

ILUMINACE

Časopis pro teorii, historii
a estetiku filmu

The Journal of Film Theory, History,
and Aesthetics

3 / 2025



Na obálce / Front cover:

Film still from *Presente* (Melanie Bravo, 2021).

ILUMINACE

Časopis pro teorii, historii
a estetiku filmu
The Journal of Film Theory, History,
and Aesthetics

3 / 2025

Ročník / Volume 37

SPECIAL ISSUE:
FILMIC MATTER AND GEOGRAPHIC SPECIFICITY

Guest Editors:
Byron Davies and Jiří Anger

OBSAH

Články k tématu

Byron Davies – Jiří Anger: Toward a Geographically Specific Understanding of Filmic and Media Matter: An Introduction to a Special Issue.....	5
Marek Jancovic: Cinema's Atmospheric A Priori: How Weather and Environment Shaped Celluloid Film Manufacturing and Raw Material Supply at Fujifilm, Daicel, and Agfa.....	21
Jennifer Nightingale: Knitting on Location: The <i>Norfolk Knitting Pattern</i> Film Series	43
Libertad Gills: <i>Por un cine cachinero</i> : Reappropriation as a Survival Strategy in Contemporary Experimental Cinema from Guayaquil.....	49
Maxime Harvey: Language Matters in the Geography of AI: French-Language Uses of Generative Artificial Intelligence in Filmmaking	57
Aleksei Ziniuk – Margarita Galandina: Refiguring the Buryat Photographic Archive: Ethnographic Visuality, Vernacular Montage, and Shamanic Temporality.....	77
Laurence Kent: Hussein Shariff's Filmic Ruins: Archival Noise and <i>The Dislocation of Amber</i> (1975)	109
Bori Máté: Ritualization and <i>Táltos</i> Procedures in Péter Lichter's <i>Nutrition Fugue</i> (2018).....	119
Ludo de Roo: Kidlat Tahimik: Metaphorical Journeys in Decolonial Cinema	147
Floris Paalman: Moving in Circles: Space and Place in Media Archaeology and the Art of Jop Horst	171

Články

Tereza Frodlová – Jakub Egermajer: Středověký partyzán v barvě. Restaurování filmu <i>Jan Roháč z Dubé</i> jako pramen kulturní historie	199
---	-----

Recenze

Jakub Egermajer: Chudáci chlapi a ti druzí (Pavel Skopal a kol., <i>Lidé – práce – animace: Světy animovaného filmu na Kudlově</i>)	233
Josef Tichý: Prostor a čas v japonských videoherních centrech (Jérémie Pelletier-Gagnon, <i>Space and Play in Japanese Videogame Arcades</i>)	241

CONTENTS

Themed Articles

Byron Davies – Jiří Anger: Toward a Geographically Specific Understanding of Filmic and Media Matter: An Introduction to a Special Issue.....	5
Marek Jancovic: Cinema's Atmospheric A Priori: How Weather and Environment Shaped Celluloid Film Manufacturing and Raw Material Supply at Fujifilm, Daicel, and Agfa.....	21
Jennifer Nightingale: Knitting on Location: The <i>Norfolk Knitting Pattern</i> Film Series.....	43
Libertad Gills: <i>Por un cine cachinero</i> : Reappropriation as a Survival Strategy in Contemporary Experimental Cinema from Guayaquil.....	49
Maxime Harvey: Language Matters in the Geography of AI: French-Language Uses of Generative Artificial Intelligence in Filmmaking.....	57
Aleksei Ziniuk – Margarita Galandina: Refiguring the Buryat Photographic Archive: Ethnographic Visuality, Vernacular Montage, and Shamanic Temporality.....	77
Laurence Kent: Hussein Shariffe's Filmic Ruins: Archival Noise and <i>The Dislocation of Amber</i> (1975).....	109
Bori Máté: Ritualization and <i>Táltos</i> Procedures in Péter Lichter's <i>Nutrition Fugue</i> (2018).....	119
Ludo de Roo: Kidlat Tahimik: Metaphorical Journeys in Decolonial Cinema.....	147
Floris Paalman: Moving in Circles: Space and Place in Media Archaeology and the Art of Jop Horst.....	171

Articles

Tereza Frodlová – Jakub Egermajer: Medieval Partisan in Color. Restoration of the Film <i>Jan Roháč of Dubá</i> as a Source of Cultural History.....	199
---	-----

Reviews

Jakub Egermajer: Poor Boys and the Others (Pavel Skopal a kol., <i>Lidé – práce – animace: Světy animovaného filmu na Kudlově</i>).....	233
Josef Tichý: Space and Time in Japanese Videogame Centers (Jérémie Pelletier-Gagnon, <i>Space and Play in Japanese Videogame Arcades</i>).....	241



<https://doi.org/10.58193/ilu.1831>

Byron Davies  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2997-7806>

(Universidad de Murcia, Spain)

Jiří Anger  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3096-5447>

(Queen Mary University of London, United Kingdom)

Toward a Geographically Specific Understanding of Filmic and Media Matter: An Introduction to a Special Issue

Abstract

It can be difficult to articulate a substantive materialism in film and media studies, owing to the slipperiness of that term and its cognates. Changes in media and their technology can even bring out the materialist elements of supposedly idealist views in past film theory, thus raising the question of whether there is any meaningful contrast with “materialism.” We proffer the hypothesis that these difficulties lose their force as we move away from the global center and toward sites shaped by material scarcity and colonial extraction. Consequently, a materialism thought through to its full implications must be a geographically grounded one. An example is the *sololoy* cinema articulated by Peruvian filmmaker and programmer Aroldo Murguía: an idea of cinema as materially continuous with cellulose nitrate dolls and related practices of reappropriation in Mexican popular art. We also explore the idea that the more a film is geographically situated away from colonial standardization, the more likely it is to be diegetically transparent to the resources making that very film possible, from its manufacturing to screening to preservation. These hypotheses are presented in the spirit of introducing a set of six written essays and three hybrid audiovisual/written essays, all of them concerned with geographically situated film materials. The essays are organized according to the topics “Infrastructures and Ecologies,” “Archives and Historicity,” and “Concepts and Metaphors.” Ultimately, this Introduction to the special issue “Filmic Matter and Geographic Specificity” frames these essays as models of a vision of geographic specificity’s material survival, as well as of how speaking about the survival of matter is indissolubly linked to place.

Keywords

materialism, film theory, philosophy, geographic specificity

Is calling oneself a “materialist” in film and media studies just too easy a gesture? The self-label “does not necessarily by itself mean much,” as Jussi Parikka says in his treatment of the geology of media.¹⁾ If anything, the rejection of materialism would seem to be the more provocative gesture — and yet is such provocation even desirable? Instead, we might find questions of matter and materiality deemphasized for reasons of context, as when film theory aims to revivify the other principal term of Aristotle’s metaphysics, *form*, while also recognizing that these are still two sides of a distinction; we cannot speak of one without speaking of another.²⁾ There exist cases, more common in analytic philosophy of film, where a theory really does embrace the picture of mediumless or quasi-mediumless viewing (where being situated “face-to-face” toward a scene becomes an operative notion).³⁾ But excavating those views’ anti-materialism (and then articulating that feature as an objection to them) is more difficult than it might seem — certainly requiring more work than reading a surface label of “idealist” or “anti-materialist.” Much more common is to evoke something of Karl Marx’s first thesis on Feuerbach: previously existing materialisms have been defective as materialisms.⁴⁾ That is a very venerable lineage for a thought, but does that lineage always provide the rhetorical maneuver (*more materialist than thou*) a release from its air of emptiness? It would be understandable, then, if film historians and archivists — not to mention filmmakers — felt that the term had no real bearing on their practices.

Much of classical film theory can indeed be read as a debate among materialisms and idealisms, with a sense of “materialism” that can seem utterly refreshing in its specificity: the historical materialism of Marx that was invoked, for example, by Walter Benjamin at the beginning of his “Work of Art” essay in noting the slow transformation of the ideological superstructure following the technological invention of photography.⁵⁾ That is, it was understood in early film theory that “materialism” turned on the question of how much of the medium’s incipient history could be explained by technology and infrastructure rather than ideas. But we should have no illusions that these debates were somehow simpler than our own. André Bazin’s “Myth of Total Cinema” is often invoked as a paradigm of an idealist form of historical explanation: cinema had to be invented in order to satisfy a longstanding fantasy of reproducing reality.⁶⁾ Nevertheless, history has a way of

-
- 1) Jussi Parikka, *A Geology of Media* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 1.
 - 2) Jordan Schonig, *The Shape of Motion: Cinema and the Aesthetics of Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022); Byron Davies, “Formalism Expanded,” *NECSUS: European Journal of Media Studies* 13, no. 1 (2024), 308–315.
 - 3) George M. Wilson, *Seeing Fictions in Film: The Epistemology of Movies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Byron Davies, “Surface, Material Bodies, and the Avant-Garde in Philosophy of Film,” *October*, no. 191 (2025), 97–118.
 - 4) Karl Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach,” in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2nd ed., ed. David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 171; Sebastian Rödl, *Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 105–131.
 - 5) Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version,” in *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, eds. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 19–20.
 - 6) André Bazin, “The Myth of Total Cinema,” in *What Is Cinema?*, trans. Timothy Barnard (Montreal: Caboose, 2009), 13–20; Jonathan Walley, “The Material of Film and the Idea of Cinema: Contrasting Practices in Sixties and Seventies Avant-Garde Film,” *October*, no. 103 (2003), 15–30.

revealing the materialism underlying even supposedly idealist arguments: digital photography, by offering a contrast, has allowed us to understand how much Bazin's idea of photography as a mold or visual impression was rooted in the specific matter of light's impression on emulsion.⁷⁾ Moreover, an assumption often emerging from apparatus theory is that a resolutely materialist perspective should counter the impulses lying behind photographic realism.⁸⁾ But in other contexts, realism can appear to work intricately with materialism, including when it comes to a close analysis of photographic "noise" and "interference."⁹⁾ When even paradigms of idealism in film theory turn out to be implicitly materialist, have our terms not become intolerably slippery?

Debates among artists themselves are not far from these difficulties. In the history of expanded cinema, a reductive, "structural" emphasis on the materiality of the film strip was often understood as a reaction against the openness of the cybernetic, McLuhan-influenced happenings pioneered by Stan VanDerBeek and celebrated by Gene Youngblood.¹⁰⁾ But this appears to be less a debate about materialism than one about different materials: or rather, any debate about materialism seems downstream from the more basic question of whether an artist is working with, say, celluloid or circuits. Meanwhile, even though Peter Gidal came to coin the term "structural/materialist" film in opposition to some main currents of structural film in the U.S. back in the 1960s and 1970s,¹¹⁾ we might now, in the distance and perspective afforded by cinema's digital turns, see the "materialist" in "structural/materialist" as constituting a pleonasm: structural film was already materialist, with the term only serving to mark an explicit endorsement of Marxist and Althusserian theory.

Within film scholarship, it might be more substantive to speak about an ethos of materialism. This appears to be the purpose, for example, in Hannah Frank's opening her "materialist aesthetics of animated cartoons" with poet Susan Howe's invocation of "the portrait of history in so-called insignificant visual and verbal textualities and textiles." Thus, Frank quotes Howe's mention of "twill fabrics, bead-work pieces, pricked patterns, four-ringed knots, tiny spangles, sharp-toothed stencil wheels; [...] quotations, thought-fragments, rhymes, syllables, anagrams, graphemes, endangered phonemes, in soils and cross-outs."¹²⁾ It is worth pointing out, though, that invocations of a materialist ethos can just as frequently associate it with standardization and the very opposite of Howe's variegated attention to miniature detail. Thus, in his recent study of experimental film and queer materiality, Juan A. Suárez quotes Henry Miller's rebuke of the "insidious materialism of the times" in *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare* (1945): "Our world is a world of things [...] cluttered with useless objects which men and women, in order to be exploited and

7) André Bazin, "Ontology of the Photographic Image," in *What Is Cinema?*, 3–12.

8) Jean-Louis Baudry, "The Apparatus," *Camera Obscura* 1, no. 1 (1976), 104–126.

9) Hannah Frank, *Frame by Frame: A Materialist Aesthetics of Animated Cartoons*, ed. Daniel Morgan (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019).

10) Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1970); Jonathan Walley, *Cinema Expanded: Avant-Garde Film in the Age of Intermedia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

11) Peter Gidal, "Theory and Definition of Structural/Material Film," in *Structural Film Anthology*, ed. Peter Gidal (London: BFI, 1978), 1–21.

12) Frank, *Frame by Frame*, 1.

degraded, are taught to regard as useful.”¹³) These “useless objects,” then, on Suárez’s reading, become sites for queering by artists like the Kuchar Brothers and their reuse of plastics. Nevertheless, it is difficult to navigate oneself within an ethos of materialism when Howe’s “pricked patterns, four-ringed knots” always stand the risk of being submerged among just more consumerist clutter.

Is there any way out of these difficulties while intelligibly staking ourselves out as “materialists”? It is extremely important to note that Miller’s discourse of clutter with “useless objects” emerges from a specific experience of the U.S. at the end of World War II: in other words, the emergence and solidification of a neocolonial center. Let us, then, consider a different kind of experience. In a recent text, Peruvian filmmaker and programmer Aroldo Murguía talks about his apprenticeship in Mexico in a workshop of “Judas dolls,” or dolls in the form of devils, that are widely burnt in Mexico every Holy Saturday and that, in days prior, fill streets on rolling carts. Most interestingly, he learned from this workshop’s master about the use of cellulose nitrate — the same material used in earlier film, before the change to acetate — in dolls of Western complexion that arrived in Latin America from the North, and that, following the translation of “celluloid” into popular Mexican discourse, became known as *sololoy* dolls. *Sololoy* dolls are film dolls (celluloid dolls, after all), and they were maintained by a kind of found-footage filmmaking: Murguía says, “people with limited resources collected broken *sololoy* dolls that had been discarded and repaired them with paper or cardboard for their children. They replaced the nitrate cellulose with cellulose from paper, which was more common and accessible.” Meanwhile, Murguía likens the materials of his own training in doll-making (the glue, the paint, the scissors, the tiny instruments) to those used in camera-less film. He thus believes in the possibility of a *sololoy* cinema: a cinema “that collects and appropriates waste, that is sustained by popular materials, that burns amid celebrations and is damnably different from Western cinema.”¹⁴)

Sololoy cinema is a cinema from below. Its theory has yet to be written.¹⁵) It emerges from a finite but continuously replaceable set of materials, where the materials determine what counts as cinema. Doll-making and doll-repairing are asserted as the same activities as film-making and repairing; doll-burning and film-viewing are the very same spectacle. The attitude is: let the burden be on those who say that these categorizations are in error. The clutter of *sololoy* cinema is at times miniature — this is a cinema of detritus — but it is manifestly apart from amorphous consumer waste. The sense of Miller’s “our world is a world of things” (an art emerging from festive and playful detritus or art-destroying standardization) depends entirely on who is uttering that phrase, and from where.

From this perspective, we can begin to articulate some hypotheses. Evoking an ethos of materialism is not at all empty — so long as we are speaking from *place*. Moreover, a substantive materialism can begin to flourish away from colonial and neocolonial centers

13) Juan A. Suárez, *Experimental Film and Queer Materiality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024), 27.

14) Translated from Aroldo Murguía, “El cine es una serpiente que constantemente cambia de piel,” in *Umbrales 4.0*, eds. Salvador Amores and Maximiliano Cruz (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2025), 88–100.

15) Jiří Anger, *Towards a Film Theory from Below: Archival Film and the Aesthetics of the Crack-Up* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2024).

and their characteristic standardization. In fact, the hypothesis that the only substantive filmic materialism is a located one would have radical consequences for already-existing filmic materialisms emanating from the Global North. At one point in her materialist analysis of animation, Hannah Frank asks regarding a 1941 Warner Brothers cartoon, “Do I really wish to argue [...] that *Sniffles Bells the Cat* is about paint, paper, cellulose acetate, and glass?”¹⁶ Expanding this scheme of question to another region — Is *The Blood of the Condor / Yawar Mallku* (Jorge Sanjinés, 1969) really about the silver making up its print? Is *El gran movimiento* (Kiro Russo, 2021) really about the lithium of the monitor screening it? — might find that addressing these questions depends entirely on the proximity of those films’ production to the silver and lithium mines of Bolivia. For films produced by geopolitical metropolises, away from actual sites of extraction of the resources serving capital accumulation in those metropolises, that schema of question is less pressing. Thus, the consequence of a radical geographic specificity in our materialism might be that some films are diegetically transparent to their resources.

The topic of geographically specific film materials forces the question, “Why now?” The significance of geographic specificity in film has always waxed and waned, corresponding to technological shifts (perhaps above all, the differentiation afforded by sound film) and the vicissitudes of different national film industries. But it has always been with us, so long as people have been making and viewing films in different places. Is the theme thus motivated by yet another colonial hunger for new topics emanating from the periphery, once those scholarly topics recognized in metropolises have begun to feel tired and exhausted? Another, almost opposite worry, is that geographically specific materials have become theory because the topic is already being exhausted. Thomas Elsaesser asked, “Will it come to be said of film history that it is the (retroactive) resurrection of collapsed distinctions? We care about the indexicality of the photograph because we miss it in the post-photographic pixel.”¹⁷ Is our topic a symptom of increased globalization and standardization, where geographic specificity can be theorized — but only as elegy?

We share some of these worries, but we recur to our previous hypothesis: a substantive materialism in film scholarship must be a geographically grounded one. While the authors of this special issue might not themselves agree with the letter of this hypothesis (that is for them to say), their own research into a variety of geographically specific film materials gives it weight. The conversation that emerges between three audiovisual essays and six written essays demonstrates how thinking about specific archives from specific places especially facilitates a parallel dialectic: the sort of dialectic between concrete attention to matter and an abstract term like “materialism” that can constitute not just scholarship, but also art. Together, they offer a model of both theoretical and practice-based film scholarship that does not just elegize the specificity of place, but (again, speaking only as editors) foments a vision of that specificity’s survival.

16) Frank, *Frame by Frame*, 146. For discussion of this question, see Byron Davies, “*Historia pluriversal: Ernesto Baca’s Samoa* (2005),” *En la otra isla: Revista de audiovisual latinoamericano*, no. 12 (2025), 83–101.

17) Thomas Elsaesser, “The New Film History as Media Archaeology,” *Cinémas: revue d’études cinématographiques / Cinémas: Journal of Film Studies* 14, no. 2/3 (2004), 92.

Infrastructures and Ecologies

To provide some modest orientation points on the ever-incomplete map of practices involving filmic matter, we divided the submissions into three groups: “Infrastructures and Ecologies,” “Archives and Histories,” and “Concepts and Metaphors.” Articles and audio-visual essays included in the first group illuminate the fact that behind processes of film manufacturing, production, distribution, spectatorship, and archiving lie distinctive material worlds. Worlds that do connect to film but were not designed specifically for it, and may even be inert to it. Worlds that, no matter how deeply into the geological substrate they reach, still refrain from monolithic homogeneity. As the pioneer of inhuman geography Kathryn Yusoff argues, geology itself is far from neutral or universal. The discipline established its system of categorizing the Earth by distinguishing between active and inert matter, mirroring the distinction between humans and slaves, and thus in many ways underpinned the extractive colonial regime that distributes elements of nature, land, and labor to this day.¹⁸⁾ The differences that arise from entanglements of physical matter with socio-cultural and economic forces, as well as from the variety of geographically situated matter(s) themselves, may influence “our” cinematic experience as gravely as, or even more than, formal and stylistic choices undertaken by artists. Before a film of any kind can be made, and before we can binge-watch a TV series or generate an AI video, a specific country or region must first have access to natural resources — which is, *surprise surprise*, unevenly distributed. As the global chain of raw materials is in many ways a zero-sum game structured by (neo)colonial economic relations, a center’s abundance is intrinsically tied to the extraction of resources from the peripheries. Sometimes, however, scarcity may catalyze innovation, as in the case of Nigeria in the 1980s, where the rising cost and unreliable availability of imported celluloid film stock, chemicals, and processing facilities — exacerbated by currency devaluation and economic crisis — pushed filmmakers to adopt video (and later digital) technologies earlier than many other regions, ultimately contributing to the emergence of one of the world’s most productive film industries.¹⁹⁾

This section opens with an article that unravels the geological and chemical grounding of cinema in a historically and geographically fine-grained manner. In a study titled “**Cinema’s Atmospheric A Priori: How Weather and Environment Shaped Celluloid Film Manufacturing and Raw Material Supply at Fujifilm, Daicel, and Agfa**,” Marek Jancovic situates filmic matter in the era of nitrate film production (focusing specifically on the years 1920 to 1945), within the supply chain of raw materials between East Asia and Europe, and in an intense connection with natural elements (earth, wood, air, and water). Jancovic’s notion of the “atmospheric a priori” is a quintessential expression of filmic matter as globally circulating yet always locally situated. For instance, opening a nitrate film factory in Japan was challenging, given the country’s warm and humid climate, and when the celluloid company Daicel decided to build a plant in Gotemba, they discovered that

18) Kathryn Yusoff, *Geologic Life: Inhuman Intimacies and the Geophysics of Race* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2024).

19) Vinzenz Hediger, Didi Cheeka, and Sonia Campanini, “Reconfiguring the Audiovisual Heritage: Lessons from Nigeria,” *The Moving Image* 21, no. 1–2 (2021), 55–76; Benoît Turquety, *Medium, Format, Configuration: The Displacements of Film* (Lüneburg: meson press, 2019).

Mount Fuji nearby created a “watashiamé” microclimate of frequent local rain, even when nearby Numazu stayed sunny. Air is thereby revealed as an active agent that preconditions where film can or cannot exist. The natural environment also in many ways dictates film aesthetics: “Gelatin must not be too cloudy. Camphor must resist yellowing.” Shifting our attention to global supply chains, individual elements and natural resources, local factories, and microclimates leads to a media history capable of accounting for the many ways in which filmic matter structures what we see in cinemas or on our phones.²⁰⁾

In recent years, natural elements and raw resources have become a core focus across various spheres of art, inspiring a rethinking of how works are materially composed, how they circulate, and how these processes translate into form and aesthetics. We can discern several intertwined, often indistinguishable “turns” that touch upon these issues — the materialist turn, the nonhuman turn, the environmental turn, even the geological turn.²¹⁾ What they share is an orientation toward matter as a spatial and temporal phenomenon, which also means that matter is always tied to distinctive places and/or cultures centered around it. In experimental cinema, this tendency has led, for example, to incorporating native plants directly into the filmmaking process, as in Mexican artist Azucena Losana’s work exploring the curative properties of Argentinian trees in chemical film development.²²⁾ However, many examples of these geographically grounded filmmaking practices can be found in the Global North as well. Jennifer Nightingale’s audiovisual essay “**Knitting on Location: The Norfolk Knitting Pattern Film Series**” reflects on her own process of translating the knitting patterns traditionally used in the Norfolk fishing villages of Sheringham and Cromer in the UK. The affinity between filmmaking and knitting as handmade, craft-oriented practices — which has recently gained considerable attention²³⁾ — is made literal, creating a structural relationship between a knitted stitch and a film frame. What used to be a cornerstone of structural filmmaking and its explorations of cinematic ontology (Nightingale highlights the influences of Kurt Kren and Rose Lowder)²⁴⁾ is now “stitched” to another like-minded material practice, one that carries ties to local landscape, culture, history, and industry.

20) See also Brian R. Jacobson, *The Cinema of Extractions: Film Materials and Their Forms* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2025).

21) See, for example, Sasha Litvintseva, *Geological Filmmaking* (London: Open Humanities Press, 2022); Tiago de Luca and Matilda Mroz, eds., *Elemental World Cinema: Cinematic Entanglements of Earth, Fire, Water and Air* (Leiden: Brill, 2025); Katarzyna Paszkiewicz and Andrea Ruthven, eds., *Cinema off/for the Anthropocene: Affect, Ecology, and More-Than-Human Kinship* (London: Routledge, 2025). *Illuminace* recently dedicated a special issue, “(Eco)Traumatic Landscapes in Contemporary Audiovisual Culture,” along similar themes. Bori Máté, “(Eco)Traumatic Landscapes in Contemporary Audiovisual Culture,” *Illuminace* 35, no. 2 (2023), 5–8.

22) Losana’s eco-developing film project *Metarretratos* not only experiments with the chemical and curative properties of native plants, but also depicts the plants/trees used in the developing recipe, foregrounding vegetal worlds as protagonists. Salomé Lopes Coelho, “The Rhythms of More-Than-Human Matter in Azucena Losana’s Eco-Developed Film Series *Metarretratos*,” *Illuminace* 35, no. 2 (2023), 31–49. See also Karel Doing’s phytographic practices: Karel Doing, “Phytograms: Rebuilding Human–Plant Affiliations,” *Animation* 15, no. 1 (2020), 22–36.

23) See, for instance, Lola Rémy, “Remediating the Archive: Sabrina Gschwandtner’s Film Quilts as Forms of Material Knowledge,” *Frames Cinema Journal*, no. 19 (2022), 43–74; Becky Peterson, *Textiles on Film* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2024).

24) Nicky Hamlyn, Simon Payne, and A. L. Rees, eds., *Kurt Kren: Structural Films* (Bristol: Intellect, 2016); Rose Lowder, *Bouquets 11–20: Notebooks* (New York: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 2018).

Local infrastructures and economies can also serve as inspiration for a distinctive creative ethos. As Libertad Gills shows in her audiovisual essay “**Por un cine cachinero: Re-appropriation as a Survival Strategy in Contemporary Experimental Cinema from Guayaquil**,” experimental filmmaking in Ecuador often rests on the local economies of second-hand street markets known as *cachinerías*. The lack of structural support for production and preservation in Guayaquil has led many artists to adopt DIY approaches to filmmaking, based on appropriating discarded film materials and obsolete cameras and projectors. Building on a project that sought to rediscover Guayaquil’s decaying analog past, Gills recontextualizes *cachinero* films into a videographic manifesto that calls for embracing scarcity and second-hand appropriation as creative strategies for articulating — and ultimately overcoming — the impoverished character of local culture and the desolation of urban space. In a way, Gills’s work can also be understood as a locally specific and circumstantially more urgent return to what drove found-footage filmmaking in the first place — after all, one of the defining books on the history of this “genre” was titled *Second-Hand Cinema (Kino aus zweiter Hand)*.²⁵⁾

The focus thus far on photochemical, analog processes should not create the impression that materialism and geographic specificity are unrelated to digital media. Quite the contrary. Today, numerous studies address the materiality of the digital in terms of manufacturing, functioning, labor, preservation, and environmental impact,²⁶⁾ alongside emerging attempts to foreground its local specificities.²⁷⁾ The recent acceleration of AI-based models has further intensified attention to their deep entwinement with the material world — in many ways, given the gargantuan costs and human and nonhuman resources required to keep large language models running, AI may be the most materialist medium of all. Maxime Harvey’s article “**Language Matters in the Geography of AI: French-Language Uses of Generative Artificial Intelligence in Filmmaking**” addresses this situated materiality of AI in relation to questions of sound and voice in cinema and film theory — problems that remain underexplored²⁸⁾ — and more specifically in relation to dubbing and synthetic voice practices in French and Québec contexts. Harvey argues that current debates about chatbots and AI tools are ultimately about language *as* matter, embodied in voices, gestures, and accents, and built into technical and economic infrastructures — hence always geographically and geopolitically distinctive. Through topical examples — such as a Québécois artist attempting to replicate Darth Vader’s voice or Amazon’s effort to “honor” Sylvester Stallone’s recently deceased French dubber Alain Dorval by emulat-

25) Christa Blümlinger, *Kino aus zweiter Hand: Zur Ästhetik materieller Aneignung im Film und in der Medienkunst* (Berlin: Vorwerk 8, 2009).

26) See, for example, Parikka, *A Geology of Media*; Sean Cubitt, *Finite Media: Environmental Implications of Digital Technologies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017); Laura U. Marks, Joseph Clark, Jason Livingston, Denise Oleksijczuk, and Lucas Hilderbrand, “Streaming Media’s Environmental Impact,” *Media+Environment* 2, no. 1 (2020), accessed October 31, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1525/001c.17242>; Veronika Hanáková, “Configuring Computer Labor in Film and Audiovisual Media: An Introduction to a Special Issue,” *Iluminace* 36, no. 2 (2024), 5–22.

27) See, for example, Yanni Alexander Loukissas, *All Data Are Local: Thinking Critically in a Data-Driven Society* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2019).

28) See, for example, Christopher Holliday, “Ghosts in the Celluloid: AI Video Dubbing and TrueSync,” *JCMS: Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 64, no. 1 (2024), 75–82.

ing his voice — the article reveals AI as a battleground where seemingly innocent uses of cutting-edge technology can quickly become messy, generating rifts both within society and across its underlying infrastructures.

Archives and Historicity

The second vector of this special issue moves toward examining how the geographic situatedness of filmic (and photographic) matter shapes the capacity of images and sounds to reflect the histories they depict — or are expected to depict; the historicity of the artifacts that carry them; and the methodological possibilities for historiography and archival work grounded more fully in locally specific materiality. In *Bad Film Histories: Ethnography and the Early Archive*, Katherine Groo calls for a “particularist approach to film historiography,” one that takes as a crucial methodological coordinate “*particulate* matter, of the artifact itself, its physical condition (in the present), its routes of circulation through an archive, its restoration or reformatting, or indeed the absence of identifying marks or paratexts.”²⁹⁾ In the word *particulate*, we can hear echoes of the sensitivity to individual resources and elements explored in Marek Jancovic’s text, as well as the inevitable anchoring of filmic objects within specific spaces and milieus (after all, Groo focuses on a particular corpus of early ethnographic films and the colonial relations within which they were created). Yet how might these notions translate into distinctive practices of doing history and reinventing the archives in ways that remain true to their geographic–material grounding?

Considering the photographic basis of filmic matter — acknowledged most famously through André Bazin’s essay “Ontology of the Photographic Image”³⁰⁾ — we as editors had no hesitation in including an article centered on a photographic archive, especially one conceived through the lens of montage. Aleksei Ziniuk and Margarita Galandina’s “**Refiguring the Buryat Photographic Archive: Ethnographic Visuality, Vernacular Montage, and Shamanic Temporality**” resuscitates a corpus of photographs from a region strikingly underexamined in film and media scholarship: Buryatia, a Siberian republic long marginalized by Russian authorities across regimes and largely invisible to the global center. Unsurprisingly, the Buryat photographic archive is unwieldy and conflicted, physically scattered across institutions in Russia, Mongolia, and Europe, and divided among colonial ethnography, Soviet social engineering, and Indigenous memory. The authors identify three historical scopic regimes that shaped how Buryats were seen and classified: colonial (1880s), activist (1900s–1920s), and biometric (1930s). Nevertheless, rather than confining themselves to analyzing the photographic manifestations of these regimes, Ziniuk and Galandina also venture into alternative, non-institutional forms of photographic representation. The family album of journalist Sodnom-Dorzhi Badmaev is read as a vernacular counter-archive that traces fragments of Buryat history from the 1930s to the 1990s through montage, collage, multilingual annotations (Buryat/Russian), and nonlinear layout. Further, one of the authors (Galandina) discusses and contextualizes her own

29) Katherine Groo, *Bad Film Histories: Ethnography and the Early Archive* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019), 8.

30) Bazin, “Ontology of the Photographic Image.”

photographic self-portraiture as a form of performative archival intervention — an attempt to return the gaze shaped by earlier scopic regimes and to find contemporary visual expressions of Buryat shamanic concepts.

Continuing in the vein of performatively reactivating marginalized archives, Laurence Kent's audiovisual essay "**Hussein Shariffe's Filmic Ruins: Archival Noise and *The Dislocation of Amber* (1975)**" testifies to one of videographic criticism's key affordances: the capacity to show through comparison.³¹⁾ Centering on a major work of Sudanese cinema, the essay uses a split-screen structure to stage a dialogue between two degraded digital copies circulating online, and between the "filmic ruin" constituted by the surviving fragments of *The Dislocation of Amber* and the architectural ruin of Suakin — whose desolation Shariffe captured in the 1970s and which persists today. In the spirit of Groo's bad film histories, the noise and imperfections in both copies are treated as meaningful evidence of exile, censorship, violence, and the transnational dispersal of archives. Embracing these "defects" stands in marked contrast to restoration practices that smooth away such traces in the name of accessibility — much like the resistance articulated in Filipa César's work on Guinean cinema.³²⁾ Through a videographic reimagining of Shariffe's film, enriched with textual inserts from the director's poetic notes, Kent renders scratches and tears speculatively and aesthetically generative, attentive to the shifting meanings that ruin can take on and to the sensual-yet-cerebral pleasure of tiny dots and streaks dancing across the film's surface.

Concepts and Metaphors

The question toward which all articles in the special issue's third section implicitly or explicitly gravitate concerns how locally, culturally, and geographically specific figures and metaphors find their material expressions (and vice versa). In the introduction to the edited volume *Concepts: A Travelogue*, Bernd Herzogenrath argues that if philosophy aims to produce new thought through the invention of concepts, then language can be as much an instrument as a barrier. First, concepts never emerge as pure content; they always arrive to us already mediated — "there is always a 'material basis': as Nietzsche had already claimed, our writing equipment takes part in the forming of our thoughts."³³⁾ Second, Herzogenrath asks, "does not the focus on English as a hegemonic language of academic

31) Nicholas Baer and Annie van den Oever, "Split Screens: A Discussion with Catherine Grant, Malte Hagener, and Katharina Loew," in *Technics: Media Technologies in the Digital Age*, eds. Nicholas Baer and Annie van den Oever (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2024), 263–275.

32) See Malini Guha, "Assemblage, Performance, Precarity: Moving through the Archive in Filipa César's *Spell Reel* (2017) and *Conakry* (2013)," *Feminist Media Histories* 7, no. 3 (2021), 82–103. For a more general overview of archiving African cinema, see Jennifer Blaylock, "Audiovisual Artefacts: The African Politics of Moving Image Loss," *Social Dynamics: A Journal of African Studies* 50, no. 1 (2024), 60–75. Nikolaus Perneczky, "Reanimate, Recupérate, Repair: Post-Independence African Archival Filmmaking and the Question of Restitution," *Sources: Materials & Fieldwork in African Studies*, no. 10–11 (2025), accessed October 31, 2025, <https://journals.openedition.org/sources/3603>.

33) Bernd Herzogenrath, "Introduction: Concepts," in *Concepts: A Travelogue*, ed. Bernd Herzogenrath (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), 4.

discourse deny us a plethora of possibilities, of possible *Denkfiguren*, of possible concepts?”³⁴⁾ To tackle this problem, the editor assembled an international group of scholars and artists to propose words and conceptual constellations that are difficult, even impossible, to translate into English. Yet, as Herzogenrath would undoubtedly affirm,³⁵⁾ conceptual thinking does not occur solely through language — oftentimes it emerges through images and sounds, through distinctive patterns, forms, and figures bound to particular materials and cultures, and thus resistant to translation. Signs of this dynamic run throughout the issue, from Jennifer Nightingale’s exploration of Norfolk knitting patterns to Aleksei Ziniuk and Margarita Galandina’s strategies for subverting colonial scopic regimes through Buryat shamanic concepts. This section, however, encompasses texts that hover around the problem of materialized thought / thinking matter in a more systematic fashion.

Bori Máté’s article “**Ritualization and *Táltos* Procedures in Péter Lichter’s *Nutrition Fugue* (2018)**” can indeed be read as an extension of Herzogenrath’s project, taking the difficult-to-translate verb *tált* (roughly “to open wide”) as a point of departure for examining how ritualistic, trance-like tendencies in experimental cinema gain a specifically Hungarian spin. Focusing on Péter Lichter’s film made from discarded remnants of a socialist-era grocery advertisement (*közért*, literally “for the community”) that showcases processed meat dishes, the article demonstrates how decaying food and distressed film stock parallel *táltos* initiation motifs of symbolic dismemberment and reconstitution. The meat and the film strip are destroyed, rotted, and disfigured, yet also exhumed and newly reassembled — resonating with how the film hijacks certain Hungarian historical symbols from the contemporary Hungarian regime and reappropriates them for emancipatory purposes. The article also enters into dialogue with the shamanic materialism of Mexican artistic group Colectivo Los Ingrávidos,³⁶⁾ highlighting how even an East-Central European context, often assumed to be far more removed from mythic cosmologies than Mexico, can activate ritualistic imagination for distinctly political and aesthetic ends.

If the question of concepts is also a question of situated materiality, something similar applies to metaphors as well. In fact, for metaphors this connection to material specificity may be even more immediate, since metaphor is, at its core, a relation between two concrete or conceptual things. In Ludo de Roo’s article “**Kidlat Tahimik: Metaphorical Journeys in Decolonial Cinema**,” materialized metaphors — what the author calls “concrete metaphors” — are shown to be a deliberate stylistic strategy in the Filipino filmmaker’s work. The concrete metaphor of the bridge in *Perfumed Nightmare* (1979), for example, is never merely abstract or illustrative; it is anchored in the tangible, filmed reality of the Balian bridge — its stone curvature, riverbanks, tropical environment, colonial construction history, and the jeepneys that traverse it. Through close readings of selected works from Tahimik’s oeuvre, de Roo demonstrates how concrete metaphors generate a locally and geographically specific variant of essay filmmaking.

34) Ibid., 6.

35) Bernd Herzogenrath, ed., *Practical Aesthetics* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020).

36) Colectivo Los Ingrávidos, “Shamanic Materialism: 77 Theses on the Audiovisual,” in *Expanded Nature: Ecologies of Experimental Cinema*, eds. Elio Della Noce and Lucas Murari (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2025), 229–240.

The final contribution to the issue responds to the anything-but-automatic nexus between words and matter through a media-archaeological endeavor. In his article “**Moving in Circles: Space and Place in Media Archaeology and the Art of Jop Horst**,” Floris Paalman builds his argument around a structure of creative doubling. On the one hand, he interprets and situates the work of Dutch multimedia artist Jop Horst, who can himself be understood as an “experimental media archaeologist”³⁷⁾ through his many attempts to resurrect obsolete media or “mediatize” ordinary objects (ventilators, toasters, washing machines) in exhibition spaces connected to his home town of Hengelo (an old mill, a former school, an aviary). On the other hand, he devises the dual conceptual framework of *sur place* (borrowed from track cycling) — being in motion yet going nowhere, an existential condition of staying in one place under tension, without clear direction or final goal — and the “circular trace,” understood as a physical inscription or pathway that links space to time and implies a temporal dimension and layering of movements. Through this “double doubling” (our phrasing), Paalman calls for a spatial media archaeology in a very concrete sense, tied to locally specific sites of production; spatial arrangements of media exhibition (*dispositifs*); places where media are made manifest (*topoi*); and broader environments and ecologies.

— — —

Altogether, we can only hope that these nine contributions — six articles and three hybrid pieces (audiovisual essays accompanied by written statements) — covering case studies from Budapest (Hungary), Buryatia (Russia), Guayaquil (Ecuador), Hengelo (the Netherlands), Norfolk (the United Kingdom), Québec (Canada), Suakin (Sudan), as well as various factories across Japan and bridges between rural and urban places in the Philippines, will inspire further transnational research into the production and circulation of filmic matter, and help advance a genuinely horizontal³⁸⁾ theory and history of media materialism. And because *Illuminace* is a Czech journal, we would be especially glad to see future projects incorporate the context of the Czech Republic and East-Central Europe as well.

Acknowledgements

Byron Davies acknowledges the support of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action (MSCA) “Materialism and Geographic Specificity in the Philosophy of Film” (Grant agreement ID: 101102377), at the University of Murcia, funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the authors only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the University of Murcia. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

37) Andreas Fickers and Annie van den Oever, *Doing Experimental Media Archaeology: Theory* (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2022).

38) Agata Jakubowska and Magdalena Radomska, eds., *Horizontal Art History and Beyond: Revising Peripheral Critical Practices* (London: Routledge, 2022).

Jiří Anger's research was supported by a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship (10.13039/501100000286), undertaken at the Department of Film, Queen Mary University of London, United Kingdom.

Bibliography

- Anger, Jiří. *Towards a Film Theory from Below: Archival Film and the Aesthetics of the Crack-Up* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2024).
- Baer, Nicholas, and Annie van den Oever. "Split Screens: A Discussion with Catherine Grant, Malte Hagener, and Katharina Loew," in *Technics: Media Technologies in the Digital Age*, eds. Nicholas Baer and Annie van den Oever (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2024), 263–275.
- Baudry, Jean-Louis. "The Apparatus," *Camera Obscura* 1, no. 1 (1976), 104–126.
- Bazin, André. "Ontology of the Photographic Image," in *What Is Cinema?*, trans. Timothy Barnard (Montreal: Caboose, 2009), 3–12.
- Bazin, André. "The Myth of Total Cinema," in *What Is Cinema?*, trans. Timothy Barnard (Montreal: Caboose, 2009), 13–20.
- Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version," in *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, eds. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 19–55.
- Blaylock, Jennifer. "Audiovisual Artefacts: The African Politics of Moving Image Loss," *Social Dynamics: A Journal of African Studies* 50, no. 1 (2024), 60–75.
- Blümlinger, Christa. *Kino aus zweiter Hand: Zur Ästhetik materieller Aneignung im Film und in der Medienkunst* (Berlin: Vorwerk 8, 2009).
- Coelho, Salomé Lopes. "The Rhythms of More-Than-Human Matter in Azucena Losana's Eco-Developed Film Series *Metarretros*," *Iluminace* 35, no. 2 (2023), 31–49.
- Colectivo Los Ingrávidos, "Shamanic Materialism: 77 Theses on the Audiovisual," in *Expanded Nature: Ecologies of Experimental Cinema*, eds. Elio Della Noce and Lucas Murari (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2025), 229–240.
- Cubitt, Sean. *Finite Media: Environmental Implications of Digital Technologies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).
- Davies, Byron. "Formalism Expanded," *NECSUS: European Journal of Media Studies* 13, no. 1 (2024), 308–315.
- Davies, Byron. "Historia pluriversal: Ernesto Baca's *Samoa* (2005)," *En la otra isla: Revista de audiovisual latinoamericano*, no. 12 (2025), 83–101.
- Davies, Byron. "Surface, Material Bodies, and the Avant-Garde in Philosophy of Film," *October*, no. 191 (2025), 97–118.
- de Luca, Tiago, and Matilda Mroz, eds. *Elemental World Cinema: Cinematic Entanglements of Earth, Fire, Water and Air* (Leiden: Brill, 2025).
- Doing, Karel. "Phytograms: Rebuilding Human–Plant Affiliations," *Animation* 15, no. 1 (2020), 22–36.
- Elsaesser, Thomas. "The New Film History as Media Archaeology," *Cinémas: revue d'études cinématographiques / Cinémas: Journal of Film Studies* 14, no. 2/3 (2004), 75–117.

- Fickers, Andreas, and Annie van den Oever. *Doing Experimental Media Archaeology: Theory* (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2022).
- Frank, Hannah. *Frame by Frame: A Materialist Aesthetics of Animated Cartoons*, ed. Daniel Morgan (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019).
- Gidal, Peter. "Theory and Definition of Structural/Material Film," in *Structural Film Anthology*, ed. Peter Gidal (London: BFI, 1978), 1–21.
- Groo, Katherine. *Bad Film Histories: Ethnography and the Early Archive* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019).
- Guha, Malini. "Assemblage, Performance, Precarity: Moving through the Archive in Filipa César's *Spell Reel* (2017) and *Conakry* (2013)," *Feminist Media Histories* 7, no. 3 (2021), 82–103.
- Hamlyn, Nicky, Simon Payne, and A. L. Rees, eds. *Kurt Kren: Structural Films* (Bristol: Intellect, 2016).
- Hanáková, Veronika. "Configuring Computer Labor in Film and Audiovisual Media: An Introduction to a Special Issue," *Iluminace* 36, no. 2 (2024), 5–22.
- Hediger, Vinzenz, Didi Cheeka, and Sonia Campanini. "Reconfiguring the Audiovisual Heritage: Lessons from Nigeria," *The Moving Image* 21, no. 1–2 (2021), 55–76.
- Herzogenrath, Bernd, ed. *Practical Aesthetics* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020).
- Herzogenrath, Bernd. "Introduction: Concepts," in *Concepts: A Travelogue*, ed. Bernd Herzogenrath (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), 1–33.
- Holliday, Christopher. "Ghosts in the Celluloid: AI Video Dubbing and TrueSync," *JCMS: Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 64, no. 1 (2024), 75–82.
- Jacobson, Brian R. *The Cinema of Extractions: Film Materials and Their Forms* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2025).
- Jakubowska, Agata, and Magdalena Radomska, eds. *Horizontal Art History and Beyond: Revising Peripheral Critical Practices* (London: Routledge, 2022).
- Litvintseva, Sasha. *Geological Filmmaking* (London: Open Humanities Press, 2022).
- Loukissas, Yanni Alexander. *All Data Are Local: Thinking Critically in a Data-Driven Society* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2019).
- Lowder, Rose. *Bouquets 11–20: Notebooks* (New York: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 2018).
- Marks, Laura U., Joseph Clark, Jason Livingston, Denise Oleksijczuk, and Lucas Hilderbrand. "Streaming Media's Environmental Impact," *Media+Environment* 2, no. 1 (2020), accessed October 31, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1525/001c.17242>.
- Marx, Karl. "Theses on Feuerbach," in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2nd ed., ed. David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
- Máté, Bori. "(Eco)Traumatic Landscapes in Contemporary Audiovisual Culture," *Iluminace* 35, no. 2 (2023), 5–8.
- Murguía, Aroldo. "El cine es una serpiente que constantemente cambia de piel," in *Umbrales 4.0*, eds. Salvador Amores and Maximiliano Cruz (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2025), 88–100.
- Parikka, Jussi. *A Geology of Media* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).
- Paszkievicz, Katarzyna, and Andrea Ruthven, eds. *Cinema off/for the Anthropocene: Affect, Ecology, and More-Than-Human Kinship* (London: Routledge, 2025).
- Perneczky, Nikolaus. "Reanimate, Recuperate, Repair: Post-Independence African Archival Film-making and the Question of Restitution," *Sources: Materials & Fieldwork in African Studies*, no. 10–11 (2025), accessed October 31, 2025, <https://journals.openedition.org/sources/3603>.

- Peterson, Becky. *Textiles on Film* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2024).
- Rémy, Lola. "Remediating the Archive: Sabrina Gschwandtner's Film Quilts as Forms of Material Knowledge," *Frames Cinema Journal*, no. 19 (2022), 43–74.
- Rödl, Sebastian. *Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).
- Schonig, Jordan. *The Shape of Motion: Cinema and the Aesthetics of Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).
- Suárez, Juan A. *Experimental Film and Queer Materiality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024).
- Turquety, Benoît. *Medium, Format, Configuration: The Displacements of Film* (Lüneburg: meson press, 2019).
- Walley, Jonathan. *Cinema Expanded: Avant-Garde Film in the Age of Intermedia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).
- Walley, Jonathan. "The Material of Film and the Idea of Cinema: Contrasting Practices in Sixties and Seventies Avant-Garde Film," *October*, no. 103 (2003), 15–30.
- Wilson, George M. *Seeing Fictions in Film: The Epistemology of Movies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
- Youngblood, Gene. *Expanded Cinema* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1970).
- Yusoff, Kathryn. *Geologic Life: Inhuman Intimacies and the Geophysics of Race* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2024).

