluded images of direct violence altogether (ibid.).

Revealing the "thing itself" is neither respectful nor helpful nor protective of those depicted. Nor is it protective of the beholder: "in order to recover our (critical) composure and equilibrium" and "to try to protect the human being we are looking at" (ibid.) we have, in this instance, to look away – only, crucially, to "*return* to the image as a critical assimilation of the perceived

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8   Roberts explains the "process of secondary ostension" as follows: "by pointing at one thing, we may in fact be making clear that we are pointing at something else, relating one thing metonymically, synecdochically, to another thing" (pp. 154–155).

suffering" (ibid: 163). Without such a return to the image, we would "concede ground to the perpetrators of state violence and the systematic violence of the capitalist system" (ibid.: 161) in a world dominated by images where what cannot be seen can easily be, and is routinely being, denied. However, looking at the "thing itself", even if done with critical intention, is "under the constant threat of the desensitization of looking" (ibid.: 163). Representational intolerance is also always under the threat of following the "kitsch economy of perpetual inflation" (Elkins 2011: 185) – each shock, each horror, each 'thing itself', has to be stronger than the one before. Thus, representational intolerance may become intolerable or *too* violent: 'the thing itself' may become the obstacle that has to be conquered but cannot because its inherent enormity and inhuman-ness make every attempt to conquer it both harmful to the subjects depicted *and* the beholders, and useless as a means of critique. Pointing at one thing (a cloud, a passport) but actually pointing at another thing (genocide), thus capitalizing on the space of architecture, may help turn photographic reception into (critical) reflection of that which is singled out for representation – a cloud, a passport or a comb, a hat, a wedding ring, a stove (Möller and Ubaldo 2013) – but also, and more importantly, of that which is alluded to in this representation – genocide – without simultaneously violating the dignity of the victims and doing harm to the beholder.

<center>*</center>

Is it disrespectful of people to focus photographically on material objects? James Elkins (2011: 50) has argued that the seeming absence of a face from a photograph engages vision because "most images without faces or people are actually full of people". They are full of people and full of faces not only because human beings are socialized into searching for, and are trained to recognize, faces in all sorts of circumstances – including those where no faces are in fact present. They are full of faces also because most images without faces are "places where people can find themselves in imagination" (ibid.). Images without faces are also places where people can find other people in imagination. The absence of faces thus appeals to and triggers imagination, and this is exactly what should be expected to happen if we follow W.J.T. Mitchell's assessment that the mind can actually be stimulated, not by that which can be seen but by that which can*not* be seen. Mitchell (2011: 84) indeed suggests that what cannot be seen is more powerful than what can be seen, and that making things visible would undermine their power "to activate the power of imagination". This assessment explains why a photograph of a passport without the passport photograph (or with a passport photograph that is barely visible) can affect viewers as strongly as, or even stronger than, a photograph of a passport where the passport photograph is clearly visible. And that explains why

Ubaldo's photograph, although the passport is not embedded in clouds, is as strong and powerful as Raymont's and Jaar's images: not as a representation of realistic elements – a cloud, a passport – but as one which opens up new dimensions in addition to those initially revealed, thus probing into and expanding the limits of representation and the limits of visibility.[9]

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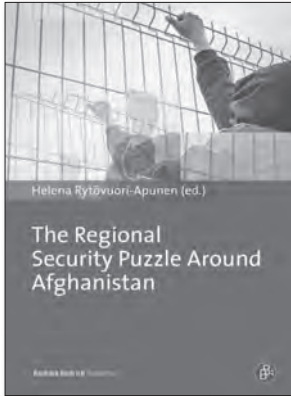Wieviorka, Annette (2006): *The Era of the Witness.* Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

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