Filmography

- El gran movimiento* (Kiro Russo, 2021)
- Nutrition Fugue* (Péter Lichter, 2018)
- Perfumed Nightmare* (Kidlat Tahimik, 1979)
- Sniffles Bells the Cat* (Chuck Jones, 1941)
- The Blood of the Condor / Yawar Mallku* (Jorge Sanjinés, 1969)
- The Dislocation of Amber* (Hussein Shariffe, 1975)

Biographies

Byron Davies is a researcher in philosophy, film programmer, and visual artist originally from the U.S. and a naturalized Mexican citizen. He is currently a Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellow at the University of Murcia, Spain, where he is conducting the research project "Materialism and Geographic Specificity in the Philosophy of Film" (2024–2026). From 2018 to 2020, he was a postdoctoral researcher in philosophy at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), and just before that, he completed his PhD in the Department of Philosophy at Harvard University. His writings have appeared in *October*, *Screen*, *Millennium Film Journal*, *The Baffler*, *Desistfilm*, *Los Experimentos*, and *NECSUS_European Journal of Media Studies*, among other places, in addition to co-authored pieces in the *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* and *La Furia Humana*. He is a member of the Oaxaca, Mexico-based film and programming collective *Salón de Cines Múltiples (SACIMU)*. Email: byron.davies@um.es

Jiří Anger is a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow at Queen Mary University of London and a researcher at the National Film Archive in Prague, where he also serves as an editor of the peer-reviewed journal *Illuminace*. His research explores the intersections of media theory, videographic scholarship, and archival practice, with particular emphasis on the media archaeology of digital editing. He is the author of two monographs, editor of three volumes, and has published widely in journals such as *Screen*, *NECSUS*, *[in]Transition*, *Film-Philosophy* (where he won the Article Award in 2022), and *The Moving Image*. His latest book, *Towards a Film Theory from Below: Archival Film and the Aesthetics of the Crack-Up* (Bloomsbury, 2024), was awarded the Runner-Up Prize for Best Monograph by BAFTSS. His recent collaborative videographic work has also received recognition, including a BAFTSS Award for Best Videographic Criticism.
Email: j.anger@qmul.ac.uk

<https://doi.org/10.58193/ilu.1819>

Marek Jancovic

(Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Netherlands)

Cinema's Atmospheric A Priori: How Weather and Environment Shaped Celluloid Film Manufacturing and Raw Material Supply at Fujifilm, Daicel, and Agfa

Abstract

Where was the cotton for Fujifilm's cine-film grown? Who supplied the animal parts that would end up coated on Agfa's film as gelatin? How did climate, environment, geology, and river hydrology shape the history of celluloid film manufacturing, and thus of cinema?

This article enlists several archival collections and a range of little-known, multi-language secondary sources in the broader task of understanding cinema's relationship with the material environment and climate, and its historical role in global trade, extractivist practices, and colonial politics. Drawing on primary source research in the archives of film stock and chemical manufacturers Agfa-Gevaert, IG Farben, and Schering, and on the corporate histories of Fujifilm and Dainippon Celluloid, I clarify how parts of the raw material supply chain for celluloid film were structured between roughly 1920 and 1945. Methodologically, this article integrates eco-media thought with spatial approaches to show how nonhuman elements (earth, wood, air, and water) are historically implicated in the global photochemical industry. It introduces the notion of the *atmospheric a priori* and shifts emphasis to East Asian sites — or rather: environments — often overlooked in English-language research.

By attending both to fine-grained microhistories of individual factories as well as global transnational trade networks, the article challenges prevailing Euro- and Americentric narratives of film technology and provides a situated account of the critical role of logistics and environment in cinema's material foundation.

Keywords

elemental film history, colonialism, cotton, gelatin, camphor

Introduction

In this article, I enlist several archival collections and a range of little-known, multi-language secondary sources in the broader task of understanding cinema's relationship with the material environment and climate, and its historical role in global trade, extractivist practices, and colonial politics.

This contribution represents one of the interim results of CINEAGRI, an ongoing project mapping the global trade in raw materials needed to make photochemical cinema. Of special interest are the transnational supply chains of agricultural products used in nitrate film manufacturing that originate from plant and animal bodies: camphor, cotton, turpentine, and gelatin.

Via CINEAGRI, I was able to conduct research in the archives of film stock and chemical manufacturers Agfa-Gevaert in Belgium, as well as IG Farben and Schering in Germany, and also access the corporate histories of Fujifilm, its parent company Dainippon Celluloid (hereafter referred to as Daicel), and the Taiwan Governor-General Monopoly Bureau. Each of these archival collections and secondary sources is fascinating in its own right, but together they tell the history of an intensely global but also paradoxically place-bound industry whose geographic extent is quite at odds with the typical view of film stock's technological past. That view is dominated by Western inventors and businesses — Eastman Kodak, in particular. Clearly, I am not denying Kodak's outsized, pioneering role nor the great enrichment that studies of the company have contributed to economic history as well as to film and media studies.¹⁾ Nevertheless, although dominant, Kodak, like all film stock makers, relied on a complex network of global suppliers and was but one company among many. That word — “many” — is the object of my research.

My contribution thus builds upon and advances existing eco-media research on the materiality and elementality of celluloid film and the workings of the international photochemical industry,²⁾ but also shifts attention to places (or, more saliently, *environments*) whose presence, especially in English-language research, remains thin. More specifically, this article clarifies how the supply of gelatin, cotton, camphor, and turpentine to Fujifilm and Agfa was organized in the period between roughly 1920 and 1945, and how the histories of these companies have been defined by weather and the natural environment. The choice of this time period is partly strategic, partly pragmatic: there are simply substantially more preserved archival records to study after World War I than before it. But this period also coincides with increasingly aggressive Japanese imperialist forays and the industrialization of the country's celluloid manufacturing, represented by Daicel's formation and meteoric global ascendance, as well as the founding and early period of its subsidiary, Fujifilm.

1) Lutz Alt, “The Photochemical Industry: Historical Essays in Strategy and Internationalization” (PhD Dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1986); Emmet Winkle von Stackelberg, “Seeing Through Silver: A Chemical History of Moving Images 1880–1950” (PhD Dissertation, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2023); Alice Lovejoy, *Tales of Militant Chemistry: The Film Factory in a Century of War* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2025).

2) Elena Past, “The Ferrania Acquisition, the Cinematic Archive and the Anthropocene: Celluloid Materialities,” *La Valle Dell'Eden*, no. 37 (2021), 147–158; Lovejoy, *Tales of Militant Chemistry*.

I conclude with the assertion that viewing cinema as a series of geographically situated, interlinked agricultural and chemical manufacturing sites operating within specific climatic environments allows us to recalibrate the received timeline and map of its technological history. Taking cues from recent environmental perspectives, the article is loosely structured around some of the elements that dictate where film can be made: earth, wood, air, and water.

Integrating Spatial Precision and Eco-Materialism

Spatial approaches have been a thematic mainstay of film scholarship since the early days of new film history.³⁾ Nowadays often pursued in the context of digital humanities projects, the value of spatial approaches, as Vincent Baptist et al. explain, lies in their “ability to unearth patterns in different types of data [which] allows historians of cinema culture to identify relevant new connections that can then be studied more in-depth with traditional, qualitative methods.”⁴⁾ To date, this utility has been applied predominantly to research on audiences and cinemagoing, film programming and film diffusion across cinemas, and the geographic distribution of production and exhibition venues.⁵⁾

In their introduction to one of the influential volumes on the subject, Julia Hallam and Les Roberts argued that “spatial methodologies are reinvigorating film scholarship by charting new pathways [...] through the multilayered landscapes of film production, distribution, exhibition, and consumption.”⁶⁾ Conceptual developments within film and media studies in the intervening decade help us to recognize that this lifecycle had left out the first, quintessential step: film *manufacturing*. This lacuna, I posit, can be remedied through a dialog between spatial and eco-materialist methods.

Indeed, roughly coinciding with the publication of Hallam and Roberts’s book, Eastman Kodak went bankrupt and entered suspended animation, and Fujifilm discontinued the production of motion picture film stock. Most commercial film processing laboratories have gone out of business, although new, artisanal ones have appeared in their place, and photochemical cinema is experiencing a small revival in both screening practice

3) Thomas Elsaesser, “The ‘New’ Film History,” *Sight and Sound* 55, no. 4 (1986), 246–251; Robert Allen and Douglas Gomery, *Film History: Theory and Practice* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994).

4) Vincent Baptist et al., “A Digital Toolkit to Detect Cinema Audiences of the Silent Era: Scalable Perspectives on Film Exhibition and Consumption in Amsterdam Neighbourhoods (1907–1928),” *Studies in European Cinema* 18, no. 3 (2021), 252–273.

5) Julia Hallam and Les Roberts, eds., *Locating the Moving Image: New Approaches to Film and Place* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014); Charles R. Acland and Eric Hoyt, eds., *The Arclight Guidebook to Media History and the Digital Humanities* (Sussex: Reframe Books in association with Project Arclight, 2016); Clara Pafort-Overduin et al., “Moving Films: Visualising Film Flow in Three European Cities in 1952,” *TMG Journal for Media History* 23, no. 1–2 (2020), 1–49; Julia Noordegraaf et al., “Discovering Cinema Typologies in Urban Cinema Cultures: Comparing Programming Strategies in Antwerp and Amsterdam, 1952–1972,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Comparative New Cinema Histories*, ed. Daniela Treveri Gennari et al. (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2024). Jeffrey Klenotic showcases more examples of concrete projects and their histories: Jeffrey Klenotic, “Mapping Flat, Deep, and Slow: On the ‘Spirit of Place’ in New Cinema History,” *TMG Journal for Media History* 23, no. 1–2 (2020), 1–34.

6) Hallam and Roberts, *Locating the Moving Image*, 3.

(through film clubs and festivals) and academic research,⁷⁾ undergirded by a societal interest in and nostalgia for analog cinema's materiality. The closely related and increasingly necessary emphasis on environmental themes in film and media scholarship raises an interesting prospect: Do spatial approaches have anything to offer to the eco-materialist study of film, specifically? In the face of *global* environmental crises, does geographic specificity even matter? (Yes, it does.)

Eco-materialist studies of media sometimes paint with broad brushstrokes, foregoing local discussions of space in favor of emphasizing planetary entanglements. The methodological heuristics of media studies are capacious enough to generate insight at this macro-scale, too, but as Priya Jaikumar and Lee Grieveson argue in their recent introduction to an issue of *Media+Environment* on "extractive film,"

bird's-eye narratives of imperialism, colonialism, and globalization are, upon close examination, composed of a patchwork of fragmented, differential, and dispersed events and conditions around the world. One part of our work is to demonstrate how these pieces fit together by exposing the long arc capitalist extractivism. The other part is to refute the inevitability and universalizing logic of extractivism by staying alive to particularities.⁸⁾

As our field has now developed a good *general* sense that 1) both analog and digital media production is shockingly resource-hungry, polluting, and toxic to living beings, and that 2) media technology is "deeply entangled [with] logics of extractive racial-imperial capitalism,"⁹⁾ then whither do we continue onward?

Put differently, how does the cartographic approach taken by CINEAGRI contribute anything not already addressed by previous inquiries? What does it matter that Fujifilm's cellulose acetate factory was in Arai, and not any other township in Japan or elsewhere? Are there benefits — in terms of method or theory-building — in increasing the resolution of our inquiries beyond the regional or national?

That question echoes much older (but still ongoing) debates about the merits of micro-historical and transnational approaches to both History *lato sensu* and media history more narrowly,¹⁰⁾ and about emerging conceptual tools like "commodity frontiers."¹¹⁾ I draw on both commodity history and what Nicole Starosielski and others call "elemental analysis."¹²⁾

7) Grazia Ingrassia, "Allegories of the Past: Nitrate Film's Aura in Postindustrial Rochester, NY," *Screen* 60, no. 3 (2019), 371–387; Kim Knowles, *Experimental Film and Photochemical Practices* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

8) Priya Jaikumar and Lee Grieveson, "Introduction to Media and Extraction: On the Extractive Film," *Media+Environment* 6, no. 1 (2024), accessed September 30, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1525/001c.123925>.

9) Ibid.

10) Bernhard Struck et al., "Introduction: Space and Scale in Transnational History," *The International History Review* 33, no. 4 (2011), 573–584; Marie Cronqvist and Christoph Hilgert, "Entangled Media Histories: The Value of Transnational and Transmedial Approaches in Media Historiography," *Media History* 23, no. 1 (2017), 130–141.

11) Sven Beckert et al., "Commodity Frontiers and Global Histories: The Tasks Ahead," *Journal of Global History* 16, no. 3 (2021), 466–469.

12) Nicole Starosielski, "The Elements of Media Studies," *Media+Environment* 1, no. 1 (2019), accessed September 30, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1525/001c.10780>.

However, I am not just aiming to describe the circulation of physical goods from which celluloid was made, but also to critically disassemble abstract business entities like “Agfa” or “Fujifilm” into their elemental components: their sites of extraction, routes of trade and supply, and places of manufacturing and processing.

The purpose of this “elemental” film history — which Elodie A. Roy recently powerfully performed for the sonic and visual culture of shellac, Siobhan Angus for photography, and Alice Lovejoy for Kodak and Agfa’s film products¹³⁾ — is twofold. Firstly, it enables the formulation of new answers to Malte Hagener’s enduringly relevant question “Where is film?”¹⁴⁾ dispersing “film” as a research object into unexpected locales like Eilenburg in Germany, Keelung in Taiwan, or Ashigara in Japan.

Secondly, as Bhaskar Sarkar, Raka Shome, Yuriko Furuhata, and many others remind us, the persistent trope of the West as the normative heart of media history and media technology still lingers in our discourse and research.¹⁵⁾ Mapping the spaces of photochemical cinema and the movements of its raw materials reveals a rich “celluloid geopolitics” (as Lovejoy calls it),¹⁶⁾ through which we can partially enact a decentering of the North Atlantic region.

Hunter Vaughan has observed that “the ecomaterialist approach struggles with access and record, attempting to wrest indirect observation and theoretical conclusion from a black hole of information scarcity.”¹⁷⁾ The spatial lens alone will not alleviate these methodological impediments, but it is an unexpectedly productive way of organizing and interpreting what historical information is available. Where Vaughan is interested in piecing together an environmental history of cinema from the fragmented production histories of various films, I turn to the manufacturing history of *film*, the material, as such.

Partial and Fragmented: The Archival Collections of Celluloid Film Makers

Due to the structure of the European and Japanese photochemical industry, archival collections related to celluloid film manufacturing are highly fractured. Historically, this industry was characterized by a minuscule number of successful manufacturers and a similarly limited group of raw material suppliers — a consequence of the industry’s proclivity toward secrecy, exclusive contracts, and vertical integration. The businesses, however, fre-

13) Elodie A. Roy, *Shellac in Visual and Sonic Culture: Unsettled Matter* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2023); Siobhan Angus, *Camera Geologica: An Elemental History of Photography* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2024); Lovejoy, *Tales of Militant Chemistry*.

14) Malte Hagener, “Where Is Cinema (Today)?: The Cinema in the Age of Media Immanence,” *Cinema & Cie* 8, no. 11 (2008), 15–22.

15) Bhaskar Sarkar, “Tracking ‘Global Media’ in the Outposts of Globalization,” in *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives*, eds. Nataša Đurovičová and Kathleen E. Newman (London: Routledge, 2010); Raka Shome, “When Postcolonial Studies Interrupts Media Studies†,” *Communication, Culture and Critique* 12, no. 3 (2019), 305–322; Yuriko Furuhata, “Of Dragons and Geoengineering: Rethinking Elemental Media,” *Media+Environment* 1, no. 1 (2019), accessed September 30, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1525/001c.10797>.

16) Alice Lovejoy, “Celluloid Geopolitics: Film Stock and the War Economy, 1939–47,” *Screen* 60, no. 2 (2019), 224–241.

17) Hunter Vaughan, *Hollywood’s Dirtiest Secret: The Hidden Environmental Costs of the Movies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 76.

quently subsidiarize, merge, branch off, and form holding companies, patent pools, syndicates, and cartels. Such institutional perturbances, along with historical events like World War II or the German Partition, have resulted in patchy, multi-sited collections. The business structures are arcane; understanding them is difficult.

Take Agfa as an example. Much of what survives of Agfa's records is at the German Federal Archives in Berlin, as part of the massive IG Farben collection. But materials can also be found in Wolfen, where its old film factory was located, and Leverkusen, where it was re-established as a Bayer subsidiary in West Germany. The 1964 Agfa-Gevaert merger sent some records to Belgium, in the care of the Fotomuseum Antwerp since 2017.

The Agfa-Gevaert archive is therefore enormous in scope, but also intensely fragmented and, as of yet, practically undescribed. There is a modicum of English-language publications,¹⁸⁾ as well as a respectable stream of German-language research dealing with the history of Agfa and its Wolfen film factory (especially the dedicated series of academic brochures published by the Industry and Film Museum Wolfen),¹⁹⁾ and yet it is still difficult to interface individual companies and archival collections with a broader, global story. The few studies that have taken an international perspective gravitate toward the subject primarily from the vantage point of business strategy.²⁰⁾ Lovejoy's recent monograph has brought some redress, showing the global scale of Kodak's and Agfa's chemical empires, as well as their toxic and radioactive legacies. Aside from Hidenori Okada's now more than twenty-five-year-old article on the early history of Fujifilm and Konica,²¹⁾ what we are still largely missing, however, is an eco-materialist account of film manufacturing in East Asia.

As for other manufacturers, records related to Schering — a major producer of synthetic camphor and key supplier to celluloid makers like DuPont and Fiberloid — are held at the Bayer AG corporate archive in Berlin and are accessible by request. Fujifilm's documentation center with historical materials in Ashigara, Japan, is closed to external scholars, although inquiries are possible. Nevertheless, the official corporate histories of Fujifilm, the Fujifilm Labor Union, and Daicel can be consulted at libraries. They span several thousand pages and are very informative. A small handful of historical materials from Konica is scattered among multiple university and museum libraries across Tokyo. Impor-

18) Carlos Bustamante, "AGFA, Kullmann, Singer & Co. and Early Cine-Film Stock," *Film History* 20, no. 1 (2008), 59–76; Miriam De Rosa and Andrea Mariani, "Experimenting in Circles: Agfa, Amateur Cinema, and the Art of R&D," *NECSUS: European Journal of Media Studies* 12, no. 2 (2023), 176–195.

19) Rainer Karlsch, "Zwischen Partnerschaft Und Konkurrenz: Das Spannungsfeld in Den Beziehungen Zwischen Den VEB Filmfabrik Wolfen Und Der Agfa AG Leverkusen," *Zeitschrift Für Unternehmensgeschichte / Journal of Business History* 36, no. 4 (1991), 245–281; Herbert Bode, "Geschichte der Filmfabrik Wolfen 1909 bis 1994," *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft Deutscher Chemiker, Fachgruppe Geschichte der Chemie*, no. 13 (1997), 157–162; Silke Fengler, "Den Markt klar im Sucher!? Krise und Niedergang des Amateurlagergeschäfts der Agfa-Gevaert AG in den 1960er und 1970er Jahren," *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte / Economic History Yearbook* 47, no. 2 (2006), 95–114.

20) Alt, "The Photochemical Industry;" Patricia A. Nelson, "Competition and the Politics of War: The Global Photography Industry, c. 1910–60," *Journal of War & Culture Studies* 9, no. 2 (2016), 115–132.

21) Appeared in English translation as Hidenori Okada, "Nitrate Film Production in Japan: A Historical Background of the Early Days," in *The Oxford Handbook of Japanese Cinema*, ed. Daisuke Miyao, trans. Ayako Saito and Daisuke Miyao (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

tantly, not a single one of the collections mentioned here is presently digitized.²²⁾ All are very place-bound.

A *comprehensive* view of the film stock industry is impossible because many archival records from the early period simply no longer exist. But even a modestly *accurate* portrayal will thus impel the historian to a sensitivity to place, if for no other reason than the prosaic circumstance of having to pay for a lot of trans- and intercontinental travel to study the records of even just one business entity. CINEAGRI circumnavigates these difficulties. By logistically enabling archival research at different, scattered collections, it seeks to combine “monocentric” — or as Paul S. Moore describes them: “often incredibly localized and particular”²³⁾ — microhistories with the connective analysis of geographically wider transnational trade and knowledge networks. Both, as Jeffrey Klenotic argues, drawing on Selina Springett, remain in a generative tension, but work best when epistemologically flattened into each other.²⁴⁾

Film Stock and the Elements

The elements provide a helpful way of mapping and understanding why film stock was produced in specific locations around the world. Next to the contemporary understanding of elements as basal chemical substances, readers are likely familiar with the Hellenic idea of the four elements: earth, water, air, and fire. In her discussion of elemental media, however, Yuriko Furuhata points out that Chinese cosmology inflects elementality somewhat differently, recognizing five elemental phases instead: fire, water, wood, metal, earth.²⁵⁾ This constellation is woven into folk practices and into the fabric of daily life in East Asia; it appears in calendars, *feng shui*, horoscopes, and Chinese medicine. Heeding Furuhata’s proviso about the importance of *global* elemental media genealogies, I borrow from both the Western and Eastern framework and use earth, wood, air, and water as a hybrid scaffolding for the remainder of this article.

Earth

Photochemical cinema has always been a medium that forced those involved in its manufacturing to be very, very geographically precise. In an anecdote now firmly embedded in Eastman Kodak’s corporate mythology, cattle raised in specific regions with specific diets were to blame for the initial photographic gelatin failures that nearly ruined George Eastman’s budding business in 1882. As Emmet von Stackelberg documents in his recent doctoral dissertation, gelatin had to be rendered from cattle that ate mustard plants, because they contain trace amounts of sulfur. Without sulfur, bovine gelatin — for instance, from

22) A few folders from the IG Farben collection have been scanned on an ad-hoc basis and are freely available online. Published corporate histories held at Japanese libraries are also excellently digitized, allowing full-text search, but access is only possible on site.

23) Paul S. Moore, “Space, Place, and Case: Surveying the Grounds of Cinema History,” *Early Popular Visual Culture* 13, no. 4 (2015), 336.

24) Klenotic, “Mapping Flat, Deep, and Slow.”

25) Furuhata, “Of Dragons and Geoengineering.”

cows that were fed cottonseed meal — is not photographically useful.²⁶⁾ Sulfur from the earth, traversing the plants and the animals that eat them, is thus one of the first elements that govern how and where cinema is made.

Sulfur and gelatin are what we might classify as the *chthonic elements* of cinema: filmic substances bound to the earth either through their origin in the underworld (much like silver or saltpeter), or by their association with death and the afterlife, like the animal carcasses from whose bones and hides gelatin is made.²⁷⁾ In chemical manufacturing, this earthly attachment is a problem. Studying Eastman Kodak's raw material supply, von Stackelberg observes that gelatin — a beastly, fleshy, difficult-to-purify substance of non-human metabolic origin — was the most frustrating material for photochemical engineers to work with.²⁸⁾ Agfa's historical trail is consistent with this finding. Photoemulsion research at Agfa is well-documented between 1919 and 1928, permitting identification not only of Agfa's gelatin suppliers, but, unusually, also of the specific tanneries that delivered animal parts to them, such as Carl Freudenberg and Lederwerke Cornelius Heyl.²⁹⁾

Even after signing an exclusive supply contract in 1922 with Deutsche Gelatine-Fabrik AG (DGF), Agfa continued experimenting with formulas from different companies. And the exasperation in its archive is palpable: batches made in separate factories using the same recipes behaved inconsistently. Letters from 1921 indicate that the Göppingen DGF factory was apparently terrible at making photographic gelatin. Kalbe's product had been excellent, then worsened quickly and the company was unable to deliver anything good for a year. Only DGF's headquarters in Schweinfurt satisfied Agfa's demands.³⁰⁾ But a later report dated November 13, 1925 complains about the poor stability of Schweinfurt gelatin, praising instead products made in Ziegelhausen by Stoess, the principal supplier to Kodak.³¹⁾

These manufacturing failures alert us to the fact that the film supply chain is a fibrous, branching structure. The movement of materials does not follow a straight line; rather, chemically similar materials originate from multiple places, move around different destinations, sometimes bouncing back-and-forth for various parts of the processing. A single company will own multiple factories and production sites, which have their own manufacturing microcultures. For example, Fujifilm first bought materials from Germany in the 1930s, but very quickly shifted to domestic production and its own vertically integrated factories (which I discuss later in this article) before World War II, then returned to international suppliers after the war. Among so many tributaries, "[m]aterials were defined by their provenance," von Stackelberg observes.³²⁾ The drive toward chemical standardization notwithstanding, gelatin sites in both Europe and Japan were bedeviled by inexplicable behaviors for decades.

26) von Stackelberg, "Seeing Through Silver," 98.

27) For an extended discussion of the close parallels between cinema and animal disassembly, see Nicole Shukin, *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

28) von Stackelberg, "Seeing Through Silver," 15.

29) Multiple reports from 1921 and 1922 in *Bundesarchiv* (henceforth abbreviated to BA) folder R8128/16907.

30) Various letters in BA R8128/16908.

31) Technical report "Haltbarkeit von Emulsionen," BA R8128/16907.

32) von Stackelberg, "Seeing Through Silver," 31.

In matters of celluloid, a chain of metabolic events links the element of earth to cinema's photochemistry. It is not entirely far-fetched to speculate that, like at Kodak, some of the frustrating inconsistencies in gelatin quality at Agfa and Fujifilm may similarly be attributable to the land — the earth where the cattle had grazed. In the archive, gelatin is always already situated, earthbound. Not a fungible, uniform commodity identified by its manufacturer, but by the specific production site.

Wood

By weight, however, cinema is of largely vegetal origin. Celluloid is made from cellulose fibers, usually derived from cotton. But in a narrower sense, *wood* is also a quintessential element of cinema. Alice Lovejoy posits that it was primarily the forests that attracted Eastman Kodak to a wood alcohol plant in Kingsport, Tennessee, and motivated it to transfer all of its acetate manufacturing there in 1930. Lovejoy concludes that “trees were at the core of nearly all of Tennessee Eastman's photographic supplies and goods.”³³⁾

Wood figures in the Agfa archives in interesting ways, too. After World War I, multiple companies supplied Agfa with cellulose “dope,”³⁴⁾ including the German explosives manufacturers Deutsche Sprengstoff-AG and Wasag. Nevertheless, by the mid-1920s, cellulose nitrate and acetate dope were mostly sold to Agfa and Gevaert by the Deutsche Celluloid-Fabrik AG in Eilenburg. In 1924, Agfa signed a contract stipulating that the Celluloid-Fabrik would satisfy two thirds of Agfa's cellulose needs. Several draft versions of the nitrocellulose contract survive, along with modification requests from Agfa.³⁵⁾ The initial contract postulated that dope pricing would be contingent on raw material costs. Agfa insisted on removing such a blanket clause and separating fibers by origin, because the company feared that Eilenburg might raise dope prices when cotton linters were expensive, even though it might be delivering cheaper wood-based cellulose.³⁶⁾ Although I have not seen evidence that Agfa made any market-ready wood-based photographic or cine-film products in this period, it did test wood pulp nitrocellulose specifically for this purpose, and the excellent performance of wood cellulose from Eilenburg was ultimately one of the reasons that tipped the contract in favor of the Celluloid-Fabrik and against its competitor, Agfa's long-standing partner, Wasag.³⁷⁾

Wood's vegetal specificities were therefore so important to the manufacturing that they had to be spelled out in detail in business negotiations, and they also led to the decades-long procurement relationship between Agfa — later IG Farben — and the Cellu-

33) Lovejoy, “Celluloid Geopolitics,” 153.

34) “Dope” is the liquid precursor to celluloid film — a syrupy form of nitrated cotton which can be poured and dried into a film after being mixed with camphor and solvents.

35) “Vertragsentwurf Nitrozellulose-Fabriken” and related correspondence from August-September 1924, BA R8128/17127.

36) Cellulose fibers derived from wood pulp have several disadvantages over cotton. For example, they require much higher amounts of acid for nitration or acetylation because of attached lignin and resins. For more detail, see also Jonathan Haid, “The Raw Materials of Celluloid Film: Wartime Economy, Educational Animation, and Film's Plasticity,” *Research in Film and History*, no. 5 (2023), accessed September 30, 2025, <https://film-history.org/issues/text/raw-materials-celluloid-film>.

37) Letter from Oppenheim to Agfa directorate, July 9, 1924; and “Aktennotiz über die Besprechung mit Herrn Professor Berl,” July 12, 1924, in BA R8128/17127.

loid-Fabrik Eilenburg. As Lovejoy argues, the scientific possibility of wood-based cellulose was hailed as a way of severing the reliance on U.S. cotton, and therefore as a matter of national political and economic autarky and imperial expansionism in the German Reich.³⁸⁾

The cotton linters used in celluloid film in the West, indeed, largely originated from the United States. Agfa's suppliers bought them on the Bremen cotton market from companies such as O'Neill Brothers (East Point), P. F. Cornwell (Atlanta), Mississippi Cottonseed Products Co. (Memphis), and others, and brought them to Germany via Rotterdam or Hamburg. Given the U.S.'s dominant position as a global cotton exporter, one might plausibly assume that Japan imported cotton for its film products from there, too. However, this does not seem to be the case.

In its early years in the 1930s, Fujifilm received all of its cellulose nitrate and acetate from Daicel, which made them out of rag tissue paper and textile scraps. A former Daicel employee recalls that no U.S. linters were imported in the early period.³⁹⁾ Linters only replaced rag paper in 1937, when research at Fujifilm and investments into new bleaching and refining machinery shifted the manufacturing process.⁴⁰⁾ Prior to that, Daicel and its precursors were buying cellulose fibers from domestic companies like Tōyō Paper and Mitsubishi Paper. While it is unclear to me where exactly the cotton for rag paper came from, based on Chisako Tsuji's analysis, during the period at stake here (1920s–1940s), most cotton in Japan would have originated from India and China.⁴¹⁾

Indeed, Northern China's abundant cottonseed production, along with the pressures of growing celluloid demand, prompted Daicel to aggressively pursue self-sufficiency. It opened several of its own cotton linter factories on the occupied Asian continent: in 1938 in Tianjin, China, and Mokpo, Korea, expanding to Manchuria the following year (either in Mukden, according to Daicel's 1952 corporate history, or Liaoyang, per the newer book from 1981). Linters from the continent were sent to Aboshi for refining into cellulose nitrate, and some to Arai for acetate. As far as I am aware, Daicel's — and thus, by extension, Fujifilm's — investment in Japanese colonial cotton has never been addressed in English-language literature previously.

But celluloid stock manufacturing revolves around wood not only as a source of methanol, acetone, acetic acid, or potentially cellulose, but also of camphor, the only economically viable plasticizer for nitrate film, and of turpentine, the raw material for making synthetic camphor.

Camphor is a crystalline substance distilled from certain species of trees native to Taiwan, Southern China, and Southern Japan. A specialty product of Japan and Taiwan, camphor was a primary source of revenue for the Government-General of Taiwan during the Japanese era (1895–1945), as well as a critical natural resource at the center of violent global conflicts between Indigenous Taiwanese, Hakka settlers, and practically every imperial empire throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. The history of camphor extraction in

38) Lovejoy, *Tales of Militant Chemistry*, 53–58.

39) Dainippon Celluloid, *History of Dainippon Celluloid Co.* [大日本セルロイド株式会社社史] (Amagasaki: Dainippon Celluloid, 1952), 408.

40) Dainippon Celluloid, *History of Dainippon Celluloid Co.* [大日本セルロイド株式会社社史], 153.

41) Chisako Tsuji, "Cotton Improvement Projects in Japan and Korea," in *Intra-Asian Trade and Industrialization*, eds. A.J.H. Latham and Heita Kawakatsu (London: Routledge, 2006).

Taiwan is a microcosm of planetary colonial extractivism. It is a fecund area of research among historians of East Asia that enjoys continued popularity as a subject of doctoral dissertations.⁴²⁾ The gamut of research spans all of cultural, economic, and environmental history, but the consensus among scholars is that the celluloid industry's hunger for camphor fueled the deforestation of Taiwan's mountainous regions and an increasingly violent displacement of their native inhabitants, both by settlers from the Chinese mainland during the Qing era, as well as under Japanese rule. It is only recently that media scholars such as WZ Hill, Jonathan Haid, Emmet von Stackelberg, and others have begun lobbying for more awareness of cinema's part in this dark camphor history.⁴³⁾

Celluloid film is fundamentally intertwined with the Japanese monopoly on camphor wood and Japan's colonial forestry.⁴⁴⁾ The precious wood-derived crystals are not only chemically indispensable to cinema; they also point us to a trade infrastructure woefully invisible in scholarship on film technology and chemistry: that of East Asian shipping and trading firms. Samuel Samuel, Suzuki Shōten, and Mitsui Bussan controlled the international trade in camphor. These businesses did not operate simply as transparent "media" of goods circulation. They actively intervened in the early celluloid film industry.

The Yokohama-based Samuel Samuel, for instance, held the Japanese Monopoly Bureau's exclusive camphor sale license early on, at the start of the 20th century, and puppeteered European industry by prioritizing supplies to camphor refineries over celluloid producers.⁴⁵⁾ Hirokazu Hirai has argued that, aside from the Russo-Japanese War, it was Samuel Samuel's throttling of sales to celluloid makers that led to the dramatic global price fluctuations and the sudden emergence of Chinese natural and German synthetic camphors on the market in 1907.⁴⁶⁾ Displeased, the otherwise hands-off Monopoly Bureau first forced Samuel Samuel to allocate 80% of its camphor to celluloid companies, then terminated its contract entirely in December 1906 and shifted its consignment to Mitsui Bussan, causing a minor diplomatic row. Mitsui itself was later instrumental in repeatedly in-

42) Daigaku Tei, "Research on the History of Taiwan-Japan Camphor Policy [臺日樟腦政策史の研究]" (PhD Dissertation, Osaka Metropolitan University, 1995); Antonio C. Tavares, "Crystals from the Savage Forest: Imperialism and Capitalism in the Taiwan Camphor Industry, 1800–1945" (PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, 2004); Ken Riebenschalm, "Der steigende Kampferbedarf infolge der Erfindung des Celluloids und die Unterwerfung der indigenen Bevölkerung Taiwans während der japanischen Kolonialherrschaft" (PhD Dissertation, University of Hamburg, 2011); Matthew Tyler Combs, "Camphor, a Plastic History: China, Taiwan, and Celluloid, 1868–1937" (PhD Dissertation, UC Irvine, 2018); Toulouse-Antonin Roy, "'The Camphor Question Is in Reality the Savage Question': The Japanese Empire, Indigenous Peoples, and the Making of Capitalist Taiwan, 1895–1915" (PhD Dissertation, UCLA, 2020); Faizah Zakaria, *The Camphor Tree and the Elephant: Religion and Ecological Change in Maritime Southeast Asia* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2023).

43) W. Z. Hill, "The Life of a Film: Medianatures, Camphor, and the Ideology of Technological Modernity," *JCMS: Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 61, no. 4 (2022), 85–105; Haid, "The Raw Materials of Celluloid Film," von Stackelberg, "Seeing Through Silver."

44) Marek Jancovic, "'Please Reseed': Camphor, Turpentine, and the Agrogeographies of Celluloid Cinema," in *Cinematic Ecosystems: Screen Encounters with More-than-Humans in the Era of Environmental Crisis*, eds. Mary Hegedus and Jessica Mulvogue (Wilmington: Vernon Press, 2026).

45) Japan Monopoly Corporation [日本専売公社], *History of the Camphor Monopoly [樟腦専売史]* (Tokyo: Japan Monopoly Corporation, 1956), 455.

46) Hirokazu Hirai, "A Study of Historical Japanese Colonial Finances [日本植民地財政史研究]" (PhD Dissertation, Hokkaido University, 1996).

viting George Eastman and his engineers to Japan as part of its (ultimately unsuccessful) efforts to seduce Kodak into building a film factory there.⁴⁷⁾

These brief historical vignettes demonstrate that there are still major blind spots in English-language celluloid film research, which can be successfully identified by heightening our sensitivity to places, materials, and environments.

Even Japanese camphor's nemesis — German and U.S. synthetic camphor — is a forest product. Turpentine oil, made by distilling pine tree resin, can be chemically synthesized into camphor through successive transformations into pinene hydrochloride, camphene, and isoborneol. Figuring out the nuances of this process was a major driver of Schering's success as one of the world's most important pharmaceutical manufacturers. Schering was the first to commercially make synthetic camphor on a large scale and ultimately broke the Japanese Monopoly Bureau's grip on the world market in the 1920s. Synthetic camphor alone accounted for 37% of Schering's turnover in 1924.⁴⁸⁾

As I have described in more detail elsewhere, turpentine suitable for camphor synthesis could only be won commercially from specific pine species growing in specific regions that produced correctly polarized resin.⁴⁹⁾ Locational specificity matters here, too: graphs in the archives of Schering and Agfa's parent company IG Farben show that U.S. turpentine, shipped overseas from Savannah, New York City, or New Orleans, was considered most suitable for camphor production due to its high pinene content. This was followed (in quickly descending order) by Portuguese, French, Russian, Nordic, and German turpentine.⁵⁰⁾

Correspondence and waybills in the Schering archive depict in crisp geographic detail the vicissitudes of a transnational industry hampered by unreliable logistical infrastructure and the smelly, pesky corporeality of its commodities. On occasion, camphor shipments were so fetid that shippers refused to load them on passenger steamboats traveling down the Rhine. Because of this, in 1928, one such delivery missed a transatlantic freight ship leaving from Rotterdam to Wilmington, where DuPont was waiting to process it into celluloid. DuPont's London office was furious!⁵¹⁾

Later, as World War II raged on the continent, Schering frantically scrambled to source substitutes for U.S. turpentine oil. Its Hamburg-based import partner Willers, Engel & Co. sent weekly updates with prices for French, Spanish, and Portuguese products. In 1944, a typical supply route might have looked like this: Schering would buy a trainload of Portuguese and Spanish turpentine from Willers, to be delivered from Hendaye at the Spanish–French border to Schering's factory in Eberswalde by rail via Strasbourg and Frankfurt. Sometimes, French turpentine came from Willers's stocks in Mühlhausen. Occasionally, trains arrived completely empty and the importer had to divert replacement cargo from other clients in Wiesbaden.⁵²⁾

47) Fuji Photo Film Co., *25 Years in Business* [創業25年の歩み] (Tokyo: Fuji Photo Film Co., 1960), 20.

48) According to the unpublished corporate history by Karl Otto Mittelstenscheid, "Kampfer: Ein wichtiges Kapitel der Schering-Geschichte," 1996, SchA-B3-788, Schering Archiv, Bayer AG, Berlin, henceforth abbreviated as SchA.

49) Jancovic, "Please Reseed."

50) I.e., "Pinen u. Kampfer Ausbeuten," January 15, 1941, in BA R8-VIII/356.

51) Letter and telegram correspondence in SchA, folder B2-973.

52) Letter correspondence in SchA folder B2-460.

In these examples, the materiality of wood-derived substances not only clearly exerts a great deal of influence over the supply chain. It is also the condition of possibility for tracing the supply chain to begin with. There is a paper trail because things went *wrong*. Had the camphor not been so smelly as to interrupt the trade route, there likely would not have been many confused letters and telegrams — the kinds of sources that tend to survive in historical collections better than, for example, invoices. Wood and its manifold forms — including the very paper of archival documents — therefore must be considered a fundamental element of celluloid cinema and its history.

Air

Air has always been a silent antagonist to film manufacturers. Berlin's turbid airs were what drove Agfa to the countryside in Wolfen in 1909.⁵³⁾ When Agfa was looking to establish its own film factory in the United States, its executives initially considered building it in New York City, then rejected the idea chiefly because of the unfavorable climate. High temperatures and humidity in the summer and too much cold in the winter would have made the maintenance of consistently tempered air conditioned to 8°C prohibitively expensive.⁵⁴⁾ Eastman Kodak's own plans to open a film stock plant in Japan also fell through because its engineers found the Japanese climate too warm and humid to make celluloid.⁵⁵⁾ Indeed, finding a suitable site was not easy for the locals, either. The company histories of both Fujifilm and its parent Daicel describe the quest in some detail.

By 1930, the celluloid company Daicel had been experimenting with making nitrate film base for a decade and finally resolved to build a dedicated film plant.⁵⁶⁾ After scouring the entire wider Kantō area, Shūichi Asano (Fujifilm's future first president), Sakae Haruki (its second president), and Seisuke Sakuma (the engineer responsible for celluloid dope pouring) initially decided on the town of Gotemba, in a generally dry area with few salt aerosols and plentiful clean water. But they later realized that Gotemba's location at the base of Mount Fuji created a microclimate that raised the humidity above the regional average and caused a weather phenomenon known as "watashiamé" — frequent rains around the town even when it was sunny in the larger Numazu urban area just 30 kilometers away.⁵⁷⁾ Air was thus also central to the siting of celluloid factories — so much so that we might even speak of an *atmospheric a priori* of cinema.

It was the clean mountain air that convinced the later Fuji Photo Film Company to invest in (and later purchase) a gelatin factory in the village of Kawakami in May 1939. Fuji purchased Nikka Kōgyō's bovine gelatin facility both because World War II escalations suddenly threatened the supply, but also because the cold climate and pure air at an elevation of 1060 meters were thought to be ideally conducive to gelatin production and curing.⁵⁸⁾

53) Bustamante, "AGFA, Kullmann, Singer & Co. and Early Cine-Film Stock."

54) „Bericht über die Möglichkeit der Fabrikation photog. Produkte in Amerika," n.d. [1928?], BA R8128/20784

55) Fuji Photo Film Co., *25 Years in Business* [創業25年の歩み], 5.

56) Daicel Chemical Industries, *A 60-year history of Daicel Chemical Industries* [ダイセル化学工業60年史] (Osaka: Daicel Chemical [ダイセル化学工業株式会社], 1981), 29.

57) Fuji Photo Film Co., *25 Years in Business* [創業25年の歩み], 28.

58) Ibid., 103; Jun Arakawa, "Industrial History of the Photographic Materials - 'How Dainippon Celluloid Esta-

But this drive toward ideal atmospheric conditions — Furuhata calls it “thermostatic desire”⁵⁹⁾ — would also lead to the factory’s demise. Clean air clashed with logistical reality. Tucked away in the mountains of Nagano (Fig. 1), the site was inconvenient and difficult to communicate with, and had no direct connection to tanneries. It somehow managed to keep alive the supply to Fujifilm’s celluloid plant in Ashigara throughout the war, in part by resorting to making gelatin from whales, even as Fuji’s other bone gelatin factory in Karino was shut down. Representatives were sent far north to Hokkaidō to buy whale blubber. Whatever was too fatty to be used for cinema, was then canned and sent to employees as food. In normal times too smelly to eat, it was greeted as a blessing during wartime shortages, the corporate history recalls.⁶⁰⁾ The Kawakami site ceased operations on July 21, 1954. But it had an essential role in teaching Fujifilm’s later suppliers — Nihon Hikaku (now Nippi) and Nitta Kōshitsu (now Nitta Gelatin) — how to make photographic gelatin.⁶¹⁾



Fig. 1: The site of Fujifilm’s former gelatin factory in the village of Kawakami. The original buildings were dismantled in the 1950s; the current structures are a produce collection facility. Photo by the author

Air, the most tenuous of elements. In the film factory, it acquires a thickness, a tenacity, a mind of its own. We know from existing literature that it is constantly treated with suspicion, monitored as a disturber of purity, subjected to thermal control and heavy-duty filtering.⁶²⁾ A carrier of dust, dirt, moisture. And later, as Lovejoy recounts, of radioactive fallout.⁶³⁾ But air steers the supply network even *before* the factory is there. It marks certain sites as atmospherically (and therefore financially) suited to pouring and handling celluloid or gelatin. It precludes others as too humid, too warm, or too polluted. Tales of

blished Fuji Photo Film’ [感光材料の産業史-「大日本セルロイドから富士写真フィルム 設立の経緯」],” *Journal of The Society of Photographic Science and Technology of Japan* [日本写真学会誌] 87, no. 2 (2024), 79–86.

59) Yuriko Furuhata, *Climatic Media: Transpacific Experiments in Atmospheric Control* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022).

60) Fuji Photo Film Co., *25 Years in Business* [創業25年の歩み], 221.

61) Fujifilm Labor Union, *History of the Fujifilm Labor Union* [富士フィルム労働組合の歴史：前史・1945年-1957年・追補] (Tokyo: Rōdō Keizaisha [労働経済社], 1960).

62) von Stackelberg, “Seeing Through Silver,” 56–57.

63) Lovejoy, *Tales of Militant Chemistry*.

air tend to be anecdotal in corporate histories, but by stitching them together across multiple archives, we begin to see how heavily the atmospheric preconditions of a place are implicated in the choice for a particular manufacturing site. And given how much film factories tend to orient the culture and economy of a city around themselves,⁶⁴ this atmospheric a priori must be understood and accounted for as more than just a passive “environment” or “weather.”

Water

The atmospheric a priori of cinema has a parallel in water. Let us return to the search for a location for Fujifilm’s first factory. Not far from both Gotemba and Numazu, on the northwestern side of Mount Myōjingatake, Asano, Haruki, and Sakuma found what they had been looking for. The town of Ashigara offered an agreeable climate and clean air. The water of the Kari river had chemically ideal properties, a stable temperature, and contained almost no metals, salts, or organic inclusions. It flowed through a V-shaped valley, so that Daicel’s usage of one branch would not upset farmers who relied on it for irrigation.⁶⁵ The elements — earth, air, and water — perfectly converged at this site, and became the reason Daicel decided to construct its first film stock plant here, spinning it off into a separate corporation, Fuji Photo Film, just before construction was completed at the end of 1933. Fujifilm’s factory remains in Ashigara to this day.

Water prolifically permeates the voluminous corporate archives of film stock makers. Across the decades, numerous reports document how floods and water shortages regularly disrupted production. Agfa’s 1905 annual report informed shareholders that shipment prices for nitrate and pyrite skyrocketed because the Elbe and Oder rivers had dried up, forcing a shift to rail transport.⁶⁶ The drought of 1911 was, again, a shock large enough that it had to be explained to investors.⁶⁷ Floods contaminated the groundwater with bacteria in 1913, causing quickly degrading, faulty emulsions.⁶⁸ Droughts on these major waterways periodically appear in IG Farben’s records well into the 1940s. When global cotton and linter prices spiked in 1936 due to a drought in Mississippi and Tennessee, IG Farben tested alternative Greek, Romanian, Turkish, and Syrian cotton linters that had appeared on the markets but found them unusable for cine-film.⁶⁹

Several scholars have pointed to the damage that Eastman Kodak and its partners and subsidiaries have caused to people and creatures living in close proximity to the Genesee and Holston rivers.⁷⁰ Much less is known of such toxic celluloid pasts in other parts of the

64) Ibid.

65) Fuji Photo Film Co., *25 Years in Business* [創業25年の歩み], 28–29.

66) 32nd shareholder report in BA R8128/20667.

67) Report of May 2, 1912 in BA R8128/20667.

68) Peter Löhnert and Heinz Mustroph, *Von der Trockenplatte zum Schwarz/Weiss Kinefilm*, Aus der Geschichte der Filmfabrik Wolfen 61 (Betriebsarchiv d. VEB Filmfabrik Wolfen, 1987), 40.

69) BA R8128/20367.

70) Richard Maxwell and Toby Miller, “Film and the Environment: Risk Offscreen,” in *Film and Risk*, ed. Mette Hjort (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2012); Past, “The Ferrania Acquisition, the Cinematic Archive and the Anthropocene”; Heather Davis, *Plastic Matter* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022); von Stackelberg, “Seeing Through Silver”; Lovejoy, *Tales of Militant Chemistry*.

world, although even official corporate histories offer glimpses of water-related environmental damage.

Both Sakai Celluloid in Ōsaka and Nippon Celluloid Artificial Silk in Hyōgo, the precursors to Daicel, built their factories near renowned rivers.⁷¹⁾ The Yamato in Ōsaka was considered an “illustrious water” so pure that it was shipped to *sake* makers all the way in Nada.⁷²⁾ The Ibo, flowing through the town of Aboshi in Hyōgo (Fig. 2), was equally famous already beginning in the Nara period.⁷³⁾ But by the time the Camphor Monopoly Bureau ordered Sakai and Nippon Celluloid to merge and form Daicel in 1919, these acclaimed streams were at their limits. The rivers had developed a habit of drying up in the summer, causing expensive production interruptions and forcing the factories to repeatedly rebuild water collection facilities.⁷⁴⁾ Gravel extraction sank both riverbeds and caused saltwater intrusions from the sea. By 1932, Daicel had to petition the Ōsaka prefectural government to build a weir, half of which it financed itself. Even that was not enough to secure sufficient water, as the company was gearing up to start supplying its soon-to-be new subsidiary, Fujifilm, with paper and raw celluloid. Production had to move from Sakai to Aboshi completely, where an expanded cellulose factory on the Ibo began operations in 1936.⁷⁵⁾



Fig. 2: The Ibo river in 2025, within walking distance from the Daicel compound. Photo by the author

Daicel's later acetate factory in Arai was also positioned there because of fluvial conditions deemed well-suited for manufacturing. After surveying the entire country, Daicel decided to set up shop in Niigata prefecture. The town of Arai offered land, financing, and access to enticingly cheap hydropower, thanks to the Ikejiri and Seki rivers. The Seki, Ya-

71) Regarding Daicel's prehistory, see Okada, “Nitrate Film Production in Japan.”

72) By the 1970s, the Yamato was one of the most polluted rivers in Japan.

73) Koyama Hisashi, *History of the Japanese Plastic Industry* [日本プラスチック工業史] (Tokyo: Kōgyō Chōsakai [工業調査会], 1967), 20.

74) Dainippon Celluloid, *History of Dainippon Celluloid Co.* [大日本セルロイド株式会社社史], 93.

75) Dainippon Celluloid, *History of Dainippon Celluloid Co.* [大日本セルロイド株式会社社史], 126–127; Daicel Chemical Industries, *A 60-year history of Daicel Chemical Industries* [ダイセル化学工業60年史], 26–27.

shiro, and Shibue should have provided the factory with more than enough process water, yet extreme droughts plagued it as early as 1937, a mere year after it began operations.⁷⁶⁾

As with air, one would be hard-pressed to find a manufacturing site involved in photochemical cinema whose existence is not in some profound manner intertwined with rivers. Rivers and water supply are constantly a point of discussion in the archival record, and also prominently remembered in corporate historiographies, where water appears as a processing chemical, as an energy source, as logistical infrastructure, and as waste.

Already a decade ago, in his now seminal book, Jussi Parikka had established that media technology is of the environment and returns to the environment.⁷⁷⁾ Cinema, too, is a thing of the living world. Aside from the raw materials themselves, making film is contingent on an atmospheric and fluvial *a priori*, and on specific geographic, hydrological, and meteorological features found in some places and not others. If we interrogate the archival records to ask *why* Fujifilm's or Agfa's factories were situated exactly where they were, they generously disclose a cast of nonhuman characters who direct the construction and operation of buildings and the movement of goods, trains, trucks, and ships. Throughout the history of cinema, chemical discoveries and technological inventions matter, yes, but so do droughts and microclimates, floods and aerosols, mustard plants and camphor trees, and whale blubber.

Three Takeaways

What analytical value do all these site-specific anecdotes really carry, beyond satisfying some primal encyclopedic obsession with film-related geographic trivia? By way of conclusion, allow me to format my answer as a list.

1. A geographically situated approach to cinema as a material object indicates new historical focal points and unexpected industrial, environmental, and colonial entanglements.

Recent celluloid film history has already established that cinema must be theorized as a close relative of explosives and fertilizers, and that a theory of cinema aesthetics also requires an understanding of the chemistry of the film base and emulsion.⁷⁸⁾ A situated approach to global cine-film manufacturing and its environments further reveals new regional foci and unexpected nonhuman entanglements — such as that between Fujifilm and the Japanese whaling industry, or the importance of the water systems around Ōsaka Bay and Myōkō in Niigata. It also directs us toward previously undertheorized logistical actors, such as shipping and trading companies.

76) Dainippon Celluloid, *History of Dainippon Celluloid Co.* [大日本セルロイド株式会社社史], 142–43; Daicel Chemical Industries, *A 60-year history of Daicel Chemical Industries* [ダイセル化学工業60年史], 33–34.

77) Jussi Parikka, *A Geology of Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

78) Lovejoy, *Tales of Militant Chemistry*; Pansy Duncan, “CelluloidTM: Cecil M. Hepworth, Trick Film, and the Material Prehistory of the Plastic Image,” *Film History* 31, no. 4 (2019), 92–111; Pansy Duncan, “Towards a Natural History of Film Form: Silver Salts and the Aesthetics of Early Studio-Era Hollywood Cinema,” *Screen* 63, no. 4 (2022), 411–426; Past, “The Ferrania Acquisition, the Cinematic Archive and the Anthropocene.”

This geographical realignment from Euro-American manufacturing sites to a more global map goes hand in hand with the emergence of new temporal foci. The two World Wars often serve as narrative anchors in the story of celluloid film due to both new chemical discoveries spurred by material shortages, and also because relatively many archival records survive, so the period is amenable to research. However, other armed conflicts have also distinctly shaped raw material availability. Camphor is a case in point: its price fluctuations (which impacted celluloid film manufacturers heavily and either stimulated or stymied the development of German synthetic manufacturing and the later success of Schering) can be tied directly to the First Sino-Japanese and the Russo-Japanese Wars. As I have shown, the Mukden Incident and the Japanese occupation of Korea were also instrumental to the celluloid base that Fujifilm was making until Japan lost its colonies.

2. Locational and material specificity can inform the study of film aesthetics and preservation.

Cheap electricity and labor in a given region, as well as the road, railway, and port infrastructure, weigh heavily into celluloid manufacturers' managerial decisions, but the natural environment — *the elements* — dictates a fair proportion of where celluloid film is made, its price, as well as its aesthetic and material properties. Gelatin must not be cloudy. Camphor must resist yellowing — in fact, Schering's synthetic camphor, used to make both cine-film and laminated car windshields, was subjected to intense aesthetic scrutiny from its U.S. clients. Reports show that the so-called "DuPont-grade" camphor had to withstand special testing because the celluloid interlayer in windshields made with synthetic camphor sometimes began discoloring after two years, while U.S. car warranties lasted for five.⁷⁹⁾ For obvious reasons, color stability was equally important to photographic and cine-products.

In a roundabout way, the environmental history of cinema is therefore also tied up in its archival present. Hypothetically, a batch of films in the archive that deteriorate faster than others could, on occasion, be traced back to environmental disruptions — such as a past drought that toppled the cotton supply chain and forced celluloid companies to resort to other markets. This avenue of research has tremendous potential for collaboration between historians, film archivists, and archival chemists.

3. The relevant unit of analysis is not the company, but the factory.

This article has shown that the environmental conditions underpinning celluloid film manufacturing — soil chemistry, river hydrology, forest access, and atmospheric stability — are not an abstract backdrop in cinema's industrial history, but agentive forces. In order to account for them historically, we must shift our analytical lens from the company to the factory: the site where climate meets chemistry, and where logistical decisions are shaped by nonhuman constraints. By foregrounding the factory as the nexus of environmental, colonial, and technological entanglements, we gain a more precise understanding of cinema's material infrastructure.

79) Various materials in SchA B2-0167.

In conjunction with this approach that asks about the local specificities of celluloid manufacturing sites, organizing the history of film stock elementally can be a productive way of reassessing historical documents and existing corporate historiographies, and expanding cinema's global geography eastward and toward the Pacific.

Acknowledgments

Research for this article was financed by the Dutch Research Council (NWO) as part of the project CINEAGRI — *Global Elements of Cinema* (VI.Veni.221C.026). I am greatly indebted to Ryō Ōkubo, Fumiko Tsuneishi, Norikazu Ōya, and Jun Arakawa for their generous guidance regarding the Japanese photochemical industry and related historical resources, and to Thomas Jenné (Fotomuseum Antwerp), Thore Grimm (Bayer AG Heritage Communications), Miyuki Endō (Tokyo Photographic Art Museum), Katsuhiko Sumita (Daicel), Manfred Gill (Industrie- und Filmmuseum Wolfen), and employees of the German Federal Archives for their support and for facilitating my access to archival records. I also thank the anonymous reviewers for their constructive and helpful comments.

Bibliography

- Acland, Charles R., and Eric Hoyt, eds. *The Arclight Guidebook to Media History and the Digital Humanities* (Sussex: Reframe Books in association with Project Arclight, 2016).
- Allen, Robert, and Douglas Gomery. *Film History: Theory and Practice* (New York: McGraw-Hill Humanities/Social Sciences/Languages, 1994).
- Alt, Lutz. "The Photochemical Industry: Historical Essays in Strategy and Internationalization" (PhD Dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1986).
- Angus, Siobhan. *Camera Geologica: An Elemental History of Photography* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2024).
- Arakawa, Jun. "Industrial History of the Photographic Materials - 'How Dainippon Celluloid Established Fuji Photo Film' [感光材料の産業史-「大日本セルロイドから富士写真フイルム 設立の経緯」]," *Journal of The Society of Photographic Science and Technology of Japan* [日本写真学会誌] 87, no. 2 (2024), 79–86.
- Baptist, Vincent, Julia Noordegraaf, and Thunnis van Oort. "A Digital Toolkit to Detect Cinema Audiences of the Silent Era: Scalable Perspectives on Film Exhibition and Consumption in Amsterdam Neighbourhoods (1907–1928)," *Studies in European Cinema* 18, no. 3 (2021), 252–273.
- Beckert, Sven, Ulbe Bosma, Mindi Schneider, and Eric Vanhaute. "Commodity Frontiers and Global Histories: The Tasks Ahead," *Journal of Global History* 16, no. 3 (2021), 466–469.
- Bode, Herbert. "Geschichte der Filmfabrik Wolfen 1909 bis 1994," *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft Deutscher Chemiker, Fachgruppe Geschichte der Chemie*, no. 13 (1997), 157–162.
- Bustamante, Carlos. "AGFA, Kullmann, Singer & Co. and Early Cine-Film Stock," *Film History* 20, no. 1 (2008), 59–76.
- Combs, Matthew Tyler. "Camphor, a Plastic History: China, Taiwan, and Celluloid, 1868–1937" (PhD Dissertation, UC Irvine, 2018).

- Cronqvist, Marie, and Christoph and Hilgert. "Entangled Media Histories: The Value of Transnational and Transmedial Approaches in Media Historiography," *Media History* 23, no. 1 (2017), 130–141.
- Daicel Chemical Industries. *A 60-year history of Daicel Chemical Industries* [ダイセル化学工業60年史] (Osaka: Daicel Chemical [ダイセル化学工業株式会社], 1981).
- Dainippon Celluloid. *History of Dainippon Celluloid Co.* [大日本セルロイド株式会社社史] (Amagasaki: Dainippon Celluloid, 1952).
- Davis, Heather. *Plastic Matter* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022).
- De Rosa, Miriam, and Andrea Mariani. "Experimenting in Circles: Agfa, Amateur Cinema, and the Art of R&D," *NECSUS: European Journal of Media Studies* 12, no. 2 (2023), 176–195.
- Duncan, Pansy. "CelluloidTM: Cecil M. Hepworth, Trick Film, and the Material Prehistory of the Plastic Image," *Film History* 31, no. 4 (2019), 92–111.
- Duncan, Pansy. "Towards a Natural History of Film Form: Silver Salts and the Aesthetics of Early Studio-Era Hollywood Cinema," *Screen* 63, no. 4 (2022), 411–426.
- Elsaesser, Thomas. "The 'New' Film History," *Sight and Sound* 55, no. 4 (1986), 246–251.
- Fengler, Silke. "'Den Markt klar im Sucher!?' Krise und Niedergang des Amateurkamergeschäfts der Agfa-Gevaert AG in den 1960er und 1970er Jahren," *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte / Economic History Yearbook* 47, no. 2 (2006), 95–114.
- Fuji Photo Film Co. *25 Years in Business* [創業25年の歩み] (Tokyo: Fuji Photo Film Co., 1960).
- Fujifilm Labor Union. *History of the Fujifilm Labor Union* [富士フイルム労働組合の歴史：前史・1945年-1957年・追補] (Tokyo: Rōdō Keizaisha [労働経済社], 1960).
- Furuhata, Yuriko. *Climatic Media: Transpacific Experiments in Atmospheric Control* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022).
- Furuhata, Yuriko. "Of Dragons and Geoengineering: Rethinking Elemental Media," *Media+Environment* 1, no. 1 (2019), accessed September 30, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1525/001c.10797>.
- Hagener, Malte. "Where Is Cinema (Today)?: The Cinema in the Age of Media Immanence," *Cinema & Cie* 8, no. 11 (2008), 15–22.
- Haid, Jonathan. "The Raw Materials of Celluloid Film: Wartime Economy, Educational Animation, and Film's Plasticity," *Research in Film and History*, no. 5 (2023), accessed September 30, 2025, <https://film-history.org/issues/text/raw-materials-celluloid-film>.
- Hallam, Julia, and Les Roberts, eds. *Locating the Moving Image: New Approaches to Film and Place* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014).
- Hill, W. Z. "The Life of a Film: Medianatures, Camphor, and the Ideology of Technological Modernity," *JCMS: Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 61, no. 4 (2022), 85–105.
- Hirai, Hirokazu. "A Study of Historical Japanese Colonial Finances [日本植民地財政史研究]" (PhD Dissertation, Hokkaido University, 1996).
- Ingravalle, Grazia. "Allegories of the Past: Nitrate Film's Aura in Postindustrial Rochester, NY," *Screen* 60, no. 3 (2019), 371–387.
- Jaikumar, Priya, and Lee Grieveson. "Introduction to Media and Extraction: On the Extractive Film," *Media+Environment* 6, no. 1 (2024), accessed September 30, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1525/001c.123925>.
- Jancovic, Marek. "'Please Reseed:' Camphor, Turpentine, and the Agrogeographies of Celluloid Cinema," in *Cinematic Ecosystems: Screen Encounters with More-than-Humans in the Era of Environmental Crisis*, eds. Mary Hegedus and Jessica Mulvogue (Wilmington: Vernon Press, 2026).

- Japan Monopoly Corporation [日本専売公社]. *History of the Camphor Monopoly* [樟脳専売史] (Tokyo: Japan Monopoly Corporation, 1956).
- Karlsch, Rainer. "Zwischen Partnerschaft Und Konkurrenz: Das Spannungsfeld in Den Beziehungen Zwischen Den VEB Filmfabrik Wolfen Und Der Agfa AG Leverkusen," *Zeitschrift Für Unternehmensgeschichte / Journal of Business History* 36, no. 4 (1991), 245–281.
- Klenotic, Jeffrey. "Mapping Flat, Deep, and Slow: On the 'Spirit of Place' in New Cinema History," *TMG Journal for Media History* 23, no. 1–2 (2020), 1–34.
- Knowles, Kim. *Experimental Film and Photochemical Practices* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).
- Koyama Hisashi. *History of the Japanese Plastic Industry* [日本プラスチック工業史] (Tokyo: Kōgyō Chōsakai [工業調査会], 1967).
- Löhnert, Peter, and Heinz Mustroph. *Von der Trockenplatte zum Schwarz/Weiss Kinefilm: Aus der Geschichte der Filmfabrik Wolfen* 61, Betriebsarchiv d. VEB Filmfabrik Wolfen, 1987.
- Lovejoy, Alice. "Celluloid Geopolitics: Film Stock and the War Economy, 1939–47," *Screen* 60, no. 2 (2019), 224–241.
- Lovejoy, Alice. *Tales of Militant Chemistry: The Film Factory in a Century of War* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2025).
- Maxwell, Richard, and Toby Miller. "Film and the Environment: Risk Offscreen," in *Film and Risk*, ed. Mette Hjort (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2012).
- Mittelstenscheid, Karl Otto. "Kampfer: Ein wichtiges Kapitel der Schering-Geschichte," 1996, SchA-B3-788, Schering Archiv, Bayer AG, Berlin.
- Moore, Paul S. "Space, Place, and Case: Surveying the Grounds of Cinema History," *Early Popular Visual Culture* 13, no. 4 (2015), 336–343.
- Nelson, Patricia A. "Competition and the Politics of War: The Global Photography Industry, c. 1910–60," *Journal of War & Culture Studies* 9, no. 2 (2016), 115–132.
- Noordegraaf, Julia, Thunnis van Oort, Kathleen Lotze, Daniel Biltreyst, Philippe Meers, and Ivan Kisjes. "Discovering Cinema Typologies in Urban Cinema Cultures: Comparing Programming Strategies in Antwerp and Amsterdam, 1952–1972," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Comparative New Cinema Histories*, eds. Daniela Treveri Gennari, Van de Vijver Lies, and Pierluigi Ercole (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2024).
- Okada, Hidenori. "Nitrate Film Production in Japan: A Historical Background of the Early Days," in *The Oxford Handbook of Japanese Cinema*, ed. Daisuke Miyao, trans. Ayako Saito and Daisuke Miyao (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).
- Pafort-Overduin, Clara, Kathleen Lotze, Åsa Jernudd, and Thunnis van Oort. "Moving Films: Visualising Film Flow in Three European Cities in 1952," *TMG Journal for Media History* 23, no. 1–2 (2020), 1–49.
- Parikka, Jussi. *A Geology of Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).
- Past, Elena. "The Ferrania Acquisition, the Cinematic Archive and the Anthropocene: Celluloid Materialities," *La Valle Dell'Eden*, no. 37 (2021), 147–158.
- Riebensahm, Ken. "Der steigende Kampferbedarf infolge der Erfindung des Celluloids und die Unterwerfung der indigenen Bevölkerung Taiwans während der japanischen Kolonialherrschaft" (PhD Dissertation, University of Hamburg, 2011).
- Roy, Elodie A. *Shellac in Visual and Sonic Culture: Unsettled Matter* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2023).

- Roy, Toulouse-Antonin. "‘The Camphor Question Is in Reality the Savage Question:’ The Japanese Empire, Indigenous Peoples, and the Making of Capitalist Taiwan, 1895–1915" (PhD Dissertation, UCLA, 2020).
- Sarkar, Bhaskar. "Tracking ‘Global Media’ in the Outposts of Globalization," in *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives*, eds. Nataša Đurovičová and Kathleen E. Newman (London: Routledge, 2010).
- Shome, Raka. "When Postcolonial Studies Interrupts Media Studies†," *Communication, Culture and Critique* 12, no. 3 (2019), 305–322.
- Shukin, Nicole. *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).
- Stackelberg, Emmet Winkle von. "Seeing Through Silver: A Chemical History of Moving Images 1880–1950" (PhD Dissertation, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2023).
- Starosielski, Nicole. "The Elements of Media Studies," *Media+Environment* 1, no. 1 (2019), accessed September 30, 2025.
- Struck, Bernhard, Kate Ferris, and Jacques Revel. "Introduction: Space and Scale in Transnational History," *The International History Review* 33, no. 4 (2011), 573–584.
- Tavares, Antonio C. "Crystals from the Savage Forest: Imperialism and Capitalism in the Taiwan Camphor Industry, 1800–1945" (PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, 2004).
- Tei, Daigaku. "Research on the History of Taiwan-Japan Camphor Policy [臺日樟腦政策史の研究]" (PhD Dissertation, Osaka Metropolitan University, 1995).
- Tsuji, Chisako. "Cotton Improvement Projects in Japan and Korea," in *Intra-Asian Trade and Industrialization*, eds. A.J.H. Latham and Heita Kawakatsu (London: Routledge, 2006).
- Vaughan, Hunter. *Hollywood's Dirtiest Secret: The Hidden Environmental Costs of the Movies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019).
- Zakaria, Faizah. *The Camphor Tree and the Elephant: Religion and Ecological Change in Maritime Southeast Asia* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2023).

Biography

Dr. **Marek Jancovic** is Assistant Professor of Media Studies at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. His research is centered around the materialities of the moving image, film preservation practices, media and the environment, and format studies. Marek is the author of *A Media Epigraphy of Video Compression: Reading Traces of Decay* (2023); together with Jimi Jones, the author of *The Future of Memory: A History of Lossless Format Standards in the Moving Image Archive* (2025) and, with Axel Volmar and Alexandra Schneider, the editor of *Format Matters: Standards, Practices, and Politics in Media Cultures* (2020).

Email: m.jancovic@vu.nl

<https://doi.org/10.58193/ilu.1821>

Jennifer Nightingale  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9342-9118>
(The Royal College of Art and Anglia Ruskin University, United Kingdom)

Knitting on Location: The *Norfolk Knitting Pattern* Film Series

Watch the audiovisual essay here:

<https://youtu.be/Ak7uQ-XvoxS>

Abstract

This audiovisual essay and written statement unpack two films from the *Norfolk Knitting Pattern* series, which I created in 2023. The 16mm landscape films discussed here aim to translate Norfolk fisherman gansey knitting patterns. The films were shot and edited on location in two Norfolk fishing villages, Sheringham and Cromer, in the UK, where the patterns have been historically produced. The production of the films creates a structural relationship between a stitch of knitted textile fabric and a frame of film. In this methodology, gesture, landscape, and film are “knitted together” as a material object, re-embedding the knitting patterns into the location and landscape that inspired them. The essay and statement unpack the methods used for translating the knitting patterns. These have included the use of filming charts, a single-frame shooting technique that creates a self-instigated time-lapse, and a location-as-editing-system. The films build on the legacy of single-frame modes of filmmaking in the context of experimental cinema and produce new visual phenomena and motion effects.

The project asks what it would mean and look like to translate a knitting pattern into a filming chart, and what kind of audiovisual reflection would allow me to communicate the methods and process of my filmmaking. These questions are explored using photographs, notation, and interviews collected during the films’ production and the project’s research. In doing so, both the audiovisual essay and the statement highlight the project’s relationship to the rich history and culture of gansey knitting in Sheringham, and to the nature of my film project as handmade and craft-oriented.

Keywords

textile cinema, landscape film, location-as-editing-system, single-frame production, 16mm film



Creator's Statement

My audiovisual essay unpacks two films from the *Norfolk Knitting Pattern* series (2023), a practice-based research project that emerged from my PhD, completed in 2023, that also includes series made in Cornwall (2016), the Faroe Islands (2019), and Yorkshire (2024). The 16mm landscape films I discuss here use a single-frame production technique and a unique editing system to translate fisherman gansey knitting patterns. The films have been shot and edited on location in Norfolk fishing villages in the UK, where the patterns have been historically produced. The production of the films creates a structural relationship between a stitch of knitted textile fabric and a frame of film. In this methodology, gesture, landscape, and film are “knitted together” as a material object, re-embedding the knitting patterns into the location and landscape that inspired them. It is a common feature of gansey patterns that they represent the elements of the landscape or objects the knitters would have seen around them, such as fishing nets or cliff paths.

The processes of translation and production have included preproduction filming charts, a single frame shooting technique creating a self-instigated time-lapse mode, and a mode of systems-based editing wherein an external system (in this case, the knitting pattern) determines the editing sequence, which is conducted on location and privileges the act of filmmaking in the landscape. The films build on the legacy of single-frame modes of filmmaking in the context of experimental cinema, such as the films of Kurt Kren, whose systems-based editing was founded on numerical patterns, or the films of Rose Lowder, whose expressionistic, location-based practices in the French landscape intricately weave frames using a Bolex camera.¹⁾ My films also produce new visual phenomena and motion

1) Nicky Hamlyn, Simon Payne, and Al Rees, *Kurt Kren: Structural Films* (Bristol: Intellect, 2016); Rose Lowder, *Bouquets 11–20: Notebooks* (New York: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 2018).

effects, including flash frames, a non-mechanical time-lapse not triggered by the mechanism of the camera or a crystal motor, and camera positions that privilege natural markers in the landscape (for example, the horizon).

The audiovisual essay asks what it would mean and look like to translate a knitting pattern into a filming chart, and also what kind of audiovisual reflection would allow me to communicate the methods and process of my filmmaking. I have answered these questions using photographs, notation, and interviews collected during the films' production and throughout the project's research.

The audiovisual essay also explores the role of place, considering how it can both inspire and serve as a site of production. A key aspect of the films is my method of single-frame production on location, which involves positioning the Bolex camera in two different places within the site: one representing the knit stitches and the other representing the purl of the knitting pattern. In referring again to the filming charts, the film's production thus commences. Starting at frame "0" and following the filming chart, each knit frame is exposed in sequence, leaving the purl frames unexposed. The film is then rewound (in the camera), and the camera is repositioned. Then, starting again at frame "0," every purl frame is exposed, filling the unexposed gaps from the first round of shooting. When complete (apart from the chemical development of the film stock), I have completed the production of the film. This foregrounds my role as a filmmaker and employs an innovative self-instigated time-lapse device, wherein the Bolex camera's motor is disengaged and individual exposures are made by manually triggering the single-frame release. This operation is shown in the video.

Based on the historic connection between knitting patterns and place, a key aspect of the *Norfolk Knitting Pattern* films is how they frame the local landscape. When filming on a wide-open coast, the seascape is flattened to a horizon line even when you raise the camera. It is the promenades and markers — either running parallel, or in the case of groynes, set at angles — that add depth. In both Norfolk films, I aim to highlight the horizon by framing it unconventionally. This approach draws attention to the line by working counter to the traditions of landscape and seascape composition, in which the horizon is typically centred or raised to privilege the land, or lowered to emphasise the sky.

My new compositions use radical placement of the horizon line. For example, in *Cromer: Gilbert Rook's Seeds and Bars* (2023), the horizon is placed at the far top running just below the frame line; the second framing positions it the same distance above the bottom of the frame. In the animated sequences of alternating frames, the horizon becomes unstable, as does the relative position of other prominent markers in the landscape, such as the line of fishing boats on the beach running parallel to the horizon. Two key points of action are represented: the ship sailing across the horizon line left to right, and the walkers moving in both directions on the beach. In the film, the actions disrupt each other with a new thread of time. When they alternate more frequently, between knit and purl frames, the activities are woven together and visually intermingle.

Weaving is also a method I use in the audiovisual essay, except this time with shots rather than frames. If the single-frame production technique allows for immediate dynamic visual relationships, in the video, I embrace the shot's potential to present associative and analogous relationships between elements. For example, the operation of the

Bolex camera parallels the procedure of using filming charts that translate the knitting patterns frame by frame — stitch by stitch. This is also demonstrated by combining the pictorial representation of the “Jimmy Chibbles Bishop herringbone” knitting pattern with the striations of bones and flesh of a fish. The herring, being an everyday object that the knitters would have seen in and around the harbour, inspired the gansey pattern.

The endeavour to film herring bones offered new perspectives on the project’s connection to the UK fishing industry: in my attempt to buy a fish to film, the fishmonger noted “you don’t get them nowadays” — a signal of changing tastes, and fish stock, that have contributed to the decline of certain types of fishing. These historic fishing and knitting activities are absent from my films, whose frames now capture walkers, visitors, and tourists. In buying my fish, I settled for sardines (small herring!).

My decisions in the production of the *Norfolk Knitting Pattern* films were inspired by the history and culture of gansey knitting and its patterns. While it was not necessary for these details to be communicated within the films themselves, they underpinned key production decisions: for example, the compositions used for each knit and purl framing discussed above. For me, this created conditions for practice-based reflection, such as regarding my role and position as a filmmaker in the landscape, and also how I am re-embedding the patterns of the historic women knitters who were there before me. This approach carries over into the audiovisual essay.

The knitting pattern’s new form as a film sets up a contemporary engagement with gansey knitting culture that mirrors, and is inspired by, the work of the communities of knitters who strive to understand and document the local knitting patterns as an activity that happens in-place, on location. In Sheringham, Norfolk, this is the gansey knitting group that meets weekly at Sheringham Museum. I filmed them knitting and also recorded a discussion with them. With their permission, I have included extracts in the audiovisual essay of their voice and knitting hands.

The images of hands highlight the nature of my film project as handmade and craft-oriented. “Craft” is a useful term for my films and relates to Lilly Husbands’s proposal in her essay “Craft’s Critique: Artisanal Animation in the Digital Age,” published in 2022.²⁾ The latter highlights the interrelation between process and product that lies at the heart of my film series and emphasises an intimate connection between the labour involved in the film’s production and the artefactual outcome in the form of a film. In addition, ideas of craft and labour can shed light on the production processes associated with making these films, which are physically labour-intensive and use analogue, material technologies of production, even though the hands making the knitting pattern films are not visible in them. Likewise, the knitted samples in the gansey groups — small fabric tests — and the historic garments in the museum share with my films a character of focused experiments and visualisations of the knitting patterns.

The idea of the handmade is valuable, as it highlights the importance of tacit knowledge embedded in my filming methods — working with materials and the Bolex camera technology — which in turn echoes the historic production of knitting patterns. This

2) Lilly Husbands, “Craft’s Critique: Artisanal Animation in the Digital Age,” *Animate Projects*, accessed October 8, 2025, https://animateprojectsarchive.org/writing/essays/l_husbands_2.

mirrors the practice-based research of the Sheringham group. The Sheringham patterns, like other regional gansey patterns, were not written down. The gansey group's research into the patterns — concerning how the historic garments were made and the practices used, for example — has involved re-making them.

Another key research method (also used by Mary Wright in her documentation of the Cornish Guernsey, a regional variation on gansey) has been to study early 20th-century photographs of fishermen.³⁾ In the case of Sheringham, the archive of the pioneering female photographer Olive Edis is held in the nearby Cromer Museum. To note the patterns accurately, the gansey group has studied details of the patterns from the photographs. This has been combined with the group's creative problem-solving — using old tools (such as wire needles and knitting sheafs) and working out the finer details of garment construction (e.g., gussets). These processes relate to the approaches employed by the historic knitters; for example, a gansey knitter's magpie-like approach in reproducing patterns they saw and liked, or the spirit of competitiveness that drove the knitters to create the best patterns, or the finest fabric. This fine-knitted fabric is one of the defining characteristics of the Sheringham ganseys. The voices in the video speak to this unique knowledge. The outcome of their research and noted patterns is documented in the book *Sheringham Ganseys: People, Pattern and Place*.⁴⁾

The group's research process is not linear, and my approach to the audiovisual essay chimes with this by presenting an interlinking set of subheadings under which core tools and processes that are used in my research project, and the films' production, highlighting the dialectic relationship between the camera, subject and filmmaker that underpins my practice-based research in the project. Unlike the 16mm site-based films, edited in-camera, the audiovisual essay enables me to create dialogue between audio, images, words, and preproduction documents, which speaks to the scope of my research into the Norfolk knitting patterns. As a knitter, I have followed some of these patterns myself. As a filmmaker, I have remade them cinematically.

Bibliography

- Hamlyn, Nicky, Simon Payne, and Al Rees. *Kurt Kren: Structural Films* (Bristol: Intellect, 2016).
- Husbands, Lilly. "Animate Projects — Craft's Critique: Artisanal Animation in the Digital Age," *Animate Projects*, accessed October 8, 2025, https://animateprojectsarchive.org/writing/essays/1_husbands_2.
- Lowder, Rose. *Bouquets 11-20: Notebooks* (New York: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 2018).
- Taylor, Rita, Lesley Lougher, Jan Hillier, Ken Holloway, and Martin Warren. *Sheringham Ganseys: People, Places, Patterns*. Second Edition (Sheringham: Sheringham Museum Norfolk Trust Ltd, 2019).

3) Mary Wright, *Cornish Guernseys and Knit-frocks* (Clifton-upon-Teme: Polperro Heritage Press, 2008). Photographs of the Polperro Cornish fisherman can be viewed in the Polperro museum, many of which have been reproduced in Wright's book.

4) Rita Taylor, Lesley Lougher, Jan Hillier, Ken Holloway, and Martin Warren, *Sheringham Ganseys: People, Places, Patterns*. Second Edition (Sheringham: Sheringham Museum Norfolk Trust Ltd, 2019).

Wright, Mary. *Cornish Guernseys and Knit-frocks* (Clifton-upon-Teme: Polperro Heritage Press, 2008).

Filmography

Cromer: Gilbert Rook's Seeds and Bars (Jennifer Nightingale, 2023)

Biography

Jennifer Nightingale graduated from the Slade School of Fine Art. A Senior Lecturer in Film and Media at Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, and Associate Lecturer in Visual Communication, Royal College of Art, London, her films have screened at international venues including Tate Modern, London; The National Portrait Gallery, London; The Serpentine Pavilion, London; The LUX, London; and The Film-Makers Cooperative, New York.

Email: jennifer.nightingale@rca.ac.uk; jennifer.nightingale@aru.ac.uk

<https://doi.org/10.58193/ilu.1824>

Libertad Gills  <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-6987-6027>
(University of Leeds, United Kingdom)

***Por un cine cachinero:* Reappropriation as a Survival Strategy in Contemporary Experimental Cinema from Guayaquil**

Watch the audiovisual essay here:

<https://youtu.be/7SmlQ072mz4>

Abstract

The video essay *Por un cine cachinero*, based on the manifesto of the same title published in the book *Guayaquil en ruinas* (“Guayaquil in Ruins,” Guayaquil Analógico, 2023), brings together films made in Guayaquil on analog film or made by reappropriating archives. The aim is to recontextualize these works within the local framework of “cachinería,” the name of popular second-hand markets. What would a film theory inspired by the *cachinería* look like? This video essay considers reappropriation in experimental cinema in Guayaquil as a practice that resignifies international found footage tendencies or fashions as well as local DIY traditions of reemployment and recycling. In a crisis of rising living costs, *cachinería* becomes a survival strategy for experimental filmmakers.

Keywords

found footage, Ecuadorian cinema, experimental film, Latin American cinema, analog filmmaking

— — —



Creator's Statement

Cachinería is a term used in Ecuador to refer to second-hand markets located in popular areas of the city center. They are also known by locals as “el mall del piso” (or “mall on the ground”), in reference to the objects that are displayed at street level. Although the origin of the items sold is often unknown (or even questionable), it remains an attractive alternative to the malls, where products are often imported and much more expensive. More than just a hipster trend, in Guayaquil second-hand reappropriation is a survival strategy for the working class.

The first time I saw Guayaquil's *cachinería* was in the documentary *Descartes* (Fernando Miele, 2009), about Gustavo Valle, who unexpectedly won several amateur filmmaking contests in the 1980s and then stopped making films when the contests were discontinued. The title *Descartes* — a wordplay relying on Spanish for “discarded” as well as the philosopher's name — comments not only on the fact that Valle's films were badly preserved and partially lost (by the local municipality), but also on how artists are unsupported and eventually “discarded” in Guayaquil society through systems that do not value cultural production or understand the importance of preserving films. Miele shot Valle in the *cachinería* in order to reflect on how many films have ended up there — as trash. Valle's livelihood depends on the *cachinería* and the buying and reselling of objects, especially photographic cameras and books. On rare occasions, Valle even finds old Super 8, 8mm, and 16mm films and film projectors.¹ But Miele's reflection also concerns Guayaquil's

1) For more about Valle's analog films from the 1980s and his return to cinema through digital experimental filmmaking see Libertad Gills, “Notes Toward a History of Amateur Filmmaking in Guayaquil,” in *Small Cinemas of the Andes: New Aesthetics, Practices and Platforms*, eds. Diana Coryat, Christian León, and Noah Zweig (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 219–233. For more about Fernando Miele's filmography see Libertad Gills, “De *Tábara* (2003) a *Persistencia* (2016): El cine sobre arte de Fernando Miele,” *Fuera de Campo* 1, no. 5 (2017), 20–39.

forgotten, abandoned, and invisibilized film history. He made *Descartes* when he returned to Guayaquil after completing his studies abroad, uneasy about what it means to be an artist from Guayaquil and to continue making films there.

Like Mieles, in 2018 I returned to Guayaquil and experienced a similar desire to understand what it meant to be a filmmaker — as well as a film educator in a public university — in this city. Recognizing that there was already a history of analog filmmaking that I knew little about, I began a research project at the Universidad de las Artes titled “Guayaquil Analógico” dedicated to the study of — and correspondence with — the city’s analog past. Together with filmmaker Martín Baus, we organized our first public events, which were flooded by students and artists from the community. We realized that there were many other people just as interested as we were in this history. Together with students, teachers, and artists, Guayaquil Analógico organically became a film collective: we studied, found, projected, and corresponded with analog films made in Guayaquil, from the *Ruta sin cine* guided walks through the cemetery of closed movie theaters, to found Super 8 film community screenings, to experimental film practices of reappropriation or *cachinería*, and artisanal practices of film processing, the collective proposed ways of thinking through cinema that could constitute a community-centered, practice-based, living research project. This work took place between 2018 and 2022 and was collected and published in a book titled *Guayaquil en ruinas: Cartografía filmica*,²⁾ for which we were awarded the Premio Nacional de Artes Mariano Aguilera.

As we worked, the *cachinería* kept returning, not only as a place (to find abandoned films, projectors, cameras, reels, books about film), but also as a *practice*, and therefore, as a verb, *cachinear*, and as a way of being, as a noun: *cachinero*. Gustavo Valle — the quintessential filmmaker from Guayaquil, experimental, unfunded, yet resourceful, whose films were shot in the city and with nonprofessional actors, often inspired by stories read in the local newspapers — is a *cachinero*. Every morning he rides his bicycle to the *cachinería* and finds objects to resell or to use in his work. But also artists working today in Guayaquil, such as Juanca Vargas, Eduardo Jaime, Fabricio Medina and photographers from the Pinhole Guayaquil collective: they too are *cachineros*, rummaging through the abandoned and discarded in order to find materials to make their art. When the pandemic set in, and we were unable to travel, buy film stock or film books, or get our film processed, Martín started developing film at home using alternative recipes, since the traditional ones included chemicals that were prohibited in Ecuador. Meanwhile, the pandemic was devastating for Guayaquil’s working class. As the government washed its hands of all responsibility, and the morgues were overcrowded, cadavers were left out on the streets, making international headlines the following day. The sense of abandonment and ruin was everywhere. One day, we found dozens of cans of 35mm film on a street corner, which had been thrown out by a film distributor that had been out of business for decades. We took some of these film cans home, as did some of our friends and students. These films became the *materia prima* (raw material) for new film projects. And we, in the process, became *cachineros*.

2) Libertad Gills and Martín Baus, eds., *Guayaquil en ruinas: Cartografía filmica de una ciudad* (Quito: Guayaquil Analógico, 2023).

This is how we started to think of *cine cachinero* as a practice, as an ethos, as an attitude and way of life of working artists and filmmakers in Guayaquil. It encapsulates the experimental film practices of reappropriation and found footage filmmaking in contemporary cinema made in Guayaquil. In a context where fresh film is difficult to find — not to mention process and scan — and where the notion of film as industry excludes more experimental practices of filmmaking, *cine cachinero* encompasses a local DIY way of making films cheaply and independently, with pre-existing materials, and without the need for financial assistance from national film funds (which often comes with long waiting periods and bureaucratic obstacles).

The video essay *Por un cine cachinero*, based on the eponymous manifesto published in the aforementioned book *Guayaquil en ruinas* (Guayaquil in Ruins, 2023),³⁾ brings together *cachinero* films, including films that we found, digitized, intervened on, and made, in order to recontextualize these works within a framework that is local, in both economic and political senses. Our original text “Por un cine cachinero” is written as a manifesto, echoing the language and urgency of revolutionary texts like Julio García Espinosa’s “Por un cine imperfecto” (“For an Imperfect Cinema,” 1969), which challenges the notion of a technically perfect cinema of quality from Hollywood and Europe, embracing instead a low-budget, anti-academic, and revolutionary Latin American cinema.⁴⁾ Our manifesto also directly cites Brazilian poet Oswald de Andrade’s “Manifesto Antropófago” (1928),⁵⁾ in which the iconic line “Tupi, or not Tupi: that is the question” creates a mashup of Shakespeare and the Tupi, one of the largest Indigenous groups in Brazil prior to colonization, which, according to European travelers, practiced cannibalism. De Andrade turns the accusation of cannibalism into a metaphor for postcolonial cultural reappropriation, for how artists can eat up dominant cultural references and spit them out in a new form. Similarly, our manifesto posits reappropriation as a form of reverse colonial plunder. And it reimagines the “cachinero,” sometimes also considered a thief who sells stolen goods, as our inspiration.

The video essay considers reappropriation in experimental cinema in Guayaquil as a practice that resignifies international found footage tendencies or fashions and local DIY traditions of reemployment and recycling. In a crisis of rising living costs, *cachinería* additionally becomes a survival strategy for experimental filmmakers too. The video essay begins with images of Valle wandering through the *cachinería* in Fernando Miele’s *Descartes* and then cuts to images from a film that we found in Valle’s home and digitized. This film, titled *Un muñeco llamado Año Viejo*, is a documentary about the traditional effigies made and burnt at midnight on New Year’s Eve in Ecuador. Originally shot in color and then stored at room temperature in Guayaquil’s swampy climate, the colors have transformed over time into a yellowish-red hue. I likewise wanted to include the images of

3) Libertad Gills and Martín Baus, “Por un cine cachinero: Un manifesto,” in *Guayaquil en ruinas: Cartografía filmica de una ciudad*, eds. Libertad Gills and Martín Baus (Quito: Guayaquil Analógico, 2023), 199–201.

4) Julio García Espinosa, “Por un cine imperfecto,” *Cine cubano* 66/67, 1969. Translated into English by Julianne Burton for *Jump Cut*, no. 20 (1979), 24–26.

5) Oswald de Andrade, “Manifesto Antropófago,” *Revista de Antropofagia*, 1928. Translated into English by V. S. Conttren here: Oswald de Andrade, “Anthropophagic Manifest,” *Bunker within Reason*, June 9, 2020, accessed September 30, 2025, <https://huebunkers.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/andrade-anthropophagic-manifesto.pdf>.

the burning effigies in reference to the many fires that have wiped out archives and contributed to Guayaquil's "lost" cultural memory.

The video essay continues with fragments from Oscar Illingworth's *Flores de fuego* (2020), a film made in response to the corpses found on the streets of Guayaquil during the pandemic and in which fire plays an important role. It follows with contributions from photographer and painter Eduardo Jaime, materials from visual artist Juanca Vargas, and two films by Martín Baus — *Al pasar: cartas desde el trópico* (2022) and *Preludio (a la siesta del Fauno y la Bacante)* (2020), the latter made with the 35mm found on the street corner — as well as the documentation of his work titled *Reductos ecuatoriales* (2020), for which he created an apparatus for transforming 35mm into 8mm film using only recycled materials. It also includes camera-less, found footage films manually intervened on by students from the Universidad de las Artes, including *Guía de calentamientos y ejercicios de control para niños* (Mayro Romero, 2021), *Los danzantes* (Génesis Barahona Rodríguez, 2021), and a film also made with the found 35mm film, *Presente* (Melanie Bravo, 2021) — all three films produced in the context of Andrés Dávila's experimental cinema course at the University.⁶⁾ I incorporate fragments from my own work as well: the Super 8 film *cielo abierto / suelo abierto / mar abierto* (co-directed with Baus, 2021), my archival essay film *1922* (2023) about the massacre of striking workers in Guayaquil in 1922,⁷⁾ as well as Super 8 home movies shot in Guayaquil during lockdown and developed by hand.

The video essay includes two salsa songs, which are part of the soundtrack to life in Guayaquil and referenced in different parts of the manifesto. As the manifesto "Por un cine cacinero" was written while listening to these tracks, they also reflect the rhythm (and humor) of the words/texts that appear onscreen. The first is "Arroz con habichuelas" by El Gran Combo de Puerto Rico (2006), a song that celebrates the vibrant culture of salsa music and Puerto Rican heritage. Here the line "Esto no es ensaladita light" ("This is not a light salad," meaning that salsa music is not something light or superficial, but rather rich and substantial like the title's "rice and beans") is reappropriated in the manifesto to say: "This is not found footage," "reappropriation, or remploi." The second song referenced is "Periódico de ayer," a salsa classic by Héctor Lavoe from 1976, in which the line "tu amor es un periódico de ayer" ("your love is yesterday's paper") is transformed into "tu industria es un periódico de ayer" ("your industry is yesterday's paper") in reference to a dying film industry.

6) For a dossier about these works and more produced in the framework of these film courses at the Universidad de las Artes led by professor and filmmaker Andrés Dávila, including articles written by Romero, Barahona Rodríguez, and Bravo about their individual films, see Andrés Dávila, ed., *Autoetnografías: Archivos y apropiaciones / Preliminar Cuadernos de Trabajo 8* (Guayaquil: UA Ediciones, 2021–2022). Bravo's text describes the process of finding the can of film on the street corner, discovering it to be the Italian film *L'ultimo volo all'inferno* (Ignazio Dolce, 1990), and then proceeding to rework a fragment of it manually in order to create a critical tribute to the Indigenous activists murdered by the police in Ecuador in the protests of 2019. This text was republished in our book *Guayaquil en ruinas: Cartografía fílmica de una ciudad*. See Melanie Bravo, "Presente," in *Guayaquil en ruinas: Cartografía fílmica de una ciudad*, eds. Libertad Gills and Martín Baus (Quito: Guayaquil Analógico, 2023), 219–222.

7) For more about my process making this film while teaching at the Universidad de las Artes, see my co-authored article: Libertad Gills, Andrés Dávila, and Carlos Terán Vargas, "Professor-artist and Professor-researcher: Making the Case for Experimental Filmmaking as Research in the Academic Context of Ecuador's Universidad de las Artes," *Academic Quarter*, no. 27 (2024), 83–95.

In his 2017 essay “The Image Belongs to Those Who Work It: Recycled Cinema in Latin America,” filmmaker and writer Jesse Lerner also discusses De Andrade’s aforementioned manifesto and the cannibal archetype “not just as a paradigm for a critical cinematic practice, but also more broadly as a strategy of decolonization and as a powerful model for Latin American cultural production.”⁸⁾ He goes on to argue that *cine reciclado*, or recycled cinema, is not just “one more strategy” available to the Latin American experimental filmmaker, but rather “an anticolonial gesture of appropriation and resignification, a way of creating an ‘original’ through the reproduction, the illegitimate, the borrowed, and the stolen.”⁹⁾ He then asks, “[H]ow different would a history of found footage filmmaking look if written from a Latin American perspective?”¹⁰⁾

In my research with Guayaquil Analógico, the question arises: What would a film theory inspired by the *cachinería* look like? My search echoes similar contemporary scholarship which seeks to create a “theory from below,”¹¹⁾ where “theory” is understood for its original meaning — as scholar Jiří Anger recalls (channeling an interview with Eugenie Brinkema) — namely, as “a way to see differently.”¹²⁾ In Juanca Vargas’s exhibit “El Amanecer de los cines zombies” (“The Awakening of the Zombie Cinemas”), which I curated in Guayaquil at the Museo Nahim Isaías in 2024 and which was inspired by our manifesto (and, in turn, by Vargas’s work), Vargas proposed to place his reworked art pieces on red blankets on the ground, similar to the ones found in the *cachinería*. Mixed with his creations were objects from the *cachinería* (readymades), and other found objects (including a copy of our book). In preparations for the exhibit, Vargas and I spoke on the phone often, and he told me that he wished to transform the museum into a *cachinería*. As people wandered through the museum space, they looked down instead of looking up at the walls. Vargas proposed a way to see — and to experience the museum space — differently. A film theory of cine cachinero would similarly challenge traditional forms of film scholarship. For this reason, perhaps, the video essay or videographic criticism — as an alternative form of film scholarship that thinks with and through images and sounds instead of “about” them — is a coherent form for this film theory in construction.

The initial aim of this video essay was to group together artists who have not yet been thought of in a collective way. By calling this “cine cachinero,” we propose a local name — a name that comes from inside rather than outside, a name that refers to the practices of economic, material, and aesthetic survival which already take place in Guayaquil, and which offer a colorful and rich context from which to think about local artistic and filmmaking practices. But *in the process, something else also becomes possible* through the video essay, as themes, styles, and attitudes become visible through the coming together of

8) Jesse Lerner, “The Image Belongs to Those Who Work It: Recycled Cinema in Latin America,” in *Ismo, Ismo, Ismo: Experimental Cinema in Latin America*, eds. Jesse Lerner and Luciano Piazza (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 108–127, 110.

9) *Ibid.*, 120.

10) *Ibid.*, 116.

11) Jiří Anger, *Towards a Film Theory from Below: Archival Film and the Aesthetics of the Crack-Up* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2024).

12) Jiří Anger and Tomáš Jirsa, “We Never Took Deconstruction Seriously Enough (On Affects, Formalism, and Film Theory): An Interview with Eugenie Brinkema,” *Iluminace* 31, no. 1 (2019), 80.

these individual audiovisual works. One question I had while preparing the video essay to be seen by English speakers was how to translate the term “cachinero.” In the end, I decided not to. We have “cannibalized” enough from the English and French languages in our writing on appropriation, found footage, and recycled cinema; it is time for other words to enter the conversation.

Qué viva el cine y el arte cachinero, long live the cine cachinero.

Bibliography

- Anger, Jiří. *Towards a Film Theory from Below: Archival Film and the Aesthetics of the Crack-Up* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2024).
- Anger, Jiří and Tomáš Jirsa. “We Never Took Deconstruction Seriously Enough (On Affects, Formalism, and Film Theory): An Interview with Eugenie Brinkema,” *Iluminace* 31, no. 1 (2019), 80.
- Bravo, Melanie. “Presente,” in *Guayaquil en ruinas: Cartografía filmica de una ciudad*, eds. Libertad Gills and Martín Baus (Quito: Guayaquil Analógico, 2023), 219–222.
- Dávila, Andrés, ed. *Autoetnografías: Archivos y apropiaciones / Preliminar Cuadernos de Trabajo* 8 (Guayaquil: UA Ediciones, 2021–2022).
- de Andrade, Oswald. “Anthropophagic Manifest,” trans. V. S. Conttrent, *Bunker within Reason*, June 9, 2020, accessed September 30, 2025, <https://huebunkers.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/andrade-anthropophagic-manifesto.pdf>.
- de Andrade, Oswald. “Manifesto Antropófago,” *Revista de Antropofagia*, 1928.
- Espinosa, Julio García. “For an imperfect cinema,” trans. Julianne Burton, *Jump Cut*, no. 20 (1979), 24–26.
- Espinosa, Julio García. “Por un cine imperfecto,” *Cine cubano* 66/67, 1969.
- Gills, Libertad. Curatorial text for Juanca Vargas exhibit *El Amanecer de los cines zombies*, Museo Nahim Isaias, July 2024 [unpublished].
- Gills, Libertad. “De *Tábara* (2003) a *Persistencia* (2016): El cine sobre arte de Fernando Mieles,” *Fuera de Campo* 1, no. 5 (2017), 20–39.
- Gills, Libertad. “Notes Toward a History of Amateur Filmmaking in Guayaquil,” in *Small Cinemas of the Andes: New Aesthetics, Practices and Platforms*, eds. Diana Coryat, Christian León, and Noah Zweig (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 219–233.
- Gills, Libertad, and Gustavo Valle. “Desde los descartes hacia un cine experimental: Conversación con Gustavo Valle,” in *Guayaquil en ruinas: Cartografía filmica de una ciudad*, eds. Libertad Gills and Martín Baus (Quito: Guayaquil Analógico, 2023), 205–213.
- Gills, Libertad, and Martín Baus. “Por un cine cachinero: Un manifiesto,” in *Guayaquil en ruinas: Cartografía filmica de una ciudad*, eds. Libertad Gills and Martín Baus (Quito: Guayaquil Analógico, 2023), 199–201.
- Gills, Libertad, Andrés Dávila, and Carlos Terán Vargas. “Professor-artist and Professor-researcher: Making the Case for Experimental Filmmaking as Research in the Academic Context of Ecuador’s Universidad de las Artes,” *Academic Quarter*, no. 27 (2024), 83–95.
- Lerner, Jesse. “The Image Belongs to Those Who Work It: Recycled Cinema in Latin America,” in *Ismo, Ismo, Ismo: Experimental Cinema in Latin America*, eds. Jesse Lerner and Luciano Piazza (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 108–127.

Valle, Gustavo. "Cine guayaquileño [2010]," in *Guayaquil en ruinas: Cartografía filmica de una ciudad*, eds. Libertad Gills and Martín Baus (Quito: Guayaquil Analógico, 2023), 280–281.

Filmography

1922 (Libertad Gills, 2023)

Al pasar: cartas desde el trópico (Martín Baus, 2022)

cielo abierto / suelo abierto / mar abierto (Libertad Gills and Martín Baus, 2021)

Descartes (Fernando Miele, 2009)

Flores de fuego (Oscar Illingworth, 2020)

Guía de calentamientos y ejercicios de control para niños (Mayro Romero, 2021)

Los danzantes (Génesis Barahona Rodríguez, 2021)

Preludio (a la siesta del Fauno y la Bacante) (Martín Baus, 2020)

Presente (Melanie Bravo, 2021)

Reductos ecuatoriales (Martín Baus, 2020)

Un muñeco llamado Año Viejo (Gustavo Valle, 1979)

Biography

Libertad Gills is a filmmaker, writer and researcher. She is Lecturer in Videographic Criticism at the University of Leeds since 2025. Prior to this, she was a Postdoctoral researcher for the Future of Cinema and the Audiovisual Arts at the Università della svizzera italiana-Locarno Film Festival and from 2015 to 2023 she taught film at the Universidad de las Artes in Ecuador, where she co-founded Guayaquil Analógico, a film collective dedicated to the preservation, screening and study of analogue films made in Guayaquil. She has published two books, *Guayaquil en ruinas* (Guayaquil Analógico, 2023) and *La crítica es una escuela* (UA Ediciones, 2022), as well as a chapter on a history of amateur filmmaking in Guayaquil in the volume *Small Cinemas of the Andes: New Aesthetics, Practices and Platforms* (2023).

Email: L.Gills@leeds.ac.uk

<https://doi.org/10.58193/ilu.1822>

Maxime Harvey  <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-6004-2507>

(Institut national de la recherche scientifique — Université du Québec, Canada)

Language Matters in the Geography of AI: French-Language Uses of Generative Artificial Intelligence in Filmmaking

Abstract

This paper examines how generative artificial intelligence (AI) reconfigures linguistic practices and labour in contemporary filmmaking. Building on relational-materialist approaches, it argues that recent controversies and transformations in the film industry, such as synthetic voice generation, AI-assisted dubbing, and prompt-based creative tools, are deeply entwined with issues of language. The case of French-language filmmaking serves to foreground the geopolitical and sociolinguistic specificities that are often flattened in global AI deployments. Through a critical analysis of discourse around AI voice technologies and ethnographic observations of Québécois filmmakers, the study explores how AI's integration into creative workflows reshapes voice, identity, and authorship in localized yet globally interconnected film cultures. The paper revisits foundational film theories on voice and language, connecting them to contemporary concerns over automation, labour precarity, and the platformization of cultural production. It highlights how dubbing practices, once tools of cultural domestication and resistance, are now battlegrounds for labour rights and identity politics in the age of AI. Moreover, the research situates prompt engineering as a sociocultural practice that redistributes agency between humans and machines, challenging deterministic narratives of AI innovation. By foregrounding language not merely as a medium but as a material condition of creation, this study calls for a situated, critical understanding of AI's role in media industries. It contributes to ongoing debates in film and media studies and critical AI studies by insisting on the importance of geography and language in shaping both the possibilities and perils of AI in filmmaking.

Keywords

artificial intelligence, language, voice and dubbing, creative labour, media materialism

Introduction

The past few months have been filled with discussions about the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in filmmaking.¹⁾ The most notable controversies in recent times, at least in terms of their mediatic echoes, are related to the use of the tools offered by the company Respeecher in the making of two contenders in the 2025 awards campaign, *The Brutalist* (Brady Corbet, 2024) and *Emilia Pérez* (Jacques Audiard, 2024). To recall, some of the actors' voices were modified with AI: the Hungarian accent of the two leading performers was corrected in the former case, and the pitch of the transgender lead actress's singing was changed in the latter.²⁾ Other discussions about AI in the film business do not address actual controversies but rather the prospective impacts of the technology on workers' practices. Human capacities will be augmented while some tasks will be automated, making the dynamics on the labour market still uncertain.³⁾ Several fields are reportedly in greater danger than others, including translation and dubbing.⁴⁾ They might not be framed as such, but as this essay argues, discussions about the actual controversies and prospective impacts of AI are, more often than not, really about language.

In AI, notably its recent incarnation based on machine learning processes, language *matters*. Here are a few examples of this. Modern AI technologies usually incorporate natural language processing functions. These functions are designed using large language models, which are built from training algorithms on datasets that include textual data and other media tagged with textual metadata, such as images. The use of generative AI applications generally revolves around prompt engineering, the art of writing instructions to produce desired output. Images can be used to prompt, but text-to-text, text-to-image, and text-to-video models are the most prevalent. The interaction with chatbots, one of generative AI's most popular software models, occurs as a linguistic situation. As addressed earlier, the controversial use of generative AI in cinema has been linked to language issues, particularly in debates over voice modulation and concerns that language-centric professions may be replaced. These are examples of language matters in AI that intersect with film matters, ranging from using films as training material for machine learning without the consent of their copyright holders to the application of AI in filmmaking to generate artificial voices or dub foreign language movies automatically, as described in the cases below.

In the context of filmmaking, a common prophecy suggests that generative AI will radically transform the voice acting industry. The voice of an American actor portraying

-
- 1) The draft of this article was first written at the beginning of 2025. The arguments presented here are embedded in a specific Zeitgeist, motivated in part by the overwhelming presence of AI in public discourses.
 - 2) Andrew Pulver, "The Brutalist and Emilia Perez's Voice-Cloning Controversies Make AI the New Awards Season Battleground," *The Guardian*, January 20, 2025, accessed March 31, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2025/jan/20/the-brutalist-and-emilia-perezs-voice-cloning-controversies-make-ai-the-new-awards-season-battleground>.
 - 3) Hye-Kyung Lee, "Reflecting on Cultural Labour in the Time of AI," *Media, Culture & Society* 46, no. 6 (2024), 1312–1323.
 - 4) "Quel Impact de l'IA Sur Les Filières Du Cinéma, de l'audiovisuel et Du Jeu Vidéo ?," 2024, accessed March 31, 2025, https://www.cnc.fr/documents/36995/2097582/Cartographie+des+usages+IA_rapport+complet.pdf/96532829-747e-b85e-c74b-af313072cab7?t=1712309387891.

Napoleon in an English-language biopic can be easily altered to sound French, for instance.⁵⁾ But to which French of the present (the film) and the past (its story) is this futuristic discourse referring? How are large language models trained on data mostly scraped from publicly accessible sites on a predominantly Anglophone Internet going to be used to (re)generate the accent of an 18th-century French military officer born in Corsica, educated in mainland France from the age of nine, and constantly moving between war and peace? How can the generation of such a voice be considered a better representation of a past era and its lost voices, given the scarce traces of this specific language instantiation that cannot be retrieved from today's Internet?

The rise of AI in filmmaking has raised new concerns about the intertwined materiality of film and AI, particularly in discussions on deepfakes and their visuality. This paper argues that we must also consider the role of language in relation to AI technologies in the filmmaking process. I will first focus on issues that relate AI to cultural references and to the embodied materiality present in language. I propose considering the arrival of AI as the re-actualization of old discussions on the question of voice in film, which has been theorized as an "attraction" in early cinema and as a "revolution" of the film medium in the age of the "talkies."⁶⁾ Through the description of a scene witnessed during ethnographic fieldwork in a filmmaking studio, I will argue that AI brings cinema to a new transition, selling voice as a particular kind of product that I conceptualize as an *interactional commodity*.

I will then address the political economy of linguistic matters through a critique of AI voice applications used in dubbing. The analysis of French-Canadian creative labour unions' discourses on the impact of AI on the dubbing sector in Québec shows a particular kind of construction and instrumentalization of the concept of "language" as it is related to the complex intertwining of national identity, its mediatic representation, technological means of production of those representations, and labour issues linked to the technology currently discussed. I argue that linking Québec's representation in film and television in the age of AI with prophecies of AI's impacts on the dubbing sector constitutes a cultural and economic performativity of "language" as a *voice of and for* cultural workers. In other words, for dubbers, language is presented as both their means of production (their voice as a tool for acting) and their means of mobilization (their voice as an abstract spokesperson, for mobilizing workers internally within the profession and externally toward the public and relevant stakeholders).⁷⁾

Finally, I will discuss AI language and its critique through two film case studies. Analyzing Sandra Rodriguez's *CHOM5KY vs CHOMSKY* (2023) and Carme Puche Moré's short film *My Word* (2023), the goal is to constructively problematize AI and film through

5) Brian Welk and Tony Maglio, "This New AI Tool Could Have Made Joaquin Phoenix's 'Napoleon' Sound French," *IndieWire*, March 13, 2024, accessed February 28, 2025, <https://www.indiewire.com/news/business/ai-tool-joaquin-phoenix-french-napoleon-deepdub-accent-control-1234958496/>.

6) André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion, "Cinéma et numérique : les avatars d'une révolution," *Création Collective Au Cinéma*, no. 7 (2023), 17–50.

7) Güneş Ertan et al., "Social Networks and Strike Participation: A Dynamic Analysis of the Hollywood Writers Strike," *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 59, no. 4 (2021), 1108–1130; Rafael Grohmann et al., "Worker-Led AI Governance: Hollywood Writers' Strikes and the Worker Power," *Information, Communication & Society*, June (2025), 1–19.

a focus on matters of linguistic agency. Observing that they both work as much with the automation of AI as against it, we will see how their work is embedded in a *generative critique* of AI. We can conceptualize this type of creative practice as a language game, as prompting and generating content with AI only seems acceptable within the context of this reflexive critique of the technology that is used. In this sense, the use of AI in the making of those two films — and its present analysis — is relevant to the broader discussion in which the use of AI intersects with language matters in filmmaking, linking the issues of generating voices and AI dubbing with other problems with this technology, such as biases in databases and the sociocultural situatedness of prompting.

How can this study of AI help us to revisit film materialism? If this question is primarily theoretical, the answer I propose is based on early reflections from ongoing ethnographic research. For almost two years, I have been observing independent French-Canadian filmmakers, their use of generative AI, and the numerous debates surrounding it. The description of how the local appropriation of these technologies is grounded in linguistic matters remains incomplete, however, as the chain of film production is complex, both industrially and geographically. Finding ideas, writing scripts, sketching storyboards, creating images and sounds, dubbing, and accomplishing other ordinary tasks in filmmaking practices with AI are ontologically different activities for a Québécois than for a French, an Algerian, a Senegalese, or any other Francophone user of AI-based applications. Those realities must be taken into account in the development, integration, and rejection of AI in cinema.

Where is Language in Materialism?

The matter of language has been addressed throughout the history of film theory. André Bazin wrote his classic essay “The Evolution of Film Language” as an existential reflection on the arrival of talkies and the possible correspondence between a technological revolution and an aesthetic one.⁸⁾ For Bazin, the matter of reflection on film language is *mise en scène* and montage, as they work differently with the medium of film in representing reality, continuously in the former case and fragmentarily in the latter. Christian Metz’s early work, for example, in “Cinema: langue ou langage?,” shifted from Bazin’s existentialist critique to a structuralist semiology, theorizing language in cinema and describing its complex semantic structure.⁹⁾ It is this structure, present in montage, framing, and even in a more literal, spoken language, that forms the matter of theorization for Metz. Taking a big leap in time, we may stop at Lev Manovich’s *Language of New Media*.¹⁰⁾ Manovich’s “language” is not defined internally, as in structuralist approaches, but materially, in relating arts and media to the materials of computers, and to visual and information cultures. Language, here, is not only spoken or projected but also screened as part of the interface of new media.

8) André Bazin, “L’évolution du langage cinématographique,” in *Qu’est-ce que le cinéma?* (Paris: Cerf, 1958), 63–80.

9) Christian Metz, *Essais sur la signification au cinéma*, vol. 1 (Paris: Klincksieck, 1971).

10) Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2001).

“Materiality” and “language” are both polysemic terms, as shown in those examples. As defined by David Samuels and Thomas Porcello, language as a conceptual entity has often been studied, but its material embodiment and social embeddedness as sound (or script) have mostly been overlooked.¹¹⁾ Inspired by Claire Kramsch’s linguistic anthropology, this article understands language at four distinct levels: at the *cultural* level, as a symbolic system with its associated worldview and mode of expression; at the *pragmatic* level, as a frame of social performance; at the *interactional* level, as historical and subjectively situated performativity; at the *political* level, as it relates to technology, as a means of power and control.¹²⁾ The latter level is especially relevant to the materialist approach adopted.

Indeed, feminist scholars have long argued that the structure of language and its performativity reproduce power relations in society. Donna Haraway, for example, often refers to “political language,” such as in writing, in order to theorize the forces of power in the hybridity of humans and technology.¹³⁾ The language of colonialism is translated in terms of modernism, for instance, through the co-construction of science, technology and society, in such concepts as “universal rationality,” “common language,” “new organon,” “unified field theory,” “world system,” and “master theory.”¹⁴⁾ In the visual field, Lisa Cartwright’s Marxist/Althusserian-inspired materialist analysis focuses on the incorporation of the means of production into visual practices, i.e., on the apparatus and the place of the body in the material means of image production.¹⁵⁾ She and other feminist researchers in science and technology studies focus on subjectivity, pleasure, the body, and affect, rather than objectivity, knowledge, and professional practice, in the study of the visibility of science. Language, in this case, is criticized for its overwhelming cultural power: in science, knowing is often synonymous with naming.

This work can be related to several film materialist theories, which both descend from and depart from Marxist historical materialism, as seen in the work of Jean-Louis Baudry and Laura Mulvey. The most obvious filiation, however, is with Jean-Louis Comolli’s critique of language.¹⁶⁾ Comolli’s argument builds on both an economic and an aesthetic critique of Hollywood’s hegemony: on the one hand, he argues that the rise of the talkies was motivated more by the internationalization of profits for U.S. companies than the valorization of national cultural values; on the other, the production of movies among a diversity of national languages was mainly modeled on one film language, following the commercial and formal norms of Hollywood. His discussion of “voice” in film history, based on this critique, addresses the problem of positionality within social structures but does

11) David Samuels and Thomas Porcello, “Language,” in *Keywords in Sound*, eds. David Novak and Matt Saka-keeney (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 87–98.

12) Claire Kramsch, “Language and Culture,” *AILA Review* 27, no. 1 (2014), 30–55.

13) Donna J. Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,” in Donna J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London: Routledge, 1991).

14) Donna J. Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,” in Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*.

15) Lisa Cartwright, “Visual Science Studies: Always Already Materialist,” in *Visualization in the Age of Computerization*, ed. Annamaria Carusi et al. (London: Routledge, 2014).

16) Jean-Louis Comolli, *Cinéma Contre Spectacle: Suivi de Technique et Idéologie (1971–1972)* (Paris: Verdier, 2009), 235–243.

not explore how actors incorporate the apparatus of sound technologies, as seen in feminist materialist approaches mentioned above.

To address the matters of language in AI-based filmmaking practices, this article borrows from the three materialist dimensions just identified: 1. the embodiment of technology and its political consequences for language; 2. the economics of film industries as they relate to the internationalization of production/distribution through the platformization of its practices, and their cultural consequences for language; 3. the aesthetics of AI-generated films and the performativity of subjective values through a critique of human-machine linguistic interactions. In the following sections, I will develop each of the three dimensions concerning language at the intersection of AI and filmmaking by associating them with the three problems related to AI and creation identified by Celis Bueno et al.: the problems of *automation*, *labour*, and *agency*.¹⁷⁾

The Commodification of Voice and the Problem of Automation

For almost two years, I have been participating in several film organizations in Québec — including a film school, a studio, and a theatre — to observe the changes in filmmaking brought about by AI. During this time, I have witnessed many situations in which the use of AI was problematic on a linguistic level for the French-Canadian filmmakers I spent time with. When I first started, OpenAI had launched ChatGPT a few months earlier. The screenwriters I observed were experimenting with it, achieving poor results and a lot of frustration. The structure was not bad, but any speech, as dialogue, was very unrealistic. Québec's dialect, in terms of accent and regionalism, sounded clichéd. Moreover, when filmmakers started seeing AI-generated images on social media, many experimented with image generation. One filmmaker, while exploring Midjourney on Discord, found it difficult to write effective prompts to represent Québec. The "Plains of Abraham," for instance, just appeared as a generic historical battlefield instead of the landmark of Québec City.

The matter of language was most visible, however, when one filmmaker wanted to clone his own voice with AI. This filmmaker was an artist-in-residence at the independent filmmaking studio where I was doing most of my fieldwork. He had just graduated from college and was exploring new ways of making films. He experimented with ChatGPT to write his script and incorporated several AI and non-AI technologies to create original images. He wanted to explore sound technologies as well. At the time, the television show *Obi-Wan Kenobi* (Lucasfilm, 2022) had just come out, and many people in the film industry discussed how Disney collaborated with Respeecher to replicate the voice of James Earl Jones for the character of Darth Vader. Since his character was also a cyborg — a ghostly figure living in a digital version of the filmmaker's apartment — he wanted to give him a voice similar to Darth Vader. So, he decided to explore the tools of Respeecher.

The filmmaker faced significant aesthetic issues, as well as economic ones. First, to generate a voice with an accurate accent, he had to clone his own voice, which involved a

17) Claudio Celis Bueno, Pei-Sze Chow, and Ada Popowicz, "Not 'What', But 'Where Is Creativity?': Towards a Relational-Materialist Approach to Generative AI," *AI & SOCIETY* 40, no. 2 (2025), 339–351.

great deal of work because it required recording long speeches with various intonations. This was particularly important for representing the specific accent of Montréal's younger generation, who celebrate their appropriation of the "franglais," a mix of French and English that is as much a cultural trend, influenced by today's dominance of U.S. popular culture, as it is a political stance toward Québec's extended history of French and British colonialism and recent debates between Québec and the rest of Canada over multiculturalism. In addition to the accent, in order to achieve the right emotional quality in the re-generated voice, the recording had to capture the emotions he intended for the output. Thus, cloning an actor's voice did not necessarily involve automating the process of creation, since he still had to direct his actor in his own recording. Finally, and most crucially, advanced tools were unaffordable for an independent filmmaker with a limited budget. Hence, he had to settle for cheaper applications than those used to clone James Earl Jones's voice. In sum, the proper expression of language in the voice he wanted to create, both in terms of accent and emotion, was only achievable through the interaction of his own voice and his actor's voice with the applications he used, which would generate a new voice by mixing those inputs with many other voices in its database. The filmmaker noticed that, ultimately, this investment can only be valuable if it is scaled up.

This example, together with the previous ones, show various language matters in the use of AI in filmmaking: generating dialogues in a script needed various iterations and re-prompting to get past regional clichés and overgeneralizations; understanding the mechanics of AI tools was necessary to circumvent translation issues; and aesthetic direction and economical means were inevitable in cloning a voice with a French-Canadian accent. Those problems were not specific to using commercial AI applications in French, but for the filmmakers I observed, such issues seemed more frequent in this language than when they used them in English. Thus, many decided to write English prompts or find other ways to generate voices with Québécois accents. Moreover, many of those "technical" problems from 2022–2023 have been solved by new models and applications. Still, those technical solutions do not solve the main cultural and social issues that come with using AI: the appeal of those technologies is leading many creators to incorporate them into their creative workflow, even if it means reproducing the commercial and formal mode of production of social media and the Hollywood film industry. Instead of investing time in creating a single piece of work, AI automation enables the production of more content to share across various media, pushing creators to scale up and transform their artistic projects into mini-franchises.

The appeal of technology and the materiality of language, as just discussed, are not new, as they have been subjects of discussion throughout film history. Germain Lacasse, for example, addressed the role played by "lecturers"¹⁸⁾ in mediating the experience of silent film and its dispositif, arguing that lecturers were not just integrated into the apparatus of cinema alongside the cinematograph, but "introduced technology while combining local cultural elements: language, accent, practices, and context."¹⁹⁾ Later, when talking

18) Also called "bonimenteurs" in Québec, similar to Benshis in Japan.

19) Germain Lacasse, "The Lecturer and the Attraction," in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, ed. Wanda Strauven (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 189.

pictures arrived, language was seen as a barrier limiting the export of films, and so subtitling, dubbing, and reshooting were explored as translation solutions for overcoming it.²⁰⁾ However, local audiences' desire to hear their native language boosted national and regional productions in France, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and India.²¹⁾ Even if this production mostly followed the hegemonic norms of Hollywood filmmaking, as discussed by Comolli, the global film industry was nonetheless somewhat diversified in the process.

Today, the appeal of AI is leading many filmmakers to walk a fine line between protecting the diversity of cultural expressions and exploiting the common language of cinema for economic gain. The embodiment of this tension is particularly revealing in the use of an AI voice generator, as cloning one's voice involves a complex balance between the politics of filmmaking and the automation of processes by AI. In the last case presented, for example, we observed that the generation of the character's voice was influenced by both the linguistic expression of a particular cultural identity, as embodied by Québec's younger generation's use of "franglais", and the adoption of Disney's film language, as seen through the influence of the infamous voice of Darth Vader. In such processes, voice is transformed into an *interactional commodity*, a product sold on the Hollywood model to perform any subjective identities through the interaction of one's voice and an AI machine. That is, only if you are willing to pay the price.

The Geography of AI and the Problem of Labour

In early March 2025, Amazon Prime Video launched a pilot program featuring movies and series dubbed in English and Spanish using AI technology. The program was framed as a matter of access for its Latin American audience: "AI-aided dubbing will help you enjoy titles that previously did not have dubbing available in select countries and territories."²²⁾ Earlier during that same winter, the AI software company ElevenLabs, which specializes in AI speech synthesis, announced a partnership with the hybrid venture capital and film distribution company Lumiere Ventures to use AI to dub the French version of Sylvester Stallone's latest performance in the Amazon movie *Armor* (Justin Routt, 2024).²³⁾ This project was framed as a tribute to Alain Dorval, the deceased voice actor who dubbed Stallone in France, whose voice would be recreated for the film. The former company claimed that artistic tradition and technological innovation can work together to preserve the audi-

20) Martin Barnier, "Réception critique et historique des technologies du son au cinéma 1," *Cinémas* 24, no. 1 (2014), 35–57.

21) Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell, *Film History: An Introduction* (New York: McGraw Hill Education, 2018).

22) Amazon Staff, "Prime Video Begins an AI Dubbing Pilot Program on Licensed Movies and Series," March 5, 2025, accessed March 31, 2025, <https://www.aboutamazon.com/news/entertainment/prime-video-ai-dubbing-english-spanish>.

23) "Lumiere Ventures et ElevenLabs collaborent pour honorer Alain Dorval dans le nouveau film de Sylvester Stallone," *ElevenLabs*, January 13, 2025, accessed March 31, 2025, <https://elevenlabs.io/fr/blog/lumiere-ventures-and-elevenlabs-collaborate-on-sylvester-stallones-new-film>.

ence's link with the beloved voice of Dorval/Stallone. Following both announcements, numerous articles, podcast episodes, and hundreds of Reddit comments emerged about those cases. While comments primarily focused on the "terrible dubbing" of both films and series, some general questions about the future of the industry were raised. Those experiments did not achieve AI's supposedly immense potential to lower the cost of the dubbing market and preserve original voices, but many commentators consider those objectives still reachable.

Those cases offer a glimpse of the material situation of AI in the dubbing sector, which must be considered in the already complex practice of dubbing in the film industry. Tejaswini Ganti has written extensively on the political economy of language in filmmaking within the Indian film industries, which are intertwined with international media industries, particularly Hollywood. The globalization of cinema is now transforming India, as foreign films circulate domestically and Indian films reach foreign audiences through digital media. These shifts are tied to a hierarchical restructuring of language by creative filmmakers and crew. English, Hindi, and dozens of other languages, which are cultural markers of class, education, and regional origin in India, are also integral to distinctive social practices and professional roles in the local film industries: scenario writing, dialogue writing, script reading/hearing, directing, acting, producing, and critiquing — all of these standard practices are influenced by language intelligibility and strategic orientation of speakers in the Indian marketplace.²⁴⁾

Moreover, Ganti argues that dubbing is not just about broadening audiences to global media but also about nurturing cultural connections with local audiences to preserve media value outside cultural centres.²⁵⁾ This local connection with national cultures — and with multiple linguistic and cultural communities within nations — is built on top of a connection between film industries, such as Hollywood and Bollywood. In other words, translation is a process of domesticating foreign content, whereas localization is an integral part of globalization. While a studio might be making local stories into content exportable globally, this can only be achieved by making global stories local.²⁶⁾

Hubert Sabino-Brunette described a similar dynamic in the context of Québec, where cultural references are also added in the dubbing process to adapt foreign content for the Francophone public.²⁷⁾ In his view, while localization contributes to the economic success

24) Tejaswini Ganti, "No One Thinks in Hindi Here"; Language Hierarchies in Bollywood," in *Precarious Creativity: Global Media, Local Labor*, eds. Michael Curtin and Kevin Sanson (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016).

25) Tejaswini Ganti, "Creating That 'Local Connect': The Dubbing of Hollywood into Hindi," in *The Routledge Companion to Media Industries*, ed. Paul McDonald (London: Routledge, 2021), 118–131; Tejaswini Ganti, "English Is so Precise, and Hindi Can Be so Heavy!" Language Ideologies and Audience Imaginaries in a Dubbing Studio in Mumbai," in *Anthropology, Film Industries, Modularity*, eds. Ramyar D. Rossoukh and Steven Charles Caton (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021).

26) Tejaswini Ganti, "Global Stories, Local Audiences: Dubbing Netflix in India," in *The Routledge Companion to Asian Cinemas*, eds. Zhen Zhang, Sangjoon Lee, Debashree Mukherjee, and Intan Paramaditha (London: Routledge, 2024).

27) Hubert Sabino-Brunette, "Le doublage cinématographique au Québec : quand la culture de la société d'accueil s'exprime dans des oeuvres étrangères," *Nouvelles vues : revue sur les pratiques, les théories et l'histoire du cinéma au Québec*, no. 19 (2018), 1–18.

of international movies, it also acts as a form of resistance to globalization at the cultural level. Adding local value to the original work erases elements of its initial cultural identity by replacing them with representations of local culture. In addition to this argument, the political, cultural, and economic issues of dubbing practices in Québec must be understood within a multidimensional geopolitical framework, as Canada is facing the cultural assimilation of the United States while Québec deals with the linguistic dominance of France in the dubbing market.²⁸⁾

Now, the automation of translation with AI technologies might allow for the export of films and series to increase their economic value, without the cultural localization of their content. The combination of these financial and cultural arguments is generally used to defend voice actors in the context of Québec. The Union des artistes (UDA), for example, which is the creative labour union representing most Francophone actors in the province, has made protecting voice acting jobs one of its main focuses in recent years.²⁹⁾ The union's concern is as much cultural as economic, as expressed by one of its representatives: "Dubbing with artificial intelligence software represents a serious challenge, precisely because it's a sector that employs almost half of our members, but also because it touches on our Québec cultural identity."³⁰⁾ In other words, what is lost in AI translation is not only local jobs but also the jobs of those localizing films and series for Québec's public.

Accordingly, the cultural problematization of dubbing with AI faces the same paradox as the domestication of films previously reported by Ganti, and even earlier by Comolli: to adopt political solutions to the issues faced by voice actors, it seems necessary for film and television representatives to leverage local frictions while framing them in global problems. It is precisely for this reason that UDA joined the United Voice Artists network, "a global coalition of voice acting guilds, associations, and unions that have united to pursue their shared goals" in the face of AI.³¹⁾ Moreover, in association with other creative labour unions in Québec, UDA recently launched the manifesto "Art is Human," which was signed by more than 3000 organizations and individuals. One of their principles is specifically joining issues of labour and culture:

AI reproduces our social biases, perpetuates our clichés, and reflects dominant ideologies. It offers a skewed view of the world. It threatens the diversity of cultural expression and, as a result, the cultural sovereignty of Québec — its distinctiveness and even the place of the French language in our cultural landscape. For these reasons, art is — and must remain — a uniquely human endeavour. Only works creat-

28) Robert Paquin, "Le doublage au Canada : politiques de la langue et langue des politiques," *Meta : journal des traducteurs / Meta: Translators' Journal* 45, no. 1 (2000), 127–133.

29) Jean Siag, "Intelligence Artificielle: Sauvez La Voix," *La Presse*, June 22, 2023, accessed March 31, 2025, <https://www.lapresse.ca/arts/2023-06-22/intelligence-artificielle/sauvez-la-voix.php>.

30) « Le doublage avec des logiciels d'intelligence artificielle représente un sérieux enjeu, C'est un enjeu, justement parce que c'est un secteur qui fait travailler près de la moitié de nos membres, mais aussi parce qu'il touche à notre identité culturelle québécoise. » (translated freely with deepl). Jean Siag, "Intelligence Artificielle: Est-Ce La Fin Du Doublage ?," *La Presse*, April 7, 2023, accessed March 31, 2025, <https://www.lapresse.ca/cinema/2023-04-07/intelligence-artificielle/est-ce-la-fin-du-doublage.php>.

31) "World Voice Professionals Speaking Up," *United Voice Artists*, 2025, accessed March 31, 2025, <https://unit-edvoiceartists.com/>.

ed by human beings can and should be recognized as such under Canadian copy-right law.³²⁾

Given this principle, the labour unions' campaign not only aims to amend Canada's Copyright Act but also to increase Canada's support for the UNESCO *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*. From this perspective, dubbing and other filmmaking practices that have language at their core strategically enter the political field. Indeed, unions and their coalitions strive to secure a proper place to protect actors' work and rights, rather than merely devising occasional tactics to circumvent Hollywood's global economic power.

Labour conditions in global economies, such as those in film and AI, result from complex interconnections among workers in the international division of labour, which intertwines with the production of local content. Amazon understands that, as it greenlit the AI dubbing of Stallone to connect its fans with a beloved artist who passed away. But a voice is one of the most powerful things to have, both literally and abstractly; cloning Alain Dorval's voice seemed more like an economic exploitation of his legacy than a cultural empowerment of his fans. While unions aim to empower their members, the menace of AI in Québec highlights a strategic battle between workers and their industry, occurring on the battlefield of language. Indeed, unions are increasingly turning to language to protect cultural identities and better represent their members. In this sense, voice is not only instrumentalized as a technical tool for actors' play, but also as a discursive tool for actors' representatives to negotiate and lobby for their rights. In a recursive logic, arguing for cultural diversity and defending the expression of French-Canadian culture through film and television dubbing becomes a way to protect actors' economic situation in Québec, which, in turn, will contribute to its cultural vitality.

The Artistic Critique of AI and the Problem of Agency

During my fieldwork, I collaborated with a filmmaking cooperative to help organize a series of activities that mobilized its members around a collective reflection on AI. One of the activities was a projection of AI-generated films in a local theatre. While programming the event, one film struck the co-organizers and me, since it was both made with AI and critical of its effects on the representation of diversity. Interestingly, it was also playful, critiquing AI through a kind of language game.

The short film, Carme Puche Moré's *My Word* (2023), used a text-to-image latent diffusion model to generate images that represent the identity of a woman narrator. As spectators, we observe the interaction between the narrator and a generative AI system tasked with creating an image of a doctor. Looking for an image that does not fall into clichés necessitates extensive interaction between the narrator's commands and the AI's visual iterations: not a male, but a female doctor; not a white doctor, but a person of colour; not an

32) AQTIS 514 IATSE et al., "Art Is Human: Manifesto for the Protection of Authentic Creation," 2025, accessed March 31, 2025, <https://lartesthumain.com/en/>.

old doctor, but a young one, etc. Finding the correct language to describe the person she is looking for is essential to visualizing her “doctor” as “female,” “black,” “young,” etc. According to Moré, the *mise en scène* of this categorization and the critique of the “implicit bias in technology” is also necessary “to be part of the debate on the unconscious biases generated by the patriarchal and colonial system.”³³⁾

This critique, made by a Catalan filmmaker, seemed especially relevant to introduce to our fellow Québec filmmakers. Indeed, we live in a similar society, torn by a tension between the defence of one national culture and its distinctive language, and the harm this protection might bring to individuals from other cultures sharing the same territory. If cases of voice generation and AI dubbing highlighted the need to protect local cultures, the presentation of this film at our event was an invitation to reimagine our connections with other cultures on a global scale. The problem, however, is to achieve this reconnection through the materiality of AI technologies.

Another artistic critique of AI addresses this problem by confronting the broader issue of machinic representation of identity. In *CHOM5KY vs CHOMSKY* (2023), Montréal-based filmmaker and sociologist Sandra Rodriguez created an AI double of Noam Chomsky, nicknamed Chom5ky, with whom the spectator can interact: the goal was to converse about, with, and through AI by personalizing it with Chom5ky. One of the main problems raised in the exercise was to “reproduce” Chomsky’s voice, including not only his way of speaking but also his philosophical reflections and linguistic theories. The filmmaker achieved this creation by using a large language model trained on generic Internet materials and Chomsky’s specific digital traces. The idea was to create a balance in the interaction between the user and the machine through scripted and generated answers:

While scripted responses help move the narrative forward at the right times, responses generated by a language model trained on Noam Chomsky’s digital traces (interviews, writings, etc.) bring a certain degree of reflexivity, especially in those moments when the machine’s inner workings are revealed to the audience.³⁴⁾

According to the producer of *CHOM5KY vs CHOMSKY*, interacting with a chatbot version of Chomsky, primarily through generated content, allowed for a form of reflexivity that revealed the materiality of the conversation system. This includes not only the machine’s mechanics but also the role of its human interlocutor, who embodies the conversation as much as the AI system. This experiment aimed to motivate critical reflection among users, as people increasingly interact with generative AI chatbots that use similar language systems in their everyday lives. Interestingly, the producer also noticed that people have become more critical of the artwork since they have had more time to experiment with AI, such as instances of miscommunication between the chatbot and its user.

Both artists, Moré and Rodriguez, present complex arguments about the link between language, AI, and representation. AI is not approached as a universal model but is engaged

33) Carme Puche, “My Word I Carme Puche Moré,” *carmepuche*, 2023, accessed March 31, 2025, <https://www.carmepuche.com/my-word>.

34) Philippe Bédard, “How Does CHOM5KY vs CHOMSKY Work?,” *NFB Blog* (blog), September 18, 2023, accessed March 31, 2025, <https://blog.nfb.ca/blog/2023/09/18/how-does-chom5ky-vs-chomsky-work/>.

through the localization of language in the practices of creators and users/spectators, addressing the limits of representation with the tools they build and use. From this perspective, AI can still be seen as an attraction, but the revolution it might bring must be tempered. The aesthetic, cultural, and economic ramifications of work done with AI are localized in various ways, primarily through the interaction between a human (the user or the narrator) and a machine. Through a language game, the reflexive dispositive reveals the rules of the conversation and the deeper infrastructure sustaining it, such as the classification of social identities on the one hand and linguistic theory on the other. It is through this infrastructure that reconnection with others on a global scale must occur when AI is being utilized. Since a technology's infrastructure is usually transparent, an artistic critique is necessary to make its biases and limitations visible.

Indeed, AI's infrastructure is problematic. Emily Bender et al. discussed the dangers of overly broad language models, which, in addition to amplifying sociocultural biases, are programmed to probabilistically reproduce hegemonic ways of seeing the world.³⁵⁾ As Dominique Cardon et al. describe, for AI designers, there's nothing too big to fit into the language of those models:

While automatic language analysis pioneered the process of “embedding” words in a vector space, we are now witnessing a generalization of the embedding procedure that is gradually extending to all fields of application: networks become simple points in a vector space with graph2vec, texts with paragraph2vec, films with movie2vec, the meaning of words with sens2vec, molecular structures with mol2vec, and so on. In the words of Yann LeCun, the ambition of the designers of connectionist machines is to put the world in a vector (world2vec).³⁶⁾

From this perspective, an infinite world embedded in a mathematically ordered space is possible, but what about the limits of AI situated in the world?

As shown in the two cases presented above, AI is problematic because its technological infrastructure is built on partial and biased social structures, and because it is increasingly embedded in everyday practices. People have conversations with chatbots every day. Additionally, during my fieldwork, I have observed how the use of generative AI is mediated by platforms that host the tools filmmakers use. Indeed, many AI applications used by filmmakers are linked to social media, either directly on the platform or via a third-party service such as Discord. Creators discuss their personal experiments, examining what

35) Emily M. Bender, Timnit Gebru, Angelina McMillan-Major, and Shmargaret Shmitchell, “On the Dangers of Stochastic Parrots: Can Language Models Be Too Big? 

36) « Si l'analyse automatique de la langue a été pionnière pour « plonger » des mots dans un espace vectoriel, on assiste aujourd'hui à une généralisation de la procédure de plongement (embedding) qui s'étend progressivement à tous les domaines applicatifs : les réseaux deviennent de simples points dans un espace vectoriel avec graph2vec, les textes avec paragraph2vec, les films avec movie2vec, le sens des mots avec sens2vec, les structures moléculaires avec mol2vec, etc. Selon la formule de Yann LeCun, l'ambition des concepteurs des machines connexionnistes est de mettre le monde dans un vecteur (world2vec) » (translated freely). Dominique Cardon, Jean-Philippe Cointet, and Antoine Mazières, “La revanche des neurones : L'invention des machines inductives et la controverse de l'intelligence artificielle,” *Réseaux*, no. 5 (2018), 206.

other users have prompted, for example, and they reproduce these methods. We could argue that their practice is part of the broader “remix” culture often associated with digital media.³⁷⁾ In this context, creation is mediated and, to some extent, appropriated by both users and machines. It is a social performance, acted by humans and AI technologies. The critique of the language of AI in filmmaking needs to address that voice is not just generated for synthesis and automated for dubbing, but also interacted with through AI systems. Users of the technology not only interact about AI, but also with AI, through a practice conventionally called “prompting.” Seen as an interactional process integrated into sociocultural practices, “prompting” blurs “the line between conversational interaction and formal instruction.”³⁸⁾ Merging programming with natural languages, such as French or Catalan, contributes to the infiltration of computer infrastructures into diverse cultural sectors, and into human-machine interactions across multiple everyday practices. For users in diverse parts of the world, such as Francophone filmmakers in Québec, a critique of the cultural biases inherent in the systems they interact with in their filmmaking practices is necessary, as is an examination of their own position in the world relative to other cultures and their mediation through technology in everyday practices. If the critique of AI is an opportunity to re-evaluate humans’ position relative to machines, it should also entail a re-evaluation of their position relative to others.³⁹⁾

Conclusion

Addressing the automation, labour, and agency problems of AI in filmmaking, we see that, along with the symbolic controversies surrounding this technology, there are material assemblages of actors that must be criticized. First, the new language in today’s discussions of AI — such as synthetic voices, automated dubbing, and interacting chatbots — when integrated into cinema and related media, should not be framed as an evolution of the film language through the power of large language models. Shifting the perspective to how users incorporate AI tools into their language performance through creative practice reveals that the apparent neutrality of automation conceals unequal uses of AI.

In the first section, I have addressed the political relationship between film language, the language of AI, and a user’s language by describing a scene observed in my field study, in which an independent filmmaker attempted to use a well-known AI voice generator software from the company Respeecher. I argued that using AI tools can transform voices into interactional commodities. Indeed, interacting with AI speech synthesizers using one’s voice is a way to perform local identities within a mode of producing audiovisual content influenced by the cultural hegemony of U.S. film and media industries. If other scholars have addressed the power structures of embodiment in films, most famously Lau-

37) Lawrence Lessig, *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy* (New York: Penguin Press, 2008).

38) Sarah Burkhardt and Bernhard Rieder, “Foundation Models Are Platform Models: Prompting and the Political Economy of AI,” *Big Data & Society* 11, no. 2 (2024), 6.

39) Hye-Kyung Lee, “Rethinking Creativity: Creative Industries, AI and Everyday Creativity,” *Media, Culture & Society* 44, no. 3 (2022), 601–612.

ra Mulvey in her critique of patriarchy as embodied in the “male gaze,”⁴⁰⁾ the critique of AI voice synthesis must address the complex embodiment of voice within the assemblage of multiple human actors and technologies. While the younger Québec generation celebrates “franglais” as a political stance against conservative purity rather than a linguistic form of colonialist domination, a similar stance is emerging against the humanist dream of an “original” human voice: in cinema, voice has never really belonged to a person and has always been part of a film’s apparatus, as a worker’s labour has never been his own in capitalist economies.

Second, the role of language in the geography of AI was addressed through the case of dubbing, which exemplifies how actors use their voice to highlight their precarious economic status as workers in local film industries, even though they connect global media with local cultures. Accordingly, AI can be associated with an ongoing phenomenon throughout film history, or at least since the advent of the talkies, marked by a growing emphasis on the competition of developing global media in local markets. The interconnection of local sites of creative labour in the globalization of film production is also important, as dubbing and voice acting are just one type of work affected by AI within a long chain of production, distribution, and exhibition of films.⁴¹⁾ It is only through the description of those complex relationships that we can criticize the discourse of AI as an automation machine and a revolution for the film industry. It will also help us to situate AI in local contexts, where material conditions make labour an issue of cultural, economic, and political conflict. Dubbing is a site of dispute not only for employment reasons but also because it is a cultural practice that allows local actors to perform a diversity of identities within dominant global industries. At the institutional level, the problem of labour is rooted in the embeddedness of filmmaking in creative industries. However, labour is also a cross-sectoral problem, as the progressive reliance on technological tools for creation is infrastructurally linked to a platform economy.⁴²⁾ In this economy, traditional networks are reconfigured to fit into the model proposed by platforms. The leaders in today’s reliance on AI for automated translation are streaming platforms, such as Amazon Prime Video and YouTube. The tools they are now developing for their own production and diffusion needs will eventually be offered as new services. We need to see how they will affect both the dubbing sector’s economy and the domestication of foreign films and series for local cultures.

Third, language is not only a matter of interpretation but of generation. As seen in two film case studies in which language is used as a generative critique of AI, interacting with generative AI systems is a distributed act of representation between humans and technology. However, even if agency is distributed, it is not shared equally between actors. Sandra Rodriguez’s work reveals the apparatus that is usually invisible in AI, echoing Jean-Louis Baudry’s famous critique of the impression of reality achieved through the integration of the subject in the apparatus of cinema.⁴³⁾ The same is happening with chatbots, when the

40) Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” *Screen* 16, no. 3 (1975), 6–18.

41) Michael Curtin and Kevin Sanson, eds., *Precarious Creativity: Global Media, Local Labor* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016).

42) Nick Srnicek, *Platform Capitalism* (Cambridge: Polity, 2016).

43) Jean-Louis Baudry, “Le dispositif,” *Communications* 23, no. 1 (1975), 56–72.

impression of interacting with an actual artificial intelligence rather than a linguistic machine is gaining in realism, when the user is effectively integrated into the conversation. *CHOM5KY* vs *CHOMSKY* critiques this apparatus by revealing its material structure, including its technical mechanism and its institutional framing, the latter partially based on the control of information provided to the user of chatbots in the conversation. Inverting the balance of knowledge is a move toward shifting the power relationship between users and machines. Carme Puche Moré achieves a similar critique, but focuses mainly on the reproduction of ideology in AI-generated content. Without a user's reflexivity, AI would fall into patriarchal and colonial habits, embedded in linguistic categories inferred from biased databases.

The latter problem is linked to the critique of AI by Jonathan Roberge and Michael Castells, who framed the language problem of AI as its quest for agency: AI represents the world, through its categorization and indexing of language, but it also intervenes in it, through the integration of language models in applications, such as recommendation systems, and now most commonly in chatbots.⁴⁴⁾ In other words, AI produces meaning, but it also performs actions. We have seen throughout this article how this plays out in filmmaking practices: AI is not just an abstract generator of voices, but is used to perform specific identities in the creation of accents, idioms and emotions present in language; AI is not just automating translation, but cutting economic investments in cultural adaptations; AI is not just generating conversations, but interacting with individuals, situating subjective and historical performativity within broader ideological frameworks. AI might be a technological innovation, but all those observations connect with critiques made by film materialists in the past. The matter of language is just translated into a new symbolic system.

Bibliography

- Amazon Staff. "Prime Video Begins an AI Dubbing Pilot Program on Licensed Movies and Series," March 5, 2025, accessed March 31, 2025, <https://www.aboutamazon.com/news/entertainment/prime-video-ai-dubbing-english-spanish>.
- Barnier, Martin. "Réception critique et historique des technologies du son au cinéma 1," *Cinémas* 24, no. 1 (2014), 35–57.
- Baudry, Jean-Louis. "Le dispositif," *Communications* 23, no. 1 (1975), 56–72.
- Bazin, André. "L'évolution du langage inématographique," in *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* (Paris: Cerf, 1958), 63–80.
- Bédard, Philippe. "How Does CHOM5KY vs CHOMSKY Work?," *NFB Blog* (blog), September 18, 2023, accessed March 31, 2025, <https://blog.nfb.ca/blog/2023/09/18/how-does-chom5ky-vs-chomsky-work/>.

44) Jonathan Roberge and Michael Castelle, "Toward an End-to-End Sociology of 21st-Century Machine Learning," in *The Cultural Life of Machine Learning: An Incursion into Critical AI Studies*, eds. Jonathan Roberge and Michael Castelle (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021), 1–29.

- Bender, Emily M., Timnit Gebru, Angelina McMillan-Major, and Shmargaret Shmitchell. "On the Dangers of Stochastic Parrots: Can Language Models Be Too Big? $\text{\textcircled{R}}$," *Proceedings of the 2021 ACM Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency* (2021), 610–623.
- Bolter, Jay David, and Richard Grusin. *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1998).
- Bunz, Mercedes. "The Calculation of Meaning: On the Misunderstanding of New Artificial Intelligence as Culture," *Culture, Theory and Critique* 60, no. 3–4 (2019), 264–278.
- Burkhardt, Sarah, and Bernhard Rieder. "Foundation Models Are Platform Models: Prompting and the Political Economy of AI," *Big Data & Society* 11, no. 2 (2024), 1–15.
- Cardon, Dominique, Jean-Philippe Cointet, and Antoine Mazières. "La revanche des neurones: L'invention des machines inductives et la controverse de l'intelligence artificielle," *Réseaux*, no. 5 (2018), 173–220.
- Cartwright, Lisa. "Visual Science Studies: Always Already Materialist," in *Visualization in the Age of Computerization*, ed. Annamaria Carusi et al. (London: Routledge, 2014).
- Celis Bueno, Claudio, Pei-Sze Chow, and Ada Popowicz. "Not 'What', But 'Where Is Creativity?': Towards a Relational-Materialist Approach to Generative AI," *AI & SOCIETY* 40, no. 2 (2025), 339–351.
- Chow, Pei-Sze, and Claudio Celis Bueno. "The Cloak of Creativity: AI Imaginaries and Creative Labour in Media Production," *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 2025, 1–10, accessed March 31, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1177/13675494251322991>.
- Comolli, Jean-Louis. *Cinéma Contre Spectacle: Suivi de Technique et Idéologie (1971–1972)* (Paris: Verdier, 2009).
- Curtin, Michael, and Kevin Sanson, eds. *Precarious Creativity: Global Media, Local Labor* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016).
- Ganti, Tejaswini. "Creating That 'Local Connect': The Dubbing of Hollywood into Hindi," in *The Routledge Companion to Media Industries*, ed. Paul McDonald (London: Routledge, 2021), 118–131.
- Ganti, Tejaswini. "'English Is so Precise, and Hindi Can Be so Heavy!' Language Ideologies and Audience Imaginaries in a Dubbing Studio in Mumbai," in *Anthropology, Film Industries, Modularity*, eds. Ramyar D. Rossoukh and Steven Charles Caton (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021).
- Ganti, Tejaswini. "Global Stories, Local Audiences: Dubbing Netflix in India," in *The Routledge Companion to Asian Cinemas*, eds. Zhen Zhang, Sangjoon Lee, Debashree Mukherjee, and Intan Paramaditha (London: Routledge, 2024).
- Ganti, Tejaswini. "'No One Thinks in Hindi Here': Language Hierarchies in Bollywood," in *Precarious Creativity: Global Media, Local Labor*, eds. Michael Curtin and Kevin Sanson (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016).
- Gaudreault, André, and Philippe Marion. "Cinéma et numérique : les avatars d'une révolution," *Création Collective Au Cinéma*, no. 7 (2023), 17–50.
- Gunning, Tom. "Le Cinéma d'attraction : le film des premiers temps, son spectateur, et l'avant-garde," trans. Franck Le Gac, 1895: *Mille huit cent quatre-vingt-quinze: Revue de l'association française de recherche sur l'histoire du cinéma*, no. 50 (2006), 55–65.
- Haraway, Donna Jeanne. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

- Lacasse, Germain. "The Lecturer and the Attraction," in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, ed. Wanda Strauven (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 181–192.
- Lee, Hye-Kyung. "Reflecting on Cultural Labour in the Time of AI," *Media, Culture & Society* 46, no. 6 (2024), 1312–1323.
- Lessig, Lawrence. *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy* (New York: Penguin Press, 2008).
- "Lumiere Ventures et ElevenLabs collaborent pour honorer Alain Dorval dans le nouveau film de Sylvester Stallone," *ElevenLabs*, January 13, 2025, accessed March 31, 2025, <https://elevenlabs.io/fr/blog/lumiere-ventures-and-elevenlabs-collaborate-on-sylvester-stallones-new-film>.
- Manovich, Lev. "Automating Aesthetics: Artificial Intelligence and Image Culture," *manovich.net*, 2017, accessed March 31, 2025, <https://manovich.net/index.php/projects/automating-aesthetics-artificial-intelligence-and-image-culture>.
- Manovich, Lev. *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2001).
- Mayer, Vicki, and David Hesmondhalgh. "Internationalizing Labour Activism: Building Solidarity Among Writers' Guilds," in *Precarious Creativity: Global Media, Local Labor*, eds. Michael Curtin and Kevin Sanson (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 267–280.
- Metz, Christian. *Essais sur la signification au cinéma*, vol. 1 (Paris: Klincksieck, 1971).
- Paquin, Robert. "Le doublage au Canada : politiques de la langue et langue des politiques," *Meta : journal des traducteurs / Meta: Translators' Journal* 45, no. 1 (2000), 127–133.
- Puche, Carme. "My Word I Carme Puche Moré," *carmepuche*, 2023, accessed March 31, 2025, <https://www.carmepuche.com/my-word>.
- Pulver, Andrew. "The Brutalist and Emilia Perez's Voice-Cloning Controversies Make AI the New Awards Season Battleground," *The Guardian*, January 20, 2025, accessed March 31, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2025/jan/20/the-brutalist-and-emilia-perezs-voice-cloning-controversies-make-ai-the-new-awards-season-battleground>.
- "Quel Impact de l'IA Sur Les Filières Du Cinéma, de l'audiovisuel et Du Jeu Vidéo ?," 2024, accessed March 31, 2025, https://www.cnc.fr/documents/36995/2097582/Cartographie+des+usages+IA_rapport+complet.pdf/96532829-747e-b85e-c74b-af313072cab7?t=1712309387891.
- Raisch, Sebastian, and Sebastian Krakowski. "Artificial Intelligence and Management: The Automation–Augmentation Paradox," *Academy of Management Review* 46, no. 1 (2021), 192–210.
- Roberge, Jonathan, and Michael Castelle. "Toward an End-to-End Sociology of 21st-Century Machine Learning," in *The Cultural Life of Machine Learning: An Incursion into Critical AI Studies*, eds. Jonathan Roberge and Michael Castelle (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021), 1–29.
- Romele, Alberto, Marta Severo, and Paolo Furia. "Digital Hermeneutics: From Interpreting with Machines to Interpretational Machines," *AI & SOCIETY* 35, no. 1 (2020), 73–86.
- Sabino-Brunette, Hubert. "Le doublage cinématographique au Québec : quand la culture de la société d'accueil s'exprime dans des oeuvres étrangères," *Nouvelles vues : revue sur les pratiques, les théories et l'histoire du cinéma au Québec*, no. 19 (2018), 1–18.
- Siag, Jean. "Intelligence Artificielle: Est-Ce La Fin Du Doublage ?," *La Presse*, April 7, 2023, accessed March 31, 2025, <https://www.lapresse.ca/cinema/2023-04-07/intelligence-artificielle/est-ce-la-fin-du-doublage.php>.
- Siag, Jean. "Intelligence Artificielle: Sauvez La Voix," *La Presse*, June 22, 2023, accessed March 31, 2025, <https://www.lapresse.ca/arts/2023-06-22/intelligence-artificielle/sauvez-la-voix.php>.

Srnicek, Nick. *Platform Capitalism* (Cambridge: Polity, 2016).

Suchman, Lucy. "The Uncontroversial 'Thingness' of AI," *Big Data & Society* 10, no. 2 (2023), 1–5.

Thompson, Kristin, and David Bordwell. *Film History: An Introduction* (New York: McGraw Hill Education, 2018).

Welk, Brian, and Tony Maglio. "This New AI Tool Could Have Made Joaquin Phoenix's 'Napoleon' Sound French," *IndieWire*, March 13, 2024, accessed March 31, 2025, <https://www.indiewire.com/news/business/ai-tool-joaquin-phoenix-french-napoleon-deepdub-accent-control-1234958496/>.

"World Voice Professionals Speaking Up," 2025, accessed March 31, 2025, <https://unitedvoiceartists.com/>.

Filmography

Armor (Justin Routt, 2024)

CHOM5SKY VS CHOMSKY (Sandra Rodriguez, 2023)

Emilia Pérez (Jacques Audiard, 2024)

My Word (Carmé Puche Moré, 2023)

Obi-Wan Kenobi (Joby Harold, 2022)

The Brutalist (Brady Corbet, 2024)

Biography

Maxime Harvey is a postdoctoral fellow at the Research Chair on Francophone Artificial Intelligence and Digital Media. He studies the adaptation of the audiovisual sector to artificial intelligence technologies and the cultural issues surrounding their use. He is generally interested in the appropriation of digital media and technologies in the context of creative practices.

Email: harvey.maxime.3@courrier.uqam.ca

<https://doi.org/10.58193/ilu.1826>

Aleksei Ziniuk

(Kingston University, United Kingdom)

Margarita Galandina

(Independent Researcher, United Kingdom)

Refiguring the Buryat Photographic Archive: Ethnographic Visuality, Vernacular Montage, and Shamanic Temporality

Abstract

This article examines the Buryat photographic archive as a contested site of visual ethnography, historical trauma, and postcolonial critique. Spanning late Imperial ethnography (1880s), early Soviet ethnographic activism (1910s–1920s), and anthropometric studies (1930s), the archive documents the transformation of Buryat communities under imperial and Soviet regimes. Its dispersed materiality and digital aggregation foreground gaps, absences, and the mediated nature of memory, prompting an approach that combines archival analysis, vernacular photography, and contemporary photographic intervention.

Structured in three parts, the article first analyzes three scopopic photographic regimes — Pyotr Shimkevich's imperial anthropology, Bernhard Petri's activist ethnography, and E. G. Shurkin's anthropometry — to trace how Buryat identity was framed through classificatory and visual taxonomies. It then turns to the family album of Sodnom-Dorzhi Badmaev, where historical consciousness emerges through montage, inscription, and personal recollection. Finally, it examines contemporary performative re-enactment, where the artist's body becomes a site of visual and historical reclamation, engaging directly with the colonial archive's anthropometric legacy. In the concluding section, shamanic concepts of memory and temporality provide a methodological lens for foregrounding embodied and affective forms of engaging with fragmented histories. Across these three registers, the study reveals how photography mediates between state surveillance, personal memory, and embodied acts of Indigenous visual sovereignty.

Keywords

visual anthropology, expanded photographic practice, archival intervention, alternative historiography, ethno-aesthetics

Introduction and Methodological Approach

The Buryats, constituting one of the largest Indigenous groups in Siberia, have historically inhabited the regions around Lake Baikal, spanning the forest-steppe of Zabaikalye and the mountainous taiga of the Eastern Sayan range. Their collective identity emerged from centuries of interaction among Mongolic, Turkic, Tungusic, and Samoyedic groups; local shamanic cosmologies and the northward-spreading Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism; and successive Mongol and Chinese states as well as the expanding frontier of the Russian Empire. What emerged by the nineteenth century was a fractured constellation of several Buryat clans and communities (e.g. Khongodor, Khori, Ekhirit), whose unity was consolidated, often violently, through colonization, dispossession, and the new classificatory languages of the state.¹⁾

Photography entered the process of the Buryats' ethnocultural formation both as its record and as an instrument of its transformation. Russian ethnographers and administrators deployed the camera to document Buryat people within the scopic regimes that rendered them legible to the imperial and later Soviet state. This practice positioned them as subjects of ethnographic study, serving to broaden European understanding of Siberian Indigenous populations, which were then under the protectorate of the Russian Empire. The notion of the scopic regime was introduced by film theorist Christian Metz to ground a semiotic-psychoanalytic theory of cinema as a specific structure of looking and visual signification, and was later historicized and generalized by Martin Jay, in his account of the scopic regimes of modernity (Cartesian perspectivalism, Baroque madness of vision, etc.).²⁾ We take this concept as our point of departure, following its analytical use by David Anderson and Craig Campbell,³⁾ whose work emerged from one of the first extensive projects to locate, classify, digitize, and disseminate photographic images depicting Siberian Indigenous peoples and their lifeways prior to Stalinization.

Within our primary research thread — an attempt to grasp both the collective and lived history of the Buryat people through photography as an active yet silent participant in ethnographic ideology, mediated geographically and thus technologically through the specificity of Siberia and socio-culturally through Russian Imperial and Soviet state formations — Anderson and Campbell's work formed the methodological pivot from which we began. However, their work cannot carry us beyond this legacy or into a productive clash with the more intimate register of photographic practice that followed it: the Soviet family album of the citizen-subject who, at least officially, was no longer bound by colonial relations. Finally, our central question concerned the possibility of contemporary artis-

- 1) For an exposition of the historical formation of the Buryats' common identity and culture out of Siberian Mongolic tribes up to the radical Stalinist transformations before, see Melissa Chakars, *The Socialist Way of Life in Siberia: Transformation in Buryatia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 17–18, 25–60; and the introduction to D. D. Nimaev, "Buriaty: Etnogenez i etnicheskaya istoriya" (Doctoral diss., Russian Academy of Sciences, 2002), <https://www.dissercat.com/content/buryaty-etnogenez-i-etnicheskaya-istoriya>.
- 2) Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, trans. Celia Britton et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 61–68; Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
- 3) David G. Anderson and Craig Campbell, "Picturing Central Siberia: The Digitization and Analysis of Early Twentieth-Century Central Siberian Photographic Collections," *Sibirica* 8, no. 2 (2009), 1–42.

tic intervention within this entanglement — this duet — of history and photography, which together shape the layered experience of a particular people.

Anderson and Campbell situated their project within a growing scholarly interest in the visual archives of colonial situations in North America and Australia. Working within a broadly decolonial orientation, two of their aims were, culturally, to analyze the regimes of classification and control embedded in these archives, and, politically, to facilitate a re-signification of the images by showing them to descendant communities, enabling former subject peoples to reflect on these photographs in the context of land claims and the affirmation of traditional knowledge systems.⁴⁾ Of course, these aims are not new. What is new is the Siberian “context,” which includes: (1) historically specific photographic technologies from the late nineteenth century to the 1920s, selected and adapted to the harsh cold climate; (2) the particular social functions and institutional mediation of these photographic images; and (3) the distinctive methods of their curating in Soviet state museums and archives. The notion of the scopic regime enabled the authors to interpret the photographs by combining an analysis of culturally and institutionally sedimented forms of looking with the technologically and geographically specific elements of photographic practice: “when trying to understand an image, we might consider the interrelation between photographic chemicals and mechanisms of the camera, the ‘eyes’ of both the photographer and the audience, as well as the agency of the individual (or even landscape) being photographed.”⁵⁾

As Anderson and Campbell explain, by the end of the nineteenth century, photography had become increasingly accessible with the introduction of mass-produced equipment and dry gelatin glass plate negatives, which eliminated the labor-intensive wet-plate process. This innovation allowed photographers to travel greater distances and document more remote places, while improvements in lenses and emulsions enabled shorter exposures and more dynamic, poorly lit, or otherwise challenging scenes — anticipating the style of later journalistic and snapshot photography. Many collections were produced by government-led expeditions, typically headed by an individual leader and supported by a team of porters who hauled expeditionary gear, including the photographic equipment necessary for glass-plate photography. The resulting images were often displayed at public exhibitions or exchanged with other departments or branches of scientific societies.⁶⁾ Turn-of-the-century Siberian photography thus developed within local administrative

4) *Ibid.*, 1. Anderson and Campbell note that a photograph of an Ostiak-Ket shaman from 1926 was immediately recognized by his descendants during contemporaneous anthropological fieldwork (*ibid.*, 13). Furthermore, many of the photographs shown to Ket and Evenki communities sparked renewed interest in the traditional clothing styles and material culture depicted, as community members compared these early-twentieth-century items with those they continue to make and use today. These authors also speculate that, with further work on the documentary archives, “it is not unconceivable that these collections could provide proof of continual ‘traditional nature use’ under Federal laws that guarantee preferential access rights to land” (*ibid.*, 11). This speculation depends heavily on the extent to which the North American decolonial model (also encompassing Australia and New Zealand) — shaped by a particular history and experience of settler colonialism — can be applied to Indigeneity in the post-Soviet cultural and political-historical context, which, in our focus on Siberia, exists today within the legal framework of the Russian Federation.

5) *Ibid.*, 3.

6) *Ibid.*, 3–4.

and scientific institutions, and due to logistical constraints, technical demands, and the high cost of glass-plate photography, image production was predominantly collective and expeditionary, serving exhibitionary and ethnographic rather than personal purposes. In relation to this exhibitionary function, Anderson and Campbell link the predominant visuality embedded in late Imperial Russian photographic practice to the so-called “genre photographs,” which depicted idealized scenes of peasant life focused on labor, material culture, and domestic interiors. Given this shared visual grammar, they regard genre photography as a precursor to ethnographic photography, noting that “photographers were staging ethnographic or genre shots in their studios years before it was feasible to shoot these kinds of photographs in the field.”⁷⁾

After the October Revolution, with the nationalization of the photographic industry and the onset of socialist modernization and nation-building projects among formerly Indigenous, nomadic, or semi-nomadic peoples, ethnographic photography’s primary exhibition function also increasingly assumed a public pedagogical role within the Soviet regime, serving as a visual agent of socialist transformation. Consequently, after the collapse of the Soviet Union — and, arguably, already following Stalinist industrialization — it has become extremely difficult, if not impossible, in most cases to grasp the concrete historical social life of these photographs, leaving them challenging to interpret. Although massive collections of late Imperial and early Soviet photographs survive in regional archives, museums, and libraries, Anderson and Campbell noted that understanding their circulation through public exhibitions and early publications remains very limited.⁸⁾ Thus, the contemporary afterlife of this photographic collection lacks any structural unity which we usually associate with the term “archive.”⁹⁾ One of the most surprising findings of Anderson and Campbell’s research was that glass-plate negatives were far less valued in Siberia than in Western Europe or North America, often remaining uncataloged in their original cardboard boxes on dusty shelves or in basement storerooms. Moreover, the photographs — originally produced through state- or society-sponsored expeditions and included in expedition reports alongside fieldnotes, maps, drawings, and letters — were later categorized by “type” within the late-Soviet archival system. Once removed from their expeditionary context, they were incorporated into the separate photographic sections of individual museums and reclassified typologically under headings such as “The First Five-Year Plan” or “Cadres from the Ranks of Indigenous Peoples of the North.”¹⁰⁾ All of these specif-

7) Ibid., 5.

8) Ibid., 3–4.

9) On the organic connection between the archive — *qua arkhē*, *arkheion*, and *archivum* — and the historical function of solidifying and legitimizing governing institutions, see Francis X. Blouin Jr. and William G. Rosenberg, *Processing the Past: Contesting Authority in History and the Archives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 13–31. As a material vessel of the paradigm of historicism (Leopold von Ranke) since the Enlightenment, this function and authority of the archive have been challenged on multiple fronts throughout the twentieth century. The progressive dissolution of historicism as the dominant ideology of historical experience, together with the digital turn at the century’s end, has profoundly problematized what functions and forms archives can assume today, and what alternative models of historical experience they might embody. In the case of our research, the final dissolution of the historicist paradigm is marked by the fall of state socialism and by the mnemonic lacunae that its archival ruins have laid bare.

10) Anderson and Campbell, “Picturing Central Siberia,” 6.

icities led the authors to argue that working with Siberian photographic collections requires a collective, on-site effort grounded in informal local networks — individuals with long-standing, tacit knowledge whose ties to archivists and local historians are essential for locating materials and tracing them across museums, archives, and libraries.¹¹⁾

In a later article, working with the Krasnoyarsk-based specialist Mikhail Batashev, Anderson and Campbell turn to the photography produced during the so-called “Northern Expedition” of 1938–1939, which surveyed some of the most remote regions of what is now Krasnoyarsk Krai in Central Siberia. The expedition’s photographer, Ivan Ivanovich Baluev, becomes the focal point through whom the authors make the images speak: they reconstruct his life as preserved in the Krasnoyarsk Krai Regional Museum where he worked as a staff photographer through the worst years of the Stalinist period, draw on his expedition diary, retrace the expedition’s route, and analyse the accompanying report. They also trace the ways in which Baluev’s work both inherits and diverges from the visual conventions of ethnographic portraiture established by the Russian Anthropological Society in the nineteenth century.¹²⁾ The authors’ main claim — which we take up in our own photographic analysis — is that, contrary to the generic understanding of Soviet photographic mediation, particularly under Stalinism, as a form of social falsification and the visualization of make-believe socialism, photographers like Baluev captured real social transformations experienced most acutely at the extreme peripheries of the Soviet state, where the Stalinist drive for modernization, collectivization, and industrialization clashed most sharply with local ways of life. In many of Baluev’s images, the authors discern an ironic and conflictual composition that reveals people caught in the midst of difficult social processes — at the very crux of transformations between the old and the new, between the Indigenous and the Soviet, belonging fully to neither.¹³⁾ Indeed, one might argue that it is only through the form of ethnographic photography — though it must simultaneously work against its own institutional visual conventions — that such processes of social transformation can be most acutely recorded.

Buryat Photographic Archive as a Contested Site

In the first part of this article, we analyze what we identify as three distinctive scopic regimes within a photographic collection documenting the social transformation of the Buryat way of life from the late nineteenth century to the early 1930s. We attribute to this collection a speculative unity — as an archive — because our aim is not only to identify

11) Ibid., 2. We must add that this remains a common experience when working with regional state archives and libraries in Russia. It also helps explain why a notion of the *collective* — structured through both on-site and off-site labour — has become so central to the organisation of work in contemporary ecological and Indigenous research-based art practices.

12) David G. Anderson, Mikhail S. Batashev, and Craig Campbell, “The Photographs of Baluev: Capturing the ‘Socialist Transformation’ of the Krasnoyarsk Northern Frontier, 1938–1939,” in *From Dust to Digital: Ten Years of the Endangered Archives Programme*, ed. Maja Kominko (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2015), 487–530.

13) Ibid., 505–526.

the embedded visual grammar of ethnographic and physical-anthropological photography during this transformative period, but also — as will be addressed in the second part of the article — to situate it in relation to more private and intimate photographic practices associated with the family album. Accordingly, we divide the archive into three distinct visual periods: the 1880s, the 1910s, and the 1930s.

Engaging with this archive today entails confronting a layered field of historical absences, in which processes of cultural transformation intersect with social and political trauma. For the Buryats, the rapid modernization and collectivization of the 1930s ASSR, the systematic disruption of local shamanist and Buddhist institutions, and the imposition of language restrictions throughout the twentieth century represent historical processes that, despite leaving lasting structural effects, have remained largely unarticulated within the Republic. This historical silence continues to shape contemporary cultural identity. In the context of the ongoing Russian military campaign in Ukraine, these dynamics are intensified: the disproportionate conscription of men from national republics such as Buryatia¹⁴) exemplifies the continuation of state strategies that render remote communities especially vulnerable. In this framework, the archive functions as a critical interface in which history, memory, and trauma converge.

The encounter with the archive is primarily mediated through its digitized hosting platforms, such as the British Library's Endangered Archives Programme, the *Kunstkamera* digital archive, and replicas of photographs collected from different regions' field trips by one of the authors over the past few years. The original photographic plates remain distributed across ethnographic institutions in Russia, Mongolia, and beyond. The selected photographers — Pyotr Shimkevich, Bernhard Petri, and E. G. Shurkin — broadly reflect the prevailing standards of photographic practice within anthropology and ethnography for each respective period. While digitization facilitates access, it does not confer analytical or historical coherence to the material beyond the imperative of preservation. Consequently, the photographic documents we work with are simultaneously materially dispersed across multiple institutions and digitally consolidated. This duality is, in fact, central to the very nature of photographic archives, shaping both their historiographical and methodological significance.

In contrast, the family album of Sodnom-Dorzhi Badmaev¹⁵) — which we explore in the second part of this article — will function as a counter-archive of vernacular photography. Compiled by Sodnom-Dorzhi Badmaev himself in the 1990s, the album chronicles Buryat life from the 1930s to the 1990s, but with a different intent and focus on the domestic setting. It incorporates the visual legacies of Soviet iconography and montage, which it simultaneously reproduces and recontextualizes, producing a representation of Buryats shaped by both personal memory and the broader visual conventions of Soviet photographic practice. Through these strategies, the album provides a point of comparison with

14) Mariya Vyushkova and Evgeny Sherkhonov, "Ethnic Minority Casualties of the 2022 Invasion of Ukraine: A Data Story from the Free Buryatia Foundation," *Inner Asia* 25, no. 1 (2023), 126–136.

15) Sodnom-Dorzhi Shirapovich Badmaev (1922–2011), relative of Margarita Galandina, was a lawyer, researcher, and journalist in the Buryat-Mongol ASSR; contributor to Buriad Ünen; author of numerous papers on Soviet social sciences and philosophy; and holder of the Candidate of Philosophical Sciences degree.

the ethnographic photography examined in the first part of the article, revealing alternative temporalities, intentions, and visual modalities.

The third section will focus on contemporary photography-based art practice, exploring shamanism and shamanic temporality through a speculative approach to understanding the passage of time specific to the pre-industrial Siberian context. This approach is exemplified by the self-portraiture works of one of the authors, Margarita Galandina, who intervenes in the visual apparatus of the Buryat photographic archive. The aim is to construct a method of grappling with fragmented visual histories that reopens the affective temporality of images. While the theoretical framing and broader visual analysis are jointly authored, this section is written in the first person in order to reflect Galandina's practice-based engagement with the archive.

Three Photographic Regimes: Colonial, Activist, Biometric

The Buryat institutional photographic collections, produced across different anthropological frameworks, ethnographic expeditions, and socio-historical events, do not constitute a coherent or unified record. Rather, they are best understood through distinct scopic regimes, each reflecting a particular moment in the evolving encounter between indigenous life and state knowledge.

We have identified three broad visual periods within these collections: **1880s:** Early ethnographic photography by Pyotr Shimkevich, focusing on the Eastern Buryats (Zabai-kalye region); **1900s–1920s:** Ethnographic activism by Bernhard Petri, concentrating on the Western Buryats (Predbaikalye region); **1930s:** Soviet anthropometric photography led by G. I. Petrov and documented by E. G. Shurkin.

Each of these periods exemplifies broader trajectories in ethnographic and colonial photography — practices that evolved within Western visual anthropology and were subsequently taken up, but also shaped by the specific institutional and scientific settings of Russian and Soviet scholarship. In their original context, the photographs were collected during the field trips of various ethnographic expeditions, extensively sponsored and conducted by institutional organisations such as the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Russian Geographical Society, among others.

From 1893 to 1894, on behalf of the Amur Governor, the Russian Geographical Society employed Pyotr Shimkevich (1862–1920) “to study small peoples and develop administrative measures for improving their situation” and to collect data on “the rights of Buryats of Zabaikalye region to their inhabiting lands and methods of serving these lands”¹⁶⁾ in Transbaikal, the Amur Region, and Primorye in southeastern Siberia. Throughout the trip, the ethnographer observed and documented the major Buryat clans in the following regions: Aginsk, Selenge, Kudarinsk, Khori, and Barguzi (Fig. 1). While focused on recording the Buryat population, Shimkevich also visited and photographed more than

16) V. B. Malakshanova, *Forgotten Journey: Photos by Pyotr Shimkevich: XIX Century: Album of Photographs from the Collections of Museums in Russia and Abroad* (Khabarovsk: Khabarovsk Territory Printing Office, 2021).

30 Buddhist temples (Fig. 2), all of which were destroyed in the 1930s. His images, therefore, preserve a rare visual record of Buryat Buddhist architecture prior to the Stalinist purges.

The majority of Shimkevich's photographic work is now housed at the N. I. Grodekov Museum in Khabarovsk.¹⁷⁾ Estimates suggest that he took over 1,000 photographs during the expedition, including original glass plate negatives, some of which were transferred to the Berlin Museum of Ethnography.¹⁸⁾



Figs. 1–2: Pyotr Shimkevich, left: Buryat women, young women of the Selenginsk District and Department (*vedomstvo*) of the Temnik Valley, dressed in rich traditional attire — nieces of the late Khambo-Lama Gomboev,¹⁹⁾ right: Barguzin Datsan,²⁰⁾ its exterior and interior observation with Ombon's (prayer house) in the Barguzin's steppe²¹⁾

17) Among the materials Shimkevich donated are 120 photographs of the *byt* (everyday life) of the Buryat people and 125 photographs depicting Buddhist sites in the Zabaikalye region. These prints are mounted in white frames, each bearing Shimkevich's stamp of authenticity and annotations on date, location, and context. The remainder of Shimkevich's photographic documentation from his Buryat expeditions is dispersed across various public and private archives in Russia and Europe.

18) These materials were brought together and systematically identified for the first time in the 2021 grant-funded project *Forgotten Journey: Photos by Pyotr Shimkevich*, a collaborative effort across multiple institutions. Unlike the British Library's Endangered Archives Programme, however, this project produced no public digital repository; instead, its outcomes took the form of a touring exhibition and a printed publication, which served as the main source for much of the information and archival access referenced here.

19) Shimkevich Pyotr Polykarpovich, Buryat women, young women of the Selenginsk District and Department (*vedomstvo*) of the Temnik Valley, in rich costumes, nieces of the late Khambo-Lama Gomboev, Khabarovsk Regional Museum named after N. I. Grodekov (inv. no. KP 10883/56).

20) Shimkevich, Barguzin Datsan, Amur Regional Museum of Local Lore named after G. S. Novikov-Daursky; State Museum of the History of Religion; Far Eastern State Scientific Library; Russian Museum of Ethnography (inv. no. 2450-53).

21) Shimkevich, Ombon (prayer house) in the Barguzin's steppe, Khabarovsk Regional Museum named after

This series of photographs by Shimkevich offers a rare and extensive visual record of the Zabaykalye Buryats at the end of the nineteenth century — a time when the region had already been territorially absorbed into the Russian Empire. Despite this incorporation, Buryat identity, way of life (*byt*), and Buddhist cultural influence remained distinctly present in the eastern part of the region, as evidenced throughout Shimkevich's collection. Today, these images hold particular historical value as visual testimony to cultural forms and religious sites that have since vanished.

The original Shimkevich photographs, likely captured on albumen glass plates, would have had a materially different presence when encountered in situ than through their current digital reproductions. Likewise, the photographs of Bernhard Petri and E. Shurkin, initially encountered as photographic objects, are now perceived through the dematerialized logic of the digital image. This shift in medium transmission foregrounds an essential question: how does the materiality of the photographic object itself affect the historical memory of the event it records?

If observed in its original context as an object, each photograph can be seen as a material relic of the Buryat way of life before collectivization — a documentation of the material culture of Zabaykalye Buryats sealed in the form of a glass plate. In the case of the earlier ethnographic photography of Shimkevich, the original photographs were made with a large-format camera that imposed mobility restrictions on the subject of the photograph, thus creating a static, historicist reading of the image and its portrayal. This is especially evident in one of the most widely circulated portraits today among the Buryat community,²²⁾ the portrait of the Buryat woman (Fig. 3) from the Aginsk Administrative District in the Zabaykalye region.

Zoriktueva is seated amongst a plain “stretched-fabric” background, dressed in a formal female Buryat-Mongol gown, which reflects her status of wealth and attribution to the Aginsk region and Khori clan.²³⁾ Her hand is gracefully resting on her left knee, and her gaze is directed toward the camera. The formal posture is partially dictated by her rank and the complexity of the dress, but also by the aesthetic decision of the photographer to capture her in a fashion reminiscent of the anthropological photography of the late nineteenth century, where staging the portraits as a makeshift studio during the field trips was a common practice. In the archive of Shimkevich's works, this portrait is also accompanied by two additional photographs of Zoriktueva that are taken at full length from the back and front (Fig. 4), which, unlike the first portrait, are not widely circulated and are

N. I. Grodekov (inv. no. KP 7959/168); Amur Regional Museum of Local Lore named after G. S. Novikov-Daursky; State Museum of the History of Religion; Far Eastern State Scientific Library; Russian Museum of Ethnography (inv. no. 245Buryat0-30).

22) Growing up in Buryatia, the portrait of the *Aginsk Woman* — recently attributed to the authorship of Shimkevich — has circulated widely across the Republic: as a national museum postcard referencing traditional costume history, as a digitally modified image incorporated into commercial projects such as souvenir manufacturing, and most recently as an AI-generated animation for an interactive exhibition in Ulaan-Ude. “Ожившие фотографии,” accessed September 30, 2025, <https://xebxab.space/sainuuger/livephoto>.

23) Traditional Buryat-Mongolian dress has an elaborate dress system with different parts of the dress attributing the wearer to a particular klan (*rod*). For more details on the symbolism of Buryat traditional dress, see R. D. Badmaeva, *Buryatskii narodnyi kostium* (Ulan-Ude: Buryat book Publ., 1987).



Fig. 3: Buryat woman Zoriktueva dressed in a rich formal attire. The dress is adorned with silver, corals (*mozhans*), lapis lazuli, and other precious ornaments²⁴⁾

seen only in the limited context of a printed publication and the archive. These portraits are also isolated by a plain background that further contextualizes and positions the photographs in the visual logic of ethnographic photography. Compared to the first portrait, the posture is much more rigid and simplified — instrumental and clear in displaying Zoriktueva's appearance and details of the dress.

Such representation mediates cultural perception through an ethnographic lens, shaping how the Buryat past is imagined in the present. Adapting Boris Groys's formulation, one might ask: to what extent does photography, as a culturally coded simulacrum of reality, contribute to — or compromise — the "truth of representation" that anthropology seeks?²⁵⁾ This question recalls Walter Benjamin's reflection on photography's paradoxical claim to authenticity: even in the most staged or artful image, the beholder is drawn to the minute trace of contingency — the "here and now" that inscribes the photograph with the mark of lived reality.²⁶⁾ The collision between mechanical apparatus and lived experience, what Roland Barthes later terms "sovereign contingency,"²⁷⁾ deposits a residue of immediacy within the photograph. Yet this immediacy coexists with loss: by fixing reality materially, photography also arrests the fluidity of memory. In this sense, the photographic

24) Shimkevich, Khabarovsk Regional Museum named after N. I. Grodkov (inv. no. KP 7959/96); Amur Regional Museum of Local Lore named after G. S. Novikov-Daursky; State Museum of the History of Religion; Far Eastern State Scientific Library; National Museum of the Republic of Buryatia.

25) Boris Groys, *Logic of Collection* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2021), 125–140.

26) Walter Benjamin, *One-Way Street: And Other Writings* (London: Verso, 1997), 280–301.

27) Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981).

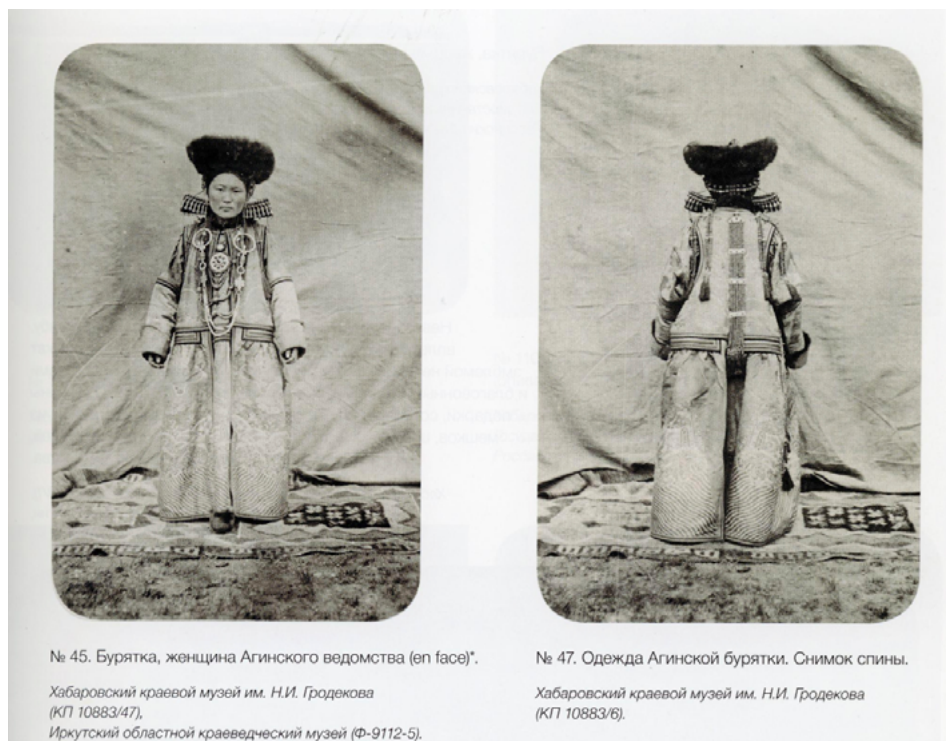


Fig. 4: left: No. 45, Buryat woman from the Aginsk Administrative District (en face),²⁸⁾ right: No. 47, Costume of an Aginsk Buryat woman. Rear view²⁹⁾

object — through its central temporal and experiential problematic — parallels Buryat shamanic practice, particularly the *Ongon*: a material vessel inhabited by an ancestral spirit, sustaining presence through matter while signifying absence in life.³⁰⁾

Photography similarly produces an object saturated with the physical trace of reality while evacuating subjective life. In Groy's reading of Siegfried Kracauer,³¹⁾ photography does not overcome death but manifests it. Capturing the body, the photograph becomes evidence of death — a counterpoint to the elusive, living quality of memory before it has been “fixed” into the physical document that constitutes photographic materiality. The photographic object, therefore, reproduces not the truth of the moment, but a mediated replica of it.

28) Pyotr Shimkevich, Buryat woman from the Aginsk Administrative District (en face), Khabarovsk Regional Museum named after N. I. Grodekov (inv. no. KP 10883/47); Irkutsk Regional Museum of Local Lore (inv. no. KP 10883/6).

29) Pyotr Shimkevich, Costume of an Aginsk Buryat woman. Rear view, Khabarovsk Regional Museum named after N. I. Grodekov (inv. no. 10883/6).

30) According to shamanist beliefs, *Ongon* is a material object inhabited by the spirit of an ancestor that conserves their presence through materiality whilst simultaneously reminding its bearer of their absence in the world of the living.

31) Groy, *Logic of Collection*, 130–131.

For Barthes, however, photography possesses its own kind of truth — the truth of the immediate effect of reality. By definition, it cannot lie about reality, for the very subject capable of lying disappears within it.³²⁾ The notion of “photographic truth” thus remains perpetually mediated: an asymptotic pursuit that photography can never fully achieve. Yet through this mediation, the photographic image transforms subjective memory and one’s relation to history, generating a liminal space that enables critical reflection and the recovery of historical discontinuities. Within this framework, institutional ethnographic collections become navigational points within these mnemonic gaps, where the material and visual conditions of the medium further complicate the fragile positioning of truth in the contested terrain of Buryat history.

Where Shimkevich’s archive captures a world still precariously intact — a visual order stabilized through ethnographic typology and framing,³³⁾ Bernhard Petri’s later work, spanning the 1910s to 1930s, confronts a world already in the throes of transformation and cultural disintegration. His photographs and writings mark a decisive shift in the function of ethnography — from static documentation to an active form of mediation and intervention.

As an ethnographer, archaeologist, and advocate, Petri practiced what might be called ethnographic activism: he positioned himself not as a passive recorder but as a cultural mediator, intervening in the historical transition confronting Indigenous Siberian communities such as the Western Buryats and Soyots. While a general distinguishing feature of Soviet ethnography in the 1920s and 1930s was the attempt to align fieldwork with the Marxist-Leninist paradigm — actively participating in the social transformation of traditional lifeways rather than merely typifying, racializing, or exoticizing Indigenous peoples, who were increasingly conceived of as Soviet citizens³⁴⁾ — Petri’s activism exceeded these bounds. In February 1929, Petri petitioned the Irkutsk Committee of the North on behalf of the Soyot people, who lacked the means to send a representative to the Buryat ASSR capital, Ulan-Ude. He highlighted multiple grievances, including excessive taxation on cattle milk, the nonpayment of a promised 5,000-ruble loan, the absence of schools, and restrictions on reindeer trade with Tuva. Petri proposed the creation of a separate Soyot administrative unit to address these issues. The Buryat ASSR authorities, however, denounced his intervention, claiming that he had incited the Soyot kulak elite to assert autonomy, pursue unrestricted trade, and resist Communist policies — demands considered politically unacceptable by the state.³⁵⁾

A landscape photograph taken by Petri, most likely during a field trip among the Western Buryats, stands out within the digital collection for its ambiguity and absence of explicit ethnographic framing (Fig. 5). In the lower left corner, the faint outline of Petri

32) Groy, *Logic of Collection*, 20.

33) Elena Barchatova, ed., *A Portrait of Tsarist Russia: Unknown Photographs from the Soviet Archives* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989), 81. The *News of the Russian Geographical Society* (1872) instructed photographers to focus on “people’s costume, every single pose, tools and household goods ... dwellings, settlements, towns, scenes from public life, and pets.”

34) Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

35) A. A. Vanov, A. D. Kalikhman, and T. P. Kalikhman, Б. Э. Петри в истории Саянского перекрестка [B. E. Petri in the History of the Sayan Crossroads] (Irkutsk: Изд-во «Оттиск», 2008), 72–92.



Fig. 5: Bernhard Eduardovich Petri, Landscape. Buryats, Irkutsk Province (Irkutsk Governorate), Russia. Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera), St. Petersburg. No later than 1913. Stereoscopic glass plate negative. MAE no. 2220-116. Size: 9 × 14 cm³⁶⁾

himself appears, leaning against a tripod while photographing the scene. The photograph's overexposure and apparent spontaneity suggest it may have been captured incidentally, without the deliberate compositional staging characteristic of his other works.

Petri's photographs should be read within the intellectual framework that shaped his ethnographic practice — an emergent Siberian anthropology conceived as a transdisciplinary science that effectively assumed the role of local sociology. In the absence of institutionalized sociology in the Russian Empire and early Soviet Union, anthropology in Siberia was a hybrid field: it fused archaeology, ethnography, physical anthropology, statistics, economics, and medicine into a unified apparatus for studying and managing social life. Petri, trained as a natural scientist and a committed Darwinist, saw cultural life as evolving in close relation to environmental and material conditions. His methodological orientation was toward development, transition, and adaptation — not preservation in any static sense.

By the 1920s, Petri understood that a return to indigenous “tradition” was no longer viable, yet the blunt imposition of Soviet modernization would be culturally catastrophic. His project was to mediate the transition to new forms of life — through cultural bases,³⁷⁾

36) Bernhard Eduardovich Petri, Landscape. Buryats, Irkutsk Province (Irkutsk Governorate), Russia, no later than 1913, Photographic Collection, Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera), St. Petersburg. inv. no. MAE 2220-116, accessed April 30, 2025, <https://collection.kunstkamera.ru/en/entity/OBJECT/68540>.

37) A *kultbaza* (cultural base) was a form of cultural development in the USSR, established in the 1920s–1930s to meet the needs of nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples of the Far North. Often mobile or semi-perma-



Fig. 6: Two Buryat women in European dress, Buryats, Irkutsk Province (Irkutsk Governorate), Russia. Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera), St. Petersburg. No later than 1913. Glass plate negative. MAE no. 2220-6. Size: 9.0 × 12.0 mm³⁸⁾

education, and land reform — but only if these were radically adapted to the geo-social, economic, and ecological conditions of each community.

The group portrait, now held in the Kunstkamera Museum of Ethnography in St. Petersburg, depicts two Buryat women from the western region of historical Buryatia, Pri-baykalye, north of Lake Baikal (Fig. 6). This region experienced earlier and more intense contact with Russian colonizers than Zabaikalye, including forced Christianization, the adoption of Russian names, and a transition from nomadic to sedentary life. In the photograph, the women wear Western-style dresses associated with European settlers and pose before a traditional Russian wooden house, signalling the profound transformation of everyday life. Unlike Shimkevich's portraits, which employ carefully staged backgrounds, Petri's composition appears more immediate and transitory; occasional technical imperfections lend a sense of naturalism, reflecting the rapid social and environmental changes he documented during fieldwork.

His photographs and writings reflect this political and epistemological commitment: they capture not timeless ethnographic “types,” but unstable hybrids — shamanic ritual in

nent, these institutions aimed to educate local populations and raise children, typically including a boarding school with an orphanage, a hospital with an outpatient clinic, a club, and radio and cinema facilities. A *kult-baza* can be understood on the better-known architectural model of the social condenser, originally developed for the metropolitan setting, to suit the specific conditions of northern, semi-nomadic communities.

38) Petri, Two Buryat women in European dress, Photographic Collection, Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera), St. Petersburg. Museum no. MAE 2220-6, accessed April 30, 2025, <https://collection.kunstkamera.ru/en/entity/OBJECT/68361?person=243&index=18>.

Western dress, ancestral earth cults resisting both institutional Buddhism and Soviet secularism, tentative collectivist experiments grafted onto kinship structures. To an extent, Petri's ethnography was a diagnostic map of cultural survival under extreme pressure. His outspoken advocacy for Soyot autonomy rendered him politically suspect; he was executed in 1937 during the Stalinist purges. His legacy endures as a rare case of an ethnographer who understood anthropology not as the study of vanishing cultures, but as a tool for imagining survivable futures.

Yet within a few years, the visual and epistemological premises of ethnography shifted markedly. While Petri's photographs documented the instability of cultural transformation, the subsequent generation of Soviet anthropology — exemplified by E. G. Shurkin's 1931 expedition under G. I. Petrov — focused on the human body itself as a site of measurement and scientific categorization. In 1931, under the direction of G. I. Petrov, the Buryat-Mongolian Anthropological Expedition undertook constitutional studies of Buryat-Mongol and mixed Buryat-Russian populations. The photographic documentation, conducted by E. G. Shurkin, originally encompassed over 600 participants; today, only 50 of these images are digitally accessible in the Kunstkamera Museum of Ethnography's public collection.



Figs. 7–8: E. G. Shurkin, left: Trans-Baikal Métis, young woman (frontal, profile, three-quarter views),³⁹⁾ right: Trans-Baikal Métis: Posokhova, sixth generation, age 28 (frontal, profile, three-quarter views). Kyakhta District, Troitskosavsky Aimag, Buryat-Mongol ASSR. Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera), St. Petersburg, 1931. Photo-sensitive layer on glass plate. Sizes: 13.0 × 18.0 × 0.1 cm 40)⁴⁰⁾

Shurkin's photographs adhere to the conventions of anthropometric photography, following protocols established by the British Anthropological Society and the work of Francis Galton. Subjects were systematically recorded in profile, frontal, and three-quarter

39) E. G. Shurkin, Trans-Baikal Métis: young woman (frontal, profile, three-quarter views), Kyakhta District, Troitskosavsky Aimag, Buryat-Mongol ASSR, Russia, 1931. Collector (private): Grigorii Ivanovich Petrov (1903–1941). Museum no. MAE I 1596-19, accessed April 30, 2025, <https://collection.kunstkamera.ru/en/entity/OBJECT/63687>.

40) E. G. Shurkin, Trans-Baikal Métis: Posokhova, sixth generation, age 28 (frontal, profile, three-quarter views), Kyakhta District, Troitskosavsky Aimag, Buryat-Mongol ASSR, Russia, 1931. Collector (private): Grigorii Ivanovich Petrov (1903–1941). Museum no. MAE I 1596-15, accessed April 30, 2025, <https://collection.kunstkamera.ru/en/entity/OBJECT/63683>.

views, typically against a neutral background. This methodology, first formalized by Jones H. Lamprey in 1869, sought to suppress individual particularities in favor of comparative typologies, thereby transforming embodied subjects into standardized somatic data. Each photograph includes factual annotations, written beneath the images (Figs. 7–8).

Yet, as Christopher Pinney and Elizabeth Edwards highlight, such scientific visualities are “infected⁴¹⁾” by the aesthetic and ideological demands of their cultural milieu. The visual codes of the images participate in the manipulation and, as a consequence, erasure of the lived singularity of the subject — a presence that, paradoxically, continues to haunt the anthropometric frame.

Shurkin’s corpus thus forms part of a longer visual narrative of othering, even as it is reframed within a new ideological project. As Francine Hirsch has demonstrated, Soviet anthropologists sought to dismantle the racial essentialisms of Western eugenics, framing *metizatsiia* (racial mixing) not as degeneration but as a driver of socialist modernity.⁴²⁾ Studies such as Petrov’s, encompassing constitutional measurements and endurance tests of Buryat-Mongol and mixed-heritage workers, aimed to recast biological differences within a dialectical materialist paradigm of social development.

However, despite their nominally emancipatory aims, Soviet researchers remained entangled in the visual episteme of eugenics: the very photographic and tabular protocols they deployed betrayed their complicity with a scientific regime that reduced the social body to anatomical metricity. Petrov’s own admission of the expedition’s compressed timeline — spanning merely from the spring to the early autumn of 1930 — is legible in the photographic inconsistencies: blurred visages, unorthodox angles, multiple subjects on a single plate, which disrupt the rigid taxonomic ambitions of the archive. The expedition report supplements these visual documents with exhaustive measurements: tables recording height, cranial indices, eye and hair color, blood type, and other biometric data — further sedimenting bodies into numeric abstractions.

Moreover, returning to Benjamin’s conception of photography as the searing of an empirical scene onto the photographic substrate, Galton’s composite technique — which layers multiple profilmic events into a singular visual schema — can be seen as an effort to thicken and destabilize the photographic instant. Far from undermining photographic indexicality, such methods reveal its reliance on aesthetic construction and its entanglement with regimes of visual control. The anthropometric grid thus functions as a paradoxical site: a project of standardization that simultaneously exposes the instability and spectrality underlying its claims to scientific objectivity.

To conclude this section, each photographic regime — colonial, activist, or biometric — represents a distinct apparatus of seeing. These are not discrete temporal sequences but overlapping strata through which the image of the Buryat has been historically constructed, transformed, and contested. Across these shifts, the photograph’s double bind endures: it simultaneously documents and distorts, preserves life while scripting its disappearance. Today, these images circulate across multiple contexts: as digitized files in museum data-

41) Elizabeth Edwards, “Professor Huxley’s ‘Well-considered Plan,’” in Elizabeth Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropologies and Museums* (London: Routledge, 2001), 135.

42) Francine Hirsch, “Race without the Practice of Racial Politics,” *Slavic Review* 61, no. 1 (2002), 30–43.

bases, occasionally reproduced by museums and scientific institutions, and further re-appropriated in commercial, educational, and academic settings.

If the photographic object, across its three key regimes, frames Buryat identity through structures of classification, salvage, and measurement, it simultaneously leaves a residue that resists enclosure. Despite their claims to fixity, these images contain errant traces — gestures, postures, and fragments — that fall outside the grammar of ethnographic capture and institutional taxonomy. Such unruly details invite a different mode of seeing, one less concerned with verification and more attentive to interruptions. It is precisely within these visual fissures that an alternative historical practice emerges: one that does not aim to reconstruct a total image of the past but instead works with its discontinuities, particularly as they materialize in the fragmented photographic record of the Buryat–Mongol borderlands.

This is where the concept of photographic montage begins to matter — not only as a technique of juxtaposition but as a way of thinking about history itself. In the next section, we turn to visual analysis of the Sodnom-Dorzhi Badmaev family album, which includes photographs from 1937 to the late 1990s, with annotations of the Badmaev family's history made in retrospect. The album is an example of vernacular photography in the Buryat-Mongol ASSR and is thus a radically different method of photographic seeing, where social and historical memory is composed through recursive layering, image friction, and temporal recursion.

Montage and Discontinuous Time: The Family Album

As the capacity to sustain memory through embodied ritual diminishes under the pressures of displacement and historical rupture, memory turns to new forms of material mediation. It is through these fractured, technologically inscribed traces that the effort to preserve and reconstitute historical consciousness endures — an effort that finds one of its most poignant sites in the family photo album.

When state-induced trauma reverberates across generations, linear historiography — grounded in formal archival records — comes under scrutiny. This questioning often begins with a personal encounter: the family photo album, dense with intimate traces of ancestral life, appeared irreconcilable with the bureaucratically categorized anthropological records held in institutional archives. From this juxtaposition emerged not only gaps but also tensions between what is remembered and what is allowed to surface as memory. Unlike the orderly, chronologically numbered glass plate negatives of early ethnographic photography, the family photo album operates through a discontinuous visual logic. Photographs are loosely arranged according to individual memory rather than archival taxonomy, with cut-out and glued black-and-white photographs accompanied by multilingual annotations in Russian and Buryat.

The organization of images resists conventional chronology, narrative direction, and structural order typical of standard family albums. Instead, the pages function as visual composites, reflecting the fragmented and selective nature of individual memory. This mode of visual assembling resonates with the dynamics described by Oksana Sarkisova

and Olga Shevchenko in *In Visible Presence: Soviet Afterlives in Family Photos*,⁴³⁾ where Soviet-era family photographs circulate between public and private domains, producing hybrid temporalities and contingent constellations of identity. Bringing this framework forward helps illuminate how Badmaev's album likewise operates through discontinuity rather than narrative coherence.

The album documents the transformative period of Sovietization, tracing the life of the Sodnom-Dorzhi Badmaev family from the 1920s through the 1990s. A prominent journalist in 1960s Ulaan-Ude, Badmaev contributed regularly to *Buriad-Uneen*, a Buryat-language newspaper, and appeared on Buryat television. While the album reflects his public life and social presence, it is equally infused with intimate family perspectives. Compiled after his retirement in the 1990s, the dark blue, velvety album — nearly twelve centimetres thick — conveys the tactile density of a life retrospectively assembled. Badmaev was the sole creator and contributor to the album, which was intended for circulation within the family. Following his passing in 2011, the album was inherited by his eldest daughter, who continues to preserve it.



Fig. 9: Sodnom-Dorzhi Badmaev's family album, a 1937 family photograph, depicting Sodnom and his Mother, Cyrilla, accompanied by an annotation in Russian. Personal archive of Badmaev's family⁴⁴⁾

The album's earliest photograph (Fig. 9) and accompanying annotation evoke Badmaev's childhood and early adolescence during Soviet collectivization, a period that left an indelible mark on the family. The translation is as follows:

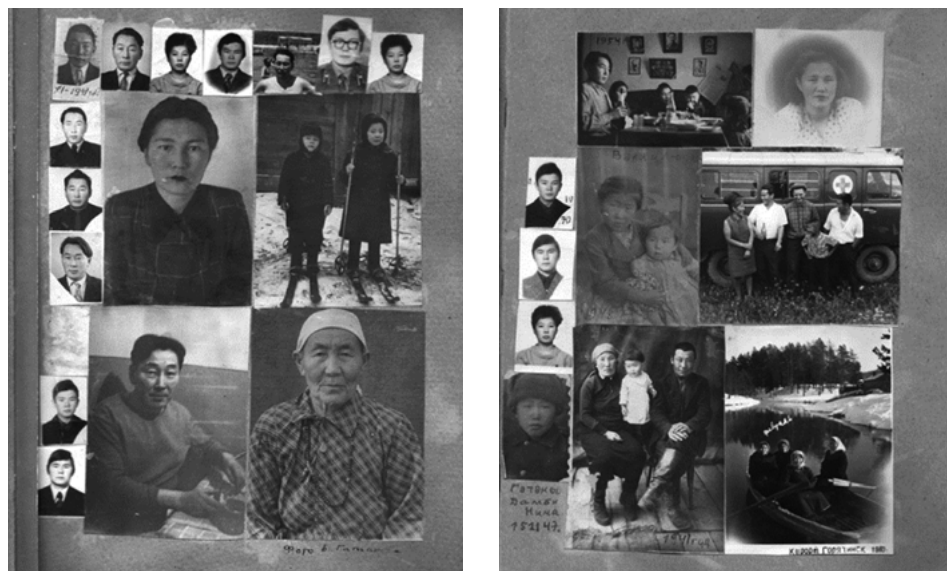
43) Oksana Sarkisova and Olga Shevchenko, *In Visible Presence: Soviet Afterlives in Family Photos* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2023).

44) The album was digitized by Margarita Galandina in January 2022.

Childhood. Sodnom Dorzhi was happy. Collectivisation began in 1931: one cow remained, then famine. Didn't think about the photo, only how to survive. Badma's family came out of collectivization with losses. Very beautiful and intelligent sister, Cirilla, passed away, born in 1917. The mother, Khandama Tsyrenova, found it increasingly hard to cope with the loss of her only daughter. This shot was taken in the year of the death of my beloved sister, when my brother, Tsydyp, was serving in Khara-Nurrei, in the cavalry. Taken in the village of Shiringe, 13 August 1937. — Sodnom Dorzhi Badmaev.

Badmaev was born in 1922 in the Buryat village of Turkhul, Eastern Buryatia, which was later dissolved and incorporated into the newly formed Sosново-Ozersk district in the present-day Yaruuna Region. The family was forcibly relocated in the 1930s, losing their pre-collectivization semi-nomadic way of life, based on herding. At just thirteen, Badmaev's older sister died of hunger following the family's dispossession and relocation.

The album does not directly document these disruptive events, likely because their magnitude made them difficult to capture photographically, as Badmaev himself noted. Yet the presence of loss remains palpable — articulated through absence. These gaps and silences thus become defining features of the album's unorthodox historical narrative.



Figs. 10–11: Sodnom-Dorzhi Badmaev's family album, personal archive, left: photographic collage combining the family's passport photos, and portraits of Badmaev's wife, mother-in-law, children and himself taken at different points in time, right: photographic collage featuring the family's gatherings, studio portraits, and holiday snapshots in Buryatia's regional sanatorium. Some photos have years annotated

The album interweaves three generations of the family within the same page (Fig. 10), collapsing temporal distinctions. Fragmented memories of Sodnom-Dorzhi emerge through annotations in both Buryat and Russian, offering an intimate, multilayered expe-

rience of time. Formal passport photographs sit alongside informal snapshots of family gatherings or countryside vacations (Fig. 11). Sarkisova and Shevchenko note that in Soviet family albums, such formal photographs frequently circulated from public domains into private life, highlighting the entanglement of personal and social identities.⁴⁵⁾ Badmaev's album similarly juxtaposes images of himself, his children, and his wife at different points in their lives. The effect is striking: the youngest son in his forties faces his father in his twenties, and vice versa. The album suspends linear historicity, presenting a visual model of memory in which past and present coexist in recursive, personal flashes.

The structure of the album echoes practices found in 1920s–1950s Mongolian photomontage posters, particularly from the Mongolian Archive of Cinema and Sound, such as the one seen in figure 12. For the newly established Soviet scopic regime, photomontages offered a new mode of historical cognition that both factographically captured and actively produced historical reality. They promised a multi-perspectival vision and a reconfiguration of past, present, and future, constructing relationships between historical events, socio-economic processes, technical objects, and personal lives.



Fig. 12: Endangered Archives Project (EAP) No. 264, printed materials [1930s–1950s]. Preserved at archives for cinema and sound recording, Mongolia⁴⁶⁾

This raises the question of how the fragmentary and emotionally charged character of such albums might offer a different mode of engaging with memory — one not bound by

45) Sarkisova and Shevchenko, *In Visible Presence*, 56.

46) "EAP264/1/1/7: Album of Photographs of Buriat People," *Endangered Archives Programme*, accessed April 30, 2025, <https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP264-1-1-7>.

linearity, biographical closure, or the aesthetic pacification of experience. For the Soviet avant-garde, montage carried a revolutionary promise: to think through images alone. It served as an organon for a new historical experience, for a new collective “We” as the subjects of world history.⁴⁷⁾ Following the historical failure of the Soviet modernization project, however, the constructive essence of montage assumed a deconstructive orientation: not the subsumption of the personal within the collective, but the negative expression of the collective within the personal. If the critical, social reception of cultural objects retroactively acts on their being, Sodnom-Dorzhi’s photographic album today may be understood as a counter-archive of collective social memory.

Speculatively, for family members, the album performs a shamanic function — not in a literal ritual sense, but as a mediatory device that navigates between temporal layers and ancestral presences. In Buryat cosmology, the shaman moves between worlds, retrieving fragments of knowledge and memory otherwise inaccessible. The album enacts a secular analog to this process: it accesses lost memories by moving through a constellation of photographs produced at different historical moments, binding together ruptures produced by collectivization, forced resettlement, and the dissolution of semi-nomadic lifeworlds across Eastern Buryatia. In this sense, its “shamanic” dimension emerges from a specifically regional history of dispossession, where recollection must be pieced together across discontinuous temporal registers.

Following Hal Foster’s notion of the “archival impulse” is productive only to a point.⁴⁸⁾ While Foster’s framework attends to gaps, losses, and fragmentary histories within contemporary art, the discontinuities in the Sodnom-Dorzhi album are of a different order: they arise from collectivization-induced famine, the erasure of Turkhul village, the death of a sister from hunger, and the fracturing of kinship networks under Sovietization. The album’s gaps and juxtapositions, therefore, do not simply resist historical totalization in an abstract theoretical sense; they articulate the specific violence of Soviet agrarian reforms in the Buryat-Mongol borderlands. These fractures become productive not because they mirror the formal strategies Foster identifies, but because they register a history that exceeds conventional archival logic altogether.

This distinction between public and private image regimes raises the question of how montage functions at the margins of institutional photographic practice. In the Soviet context, formal portraits, passport photographs, and studio images circulated widely between public infrastructures and private life, while informal snapshots carried the weight of intimate memory. The Sodnom-Dorzhi album activates montage precisely at this juncture: by bringing state-produced photographic forms into proximity with personal images, it reorganizes visual evidence in ways that challenge the state’s epistemologies of vision and time.

Allan Sekula’s schema of photography as a double archive — honor and surveillance, portrait and mugshot⁴⁹⁾ — offers a point of departure, but the Sodnom-Dorzhi album slips

47) Serguei Oushakine, *A Medium for the Masses: Photomontage and the Optical Turn in Early Soviet Russia* (Moscow: GARAGE, 2020).

48) Hal Foster, “An Archival Impulse,” *October*, no. 110 (2004), 3–22.

49) Allan Sekula, “The Body and the Archive,” *October*, no. 39 (1986), 3–64.

past these categories. It is neither an instrument of discipline nor an assertion of civic respectability. Although it resonates with what Sekula terms the “shadow archive,” its logic is not merely oppositional. Instead, the album constructs a vernacular, borderland photo-montage practice grounded in Buryat familial memory, Indigenous temporal recursion, and Sovietized visual repertoires. Montage here becomes a method of re-assembling a life dislocated by collectivisation and migration, producing a visual sensibility that Western theoretical frameworks only partially apprehend. In this periphery, images remain errant, contingent, and affective, but they also enact a region-specific form of historical cognition where past and present fold into one another in ways closer to shamanic mediation than to Western archival paradigms. It is this locally situated montage, rather than a universalized “archival impulse” that structures the album’s interpretive horizon.

The album’s vernacular montage extends beyond visual organization into its linguistic and material layers. Annotation, handwriting, and language choice become additional sites where ruptures, displacements, and returns are hidden.



Fig. 13: Sodnom-Dorzhi Badmaev’s family album, personal archive, left: Image composite featuring Badmaev in different decades, accompanied by a photograph of his two grandchildren, right: A series of photographs of Badmaev and his cousin Munko Tsybikov — Pandito Khambo Lambo taken in Ivolginsk Datsan during Dalai Lama XIV’s visit to Buryatia in 1992, accompanied by annotation in Buryat

It is unclear whether the choice to annotate some photographs in Buryat and others in Russian was intentional. Over the last century, many Buryat families underwent a complete linguistic transition from Buryat to Russian, sometimes resulting in the total loss of the former language, as was the case for Badmaev’s children and grandchildren. Consequently, parts of the album remained inaccessible to the immediate family for decades,

highlighting how linguistic loss becomes an archival condition: a form of silence inscribed in the material of memory itself.

For example, in figure 13, Badmaev notes that Pandito Khambo Lama Munko Tsybikov Zodboevich, his older cousin, received an audience with the Dalai Lama in 1992. However, the immediate family did not recognize the familial connection until 2023, when a librarian fluent in Buryat translated the annotation in the birthplace of Sodnom-Dorzhi, long after Badmaev's passing. Following the 1930s Stalinist purges in the Buryat-Mongol ASSR, Buddhist lamas were primary targets of repression: many were executed, and others were imprisoned in labor camps. Tsybikov survived eighteen years in the Kolyma camp located in modern Magadan oblast and later became the 21st Pandito Khamba Lama in 1989.⁵⁰⁾

Building on Sarkisova and Shevchenko's account of how Soviet photographic practices entangled public visibility and private memory, Badmaev's life reveals a more complex, regionally specific version of this duality.⁵¹⁾ Outwardly, he inhabited the role of a successful Soviet journalist and public intellectual; inwardly, he maintained ties to a repressed Buddhist cousin, bringing his grandchildren to the Ivolginsk Datsan while withholding the familial connection for their safety. In this expanded context, the album holds the tension between public and private but also the layered negotiations of Buryat identity — between Russian and Buryat languages, Soviet secular modernity and Buddhist lineage, official narratives and concealed kinship histories. The album thus becomes a repository of both spoken and deliberately unspoken memories, shaped by the constraints and possibilities of multilingual, borderland life where selective silence was itself a strategy of survival and remembrance.

The family album thus reveals a history constructed through a dispersed constellation of images and inscriptions that resist linear historicist reading. Its visual language — mon-tagged, multilingual, recursive, and discontinuous — mirrors the historical conditions it records: loss, displacement, and the ruptures shaping Buryatia over the past century. It enacts a lived practice of editing and reassembling memory across fractured histories. In the following section, photographic re-enactment and self-portraiture render this disruption performative, activating new relations between body, history, and photographic surface, and critically engaging with the logic of earlier anthropometric photography.

50) *Khambo Lama* (Tibetan: མཁའ་མཚན་ལཱ་ཤེན་པཎི་པོ་ཏུ་བླ་མ་; Mongolian: Хамба лам; Russian: Хамбо-лама) is the title for the senior lama of a Buddhist monastery in Mongolia and Russia, equivalent to an abbot. It also denotes the spiritual leader of Buddhists in Buryatia (since the eighteenth century) and the heads of Buddhist communities in Tuva and Altai, deriving from the monastic title *Khenpo*. For more information on Buddhism in Russia see G. G. Chimitdorzhin, *Institut Pandito Khambo Lam: 1764–2004: Sbornik biograficheskoi informatsii* (Ulan-Ude: Izd-vo buddiiskogo in-ta "Dashi Choinkhorlin," 2004). The cousins Tsybikov and Badmaev exemplify two contrasting career models: the lama, widely accepted pre-Soviet but marginalized under Soviet rule, and the journalist, aligned with the Soviet Buryat state's modernizing ideals. See Melissa Chakars, *The Socialist Way of Life in Siberia: Transformation in Buryatia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 15–16.

51) Sarkisova and Shevchenko, *In Visible Presence*, 32.

Performative Photographic Intervention and Shamanic Temporality

As the previous chapter explored montage as a logic of disrupted continuity in the context of the family photo album, this section turns toward the body itself as a site where archival intervention is enacted. The photographic practice takes the form of performative engagement with the archive, specifically through a re-enactment and reconfiguration of the scopic regime of Shurkin's anthropometric photography. Here, I (Margarita Galandina) explore how the body becomes a conduit through which fragmented histories are translated and reconstituted, echoing the temporalities embedded in Buryat shamanic practice. The re-enactment that follows can also be read as a contemporary continuation of shamanic temporality — an embodied method of entering, translating, and performing history. Just as the Buryat shaman mediates between ancestral voices and the living, the artist's body becomes a conduit through which the silent residues of the archive are reanimated.

Shamanic temporality offers a different cognition of history. In her research on the Buryat diaspora of Dornon province in Mongolia,⁵²⁾ Manduhai Buyandelger highlights a specific verb to define Buryat shamanism's understanding of history: *tuukhe*. Its direct translation is to “gather” or “collect,” presuming that knowledge is compiled from external sources. But for the Buryats, it is not only history that can be gathered; memory can be gathered as well, via the body of the shaman. In trance, the shaman gathers and performs history through fragmented, mobile, embodied narratives told by the origin spirits.⁵³⁾

In this way, the photographic act carries both forensic and ritual significance: it exposes the wound of history while simultaneously attempting to inhabit its echoes. Memory in Buryat cosmology is not fixed within linear succession but enacted through the body. Buyandelger describes this through the term *hanah* — “to remember” and “to miss” — signalling the affective and performative dimensions of recollection.⁵⁴⁾ The shaman's task is to traverse the dispersed field of ancestral voices, gather fragments of the forgotten, and make them audible again. Within this framework, forgetting in itself becomes a form of haunting. The *uheer*⁵⁵⁾ — the unnamed ancestral spirit — is not merely a lost soul, but an embodiment of the gap within historical consciousness, a sign of memory displaced or withheld. Through naming and invocation, the shaman transforms the *uheer* into origin spirits, re-establishing continuity between the living and the dead. The act of photographic re-enactment draws from this same temporality: it reactivates what is lost by performing its absence. The image summons dispersed traces of the origin into a material plate, allowing history to be gathered, enacted, and remembered through the body.

52) Manduhai Buyandelger, *Tragic Spirits: Shamanism, Memory and Gender in Contemporary Mongolia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 17.

53) The term *origin spirit* that Buyandelger refers to in her research, is used to mark a spirit of an ancestor, that upon passing, with the right burial procedure and departure from the world of the living, enables the *soul* to return to the realm of *origin spirits* that may support or disrupt the livelihoods of the living members of the kin. Hence the need to perform rituals in appeasing the origin spirits by means of shamanism and its ability to mediate between such worlds.

54) Buyandelger, *Tragic Spirits*, 17.

55) *Ibid.*, 87.

The juxtaposition of Siberian shamanic practice with modern art is not new. Art historian Peg Weiss's analysis of early Kandinsky⁵⁶⁾ positioned the artist as both ethnographer and shaman, drawing extensive visual parallels between shamanic experience: the traversal of three worlds, the shamanic illness preceding initiation, the use of ritual paraphernalia, and the artist's imaginative transformation of vision, as seen in works such as *The Blue Rider* or *St. George III*. Weiss highlighted the multitemporal nature of shamanic experience, its capacity to transform and to generate new forms of knowledge and perception. "The artist is perhaps in a position, albeit only partially and by chance, to summon up within himself these states of inspiration by artificial means," Kandinsky writes. "Moreover, he can qualify the nature of those states which arise within him of their own volition. All the experience and knowledge that relate to this area are but one of the elements of consciousness."⁵⁷⁾

Whereas Weiss situates shamanism within a modernist aesthetic of transcendence, treating it as a metaphorical resource for artistic vision, the approach taken here recontextualizes this relation through an Indigenous epistemology in which embodiment is genealogically rooted in ancestral lineage, intergenerational memory, and embodied forms of historical transmission rather than symbolic analogy.⁵⁸⁾ In this framework, the influential interpretation of shamanism as a technique for producing ecstatic states, advanced by Mircea Eliade,⁵⁹⁾ proves unhelpful. As the French anthropologist Charles Stépanoff explains: "Shamanism is not an 'archaic technique of ecstasy,' as Mircea Eliade has it, but an innovative reflexive art of mental travel."⁶⁰⁾ Roberte Hamayon similarly observes that "the Buryat shaman engaged in behaviors similar in form to possession, but not in meaning."⁶¹⁾ Hamayon's anthropological study of play situates shamanic practice within the problematic field between ritual, theatre, and performance, seeking to understand it through the concept of simulation, which operates by reinventing through mimicry. As she writes, "The shaman's mode of action, which I have called simulation, and which generated the 'presence effect' of the spirits, and gave a form of reality to the actions exerted upon them,

56) Peg Weiss, *Kandinsky and Old Russia: The Artist as Ethnographer and Shaman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 72–94. The connections between the "ethnographic turn" in late-twentieth-century art and the contemporaneous "archival turn" are significant, though neither is entirely new; both can be traced to the historical avant-garde. For example, regarding the shift from museum to archive, see Stepanova, cited in Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, *Formalism and Historicity: Models and Methods in Twentieth-Century Art* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2015), 261.

57) Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1913), XVI; and *Collected Writings* (1913 and 1918), in Lenk and Vivier, eds. (1982), 370 and 892, no. 54, 55, 57; cited in Weiss, *Kandinsky and Old Russia*, 79.

58) Kandinsky's father was born in Kyakhta — at the border of Buryatia and Mongolia, an important trade centre linking Russia, Mongolia, and China — to a mother allegedly of Buryat-Mongolian descent. Cited in Weiss, *Kandinsky and Old Russia*, 8.

59) Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, rev. ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964).

60) Stépanoff continues: "It is in this sense that we are all potential shamans. To free the shamanic arts from this pathological image means finding a way to avoid neutralizing their subversive potential as a truly human form of communication with the world, on a par with those forms that are more familiar to us and which we tend to take to be the only legitimate ones." Charles Stépanoff, *Journeys into the Invisible: Shamanic Technologies of the Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2025), 368.

61) Roberte Hamayon, *Why We Play: An Anthropological Study*, trans. Damien Simon (Chicago: Hau Books, 2016), 178.

was, in this sense, more than theatre as well. Performing an epic had a similar power of action.”⁶²⁾

Hamayon’s emphasis on simulation as an embodied mode of producing presence underscores how performance can generate its own form of reality. This attention to the body as a site where meaning is enacted provides a conceptual hinge to Pia Arke’s articulation of ethno-aesthetics, which shifts the attention to the “ethnic condition:” the simultaneous hyper-visibility and marginalization of Indigenous subjects within dominant aesthetic regimes. Arke developed the term ethno-aesthetics to define the existential limitations indigeneity imposes as a colonial construct, while also acknowledging it as a context that flared up her imagination.⁶³⁾ Her insistence on making colonial history personal becomes a generative point of departure for my work, shifting away from the escapism of colonial, visually controlling patterns of seeing, and instead inhabiting and subverting them. Thus, the semiotic violence of the photograph is deflected back into a subjective practice that re-invents and activates the process of defamiliarization.



Fig. 14: Self-Portrait: Trans-Baikal Métis: female, 23 years old, third generation, 2022. Material: collage, photo-sensitive paper

62) Ibid., 179. Hamayon clarifies “Simulation builds the field of ritual as a fictional frame, as a play, and gives a form of existence to immaterial beings. This fictional frame does not monitor regulated games, but other acts of simulation, namely other plays, to which it grants the status of genuine action (genuinely carried out) within the realm of play,” (Hamayon, *Why We Play*, 111).

63) Pia Arke, “Ethno-Aesthetics,” *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry*, no. 44 (2017), 4–11.

Building on these frameworks, my photographic practice enacts shamanic temporality and ethno-aesthetics via performative engagement with archival imagery. Through the strategic use of self-portraiture, the work foregrounds perceptual subjectivity, reversing the anthropological gaze and interrogating the position of the “native informant” — all while simultaneously employing and subverting the visual tropes of colonial anthropometric photography.

I interpret the term photographic intervention as a performative act that reconfigures archival material through contemporary methods, particularly by restaging archival imagery within a personal photographic practice. As part of the ongoing *Ovoo* project, a series of self-portraits (Fig. 14 and 15) was produced that mimics the visual patterns found in photographs from the *Kunstkamera* collection and from personal family archives, subsequently placing these contemporary images in direct dialogue with their historical counterparts.

This process extends into a composite triptych that incorporates fragments of archival imagery directly into its visual structure:



Fig. 15: Self-Portrait: Dissected Identities, Triptych, 2024. Material: collaged archive cutouts on photosensitive paper

The triptych is a further exploration of the legacy of Shurkin’s 1931 field study on mixed-race Siberian genetic health through photographic intervention. The study’s aim — documenting and displaying shifting ethnicities of Siberia in Buryatia — echoes my family’s history and multi-ethnic background. These photographs offer a hidden historical precedent: physical evidence of the complex and often fraught relationship between Indigenous Siberian communities and the Imperial Russian and later Soviet state.

When initially displayed throughout various exhibitions across the UK, the audience generally presumed the photographed subjects were prisoners, due to visual elements such as the numbers pinned to their chests and the rigid posing instructions. For this self-portrait triptych, the original front/side/three-quarter photographs of the participants were manually cut to remove the numbers from their images. The self-portraits were then taken to mimic these original postures, placing the numbers onto the artist’s own body, thus constructing a garment referencing the restrictive shape of a historic Western-style corset.

In this sense, the photo-archival intervention can be understood as a forensic act — an excavation of truth, seeking traces of something that no longer exists. The deliberate pro-

cess of ordering, printing, juxtaposing, and physically dissecting Shurkin's images, removing the numbers assigned to the original sitters and reattaching them onto my own body, transforms these archival remnants into living reflections. By pinning this visual language onto my body, I can viscerally internalize a subjective, deeply personal understanding of history, wherein the body becomes a measuring tool of trauma. By positioning myself as the primary subject of ethnographic inquiry, the aim is to rupture the composition of the archival photographs, dissecting their structure and the anthropometric logic embedded in numerical classification.

Therefore, Arke's insistence on turning the colonial archive back toward the body resonates with the shamanic gesture of invocation. To restage the anthropological photograph through one's own body is to reanimate the archive through lived experience, allowing its latent histories to speak through a transformed presence. The research and practice presented here suggest that the photographic image, far from being a fixed document of truth, constitutes a liminal medium through which the traces of historical trauma and Indigenous subjectivity may be reactivated. The archive, both institutional and familial, becomes a site where discontinuous temporalities converge, and where the gestures of montage and re-enactment operate as strategies of critical re-inscription.

Conclusion

Across the three registers explored in this study — the institutional archive, the family album, and contemporary photographic re-enactment — photography emerges as a medium through which Buryat history is continually reconfigured. Shimkevich's imperial anthropology, Petri's activist ethnography, and Shurkin's biometric images reveal how Buryat subjects were framed through the classificatory visual regimes inaugurated by photography. The Sodnom-Dorzhi family album, by contrast, demonstrates how montage, inscription, and vernacular arrangement produce a counter-archive grounded in familial memory and Indigenous survivance. Contemporary re-enactment extends this trajectory, using the artist's body to intervene directly in the colonial archive's anthropometric legacy and to reanimate its temporal residues.

The condition of distance, both geographic and historical, remains integral to this inquiry. To engage with Buryat identity from afar, and from a position of mixed heritage, inevitably shapes the interpretative lens through which history is approached. The aim, however, has not been to speak on behalf of those living within contemporary Buryatia, but to articulate a subjective trajectory through which the photographic archive might be reimagined as a living continuum of relations. The ongoing war in Ukraine, and its reverberations within Russia's national republics, further foreground the urgency of such reflection, rendering visible the unresolved legacies that continue to shape Indigenous and postcolonial subjectivities across Siberia.

Within this constellation, shamanic temporality provides a methodological framework for approaching history as recursive and relational rather than linear; for understanding memory as embodied and genealogical; and for acknowledging the co-presence

of past and present as a lived condition rather than an aesthetic abstraction.⁶⁴ Unlike modernist appropriations of shamanism, which render it symbolic or transcendent, the approach here situates it within Buryat epistemologies in which embodiment is tied to lineage, intergenerational transmission, and the ongoing negotiation of loss. Shamanic temporality, therefore, enables a mode of archival reading attuned to rupture, return, and continuity across dispersed historical fragments.

The state of in-betweenness that defines hybrid identity casts a persistent shadow over attempts to comprehend collective history, yet it also provides a generative vantage from which to interrogate the processes of remembering and forgetting. Through sustained engagement with photographic objects — whether drawn from institutional holdings or personal collections — the act of archival excavation becomes a process of assembling scattered remnants of the past into new constellations of meaning.

When refracted through shamanic temporality and embodied re-enactment, the photographic image emerges as both a medium of mourning and a medium of renewal — a space in which the documented and the forgotten may briefly converge.

Bibliography

- Anderson, David G., and Craig Campbell. "Picturing Central Siberia: The Digitization and Analysis of Early Twentieth-Century Central Siberian Photographic Collections," *Sibirica* 8, no. 2 (2009), 1–42.
- Anderson, David G., Mikhail S. Batashev, and Craig Campbell. "The Photographs of Baluev: Capturing the 'Socialist Transformation' of the Krasnoyarsk Northern Frontier, 1938–1939," in *From Dust to Digital: Ten Years of the Endangered Archives Programme*, ed. Maja Kominko (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2015), 487–530.
- Arke, Pia. "Ethno-Aesthetics," *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry*, no. 44 (2017), 4–11.
- Badmaeva, R. D. *Buryatskii narodnyi kostium* (Ulan-Ude: Buryat book Publ., 1987).
- Barchatova, Elena, ed. *A Portrait of Tsarist Russia: Unknown Photographs from the Soviet Archives* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989).
- Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981).
- Benjamin, Walter. *One-Way Street: And Other Writings* (London: Verso, 1997).
- Blouin Jr., Francis X., and William G. Rosenberg. *Processing the Past: Contesting Authority in History and the Archives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
- Buchloh, Benjamin H. D. *Formalism and Historicity: Models and Methods in Twentieth-Century Art* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2015).
- Buyandelger, Manduhai. *Tragic Spirits: Shamanism, Memory and Gender in Contemporary Mongolia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

64) Effectively, we are dealing with the desire for an epic (both collective and restorative) form of experience amid the escalating ruptures of capitalist modernity — a concern that permeates the work of many artists across ecological and Indigenous art practices, spanning both performative and cartographic dimensions. See the filmic work of Saodat Ismailova and Davra Collective, *A Seed Under Our Tongue* (Venice: Marsilio Arte, 2025).

- Chakars, Melissa. *The Socialist Way of Life in Siberia: Transformation in Buryatia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014).
- Edwards, Elizabeth. "Professor Huxley's 'Well-Considered Plan,'" in *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropologies and Museums* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 135–158.
- Eliade, Mircea. *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, rev. ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964).
- Foster, Hal. "An Archival Impulse," *October*, no. 110 (2004), 3–22.
- Groys, Boris. *Logic of Collection* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2021).
- Hamayon, Roberte. *Why We Play: The Anthropological Study of Play* (Chicago: Hau Books, 2016).
- Hirsch, Francine. *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).
- Hirsch, Francine. "Race without the Practice of Racial Politics," *Slavic Review* 61, no. 1 (2002), 30–43.
- Hirsch, Marianne. *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).
- Ismailova, Saodat. *A Seed Under Our Tongue* (Venice: Marsilio Arte, 2025).
- Jay, Martin. *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
- Malakshanova, V. B. *Forgotten Journey: Photos by Pyotr Shimkevich: XIX Century: Album of Photographs from the Collections of Museums in Russia and Abroad* (Khabarovsk: Khabarovsk Territory Printing Office, 2021).
- Metz, Christian. *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, trans. Celia Britton et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 61–68.
- Nimaev, D. D. "Buriaty: Etnogenez i etnicheskaya istoriya (Doctoral diss., Russian Academy of Sciences, 2002), <https://www.dissercat.com/content/buryaty-etnogenez-i-etnicheskaya-istoriya>.
- Oushakine, Serguei. *A Medium for the Masses: Photomontage and the Optical Turn in Early Soviet Russia* (Moscow: GARAGE, 2020).
- Sarkisova, Oksana, and Olga Shevchenko. *Invisible Presence: Soviet Afterlives in Family Photos* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2023).
- Sekula, Allan. "The Body and the Archive," *October*, no. 39 (1986), 3–64.
- Stépanoff, Charles. *Journeys into the Invisible: Shamanic Technologies of the Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2025).
- Vanov, A. A., A. D. Kalikhman, and T. P. Kalikhman. *Б. Э. Петри в истории Саянского перекрестка* [B. E. Petri in the History of the Sayan Crossroads] (Irkutsk: Изд-во «Оттиск», 2008).
- Vyushkova, M., and E. Sherkhonov. "Russia's Ethnic Minority Casualties of the 2022 Invasion of Ukraine: A Data Story from the Free Buryatia Foundation," *Inner Asia* 25, no. 1 (2023), 126–136.
- Weiss, Peg. *Kandinsky and Old Russia: The Artist as Ethnographer and Shaman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

Biography

Aleksei Ziniuk is a PhD candidate at the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy at Kingston University. His research focuses on the concepts of "the thing" (vesch) and "the everyday" (byt), aiming to place the Soviet avant-garde in critical dialogue with Bruno Latour and the contem-

porary ontological turn in the humanities. His broader research interests include modern European philosophy, approached through philosophical art criticism; the historical and neo-avant-gardes of the 1920s and 1960s; and Russian, Soviet, and post-Soviet culture.

Email: aleksei.ziniuk@gmail.com

Margarita Galandina is a multidisciplinary artist and researcher from Siberia, based in London. Trained in ballet and fine art in her early years, she later moved to the UK, completing a BA in Fashion Communication and Promotion at Central Saint Martins and an MA in Photography at the London College of Communication, University of the Arts London. Her practice is informed by her maternal Buryat-Mongolian heritage and investigates memory, indigenisation, and cross-border migration within postcolonial and Inner Asian borderland contexts. Working across photography, archives, and expanded image-making, Galandina explores how visual histories are reactivated to articulate displaced, fragile, and hybrid forms of subjectivity.

Email: mgalandina@gmail.com

<https://doi.org/10.58193/ilu.1820>

Laurence Kent  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0700-4931>
(University of Bristol, United Kingdom)

Hussein Shariffe's Filmic Ruins: Archival Noise and *The Dislocation of Amber* (1975)

Watch the audiovisual essay here:

<https://youtu.be/W4QjbiCazPo>

Abstract

My audiovisual essay explores Hussein Shariffe's *The Dislocation of Amber* (1975) as a filmic "ruin" within his archive. Described by collaborator Sondra Hale as "Sudan's first art film," *The Dislocation of Amber* was filmed in the Sudanese city of Suakin, which lies in ruins. The available digitised copies of the film are degraded and disrupted by noise. Hale interprets the film as "a metaphor for a society decimated by colonialism," and this essay uses Shariffe's approach to the ruins of Suakin as a model for how to approach the ruins of Shariffe's film itself, along with the political and personal histories that entwine around this material object.

I pay close attention to the degradation of the images in Shariffe's film to open up questions about the political realities of Sudanese cinema. This videographic scholarship is influenced by Jiří Anger's "film theory from below": a speculative and concrete way of thinking about images *through images* that "inherently depends on the material qualities of the digitised objects, the traces and gestures embedded in the individual frames and between them." If the film's future is one where restoration can help gain a larger audience for this extraordinary work, it is also vital to mark this moment of its material history, to stay with the noise and retain its loss as an index of political contingencies.

Keywords

Sudan, archives, noise, experimental, ruins



Creator's Statement

This audiovisual essay explores an archival film text by placing it within the context of its material life — as a multiplicity of film materials and paratexts, including treatments and preliminary notes — and the degradation of its physical being, the “noise” accrued in the archive.¹⁾ The objects in question surround Hussein Shariffe’s *The Dislocation of Amber* from 1975, described by collaborator and anthropologist Sondra Hale as “Sudan’s first art film.”²⁾ Shariffe’s film and surrounding materials form part of a living archive,³⁾ which I have been fortunate to play a small part in developing, along with Shariffe’s daughter, Eiman Hussein, Erica Carter, Samar Abdelrahman, amongst others.⁴⁾ If, as espoused by Amalia Sabiescu, “at the core of living archives is the performative celebration of the past through contemporary acts of creation and transmission,” then my work here aims to contribute creatively to the growing and abundant life of Shariffe’s archives.⁵⁾

- 1) This conception of noise is indebted to recent interventions in the developing field of Noise Studies, such as Cécile Malaspina’s 2018 *An Epistemology of Noise*. Noise is added uncertainty in a message, which can also be a measure of increased information. “Noise” on copies of the film discussed here can become information regarding its material history. This might be information relating to production and manufacturing conditions, the specific nature of compression during digitisation, as well as material degradation that indexes the material afterlife of objects. It is the last of these that most concerns this statement and audiovisual essay.
- 2) Sondra Hale, “The Making of the ‘Dislocation of Amber’ — Sudan’s First Art Film,” *Sudan Studies Association Newsletter* 20, no. 2 (2001), 16.
- 3) This conception of archival practice is indebted to the work of the Arsenal — Institute for Film and Video Art and their archive projects, including *Living Archive*, focusing on the their own collection (2011–2013), *Visionary Archive* on African film history and practices (2013–2015), and the transnational cultural heritage project, *Archive außer sich* (Archives beyond/beside themselves, 2017–2021). Arsenal has been instrumental in keeping, preserving, and expanding Shariffe’s archive.
- 4) You can find further information and an explanatory video essay I made here: “Activating the Exile Archive: Hussein Shariffe between London, Cairo and Khartoum,” *King’s College London*, September 3, 2024, accessed October 8, 2025, <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/spotlight/activating-the-exile-archive>.
- 5) Amalia G. Sabiescu, “Living Archives and The Social Transmission of Memory,” *Curator* 63, no. 4 (2020), 497.

I hope this audiovisual essay can play a part in gaining audiences for Shariffe's brilliant artistic innovations, as well as in revealing, through attention to archival writings and plans, his working methods and practices. There has been a recent influx of Sudanese films recognised in major film festivals from Cannes to Sundance in the last few years, as well as growing international communities, including the Sudanese diaspora and political exiles, committed to developing cultural expertise and archival capacities.⁶⁾ These projects are based on the imperative to amplify the history of Sudanese cinema, one so often neglected outside of the region; a task now taking place in the shadow of current atrocities and conflict in the country since war broke out in 2023.

This audiovisual essay is, ultimately, an experiment with and reflection on my own archival encounter, but one that I hope to use to inform my continuing involvement with projects around Shariffe's archives. This is what Jiří Anger has called "theory as archival experience," which takes seriously the specificities of the object — its imperfections and material traces of historical neglect and oppression — in an understanding of its status and the spectatorial experience it garners.⁷⁾ It is a way to learn and to communicate the stakes involved in collecting and preserving artefacts in digital forms.

The video aims to use poetic form to negate a simple opposition between loss and flawless archival retrieval, where presentation of and experimentation with a noisy and fragmented archive allow us to think before, after, and with the filmic objects, and archival deterioration can thus be recognised as an index of political realities and material contingencies. This is influenced by Katherine Groo's encouragement to "stutter or wander" in approaches to the history of film, where "a broad spectrum of faithless, errant, polyphonic, experimental methods" might "engage with the specificities of our artifacts as they are, in the present of our encounters."⁸⁾ Such a poetic encounter with Shariffe's archival objects — one that takes a kind of aesthetic delight in its noisiness — can only gesture towards the specificities of the film's material history, though it raises questions and issues that further investigative archival work might take on.⁹⁾

The context of this work is my contact with Shariffe's archives during the last 5 years, as well as the existence of an ongoing project to restore *The Dislocation of Amber*. This will be part of a larger ongoing initiative around restoring archival works, currently being run by a recently launched film restoration unit at Cimatheque — Alternative Film Centre in Cairo, in partnership with Sudan Film Factory. Their project, "Remastered," is "born out of the pressing need to preserve and safeguard the rich Egyptian and Arab film heritage, bridging the gap in infrastructure and expertise to ensure that these cinematic treasures

6) For more details see: Editor, "From Ruin to Resilience: Sudan's Archival Restoration," *Andariya*, September 12, 2025, accessed October 8, 2025, <https://www.andariya.com/post/from-ruin-to-resilience-sudan-s-archival-restoration>.

7) Jiří Anger, *Towards a Film Theory from Below: Archival Film and the Aesthetics of the Crack-Up* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2024), 6.

8) Katherine Groo, "Let It Burn: Film Historiography in Flames," *Discourse* 41, no. 1 (2019), 31.

9) This could take the form of what Marek Jancovic has called a "media epigraphy:" "a way of looking at errors, failures and decay in images as traces of subdued histories" that would delve into the technical realities of material degradation and digital compression to begin a forensic examination of how these images have travelled. Marek Jancovic, *A Media Epigraphy of Video Compression: Reading Traces of Decay* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 22.

are revitalized for future generations.”¹⁰) This is done through extensive training on image and sound restoration, colour grading, digitising tools, as well as restoration ethics.

This work is absolutely vital, and my audiovisual essay aims to reflect on such undertakings through a poetic reckoning with the existing state of the archive. Jurij Meden writes that the “history of cinema is a history of scratches, tears, burns, blurry images,” placing an emphasis on the material lives of film objects to tell stories of their contingent paths through the world.¹¹) My video ultimately asks what Shariffe's film — itself a poetic rumination on ruins — might have to say about its own ruination, prompting us to then ask wider questions about the history of Sudanese cinema, including surrounding the presence of Shariffe's work in international film festivals and the transnational dispersal of materials after artists like Shariffe went into political exile in 1989.

This is how the film is described by the website set up for the project “Hussein Shariffe — a living memory:”

The “Dislocation of Amber” was filmed in the city of Suakin, a formerly flourishing port in Sudan. All those who have previously written on Suakin admitted to the complexity of the town as a subject. So intriguing is Suakin that not even the origin of its name is agreed upon. Its history is one of famine & opulence, devastation and progress, rich trade and damage, involving colonialism. What makes Suakin so abidingly memorable is its resilience, built through war and conquests, the historical town is a product of determination and competitiveness.¹²)

In the film, Shariffe puts forward his perspective on the ruins of Suakin in his idiosyncratic, enigmatic, and poetic style,¹³) with Sondra Hale describing it as “a surreal and symbolic film set in the deserted and dying eastern medieval seaport of Suakin to portray the death/suicide of society as a result of colonialism.”¹⁴) Elsewhere, Hale described the plot as “a woman's death by drowning (and a series of suicides and violence), rape, human degradation and humiliation,” which “mixes images of Victorian ladies, British generals, with dervishes and Hadendowa/Beja lore, [making] no attempt at realism nor the presentation of ethnographic ‘fact,’ as we know it (although there are ethnographic elements in it). It is very slow moving, with the camera languishing over the ruins;” Hale analyses how the “eerie buildings” are “characters themselves,” interspersed by visual motifs “with mysteri-

10) “Cimatheque, Remastered Open Call,” accessed April 30, 2025, <https://cimatheque.org/remastered>.

11) Jurij Meden, *Scratches and Glitches: Observations on Preserving and Exhibiting Cinema in the Early 21st Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021), 25.

12) “Hussein Shariffe: a living memory: films,” shariffe.org, accessed April 30, 2025, <https://www.shariffe.org/04films.html#amber>.

13) For more information on Suakin, see: David Roden, “The Twentieth Century Decline of Suakin,” *Sudan Notes and Records* 51, (1970), 1–22. Interestingly, Shariffe's film stands out in the context of other African films of the preceding decade interested in “transformations of African landscapes, from rural to urbanized spaces” in its focus on a previously urbanised space that has lost relevance in the supply chain and left to go to ruin. Marie-Paule Macdonald, *African Cinema and Urbanism* (London: Anthem Press, 2024), 11.

14) Sondra Hale, “More than a Grain of Sand: Opening Outward — Sudanese Thought in a Globalized Milieu,” in *Sudanese Intellectuals in the Global Milieu: Capturing Cultural Capital*, eds. Gada Kadoda and Sondra Hale (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2022), 16.

ous links between them.”¹⁵) It is the haptic nature of the film that Hale focuses on: the way the camera “touches the crumbling facades of the buildings” with the sound of Red Sea waves and wind in the background.¹⁶) There are poems, including by the Sufi Mystic, Ibn al-Farid (1181–1234), heard being sung by the late Sudanese singer Abdel-Aziz Dawoud, as well as Sudanese song and Quran recitation.¹⁷)

My audiovisual essay was constructed using two different versions of Shariffe’s film circulating online. These two digital copies were located in an online open archive, without easily traceable file histories or sources. As it stands, the Arsenal — Institute for Film and Video Art archive contains a 16mm print and a Betacam copy of *The Dislocation of Amber*. The version of the film presented at the beginning on the left of the video is a copy digitised from the Arsenal’s 16mm print.¹⁸) A different 16mm print is also part of the Cinematheque Suisse archive. A report for digitisation exists for this from 2019, detailing its condition as well as its origin as a deposit from the Fribourg International Film Festival (FIFF). Although no date is given for this, we can perhaps conjecture that this corresponds to a brief homage that the festival did to Shariffe in 2006 shortly after his death, where a posthumous completion of Shariffe’s unfinished *Of Dust and Rubies* had been scheduled but did not take place.¹⁹) However, the quality of this print, as seen in the Cinematheque Suisse report, is superior to the copy used in this audiovisual essay. Judging from the fact that many of the images of the film that circulate online, such as on IMDB and Letterboxd, seem to come from the copy of the film placed on the right at the beginning of my video, it suggests that this digitised version has been the most accessible one, and perhaps has been available online for a while.

Whilst the precise origins of this digitised copy of the film might remain somewhat of a mystery for now, placing the two digital copies side-by-side nonetheless reveals the divergent histories of the film as an object vulnerable to material degradation. Through my editing, the image is slowed down, and details of the frame are blown up, foregrounding the dance of scratches and lesions on the reel. Sound from the film is present, the noisy background emphasised in the edit, and the film is slowed down at times to allow deeper examination and experience of the static intrusions on the soundtrack. Such an approach mirrors Anger’s theorisation of videographic practice as a speculative and concrete way of thinking about images *through images* that “inherently depends on the material qualities of the digitised objects, the traces and gestures embedded in the individual frames and between them.”²⁰) But moving beyond the film itself, the images are accompanied by text

15) Hale, “The Making of the ‘Dislocation of Amber,’” 19.

16) Ibid.

17) Eiman Hussein has pointed out to me that, in the copy on the left at the beginning of the audiovisual essay, the translated words in the subtitles do not exactly match the words of the song.

18) It is specifically a copy that includes subtitles by Shah Noor Hussein and Hatim Eujayl, produced for Canyon Cinema Discovered in 2022 in a programme titled “Playing in the Dark: Watery Experiments” curated by Chrystel Oloukoï. The program can be found here: “Canyon Cinema Discovered,” *canyoncinema*, accessed October 8, 2025, <https://canyoncinema.com/wp-content/uploads/ccd-final-web.pdf>.

19) Erica Carter and Laurence Kent, “An Infinity of Tactics: Hussein Shariffe’s archive in motion,” *L’Atalante: Revista de estudios cinematográficos*, no. 28 (2022), 124. For further information and discussion of this unfinished film see Tamer El Said’s film *Of Dust and Rubies, a Film on Suspension* (2020).

20) Anger, *Towards a Film Theory from Below*, 9.

from Shariffe's preliminary notes for the film, a document itself bearing the scars of time, with tears and unreadable sections. It is part of the ever-expanding digital archives linked to the director and artist, dated to 1974, and its placement here produces their own interpretations of the image. Forging new connections with what is seen and heard, the written treatment is allowed to resonate with the film. At times, the link between the text and the images is clear, but elsewhere seemingly incongruous relationships prime the watcher for making obscure connections, such as the poetic evocation of "ciphers," "enigmas," and the description of shapes in the script being placed alongside visuals of dust and scratches on the surface of the image.

The purpose of using this juxtaposition to think through the film's images is to try to approach the "ruined" film stock itself through how Shariffe approaches the ruins of Suakin, and to use his poetic writing to make new links with the contingent material traces that have arisen on the surface of the image and the grain of the sound. This then complicates the meaning of "ruin." Just as noise becomes new information and imperfections forge unexpected aesthetic interest, the film is not "ruined" but, in our appreciation of material ruination, finds new purposes for the film as a marker of historical processes. The film thus doubles as a "material witness," both documenting the fate of Suakin and, in its very material state, bearing witness to a subsequent history of Sudan, of exile and forced transnational dispersal of cultural objects.²¹⁾

This then serves to problematise the concept of completeness regarding film texts.²²⁾ Films have material afterlives, and they also have lost futures buried in their depths: ideas that were abandoned or changed in the stages of turning concepts and plans into finished form. It is Bill Reid who thinks through the art object that we receive as its "afterlife," and he asserts that this also "obscures" something:

When we look at a particular work
of Northwest Coast art
and see the shape of it,
we are only looking at its afterlife.
Its real life is the movement
by which it got to be that shape.²³⁾

So, alongside the ongoing ruination and afterlives that define the open archival object, a *before* of an object can be sought. I contend that Shariffe's written treatment marks the "life" of the film and his contingent processes of filmmaking. Finding Shariffe's notes and matching up the plans to the film's existing images is a process of retracing lines of creative flow, constituting a form of archival detective work. By replicating this process, the audio-

21) Susan Schuppli, *Material Witness: Media, Forensics, Evidence* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2020).

22) There has been growing interest in unfinished films within screen studies, such as James Fenwick, Kieran Foster, and David Eldridge's 2020 *Shadow Cinema: The Historical and Production Contexts of Unmade Films* and the 2023 collection, *Incomplete: The Feminist Possibilities of the Unfinished Film*, edited by Alix Beeston and Stefan Solomon.

23) Bill Reid, "Out of the Silence," in *Solitary Raven: The Selected Writings of Bill Reid*, ed. Robert Bringhurst (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2000), 71.

visual essay places Shariffe's film in the wider orbit of his archive, where watching the images combined with Shariffe's notes — themselves an archival object subject to the ravages of time — then mirrors an encounter with the materials. The *before* of the film (its preliminary materials, its Reidian "life") is put in contact with its *after* (its material noise and decay, its afterlives) to think *with* the film and its archive, producing a specific *now* of the object.

This is what Erica Carter and I have discussed, regarding Shariffe's archive, as a process of deixis: the articulation of positionality in relation to an archival object, and "the performative strategies of archival screenings that resituate [the] neglected film in new spatiotemporal constellations."²⁴⁾ Constructing an audiovisual essay is a modality of this performative form of screening, and an attempt to answer what Carter elsewhere describes as Shariffe's films' call for "a poetry of the archive that works associatively and intuitively across archival objects and their human interlocutors."²⁵⁾

My audiovisual essay ends by delving into the public archives of Sudan Memory, an initiative that began in 2018 and that "seeks to conserve and promote valuable cultural materials from and about Sudan through digitisation and via an online platform."²⁶⁾ One part of this project entailed constructing a 3D model of the city of Suakin available for exploration virtually on its website. This was made possible thanks to local historian Mohamed Nour and his family, who built a museum of the island's history. Such work is vital to historical and cultural inquiry, as are the current efforts to restore *The Dislocation of Amber*. The closing moments of the video emphasise the paradoxical materiality of this online model; the waves lapping against Suakin's shores, heard by Shariffe in the early 1970s, now accompany the animated sea surrounding the virtual restoration of the ruined city, navigated digitally 50 years later. Words from Shariffe's poetic script for *The Dislocation of Amber* then seem to comment on these images. My audiovisual essay does not attempt to tie down the meaning of the words and indeed produces new ambiguities in their connections with the accompanying images of a virtual Suakin. Alongside the incredible work that has gone into recreating the city by Sudan Memory, the words seem to call for a supplementary form of communication attuned to a consciousness of time, a speaking that I believe Shariffe's works themselves achieve as material witnesses to history. Indeed, Sudan Memory's project calls for such deictic encounters as it "not only preserves tangible heritage but also fosters community participation and digital literacy."²⁷⁾ As Susan Schuppli states, it is "within these institutional forums that 'witnessing' itself can be witnessed."²⁸⁾ These initiatives provide platforms where archival objects can be recognised as material storytellers of Sudan's past.

Behind all forms of completion are ruins haunting — markings of material history and contingent realities. These ruins speak to histories of colonial and neocolonial violence

24) Carter and Kent, "An Infinity of Tactics," 123.

25) Erica Carter, "The Eloquence of Odradek: Hussein Shariffe's Exilic Film Objects," in *Accidental Archivism: Shaping Cinema's Futures with Remnants of the Past*, eds. Stefanie Schulte Strathaus and Vinzenz Hediger (Lüneburg: Meson Press, 2023), 250.

26) "Sudan Memory's Story," *sudanmemory*, accessed April 30, 2025, <https://www.sudanmemory.org/about/>.

27) Marilyn Deegan, "Cultural Destruction and Rescue in Sudan: The Sudan Memory Project," *Journal of Art Crime*, no. 33 (2025), 43.

28) Schuppli, *Material Witness*, 4.

and neglect, as well as political repression: the destruction of the film industry and its lineage of avant-garde experimentation in Sudan after the 1989 coup d'état that put Omar al-Bashir in power for 30 years. Shariffe went into exile after this and his archive is now dispersed across the world, including in London, Cairo, and Berlin. This is the politics buried within any act of restoration. As Paolo Cherchi Usai writes in their provocative manifesto, "If film had been treated properly from the very beginning, there would be less of a need for film preservation today and citizens would have had access to a history of cinema of their choice."²⁹ Current projects of restoration thus reveal the global asymmetries involved in letting the object-to-be-restored enter a state of ruin in the first place.

It is this hidden index of filmic objects that many archival and curatorial projects reckon with. Filipa César's work on Guinean cinema, for example, explicitly resists restoration practices that erase decay or material traces of neglect: "In the purposeful absence of any attempt at restoration, along with the images are transferred the inscriptions of time, neglect, war, decomposition, corrosion, mold, vinegar syndrome and projection scratches on the animal gelatin of the celluloid," such that a "posthumous state of decay makes film an agent capable of different understandings of time and presence."³⁰ Resisting the total replacement of the noisy archival object by its digitised completion through disseminating images of its ruined state is a way of remembering neglect. Indeed, Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld and Pepita Hesselberth discuss "the risk of losing the noise of the archive," and opt instead to "attune" to noise in order "to nourish a relationship to time where the past keeps enfolding on itself in the present."³¹ If the future of Shariffe's film is one where restoration can help gain a larger audience for this extraordinary work, it is also vital to mark this moment of its material history, to stay with the noise and retain its loss as an index of political contingencies.

This helps in raising important questions that future archival work might pursue. How did Shariffe's film travel transnationally, and where was it stored during these times? How have digital copies circulated online? Sondra Hale emphasises the censorship that Shariffe's film was subjected to on its completion — how might this have affected where the physical print was stored?³² And of course, what might all this mean for the archives today?

The current war in Sudan has wreaked untold horrors upon its population. It has also left existing artistic materials housed in the country at severe risk of destruction. The Sudan Radio and Television Corporation (SRTC), for example, contains one of the largest

29) Paolo Cherchi Usai, "The Lindgren Manifesto: The Film Curator of the Future (Italy, 2010)," in *Film Manifestos and Global Cinema Cultures*, ed. Scott Mackenzie (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014), 558.

30) Filipa César, "Cine-animism: *The Return of Amílcar Cabral* and Many Returns," in *Accidental Archivism: Shaping Cinema's Futures with Remnants of the Past*, eds. Stefanie Schulte Strathaus and Vinzenz Hediger (Lüneburg: Meson Press, 2023), 463–464.

31) Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld and Pepita Hesselberth, "Ledgers and Legibility: A Conversation on the Significance of Noise within Digital Colonial Archives," in *Legibility in the Age of Signs and Machines*, eds. Pepita Hesselberth, Janna Houwen, Esther Peeren, and Ruby de Vos (Leiden: BRILL, 2018), 251, 259.

32) Sondra Hale, "Hussein Shariffe (1934–2005): Exile and homecoming between London, Cairo and Khartoum. Panel 2 — The City as Metaphor: The Dislocation of Amber" (online presentation), December 19, 2020, accessed October 8, 2025, <https://germanscreenstudies.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/2020/12/19/hussein-shariffe/>.

film archives in Africa, with around 13,000 film reels dating back to the 1940s, the digitisation of which has been started by Sudan Memory. Artists and filmmakers have been fleeing the country since 2023, and many are now part of diaspora communities in Cairo and elsewhere. I am part of a project around Shariffe's work that aims to develop models for workshops examining how to approach the existing archives creatively. As a potential impact for my audiovisual essay, I hope it could be a modest contribution to this work — an amateur attempt to capture the archival experience, proving all archives to be living, capable of producing new communities and experiences in their encounters.

Bibliography

- "Activating the Exile Archive: Hussein Shariffe between London, Cairo and Khartoum," *King's College London*, September 3, 2024, accessed October 8, 2025, <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/spotlight/activating-the-exile-archive>.
- Anger, Jiri. *Towards a Film Theory from Below: Archival Film and the Aesthetics of the Crack-Up* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2024).
- Beeston, Alix, and Stefan Solomon, eds. *Incomplete: The Feminist Possibilities of the Unfinished Film* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2023).
- "Canyon Cinema Discovered," accessed October 8, 2025, <https://canyoncinema.com/wp-content/uploads/ccd-final-web.pdf>.
- Carter, Erica, and Laurence Kent. "An Infinity of Tactics: Hussein Shariffe's archive in motion," *L'Atalante: Revista de estudios cinematográficos*, no. 28 (2022), 115–136.
- Carter, Erica. "The Eloquence of Odradek: Hussein Shariffe's Exilic Film Objects," in *Accidental Archivism: Shaping Cinema's Futures with Remnants of the Past*, eds. Stefanie Schulte Strathaus and Vinzenz Hediger (Lüneburg: Meson Press, 2023), 243–252.
- César, Filipa. "Cine-animism: *The Return of Amílcar Cabral* and Many Returns," in *Accidental Archivism: Shaping Cinema's Futures with Remnants of the Past*, eds. Stefanie Schulte Strathaus and Vinzenz Hediger (Lüneburg: Meson Press, 2023), 455–477.
- Cherchi Usai, Paolo. "The Lindgren Manifesto: The Film Curator of the Future (Italy, 2010)," in *Film Manifestos and Global Cinema Cultures*, ed. Scott Mackenzie (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014), 558–559.
- "Cimatheque, Remastered Open Call," accessed April 30, 2025, <https://cimatheque.org/remastered>.
- Deegan, Marilyn. "Cultural Destruction and Rescue in Sudan: The Sudan Memory Project," *Journal of Art Crime*, no. 33 (2025), 43–65.
- Dirckinck-Holmfeld, Katrine, and Pepita Hesselberth. "Ledgers and Legibility: A Conversation on the Significance of Noise within Digital Colonial Archives," in *Legibility in the Age of Signs and Machines*, eds. Pepita Hesselberth, Janna Houwen, Esther Peeren, and Ruby de Vos (Leiden: BRILL, 2018), 243–262.
- Editor. "From Ruin to Resilience: Sudan's Archival Restoration," *Andariya*, September 12, 2025, accessed October 8, 2025, <https://www.andariya.com/post/from-ruin-to-resilience-sudan-s-archival-restoration>.
- Fenwick, James, Kieran Foster, and David Eldridge. *Shadow Cinema: The Historical and Production Contexts of Unmade Films* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

- Hale, Sondra. "Hussein Shariffe (1934–2005): Exile and homecoming between London, Cairo and Khartoum. Panel 2 — The City as Metaphor: The Dislocation of Amber" (online presentation), December 19, 2025, accessed October 8, 2025, <https://germanscreenstudies.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/2020/12/19/hussein-shariffe/>.
- Hale, Sondra. "More than a Grain of Sand: Opening Outward — Sudanese Thought in a Globalized Milieu," in *Sudanese Intellectuals in the Global Milieu: Capturing Cultural Capital*, eds. Gada Kadoda and Sondra Hale (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2022), 3–18.
- Hale, Sondra. "The Making of the 'Dislocation of Amber' — Sudan's First Art Film," *Sudan Studies Association Newsletter* 20, no. 2 (2001), 16–19.
- Jancovic, Marek. *A Media Epigraphy of Video Compression: Reading Traces of Decay* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023).
- Macdonald, Marie-Paule. *African Cinema and Urbanism* (London: Anthem Press, 2024).
- Malaspina, Cécile. *An Epistemology of Noise* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018).
- Meden, Juri. *Scratches and Glitches: Observations on Preserving and Exhibiting Cinema in the Early 21st Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021).
- Reid, Bill. "Out of the Silence," in *Solitary Raven: The Selected Writings of Bill Reid*, ed. Robert Bringham (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2000), 71–84.
- Roden, David. "The Twentieth Century Decline of Suakin," *Sudan Notes and Records* 51, (1970), 1–22.
- Sabiescu, Amalia G. "Living Archives and The Social Transmission of Memory," *Curator* 63, no. 4 (2020), 497–510.
- Schuppli, Susan. *Material Witness: Media, Forensics, Evidence* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2020).

Filmography

- Of Dust and Rubies, a Film on Suspension* (Tamer El Said, 2020)
- The Dislocation of Amber* (Hussein Shariffe, 1975)

Biography

Laurence Kent is Lecturer in Digital Film & Television at the University of Bristol. He has published and presented on various topics within film theory and philosophy, from Deleuzian ethics, Sudanese cinema, experimental filmmaking, Hollywood action film, archiving practices, and anticolonial aesthetics. His articles and book reviews have appeared in *Film-Philosophy*, *Alphaville*, *Studies in World Cinema*, *Pli: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy*, *Frames Cinema Journal*, and *Cinema: Journal of Philosophy and the Moving Image*, amongst others. His current research explores forms of contingency, noise, and blurring within screen media.

Email: laurence.kent@bristol.ac.uk

<https://doi.org/10.58193/ilu.1825>

Bori Máté  <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-4684-2210>
(University of Applied Arts Vienna, Austria)

Ritualization and *Táltos* Procedures in Péter Lichter’s *Nutrition Fugue* (2018)

Abstract

In his film *Nutrition Fugue* (2018), Hungarian experimental filmmaker Péter Lichter appropriates remnants of discarded film strips from a socialist grocery advertisement (*közért*, literally, “for the community”), featuring images of processed meat dishes. As an exemplary case of geographically specific materialist film practice, the film functions as both a historical artifact — documenting East Central Europe under the socialist regime — and as a disruptive rupture, bringing past and present materialities into dialogue. This paper argues that Lichter’s process of cutting, decaying, and reassembling the film stock enacts a form of material self-dismemberment that contests dominant (visual and narrative) representational regimes. This ritual undoing of cinematic form resonates deeply with the logic of the ancient Hungarian *táltos* tradition. The verb *tált*, meaning “to open wide,” is connected to shamanistic procedures of ecstatic dismemberment, renewal, and revelation, serving as a tool for transmutation and perceptual expansion. This ritualistic transformation constitutes a strategy of cultural re-appropriation. By subjecting embedded cultural images to this process, Lichter dislodges and re-contextualizes official image regimes and contested symbols of national identity, working toward the liberation of human perception against repressive and arbitrary systems. Lichter does this by creating a sensorial field that disorients and expands perception through visual and auditory haptics, facilitating an affective and trance-like encounter and positioning itself as a ritual site where perception is “opened (*tált*),” and the viewer enters a space of transformation.

Keywords

Hungarian experimental cinema, process cinema, shamanic procedure, visual and auditory haptics

Introduction

At the beginning, there is thick blackness, the keeper of all possibilities; then, bright colors and the almost deafening sound of cicadas signal a passageway through which we slip into another realm. The cicadas' song, which evokes late-summer rural afternoons, merges into the glorified music of transubstantiation as the film is buried, then unearthed. Once again, the vividly pulsating body bursts into an ecstatic dance with foods that are soft and hard, juicy and dry, solid and liquid — caught in the very state of (trans)formation. Everything recalls the disintegration and reformation of matter and its intricate web of relations, through which something new — a strange familiarity of sensory experiences, a kind of aberrant (multi)sensoriality — comes into being. *Nutrition Fugue* (2018) is a four-minute, twenty-three-second short film made of found footage by Hungarian experimental filmmaker Péter Lichter.¹⁾ He uses excerpts from a socialist grocery advertisement (in Hungarian: *közerét* [grocery store], literally “for the community”) saved from the Hungarian National Film Archive's trash bin, featuring images of luncheon meat, aspic, and other processed meat dishes posed against vivid red, green, and yellow backdrops.

Throughout this article, I will look at how Lichter's material practices in *Nutrition Fugue* constitute a geographically specific ritual of transformation. Through my argument, I aim to show that the film functions as a material-discursive phenomenon²⁾ in which physical processes and encounters operate as rituals rooted in Hungarian culture. This involves re-positioning the handling of found footage — cutting and reassembling images both physically and digitally during editing, as well as burying and excavating the raw material — as a cultural strategy. These rituals transform situated matter and memory through affect, emphasizing embodied and lived experience. By thinking ritual and material practice together, I will examine the film through the lens of Hungarian *táltos* procedures, which resonate with the ritualization of material degradation, transformation, and reassembly. *Tált* is an ancient Hungarian verb linked to shamanistic traditions, meaning “to open wide,” and it serves as a tool for transmutation and perceptual expansion. The *táltos* tradition itself follows a logic of ecstatic dismemberment, renewal, and revelation. This ritualistic undoing of cinematic form and matter creates a sensorial field that disorients and

-
- 1) Most of Péter Lichter's films are available on his YouTube channel. The object of my analysis is the digital video of *Nutrition Fugue* accessible there, which I viewed at home on my computer using headphones. I specify these viewing conditions because haptics, affect, and phenomenological aspects of film viewing experience are central to this article, and such circumstances significantly shape perception and engagement.
 - 2) While it falls outside the scope of this article to elaborate on new materialist theories in detail, the text will employ some concepts and terms — primarily derived from Karen Barad's agential realism — that aptly capture the performative materiality and relationality of film. These include the notion of (1) *material-discursive phenomena*, defined as dynamic sites where diverse bodies, histories, and times intra-act, thus emerging events of becoming in which meaning and matter are mutually co-constituted through entanglement; (2) *intra-action*, a neologism developed by Barad that challenges individualist metaphysics by describing the mutual co-constitution of entangled agencies and entities through their relational engagement rather than through interaction between pre-existing, independent beings; and (3) *things-in-phenomena*, which, in Barad's agential realist ontology, replace the notion of “things-in-themselves” and are understood as entangled material agencies that emerge as the conditions of things through experience and within a web of intra-acting components. (See Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007)).

expands perception. *Nutrition Fugue* facilitates an affective encounter between the viewer and the relations manifested in the film through visual and auditory haptics. Viewers enter a trance-like mode of knowing, where historical sediment and sensory agitation collide.

This article positions its analysis of Lichter's *Nutrition Fugue* within a theoretical framework that aims to contribute, on the one hand, to debates on materialism and cinema, specifically focusing on photochemical and hybrid film practices as discussed by scholars such as Kim Knowles, Tess Takahashi, Scott MacKenzie, and Janine Marchessault, among others, and on the other hand, to discussions of film phenomenology and the embodiment of perception, drawing on the phenomenological and haptic approaches of Laura U. Marks, Jennifer M. Barker, and Lisa Coulthard. The paper also wishes to engage the underexplored discourse of Hungarian experimental cinema, situating Lichter's film as a materialist practice within the East-Central European context. Finally, in framing Lichter's methods as a ritualistic cultural re-appropriation that resonates with the Hungarian *táltos* tradition, the article draws on Catherine Bell's theorization of ritual practice and aims to dialogue with Colectivo Los Ingrávidos' discussion of shamanic materialism and shamanic procedures in relation to Mexican experimental cinema, in order to outline the possibilities of what a shamanic matter might be in an East-Central European framework.

In this article, I will first provide some context for Lichter's filmmaking practice. Then I will describe and analyze *Nutrition Fugue* while situating it within the ideas of ritualization and cultural re-appropriation. The following section will demonstrate the affective and haptic strategies that Lichter's film deploys, while in the last part of the paper, I will discuss its specific shamanistic procedures and rituals of transformation.

Contexts

Visibility and Institutional Position of Experimental Cinema in Hungary

Both Péter Lichter and scholar Dorottya Szalay emphasize the systemic and discursive challenges facing experimental cinema in Hungary and the wider East-Central European region.³⁾ They describe a landscape marked by a lack of critical discourse and institutional support, where avant-garde, abstract, or lyrical documentary film traditions remain largely marginalized. Historically, the Balázs Béla Stúdió (1959–2000) provided a crucial state-funded space for early-career filmmakers and artists to experiment with the audiovisual medium, often producing low-budget, socially critical short films.⁴⁾ Following its dissolution, however, experimental film lost its primary institutional home and entered what Szalay calls a “transit zone” (*tranzitózona*)⁵⁾: a peripheral and ambiguous space suspended between defunct traditions and unrealized opportunities. In this specific context,

3) See László Csujá, “A Balázs Béla Stúdió vonzáskörzete: ‘Irányított véletlenek’ — Lichter Péter,” *Balkon*, no. 1 (2013), 40–43; Dorottya Szalay, “Konceptualizmus egy kortárs magyar kísérleti filmben: Lichter Péter: Non-Places: Beyond the Infinite,” *Alföld*, (2016), 88–95.

4) For more on the Balázs Béla Stúdió, see Gábor Gelencsér, ed., *bbs 50: A Balázs Béla Stúdió 50 éve* (Budapest: Műcsarnok, 2009); Sonja Simonyi, “The Man Behind the Curtain: Gábor Bódy, Experimental Film Culture and Networks of State Control in Late Socialist Hungary,” *Third Text* 32, no. 4 (2018), 519–529.

5) Szalay, “Konceptualizmus egy kortárs magyar kísérleti filmben,” 91.

the term “experimental film” (*kísérleti film*) itself is considered problematic, reflecting a broader definitional crisis and “loss of forum” (*fórumvesztés*).⁶⁾ The collapse of infrastructure has also deepened the divide between film and fine art: many works once conceived for the cinema are now exhibited in galleries and museums, where they are framed as video or visual art rather than film. Within the Hungarian film ecosystem, a strong bias toward feature filmmaking further exacerbates this marginalization, as funding and recognition primarily flow toward conventional narrative forms. Lichter points out that while this fragility is visible worldwide, in a smaller national context like Hungary, the system's instability becomes especially apparent.⁷⁾

Despite these systemic challenges, Lichter's work is shaped by both local and international influences. He has been inspired by filmmakers such as Stan Brakhage, Peter Tscherkassky, and Len Lye,⁸⁾ while also continuing the legacy of the Balázs Béla Stúdió, whose spirit of experimentation still resonates in his practice. Yet with the disappearance of the studio and the institutional frameworks that once supported such work, Lichter — and the few other Hungarian filmmakers pursuing experimental cinema — find themselves in relative isolation, operating on what might be described as creative islands within a fragmented landscape.⁹⁾ The lack of infrastructure and discursive forums makes sustaining a community of experimental film practice particularly difficult. At the same time, however, the internet has opened unprecedented avenues for connection and visibility, allowing Lichter to engage with an international network of experimental filmmakers and audiences. His films have been screened at major festivals including International Film Festival Rotterdam, Tribeca Film Festival, Jihlava International Documentary Film Festival, and Berlin Critics' Week, attesting to his recognition and integration within the broader global avant-garde scene even as he continues to work from within a locally constrained context.

Péter Lichter's Creative Practice

Péter Lichter has been making films since 2002. As he points out in an interview with László Csujá, his filmmaking practice emerged from intuitive experimentation and was characterized by an awareness of, and a willingness to work with, his own limitations, while explorative methods were grounded in what he calls the “security of not knowing,”¹⁰⁾ a sort of lack of technical expertise. In an interview, the filmmaker gives voice to his fascination with so-called “documentary elements”¹¹⁾ in found footage cinema and to his desire

6) Ibid., 89.

7) Personal conversation with Péter Lichter, Budapest, October 12, 2025.

8) Ibid.

9) Currently, only a small number of contemporary Hungarian experimental filmmakers remain continuously active and visible. Among them are Péter Lichter, the Buharov Brothers, and Péter Forgács, whose work has also received significant international attention.

10) It also refers to his initial unfamiliarity with avant-garde cinematic traditions. His time at ELTE Film Studies proved inspirational, as it helped him to conceive of film history as a network and led to his discovery of the Balázs Béla Stúdió as well as the French and U.S. avant-garde, through which he recognized that his films fit naturally into this world. A significant later realization was the existence of a vast, global community of experimental filmmakers accessible via the internet. See Csujá, “A Balázs Béla Stúdió vonzáskörzete,” 40–43.

11) Ibid., 42.

to capture something that occurs in the moment of creation yet remains free from excessive construction. As Lichter puts it, on the one hand, the original footage always contains a certain truth that the filmmaker cannot manipulate, giving the film a documentary quality. On the other hand, during the process of manipulation, there arise moments — “directed accidents,”¹²⁾ as he calls them — that draw attention to the presence and dynamism of matter itself and, in turn, become records or documentary traces of that presence and dynamism.¹³⁾

Beyond the overarching practice of found footage filmmaking, Lichter’s body of work is notably diverse: he produces both short and feature-length films, working with 8mm, 16mm, and 35mm film, which he often subjects to both chemical and digital manipulation — such as painting, bleaching, rotting the emulsion with fruits or milk, burying it in soil, scratching, cutting, or re-filming it through multiple cameras after digitizing the film strip frame by frame. He also frequently incorporates material found on the internet, which he later blends with the physical footage after digitization. Examples of this hybrid methodology include *The Rub* (2018, with Bori Máté), *The Philosophy of Horror* (2020, with Bori Máté), *Barokk Femina* (2020), *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (2022), and *The Grey Machine* (2025), among others. In many of his works, Lichter also experiments with the tension between narrative and radically experimental form, as seen in *The Rub*, *Empty Horses* (2019), and *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*.

Thematically, *Nutrition Fugue* belongs to a smaller group within Lichter’s oeuvre that engages with cultural-political issues, alongside works such as *8th October 2016* (2016, with Bori Máté), *George’s Poem* (2018), and *Barokk Femina*. In the case of *8th October 2016*, the film takes its title from the day when the entire editorial staff of Hungary’s largest opposition newspaper, *Népszabadság*, was abruptly dismissed without warning. Through its material and structural choices (using the pieces of the last issue, cut, glued, and painted on a 35mm clear filmstrip), the film reflects on censorship, silencing, and the erosion of democratic discourse in contemporary Hungary. *George’s Poem*, on the other hand, is described on the webpage of his works’ distributor, Light Cone as “paranoid poetry exploring a galactic conspiracy, futuristic politics, and concealed meanings,”¹⁴⁾ using a 35mm print of George Lucas’s *Star Wars* (1977) rolling opening text and a magic marker. This “Hungarofuturist”¹⁵⁾ film deconstructs the political narratives and conspiratorial rhetoric regarding George Soros propagated by Hungary’s current right-wing populist re-

12) Ibid.

13) Although his oeuvre largely consists of found-footage films, several of his works feature material recorded by either the filmmaker himself or a director of photography, as in the case of *Non-Places: Beyond the Infinite* (2016) and *Frozen May* (2017).

14) See the film and the description on the webpage of the filmmaker’s distributor, Light Cone: “George’s Poem,” *Light Cone*, accessed September 30, 2025, <https://lightcone.org/en/film-11944-george-s-poem>.

15) Hungarofuturism (HUF) is a mythofictional and aesthetic strategy that conditions the cultural imagination, conceived by the aesthetic theorist Márió Nemes Z., while Lichter’s *George’s Poem* serves as its programmatic film. The movement’s aim is to reclaim national and historical myths from the nationalist ideologies that have occupied them, and to reconstruct progressive ways of thinking about Hungarian identity. The aesthetic and narrative strategies of HUF are often satirical and Dadaist in nature. See the HUF Manifesto: Miklósvölgyi Zsolt and Nemes Z. Márió, “Hungarofuturista Kiáltvány,” *litera*, January 10, 2018, accessed September 30, 2025, <https://litera.hu/irodalom/elso-kozles/hungarofuturista-kialtvany.html>.

gime, blending speculative poetics with critical satire. Lastly, *Barokk Femina* is based on Márió Nemes Z's visionary poetic diary; the film offers a hallucinatory archaeological portrait of the 2006 autumn protests in Hungary, sparked by the leaked "Őszöd speech" of then Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány.¹⁶⁾ Lichter's collage film translates this text into an experimental audiovisual excavation of collective memory and political trauma.

As mentioned above, I likewise consider *Nutrition Fugue* an example of a geographically specific materialist film practice. On the one hand, the film functions as a historical artifact documenting a geographically specific space (East-Central Europe) and a historical period (the socialist regime). On the other hand, it embodies a rupture by bringing materialities (past and present) that span space and time into dialogue through replaying, rearranging, and transforming systems of relations. This materialist practice is situated within the specific tradition of Hungarian experimental cinema, exemplified by the Balázs Béla Stúdió, which fostered works dealing with social and political issues through formal deconstruction.¹⁷⁾ *Nutrition Fugue* is a material-discursive phenomenon, where the different human and nonhuman agents — including the filmmaker's embodied gestures, the materiality of soil, the decaying emulsion, and the viewer's sensory engagement — coalesce within an entangled web of relations. This entanglement is further shaped by situated knowledge and affective memories — personal, cultural, and political — that traverse temporal and spatial boundaries, becoming inseparable from the film's material and experiential unfolding.

The Crumpled Ballet of Luncheon Meat: The Description and Production of *Nutrition Fugue*

The film begins with a black screen lasting no more than a second, accompanied by silence. Then, the sound of cicadas gradually drifts in, and the title appears — white, slender letters centered against the black backdrop. As the cicadas grow louder, the title lingers for four more seconds. The first image appears abruptly: a blue frame stretching between shades of indigo and ink. The perforations of the 35mm film are clearly visible on the left, while the optical sound strip — originally recorded on the film — is visible on the right. The frame is not parallel but oddly warped. For the creation of *Nutrition Fugue*, Lichter used found footage acquired from the Hungarian National Film Archive, which provided him with several boxes of film strips designated for disposal. While sorting through the material at home, he discovered fragments of a socialist advertising film — these would later appear in *Nutrition Fugue*. Although the footage had decayed and had been cut, dismantled, and rearranged multiple times, with the help of Mihály G. Horváth (who works

16) The "Őszöd speech" (*Őszödi beszéd*) was the closing address delivered by then-Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány on May 26, 2006, one month after his party's parliamentary election victory, during a closed meeting of the Socialist Party (MSZP) faction in Balatonőszöd. The speech became controversial in Hungarian politics because of Gyurcsány's admission that his government had not been truthful about the state of the economy before the elections ("we lied in the morning, in the evening, and at night"). When the recording was leaked later that year, it triggered mass protests and a significant political crisis, leading to a sharp decline in public trust toward the ruling Socialist Party.

17) Ádám Nagy, "A peremvidék kavalkádja: A Balázs Béla Stúdió vázlatos története és irányzatai," *Filmtett*, March 3, 2010, accessed September 30, 2025, <https://filmtett.ro/cikk/a-balazs-bela-studio-vazlatos-tortenete-es-iranyzatai>.

at the National Film Archive), it was possible to deduce that the film stock was most likely an ORWO color, sound, safety acetate print used for television in Hungary during the 1970s or 1980s, with a duplex variable area optical soundtrack.

Neatly arranged piles of gelatinous food appear, and through a technique that produces a visual effect similar to stop motion, they begin to triple, then quintuplicate. The images, once recorded to attract the socialist buying public, are now complemented by the dynamic presence of the film's physicality: its grain, its flaws, the dirt and filaments clinging to the strip. The sound of cicadas continues, but the visuals shift — the earlier blue background gives way to a bright yellow one, revealing a bowl of minced meat. The composition of the reconstructed image is slightly off-kilter. Once meant to appear appetizing, the minced meat now seems tremulous and awkward. Next, a split screen presents blue and red backgrounds, displaying a half-sliced meatloaf baked in one piece. Against a blood-red backdrop, ham cream rolls with mustard on a bed of salad are stacked on a plate. The film works with the visual and material residue of the “planned economy’s” failures, positioning the food imagery subjected to decay as an artifact of the socialist regime’s management of production and consumption (see Figs. 1–2).

Here, the illusion of prosperity and economic reality collide; the film can be seen as a critique of socialist economic conditions, where the government projected success despite internal failures and shortages, which was central to maintaining the system’s legitimacy. This visually awkward and unappetizing presentation of processed meats is expressive of how the problem of material shortages led to the use of substitutes and low-quality goods (e.g., more water, less meat in products like cold cuts). In quick succession, various meat creams, aspic meats, and egg dishes appear. Around the twenty-eight-second mark, a studio kitchen enters the frame, featuring a bright purple counter covered with unprocessed vegetables — onions, mushrooms, cucumbers, potatoes, salad leaves — standing in stark contrast to the highly processed meat dishes shown before. Images of food and brightly colored backgrounds continue to alternate, but movement begins to emerge within the images themselves.

We see an industrial slicing machine cutting luncheon meat, with the slices cascading down. Simultaneously, the soundtrack shifts. Alongside the cicadas, a majestic electronic score — reminiscent of space science fiction films — floats in. It accompanies the now even more rapidly changing images, and in one moment, the falling slices of freshly cut meat suddenly evoke a sense of flight. The images become stroboscopic, with many zoomed in to reveal extreme close-ups of the meat and the very materiality of the film stock. Earlier images of meat dishes reappear, disappear, and rotate at high speed, yet smoothly and effortlessly. The rumbling visuals, seemingly coming at us from all directions, become a rich cavalcade of colors, textures, and movements. Merged in a flux of constant motion, they transform into a psychedelic vision as the decayed images begin to surface. The rot appears in layered hues that seem to contain the full spectrum of a rainbow: blues and purples, greens, yellows, and even pinks appear.

The production of *Nutrition Fugue* is grounded in both the materiality and physicality of photochemical film, which provides the foundation for the cinematic work and digital possibilities, making this film a hybrid. In the summer of 2018, in a once marshy, swampy area of Budapest, where the reeds growing at the base of the panel houses in many loca-



Figs. 1–2: Stills from *Nutrition Fugue* (Péter Lichter, 2018)

tions still evoke the marshland of earlier times, Lichter buried the film stock for approximately two weeks, allowing the soil, time, and natural decay to inscribe their marks on the emulsion. Once he had unearthed and cleaned the film strips, Lichter digitized the decayed material using his characteristic gear: a Canon photo camera and an old duplicator lens from the 1970s. He photographed each frame individually and uploaded the images to his computer. As a third step, he returned to the physical film, cut certain sections, and glued them onto a clean 35mm strip. He then digitized this material using the same technique. After uploading all the stills to his computer, he imported them into an editing program and created a series of sequences. These were merged, assembled, zoomed in, and

superimposed on each other, highlighting the textures, surfaces, and qualities of the re-photographed photochemical film. They were repeatedly reconfigured until the cinematic work reached its final form.¹⁸⁾ This meticulous handling of the material foregrounds the hybridity of the work: the decayed analog film and the reconfigured digital image co-exist in a non-hierarchical, participatory process.

As Kim Knowles points out, “artists who are invested in photochemical film have shown that creative dialogues can take place between both media and that hybrid practice may open other exciting avenues of experimentation.”¹⁹⁾ Lichter’s practice provides a pertinent example of her observation. Furthermore, as Jihoon Kim observes in his article on film-digital hybrids, they “bring into relief the materiality of both mediums.”²⁰⁾ *Nutrition Fugue* is a testament to how the film grain, the decaying layers of the organic emulsion, the dirt, and the physicality of the cut and glued pieces of film stock, using Knowles’s phrasing, “speak’ to the digital pixel creating a new kind of image that hovers somewhere between the two.”²¹⁾ Lichter’s “process-driven methodology” treats the material and discursive encounters through which experience emerges not as fixed but as continual “change and movement in a process of becoming.”²²⁾ In *Nutrition Fugue*, Lichter’s active participation in the physical and digital production procedures creates a participatory and improvisational process, which is complemented by the dynamic mattering of nonhuman participants such as the soil, the decaying emulsion, the glue, and even the repeatedly cut and assembled film stock. To a large degree, Lichter’s manipulation of both photochemical and digital materials, through actions such as burying and unearthing decayed film stock, digitizing it, and reconfiguring it, embodies the idea of the multiplicity inherent in all forms of perception, where the distinct materialities of film grain and digital pixel interact in a non-hierarchical, dynamic relationship. The emphasis on hybrid textures, materiality, and movement activates the viewer’s sensorium and opens haptic and trance-like ways of perceiving, seeing, and knowing.

Regarding the film’s soundtrack, the sound of cicadas gradually fades. Only the electronic music and accompanying noise remain — still majestic and triumphant. However, as the images begin to disintegrate more noticeably, the noise intensifies, gradually overshadowing the music. An electric guitar emerges, first striking a single note, then oscillating between two or three. Suddenly, a church bell rings, marking the time. The noise recedes for a fleeting moment, only to return with renewed force. The images are now cut into bits and fragments — intact and decayed pieces of various meat dishes swirl before our eyes at an impossible speed. Then, the first notes of a melody played on an electric guitar begin to surface — one that every Hungarian knows by heart from childhood. It starts hesitantly, repeating the first few beats over and over, but eventually finds its rhythm: the

18) Personal conversation with Péter Lichter, Budapest, April 23, 2025.

19) Kim Knowles, “Self-Skilling and Home Brewing: Some Reflections on Photochemical Film Culture,” in *Process Cinema: Handmade Film in the Digital Age*, eds. Scott MacKenzie and Janine Marchessault (Montreal, Kingston, London, and Chicago: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2019), 81.

20) Jihoon Kim, “Bruce Elder’s Film-Digital Hybrids and Materialist Historiography,” *Millennium Film Journal*, no. 56 (2012), 30.

21) Knowles, “Self-Skilling and Home Brewing,” 82.

22) Scott MacKenzie and Janine Marchessault, eds., *Process Cinema: Handmade Film in the Digital Age* (Montreal, Kingston, London, and Chicago: MacGill Queen’s University Press, 2019), 3.

Kossuth Song, an emblematic march of the 1848–49 Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence, becomes clearly distinguishable amid the noise. What we hear is the recurring refrain of the song, which does not appear here in words but only melody, that proclaims: “*Long live Hungarian freedom! Long live the homeland!*” At around three minutes and forty-six seconds, a still image of all the dishes on display appears, accompanied by the melody, this time in the version that used to serve as Kossuth Radio’s intro, and the returning sound of cicadas. The film concludes with the cicadas and an upward tilt revealing the word: KÖZÉRT (“for the community”).

Lichter served as the sound designer but asked his long-time friend and collaborator, Ádám Márton Horváth, to compose the musical score. Reaching the final form of the soundtrack was a gradual process that involved several discussions between the filmmaker and the composer. Although Horváth had a high degree of artistic freedom, Lichter indicated that the score should escalate in a fugue-like fashion, paralleling the film’s progression. He also suggested incorporating the Kossuth Song. The first time we hear the song’s melody, played on an electric guitar, it is performed by Horváth. In contrast, Lichter added it to the soundtrack when it appears again toward the end in its traditional form. To a large degree, the filmmaker uses the score according to his wit, mixing it with the sounds of cicadas and bells, which he acquired from the BBC Sound Effects Library.²³⁾ This interplay of organic, analog, and digital sound mirrors the visual materiality of the film: the cut, glued, decayed, and digitized images interact dynamically with the electronic and acoustic sounds, producing a holistic hybrid experience.

Cultural Re-appropriation through Ritualization, Haptic Strategies, and *Táltos* Procedures

What broader function does this invocation of a holistic hybrid experience have, though? This section will explore how Lichter’s filmmaking practice, defined as process-oriented and rooted in photochemical and digital manipulation, operates as a specific ritualization strategy. This involves critiquing official image regimes (like the socialist grocery ad that projected an illusion of prosperity) and symbols of national identity (the Kossuth Song), and using the act of re-appropriation to dislodge and re-contextualize them in an attempt at liberation. The film performs a material self-dismemberment (cutting, decaying, reassembling the film stock) that resonates with shamanic procedures of death and rebirth, and more specifically, the *táltos* tradition’s logic of ecstatic dismemberment, renewal, and revelation. This material process is a key feature of the film’s geographically specific critique and cultural re-appropriation. Ritualization allows the film for the deconstruction and reconstruction of cultural memory.

Ritualization

As Catherine Bell suggests in her seminal work, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, ritual “exhibits and exaggerates real conflicts in order to release tensions and afford a type of social

23) “BBC Sound Effects,” accessed September 30, 2025, <https://sound-effects.bbcrewind.co.uk/>.

catharsis.”²⁴⁾ This idea has helped foster a performative approach to ritual in ritual studies. However, Bell criticizes earlier theories of ritual that reify it and strictly differentiate it from quotidian practices, thereby rendering ritualistic activities sacred. She argues that there is no sharp difference between ritual and non-ritual practices; this distinction itself is socially constructed and produced performatively. For Bell, the most important question is what people do when they develop rituals, or in other words, how they ritualize. In Lichter’s case of ritualization, a cultural re-appropriation and liberation of the senses occur through the aforementioned ecstatic dismemberment, renewal, and revelation, which resonate with Hungarian shamanistic procedures. To give a little context to these local phenomena, the ideological and temporal contrast between the *táltos* tradition and the Kossuth Song provides a historical anchor for analyzing *Nutrition Fugue* as a cultural re-appropriation of contested symbols of freedom from different periods of Hungarian history.

These elements originate from vastly different eras: the *táltos* is a pre-Christian figure whose traditions were systematically erased by Prince Géza — who first embraced Christianity for strategic reasons — and later his son, King Stephen I, who consolidated Hungary as a Christian nation.²⁵⁾ In contrast, the Kossuth Song composed in honor of Lajos Kossuth at the beginning of the 1848–49 Revolution and War of Independence, became an emblem of the revolution, when nationalist ideologies inspired a struggle for greater autonomy within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Kossuth is regarded as one of the greatest figures of the 19th-century struggle for national independence, the abolition of feudal privileges, and the establishment of civil liberties.²⁶⁾ Both, however, share a symbolic association with freedom — the *táltos* with pre-Christian Hungarian spiritual autonomy, and the Kossuth Song with revolutionary patriotism. In contemporary Hungary, both have been appropriated by the right-wing populist regime, albeit in different ways, and both now often carry ambivalent or negative connotations. These heavily loaded symbols of Hungarian national identity, along with the contradictions they embody, also reflect the limbo politics of the current regime: a desire to present itself as an autonomous, Christian, European state (recalling the prosperous decades of reconciliation after the 1848–49 rev-

24) Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 71.

25) The early Hungarians’ conversion to Christianity must be understood against the background of their shamanistic, pagan belief system. As Hungarian historian Ignác Romsics notes, their religion was rooted in animistic and shamanistic practices, and although they encountered monotheistic faiths early on, none exerted a significant influence. This changed in the 10th century, when the Hungarian tribes, now settled in the Carpathian Basin and seeking stability, faced increasing geopolitical pressure. Caught between the Byzantine Empire and the Holy Roman Empire, their room for manoeuvre narrowed. In this context, Prince Géza adopted Christianity primarily for political and strategic reasons, reinforced by marriage alliances, while continuing to offer sacrifices to the old gods. His son, Stephen I, by contrast, envisioned Christianity as a tool for state-building: he established Hungary’s ecclesiastical structures and enforced both the abandonment of pagan cults and the dismantling of older social forms. For more see Ignác Romsics, *Magyarország története* (Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, 2017), 7–58.

26) Lajos Kossuth was a Hungarian statesman, Minister of Finance in the Batthyány government, President of the National Defence Committee, and later Governor-President of Hungary. To this day, he remains one of the most emblematic figures of the 1848–1849 Revolution and War of Independence in the collective memory of the Hungarian people. March 15, commemorated as the day the revolution broke out, is a national holiday.

olution) while continually aligning itself with Russia and China. At the same time, the regime has constructed narratives of grandeur around Hungarians' Central Asian ancestry (at least with regard to the original Magyar population, as the country's inhabitants were several times nearly wiped out — a fact rarely acknowledged in such narratives), selectively appropriating their belief systems and rituals to feed myths of Hungarian exceptionalism.²⁷⁾

By mobilizing *táltos* procedures in its processes, *Nutrition Fugue*, made from discarded socialist-era found footage, functions simultaneously as a historical artifact and as a rupture, bringing past and present into dialogue on material, spiritual, and mnemonic levels. By incorporating symbols of Hungarian national identity such as the Kossuth Song, socialist historical objects, and shamanistic rituals, the film stages a layered critique of both past imperial and dictatorial structures and the contemporary “neoliberal present.” All of these regimes, in different ways, have built on the eradication of whatever was construed as a threat, tampering with history, and creating only the illusion of prosperity — feeding people ideologies instead of actual nourishment (see Figs. 3–4).

The *táltos* procedures serve as a foundation for transformation and perceptual expansion in Lichter's film. Historically, this figure functioned as a mediator between the human and the cosmic, entering trance states — *révülés*, or “sleep-dream” — to access knowledge. This suppressed tradition, incorporated into Lichter's production process, resonates directly with the *táltos* initiation motif, which often involves symbolic death and rebirth, described as dismemberment and reconstitution. As mentioned earlier, the Hungarian verb *tált* literally means “to open wide,” and Lichter's film embodies this transmutation, fostering perceptual expansion and liberating embodied ways of knowing. The Kossuth Song, in turn, embodies a historical push for freedom and a break with earlier political alignments. As a key recruiting song during the 1848–49 fight for independence, it carries echoes of resistance, now overlaid by the traces of its wanton appropriation for political and ideological ends.²⁸⁾ Lichter's use of the song is both critical and affectively charged. Its effect is grounded in the convergence of symbolism, memory, and the sound's materiality, enabling *tált* to take place through three entangled elements. (1) The song itself is both emblematic and a heavily loaded national symbol. (2) The song's presentation is non-tradi-

27) This is supported by social scientist Rita Hornok, who talks about Turanism within the context of Hungarian politics of memory, specifically focusing on Fidesz's Turanist narratives between 2010 and 2022. For more see Rita Hornok, “Turanism as a political myth in the context of the Hungarian politics of memory,” *SOCIETY REGISTER* 9, no. 3 (2025), 77–100.

28) According to historian András Gerő, during the 1848–1949 Revolution and War of Independence, Kossuth became the unyielding representative of a free and independent homeland. By 1948, the Kossuth cult had assumed a central role, as the Communist regime sought to legitimize its power through the symbolic capital of the 1848 tradition. The revolution was reframed within both sacralized and secularized narratives that identified national heroes such as Kossuth, Petőfi, and Táncsics with the “people's” struggle for liberation under socialism. The political instrumentalization of the Kossuth cult thus became a means of redefining national identity. Although the topic is complex and cannot be reduced to a single explanatory frame, a similar mechanism can be detected in contemporary Hungary: the Orbán government's appropriation of national heroes and symbols — such as the figure of Kossuth and, in extension the Kossuth Song — serves to delineate the boundaries of “true” Hungarianness and to construct both current and perennial enemies both within and beyond the country's borders. See András Gerő, “A Kossuth kultusz,” *Mozgó világ* 29, no. 4 (2004), accessed September 30, 2025, <https://epa.oszk.hu/01300/01326/00038/08gero.html>.



Figs. 3–4: Stills from *Nutrition Fugue* (Péter Lichter, 2018)

tional and re-appropriative: it first emerges hesitantly, played on an electric guitar amid intensifying noise, contrasting sharply with its traditional form used later in the film. The contemporary timbre also introduces subtle countercultural layers, operating as a critical re-contextualization (temporal, ideological) of the song. (3) This unique sound design focuses on the texture and grain of the sound to produce a visceral response, which allows the sound to bypass cognitive processing and unlock the memory of the senses. Thus, here, sound mediates an expansive perceptual state in which memory (cultural and individual) and sensation collide, echoing the *táltos*'s capacity to access other temporalities and layers of knowledge.

Along these lines, I argue that Lichter's practice can be understood as a form of ritualization, in the sense that Catherine Bell defines the term. Based on her reasoning, ritualization is always situated and strategic: it always treats, rearranges, or reinforces a situation. It does not mirror the context but strategically re-creates it. Ritual is an act that creates difference and order: it rearranges the world. It is not communication but incorporation; humans incorporate cultural schemes and memories. The body and embodied knowledge are key in the act of ritualization. The ritualized body is both the tool and the result of ritualization.²⁹⁾ Thus, the filmmaker's ritualization functions as the mechanism for cultural re-appropriation. I argue that Lichter reactivates symbols of freedom through ritualized filmic practice. Drawing on the concept of ritual as a strategic practice for generating embodied power, he employs a "Burial-Exhumation dialectic," which is "the iconoclastic and materialist contradiction of appropriation cinema."³⁰⁾ In this case, it involves the literal burial and exhumation of the film stock, its deconstruction and reconstruction in a process that transforms symbols, such as *táltos* procedures (and other practices historically cast as pagan) and the Kossuth Song (and all it carries) into sensorial, bodily memories rather than fixed political tokens.

Embodiment and Haptic Strategies

Lichter's ritualization strategy, culminating in the Burial-Exhumation dialectic, transforms abstract political symbols into visceral sensory knowledge, foregrounding embodiment as the point of interception where ritualization meets — and necessitates — haptic strategies, as the material process of ritualization produces an embodied result that can only be activated and experienced through specific sensory tools (haptics). In ritualization, bodies carry and express implicit knowledge; they are simultaneously the producers and the products of ritualized practices. This process is embodied and implicit rather than primarily verbal or representational. Lichter generates haptic images and sounds that act as tools of ritualization. These activate the viewers' bodies and the memory of their senses. On the one hand, this opens a space for acknowledging and dwelling with multiple temporalities, memories, feelings, and ideas — often at the cost of facing and experiencing dissenting-within. On the other hand, it creates the possibility of liberating and expanding the senses through the transformative powers of trance.

Thus, haptic visibility and haptic aurality are key elements to the above mentioned affective encounters that *Nutrition Fugue* enables through Lichter's gestures of ritualization. As Laura U. Marks, one of the central figures of haptic theory, puts it, haptic images demand an active, caressing gaze. The quality of these tactile images allows us to fuse with the material by moving on the object's surface, almost touching and scanning it with our eyes. However, haptic images encourage and invite a bodily relationship between the viewer and the image by being multisensory.³¹⁾ Jennifer Barker in *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience* (2009) also stresses that tactile experiences extend beyond the sense

29) Bell, *Ritual Theory*.

30) Colectivo Los Ingrávidos, "Thesis on the Audiovisual," *Non-Fiction*, no. 3 (2021), accessed September 30, 2025, <https://opencitylondon.com/non-fiction/issue-3-space/thesis-on-the-audiovisual/>.

31) Laura U. Marks, *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

of touch: they create a multiplicity of sensory experiences involving the elements of smell, taste, and hearing as well. Barker suggests that a film's texture and material quality are not simply presented to viewers but constitute intra-actions (my terminology based on Karen Barad)³²⁾ between film and viewer. Complexities otherwise hidden under the skin may arise out of this entanglement.

While often discussed concerning visuality, haptics has also been extended into sonic studies, highlighting its multifaceted role in shaping sensory engagement.³³⁾ Within this film-phenomenological context, through the tactile qualities of the image, visuality invites a kind of touch, a sense of physical intimacy between viewer and screen. Similarly, haptic sound refers to auditory experiences that resonate with the body, creating a visceral connection that bypasses conventional narrative or traditional representational modes. Lisa Coulthard, who first introduced the term "haptic aurality"³⁴⁾ — based on Marks's notion of haptic visuality — in cinema, proposes the idea of "listening as an act that moves beyond simply understanding what one hears."³⁵⁾ Focusing on sounds' texture, grain, and proximity, she examines how certain film soundtracks produce a visceral response, evoking physical and embodied sensations.

Coulthard explores how sound design can provoke an affective response through its intensity, rhythm, and texture, making the sound feel "close" and intimate, producing a haptic experience. This approach highlights sound's ability to bypass cognitive processing, engaging the body directly. Listening in this way accentuates the tactile and the experiential and is based on the felt, the corporeal, and the vibratory. Listening involves stretching toward meaning that is "not immediately accessible," positioning oneself "on the edge of meaning," and being susceptible to "the resonance of being, or being as resonance."³⁶⁾ However, *Nutrition Fugue* does more than produce the necessary circumstances for resonant listening by forgoing spoken language and using recordings of the song of cicadas, electronic music, noise, and the Kossuth Song. The film's haptic aurality, together with its haptic images, are tools of transmutation: they immerse the viewer in the terrain of the sensuous to induce trance-states where the sensorium may be liberated from the power of repressive and arbitrary systems.

Regarding the use of haptic images, *Nutrition Fugue* achieves them by various means; on the one hand, through literal contact (touch) between human and nonhuman agents (contact between the soil, moist and the film strip, as well as the film strip and the film-maker), which accentuates "surface materiality" or, in other words, the "textuality"³⁷⁾ of

32) Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 2007.

33) Other authors discussing haptics and materiality in sonic studies include Andy Birtwistle, Irina Leimbacher and Miguel Mera among others.

34) In relation to sound, haptics manifests — much like visuality — on two levels: we can talk about haptic sound, which refers to the making of the sounds and the characteristics that arise from the specificities of the production of those sounds, and haptic listening, which concerns the reception and phenomenological aspects of haptic sounds.

35) Lisa Coulthard, "Haptic Aurality: Listening to the Films of Michael Haneke," *Film-Philosophy* 16, no. 1 (2012), 16.

36) Coulthard, "Haptic Aurality," *ibid.*, quoting Jean-Luc Nancy.

37) Gabriele Jutz, "Striking Textures, Sensuous Surfaces in Photography and Film," *Open Arts Journal*, no. 7 (2019), 11–25.

the medium as Gabriele Jutz puts it. In her 2019 article, "Striking Textures, Sensuous Surfaces in Photography and Film," Jutz discusses photographic and filmic works whose surface materiality — produced by the combination of hardware (camera/projector), software (support), and the filmmaker's mode of operation — goes beyond traditional modes of representation that in the case of *Nutrition Fugue* have become unreliable and propagandistic. She distinguishes between two procedural modes that can be strong markers of textuality. One of them is related to the different processes of camera-less filmmaking such as scratching the film, directly painting or applying different materials on the film stock; in sum, any kind of manipulation of the film by "hand or with the support of other exterior agents such as chemistry, and biological or thermic processes."³⁸⁾ On the other hand, Lichter also achieves haptic visuality by digitally zooming in on the images, superimposing them, or utilizing fast editing that lends the sequences dynamic movements. Jutz considers this the problem of image resolution, which may result from downloading, copying, transferring, enlarging, and even reducing or distorting, in addition to other interventions that affect the quality of the film.³⁹⁾

Although *Nutrition Fugue* features recognizable images that could be seen as representational — since we can identify different kinds of meat dishes, vegetables, the machine that cuts the luncheon meat, etc. — Lichter's treatment of the material itself (throughout the film, the images gradually disintegrate) casts a critical light on the images and sounds, questioning their representational status. Indeed, as Tess Takahashi argues, contemporary avant-garde cinema focuses less on film's ability to create recognizable iconic images of the natural world (where each dish stands for itself and signifies no more than the product desired to be sold) than on its capacity to physically record the effects of the material world on its celluloid body.⁴⁰⁾ The traces of the encounter between the filmmaker, the natural world, the glue, as well as the effects of digital manipulation layered over the original material, point toward a multiplicity of experiences, temporalities, contexts, and meanings, lifting the still-recognizable images beyond their primary signification and into a space of sensorial and conceptual resonance, opening the door to understanding representation as an effect of material-discursive entanglements.

Nutrition Fugue, as a haptic and sensorial work, foregrounds encounters that generate embodied knowledge; as a result, Marks points out, we "hold knowledge in our body and memory in our senses."⁴¹⁾ Inspired by her argument about intercultural cinema, I propose that in the case of *Nutrition Fugue*, bodies are active constituents of the phenomena within the material-discursive space the film creates. These bodies include the nonhuman bodies in the images — such as the meat, the vegetables, the remnants of the soil, and the glue — as well as the elements that comprise the film stock and whose presence becomes evident through decay, like cellulose, acetic anhydride, acetic acid, gelatin, and light-sen-

38) Ibid., 13.

39) Ibid.

40) Tess Takahashi, "After the Death of Film: Writing the Natural World in the Digital Age," *Visible Language* 42, no. 1 (2008), 44–69.

41) Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment and the Senses* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000), xiii.

sitive silver halide crystals. They also include the body of the filmmaker and the body of the viewer.

As a specific example of individual memory, my affective encounter with Lichter's film has evoked a multitude of visceral, physical reactions, which are intricately connected to memories I believed long forgotten — memories stored in my senses. Thus, the visual and auditory haptics produced by the filmmaker, immediately reactivate culturally and geographically specific sensory memories. They include family gatherings in the mid-90s of rural Hungary that span the tactile (a waxed tablecloth, or the grip of a plastic clip keeping the tablecloth at its place), the olfactory (the scent of grilled meat or the sour smell of cheap jug wine), and the aural (the chirping of crickets conjuring a rural summer, the melody of the *Kossuth Song* evoking the memory of March 15th school celebrations) — all manifesting as a spectrum of visceral and emotional responses.

These affective responses are facilitated by the fact that the viewer's engagement constitutes a situated encounter, affirming the culturally trained body as a crucial site of knowledge production. In this context, my perception is fundamentally shaped by the same geographic and cultural milieu as the cinematic work, reinforcing the finding that knowledge is always produced within specific contexts and through dynamic intra-actions. Acknowledging this situatedness is vital, as it necessitates the understanding that each encounter with the film is unique, a situated enactment defined by each viewer's own embodied histories, cultural inscriptions, and discursive frameworks.

However, the bodies participating in these encounters are sources not only of individual but also of cultural memory. Thus, these entangled bodies not only operate on the level of sensorial perception or material intra-action, but also carry cultural and historical weight. For instance, in the context of post-socialist Hungary, the imagery of processed meat, the aesthetics of decay, and the physical disintegration of the acetate stock itself evoke not just personal but collective memories shaped by the conditions of late socialism — its infrastructures of food production, its visual regimes, and its everyday materialities.

The degradation of the filmic surface parallels the erosion of ideological structures, while simultaneously preserving their residues. Lichter transforms the archival detritus designed to manufacture a sanitized illusion of prosperity into a material that bears the traces of peripheral modernity and state socialist history. During the socialist era in Hungary, the state sought to create an image of material well-being and stability. Store shelves appeared stocked, yet this "abundance" was often deceptive — many products were of poor quality, limited variety, or only intermittently available, while first-rate products were exported to other socialist countries. The state maintained this illusion through artificial price controls and imports, masking structural inefficiencies and shortages.⁴²⁾ This tendency, in part, however, continues to this day. Everyday experience suggests that supermarket shelves are increasingly filled with imported goods — mostly highly processed, additive-laden products of questionable quality. Premium Hungarian goods, such as organic or artisanal foods, are less visible and significantly more expensive. Because foreign

42) For more information see János Kornai, *Economics of Shortage* (Amsterdam and New York: North-Holland, 1980); Iván T. Berend and György Ránki, *The Hungarian Economy in the Twentieth Century* (London: Crom Helm, 1985).

markets offer higher prices, many Hungarian producers choose to export their best products abroad. This tendency is partly supported by smaller studies and industry reports.⁴³⁾

The film positions the problems of the socialist regime and the present system in continuation. Through his cinematic practice, Lichter performs a geographically specific ritual, an act of cultural re-appropriation through which he transmutes conflicted cultural memory. In this sense, *Nutrition Fugue* becomes a site where the past persists materially and affectively, inviting viewers to confront how history is sedimented not only in narrative or symbol, but in the very stuff of film and flesh. Multiple temporalities converge within the film. These include the deep geological time inscribed in the soil where the film was buried, evoking *táltos* procedures and through that, eras before the founding of the Hungarian state; and the echoes of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy carried through the Kosuth Song; the textures of socialist Hungary embedded in the footage itself. They also include the immediate past articulated through the filmmaker's embodied gestures and practices; and the present moment of viewing, charged with my own affective and sensory responses that open the door to personal histories besides national history. Lichter's montage logic, driven by rupture and temporal dissonance, collapses these distinct historical and personal layers into a hallucinatory simultaneity. These temporal and material layers do not merely coexist — they clash, resonate, and reconfigure one another in the spacetime of the viewing experience.

Thus, the film mediates between bodily, material, and cultural memory, reactivating historical and contemporary experience through haptic and temporal entanglements. In sum, it is through haptic strategies — here the tools of ritualization — that the film emphasizes or rather induces a trance-like perceptive expansion, where seeing, listening, and knowing take place in a “transformative space of betweenness.”⁴⁴⁾

The Figure of the Táltos, Shamanistic Procedures, and Cinematic Materiality

After the discussion of ritualization, haptic perception, and the importance of embodied knowledge, I turn again to the *táltos* tradition to articulate what kind of transformation the film enacts. The *táltos* — linked to Hungarian shamanism — provides a framework for understanding the work's investment in decay, renewal, and bodily dissolution as a material procedure rather than metaphor. In Lichter's film, decomposition, abrasion, and re-assemblage function like *táltos* practices of dismemberment and reconstitution: the image is broken apart and re-made, its textures becoming the site of perceptual initiation. Situating the film within this geographically specific shamanistic lineage clarifies how its material surface acts as the medium of transformation itself, not merely the carrier of representa-

43) For more statistical data see “A Nébih ismét felmérte a magyar élelmiszerek arányát a kiskereskedelmi láncok kínálatában,” *Nébih*, March 17, 2021, accessed September 30, 2025, <https://portal.nebih.gov.hu/-/a-nebih-ismet-felmerte-a-magyar-elelmiszerek-aranyat-a-kiskereskedelmi-lancok-kinalataban>; “Magyar eredetű élelmiszerek részaránya a belföldi kiskereskedelmi láncok kínálatában,” *UNIVET*, March 25, 2024, accessed September 30, 2025, <https://univet.hu/hu/2024/03/magyar-eredetu-elelmiszerek-reszaranya-a-belfoldi-kiskereskedelmi-lancok-kinalataban/>.

44) Jennifer M. Barker, *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 15.

tion. What emerges is a filmic practice that works like a ritual transmuting historical visual and aural residues and opening the viewer to a widened sensorium grounded in place-based, *táltos*-derived materiality.

Some form of shamanism was practiced on most continents throughout history. While in certain regions we can speak of traditions that are still alive today, in others, such as the Hungarian context, shamanistic practices gradually receded and were largely erased from cultural and religious life with the establishment of Christianity as a state religion. In turning to Lichter's filmmaking through this lens, I understand *táltos* procedures not as ethnographic survivals but as material strategies capable of re-appropriating cultural memory and expanding perception beyond dominant representational regimes. This is where the conceptual framework of Colectivo Los Ingrávidos becomes essential. Their "Thesis on the Audiovisual"⁴⁵⁾ repositions experimental filmmaking as a shamanic materialism — a practice of burial and exhumation, of destroying images in order to transmute them into new forms of knowledge. While their work emerges from a Mexican cosmology, I draw on their terminology because it offers a precise vocabulary for processes I see locally embodied in Lichter's *táltos*-derived procedures: material dismemberment, ritual re-bonding, and perceptual rebirth. The value of Colectivo Los Ingrávidos, then, is not to impose a foreign model, but to situate *táltos* practice within the field of filmic shamanic materiality — a form of *táltos*-inflected shamanic matter where the film-body undergoes ritual breaking and rebinding. In this shared field, geographically specific rituals (Hungarian/Mexican) operate through analogous logics of decomposition and transformation, while retaining culturally distinct inflections.

Regarding shamanistic traditions, as Mircea Eliade's foundational study on shamanism demonstrates, the ecstatic techniques central to shamanic practice — such as soul-flight, spiritual dismemberment and reintegration, and communication with spirits — appear across Siberian, Central Asian, and Indigenous American cultures, among others. Eliade emphasizes that shamanism is not merely a system of belief but a "technique of ecstasy" through which the practitioner voluntarily enters altered states of consciousness to access cosmic realms, heal, or gain knowledge. These altered states are marked by out-of-body travel, often to the Upper or Lower Worlds, and by visionary encounters with spirits or ancestors.⁴⁶⁾

Such shamanic tradition was also present in pre-Christian East-Central Europe. In Hungarian tradition, the *táltos* occupies a similar mediatory role: one chosen from birth or by fate as a conduit between the human and the cosmic. As I already mentioned, the *táltos* entered trance states — *révülés* — through which they accessed celestial knowledge, healed, and warned the nation of danger. The *táltos*'s ecstatic journey often involved the symbolic death and rebirth of the self, akin to the initiatory visions of dismemberment and reconstitution described by Eliade in his accounts of Yakut shamans. Both figures undergo visionary metamorphosis that aligns them with a sacred temporality — what Mar-

45) In the Mexican context, the relationship between shamanic practices and experimental film has a longer history; nonetheless, the collective re-introduced this line of thought into contemporary experimental film discourse.

46) Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, trans. Willard R. Trask (London: Arkana, 1989).

garet Stutley, a scholar of religion and folklore, calls a state in which “primordial time” is accessed and linear temporality is suspended. This experience, often accompanied by enhanced sensory perception and the symbolic collapse of temporal sequence, allows shamans to “see in darkness” and make contact with an otherwise hidden order of reality.⁴⁷⁾ As ethnographer Éva Pócs notes, the initiation motif of the *táltos*, echoing other Eurasian shamanic procedures, includes “*dismemberment–bone removal–re-assembly/resurrection, and the cooking, ingesting and vomiting up of the candidate*” (italics in original).⁴⁸⁾ Similarly, ethnographer Ildikó Kríza describes the *táltos* — who may appear in human or animal form — as one who “can see the future, change its shape, and, more rarely, is able to be reborn.”⁴⁹⁾ Margit Tóth, a researcher of religions and folklore, also describes the figure of the *táltos* (whether male or female) as someone capable of traveling across realms and communicating with spirits of nature, animals, weather, and ancestors. The *táltos* could interpret dreams and heal illnesses. They often experienced visions and were therefore also called *látók* (“those who see”) or watchers. Through their journeys between realms, they were able to gain sacred knowledge or receive prophecies.⁵⁰⁾

In connecting *táltos* procedures to Lichter's film, I will evoke Los Ingrávidos' proposal. The collective argues that experimental cinema can operate as a form of shamanistic practice inasmuch as it may open liminal spaces, reconfigure perceptions, and guide viewers through altered states of awareness.⁵¹⁾ Lichter's practice, as I mentioned earlier, guides the viewers through and toward altered states of awareness akin to the *táltos*'s travels across realms and time planes to obtain knowledge that otherwise would not be accessible. *Nutrition Fugue* guides the viewers across these realms through its ritualizing treatment of the film strip, which echoes the *táltos*'s death and rebirth through which, ultimately, this hidden knowledge might be acquired and the perception liberated. Regarding Lichter's methodology, I also find it useful to evoke the collective's formulation of the “three shamanic procedures,” namely “*perspectivist* possession, *transformational* conversion and *speculative* bonding”⁵²⁾ (italics in original).

The collective criticizes how official image regimes — such as in this case, the Hungarian socialist state's visual regime — construct seemingly coherent and overdetermined representations that suppress antagonism and ambiguity.⁵³⁾ They advocate for a “cinema of

47) Margaret Stutley, *An Introduction to Shamanism* (London: Routledge, 2003), 29–30.

48) Éva Pócs, “The Hungarian *Táltos* and the Shamanism of Pagan Hungarians: Questions and Hypotheses,” *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 63, no. 1 (2018), 173.

49) Ildikó Kríza, “*Táltos* as a Supernatural Being in Hungarian Tales and Legends,” *Ethnographica et Folkloristica Carpathica*, no. 5–6 (1988), 257.

50) Margit Tóth, *Mágia: Hungarian Myth, Magic and Folklore* (Woodbury: Lewellyn Worldwide, 2024).

51) Colectivo Los Ingrávidos, “Thesis on the Audiovisual.”

52) Ibid.

53) It is important to note that Los Ingrávidos' discourse is, in many respects, sympathetic to socialist thought, and their concept of “shamanic materialism” is explicitly informed by Marxist theory. At the same time, the application and lived realities of Marxist, socialist, or communist principles have varied significantly across distinct cultural and historical contexts. The present analysis therefore refers to a specific manifestation of socialism — namely, the state-socialist framework of late-1970s to mid-1980s Hungary — rather than to Marxism as a philosophical tradition or to socialism in general. This distinction is not intended to contest the positive or transformative dimensions of these intellectual lineages. It should also be acknowledged that Los Ingrávidos' critique of “official image regimes” is shaped by their own geopolitical and cultural context,

appropriation” (a form of the political cinema of agitation) that entails an “aberrant sensory practice.”⁵⁴⁾ Although I have argued that in Lichter’s case his gesture culminates in a ritualistic form of cultural re-appropriation, his cinematic ritualization does entail an aberrant sensory practice, which manifests in the literal act of burial; a “funerary trance,” as Los Ingrávidos put it. In *Nutrition Fugue*, the reused footage — originally a socialist-era television advertisement showcasing an abundance of food products available in grocery stores (*közért*), creating the illusion of having a wide range of choices — exemplifies such a strategy. These images sought to produce not a sense of collective agency, but a managed impression of prosperity, sufficiency, and satisfaction. These images are dislodged from their original function through Lichter’s embodied gestures of literal burying, decaying, and exhumation, which physically alter the film material.

As Los Ingrávidos state, the act of burying images and sounds constitutes the kinetic trance state inherent to the appropriated audiovisual document. Every gesture of appropriation sets into motion and affirms the document’s opacity. This opacity, as a sensory attribute, initiates the Burial-Exhumation dialectic. That dialectic embodies the materialist and iconoclastic tension at the core of appropriation cinema. Within it, the Burial and Exhumation dialectic also expresses the testimonial aspect of the appropriative act.⁵⁵⁾ This rupture inherent in appropriation is what they determine as shamanic possession, conversion, and bonding.

The material undergoes a kind of shamanic, perspectivist *possession* described by Los Ingrávidos as a “sensory outburst,” in which the filmmaker reclaims the footage as unstable, affective matter in constant becoming. This affective and performative process culminates in the shamanic *conversion* explained as a “hyperkinetic stasis.”⁵⁶⁾ Indeed, in Lichter’s film, the material goes through a deep transformation and opens up to other temporalities, meanings, and other modes of perceiving and knowing, holding the explosive energy of motion in tension, almost frozen in its own intensity in a trans-like suspension.

In these shamanistic procedures, the body and its processes play a key role. The repeatable biological cycle of life, decay, and renewal is mirrored in the ritual logic of the *táltos*. During the initiation process, the symbolic act of ingesting and vomiting up the candidate enacts a ritualized version of the biological cycle of metabolism and transformation. The initiate undergoes a simulated material death — often represented through dismemberment or cooking — followed by rebirth through reassembly or expulsion. This chaotic and transformative procedure reflects the fundamental necessity of breaking down and reconstituting matter to sustain life. Lichter’s *Nutrition Fugue* performs a parallel process on the material level of film.

The work focuses on images of food, particularly processed meat, which themselves belong to the nutrient cycle of life sustenance. The filmmaker subjects the celluloid mate-

and such regimes may differ considerably from one context to another. In the Hungarian case, the relevant “official image regime” was produced by the socialist state leadership, which constructed the “seemingly coherent and overdetermined visual representations that suppress antagonism and ambiguity” — precisely the conditions described in the collective’s thesis.

54) Ibid.

55) Ibid.

56) Ibid.

rial — an archive of these images — to decay through burial and renewal through exhumation and reconstitution. The decomposing film emulsion thus stages the return of organic matter, both the celluloid and the depicted food, to the soil's continuous process of mattering, affirming that "it is impossible to make a distinction in any absolute sense between creation and renewal, beginning and returning, continuity and discontinuity, here and there, past and future."⁵⁷⁾ This logic of cyclical transformation also resonates with Hungarian burial customs that incorporate food, linking the linear human life cycle (birth and death) to a non-linear, ongoing cycle of sustenance and remembrance.⁵⁸⁾

Los Ingrávidos' term, speculative *bonding*, "involves the vindication of the irrational character of testimony as well as its supernatural drift."⁵⁹⁾ *Nutrition Fugue* affirms the value of testimony in its most expansive sense: one that emerges through the encounters between the appropriated material, the soil that holds its burial and exhumation, the filmmaker's embodied intent, and the viewer's situated experience. *Nutrition Fugue* operates within an "Aesthetics of Trance,"⁶⁰⁾ recognizing that truth may reside in affective intensities, sensory impressions, and irrational or visionary states rather than concrete fact. This allows testimony to slip beyond ordinary perception, becoming a living, shifting presence. The film achieves this through formal techniques, including the dense layering of superimposed materials, haptic textures, halting rhythms, and hypnotic repetition of the appropriated footage. These elements generate a perceptual agitation and a tactile visual field that unsettles the original advertisement's neutrality, drawing the viewer into mediate states of perception where sensation blurs into trance. In this altered mode of encounter, appropriation becomes a ritualistic and affectively charged practice, where memory and emotional residue cling to the visual surfaces. By inhabiting this aesthetic zone, the film stages a collision between materialist critique and shamanic drift, mobilizing the buried histories within the image while affirming the film's capacity to transmit meanings that exceed rational comprehension (see Figs. 5–6).

The film affirms the testimonial value of the encounter itself, allowing a broad spectrum of responses — emotions, visions, tactile and auditory resonances — to emerge as carriers of meaning. The sonic and visual agitation induced by its fragmentary but texturally dense montage and flickering rhythm disturbs perception, guiding it into mediate states in which memory and sensation collide. The document becomes a trance-inducing medium of exhumed fragments, irrational truths, and spectral presences. *Nutrition Fugue* thus enacts an appropriation practice that is at once materialist and shamanic, drawing on the sedimented weight of cultural and personal history while drifting toward otherworldly perceptual zones.

This dynamic can also be situated in East-Central Europe's post-socialist and post-imperial context, a region whose entangled historical condition, as both a self-identified Eu-

57) Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, ix.

58) For instance, in a Transdanubian village, the practice of placing food and drink into the mouth of the deceased explicitly aims to sustain the dead through the liminal passage of transition, binding the continuity of nourishment to death. See Tekla Dömötör, *Hungarian Folk Beliefs* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 262.

59) Colectivo Los Ingrávidos, "Thesis on the Audiovisual."

60) Ibid.



Figs. 5–6: Stills from *Nutrition Fugue* (Péter Lichter, 2018)

ropean subject and a repeatedly subordinated periphery, haunts its cultural productions. As I already pointed out, scholars like Dorota Kołodziejczyk and Siegfried Huigen argue, East-Central Europe is marked by an “inherently contradictory in-betweenness,”⁶¹⁾ shaped by the simultaneous aspiration to belong to Europe and the internalized perception of not quite measuring up to its normative ideals. The spectral qualities of *Nutrition Fugue*’s im-

61) Siegfried Huigen and Dorota Kołodziejczyk, “Introduction,” in *East-Central Europe between the Colonial and the Postcolonial in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Siegfried Huigen and Dorota Kołodziejczyk (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 1.

agery can thus be read as symptomatic of this liminal geography — a kind of sensory palimpsest where the residues of interrupted modernities and suspended promises of progress become affectively available through cinematic trance. The archival detritus repurposed in the film (advertising fragments once designed to manufacture desire and project a sanitized vision of socialist prosperity) returns here as haunted material, bearing traces of a peripheral modernity shaped less by colonial expansion than by a persistent anxiety of exclusion from it. In this light, the film's invocation of ritual, repetition, and altered perception may be understood not only as an aesthetic strategy, but also as a post-secular attempt to metabolize the region's fractured modernities — its state socialist past, neoliberal present, and the long shadow of a Europe that remains both an object of longing and a site of alienation.

In short, through *táltos* practices, Lichter invokes a cosmology in which fragmentation and trance function as thresholds of transformation and renewal. This visceral reworking enacts a ritual unmaking of cinematic form, opening perceptual states where memory, trauma, and myth coexist as affective rather than narrative knowledge. *Nutrition Fugue* does not depict; it performs knowledge. The film becomes a vehicle for ecstatic encounters, a trance-apparatus through which otherwise inaccessible truths may surface. Here lies the film's contribution to the discourse on contemporary experimental cinema, particularly in terms of geographic specificity and shamanic materiality: *Nutrition Fugue* articulates a distinctly Hungarian variant of filmic shamanic materiality. In Lichter's work, the *táltos* paradigm reveals how cinema itself may operate as *táltos matter* — a transformative medium of testimony, trance, and historical exhumation. The shamanic here is methodological, enacted at the level of cinematic material where burial, dismemberment, and rebirth unfold.

Conclusion

Péter Lichter's experimental film, *Nutrition Fugue*, emerges as a performative event, a material-discursive phenomenon that resists linear interpretation and instead invites situated, affective participation. The film operates at the intersection of process-oriented filmmaking practice that is founded in a participatory view of cinema, which resonates with the idea of ritualistic transformation, mobilizing cinema's potential to reconfigure not just meaning, but the very fabric of matter, space, and time. Through the burial and exhumation of socialist-era footage, the filmmaker does not simply repurpose archival material — he entangles it with soil, gesture, decay, and sensory affect, through which new configurations of the world come into being.

The gesture of performative ritualization extends to the viewer's embodied engagement. Through haptics, the film fosters an affective and performative encounter with the viewer, shaping the conditions of things as they emerge in experience. Watching *Nutrition Fugue* becomes a situated encounter, a trance-like mode of knowing in which historical sediment, personal and cultural memory, and sensory agitation collide. In this way, the film participates in shamanic possession, transformational conversion, and speculative bonding — cinematic procedures that rupture representational regimes and open liminal

spaces for affective and epistemological transformation. The film thus blurs the boundary between political critique and visionary experience, grounding its radical gesture in materialist aesthetics.

In this respect, Lichter's film aligns with the shamanic practice of the *táltos*-like gesture — opening, transmuting, surrendering — which emerges as both a formal and spiritual strategy: the film becomes a ritual site where dead images are reanimated, their vibrations disturbing dominant histories and narratives and opening viewers to trance-like, cosmic ways of knowing. In this trance-state, a collective dreaming may take place with the past that is not fixed, but alive and polytemporal. In excavating buried matter and conjuring aberrant sensorialities, *Nutrition Fugue* enacts a filmic ritualization: a cultural re-appropriation of historical narratives, aesthetics, and the senses.

Situated within the post-imperial and post-socialist conditions of East-Central Europe, *Nutrition Fugue* performs a regional testimony grounded in the geographically specific ritualization strategy of *táltos* procedures. It dislodges the visual residues of a once-regimented social order, and through haptic strategies, revealing the affective layers of a landscape shaped by historical fractures and shifting ideological terrains (the time of the Magyar tribes and their pre-Christian, shamanistic religion, the period of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the Russian occupation of Hungary, and the present populist regime). The resulting cinematic space is one of historical dissonance and sensory excess, where testimony pulses through image, sound, and matter as a living, metamorphic presence.

Acknowledgments

This article was supported by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) and created within the framework of the FWF-ESPRIT grant.

Bibliography

- Barad, Karen. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007).
- Barker, Jennifer M. *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).
- Bell, Catherine. *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).
- Colectivo Los Ingrávidos. "Thesis on the Audiovisual," *Non-Fiction*, no. 3 (2021), accessed September 30, 2025, <https://opencitylondon.com/non-fiction/issue-3-space/thesis-on-the-audiovisual/>.
- Coulthard, Lisa. "Haptic Aurality: Listening to the Films of Michael Haneke," *Film-Philosophy* 16, no. 1 (2012), 16–29.
- Csujá, László. "A Balázs Béla Stúdió vonzáskörzete: 'Irányított véletlenek' — Lichter Péter," *Balkon*, no. 1 (2013), 40–43.
- Diószegi, Vilmos. *A pogány magyarok hitvilága* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1983).
- Dömötör, Tekla. *Hungarian Folk Beliefs* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982).

- Eliade, Mircea. *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, trans. Willard R. Trask (London: Arkana, 1989).
- Gelencsér, Gábor, ed. *bbs 50: A Balázs Béla Stúdió 50 éve* (Budapest: Műcsarnok, 2009).
- Gerő, András. "A Kossuth kultusz," *Mozgó világ* 29, no. 4 (2004), accessed September 30, 2025, <https://epa.oszk.hu/01300/01326/00038/08gero.html>.
- Hornok, Rita. "Turanism as a political myth in the context of the Hungarian politics of memory," *Society Register* 9, no. 3 (2025), 77–100.
- Huigen, Siegfried, and Dorota Kołodziejczyk, eds. *East-Central Europe between the Colonial and the Postcolonial in the Twentieth Century* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023).
- Jutz, Gabriele. "Striking Textures, Sensuous Surfaces in Photography and Film," *Open Arts Journal*, no. 7 (2019), 11–25.
- Kim, Jihoon. "Bruce Elder's Film-Digital Hybrids and Materialist Historiography," *Millennium Film Journal*, no. 56 (2012), 30–40.
- Knowles, Kim. "Self-Skilling and Home Brewing: Some Reflections on Photochemical Film Culture," in *Process Cinema: Handmade Film in the Digital Age*, eds. Scott MacKenzie and Janine Marchessault (Montreal, Kingston, London, and Chicago: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019), 75–84.
- Kriza, Ildikó. "Táltos as a Supernatural Being in Hungarian Tales and Legends," *Ethnographica et Folkloristica Carpathica*, no. 5–6 (1988), 257–264.
- Marks, Laura U. *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).
- Nagy, Ádám. "A peremvidék kavalkádja: A Balázs Béla Stúdió vázlatos története és irányzatai," *Filmtett*, March 3, 2010, accessed September 30, 2025, <https://filmtett.ro/cikk/a-balazs-bela-studio-vazlatos-tortenete-es-iranyzatai>.
- Pócs, Éva. "The Hungarian Táltos and the Shamanism of Pagan Hungarians: Questions and Hypotheses," *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 63, no. 1 (2018), 149–196.
- Romsics, Ignác. *Magyarország története* (Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, 2017).
- Simonyi, Sonja. "The Man Behind the Curtain: Gábor Bódy, Experimental Film Culture and Networks of State Control in Late Socialist Hungary," *Third Text* 32, no. 4 (2018), 519–529.
- Stutley, Margaret. *An Introduction to Shamanism* (London: Routledge, 2003).
- Szalay, Dorottya. "Konceptualizmus egy kortárs magyar kísérleti filmben: Lichter Péter: Non-Places: Beyond the Infinite," *Alföld*, (2016), 88–95.
- Takahashi, Tess. "After the Death of Film: Writing the Natural World in the Digital Age," *Visible Language* 42, no. 1 (2008), 44–69.
- Takahashi, Tess. "Writing the World: Medium-Specificity and Avant-Garde Film in the Digital Age," in *Process Cinema: Handmade Film in the Digital Age*, eds. Scott MacKenzie and Janine Marchessault (Montreal, Kingston, London, and Chicago: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019), 459–483.
- Tóth, Margit. *Mágia: Hungarian Myth, Magic and Folklore* (Woodbury: Lewellyn Worldwide, 2024).

Filmography

8th October 2016 (Péter Lichter and Bori Máté, 2016)

Barokk Femina (Péter Lichter, 2020)

Empty Horses (Péter Lichter, 2019)

Frozen May (Péter Lichter, 2017)

George's Poem (Péter Lichter, 2018)

Non-Places: Beyond the Infinite (Péter Lichter, 2016)

Nutrition Fugue (Péter Lichter, 2018)

The Grey Machine (Péter Lichter, 2025)

The Mysterious Affair at Styles (Péter Lichter, 2022)

The Philosophy of Horror: A Symphony of Film Theory (Péter Lichter and Bori Máté, 2020)

The Rub (Péter Lichter and Bori Máté, 2018)

Biography

Bori Máté is currently an FWF ESPRIT post-doctoral researcher in the Department of Media Theory, at the University of Applied Arts Vienna, where she also completed her doctoral studies in 2025. She studied film history and film theory at the Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest. Her current research focuses on experimental cinema, elemental media and alchemy. Máté has been publishing articles in such journals as the *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* and the *Millennium Film Journal*. She guest edited the special issue (2/2023) called “(Eco)Traumatic Landscapes in Contemporary Audiovisual Culture” at the Czech Journal for Film Theory, History, and Aesthetics, *Iluminace*. As an experimental filmmaker, her works have been screened at festivals like the Berlin Critics’ Week, the International Film Festival Rotterdam, or the Jihlava IDFF. In May 2022 Máté also curated the program “Eco Cinema” (screening and lecture) — a collaboration between the joint university program Lectures for Future and the Department of Media Theory.

Email: barbatrukk1@gmail.com

<https://doi.org/10.58193/ilu.1827>

Ludo de Roo  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3439-949X>
(Macquarie University, Australia)

Kidlat Tahimik: Metaphorical Journeys in Decolonial Cinema

Abstract

Philippine filmmaker Kidlat Tahimik's debut film *Perfumed Nightmare* (1979) reveals a sophisticated use of what I term "concrete metaphor:" while evoking complex layers of decolonial critique, his 16mm cinematography keeps the metaphorical abstractions firmly grounded in material reality — a stone bridge, tropical foliage, and rustic sounds of nature. This essay considers the complex role of concrete metaphors in Tahimik's evolving style. I start by showing how, on the one hand, multimodal extensions of cognitive metaphor theory (CMT) illuminate the dynamic structure of Tahimik's cinematic metaphors. On the other hand, due to CMT's intrinsic emphasis on universal cognitive structures, I consider its limitation in accounting for geographic specificity — a key factor anchoring Tahimik's cultural critique. Through close analysis of the bridge sequences in *Perfumed Nightmare*, and later a central scene in *Balikbayan #1 Redux VI* (2016), I retrace how Tahimik's aesthetic practice displays a subtle transition in his position in decolonial discourse. His earlier work aims at subverting Orientalist binaries from a universal position, where his concrete metaphors — materially amplified in 16mm cinematography — anchor his critique in its region. Instead, his later work increasingly speaks from the Philippines' Cordillera region; by interweaving celluloid and digital film formats, Tahimik creates essayistic mixtures that are ontologically confounding — here, the material presence of his concrete metaphors generates continuity for his conceptual critique.

Keywords

cinematic metaphor, conceptual metaphor theory, decolonial film theory, film geography, Kidlat Tahimik

“Does the word ‘contradiction’ have anything to do with ‘contradictorship’?”¹⁾

“Sometimes we feel we lost our roots. Neither this, neither that. Neither Western nor Oriental.”²⁾

Introduction

Philippine filmmaker Kidlat Tahimik's debut film *Perfumed Nightmare* (Mababangong Bangunot, 1979) opens with a simple scene: a stone bridge arching over a tropical river, sounds from the rural setting pervading the soundtrack. Within four minutes this bridge accumulates extraordinary metaphorical weight, evoking colonial history, economic exploitation, and ideological discipline. And yet the bridge never loses its perceptual presence as a material object in a specific place: its solid texture and its surrounding atmosphere remain sensorily present to us through the audiovisual image, even as the metaphorical meaning accrues — conceptual abstraction grounded in rural Philippines.

The first part of this essay examines the bridge sequence in *Perfumed Nightmare* as an instance of Tahimik's decolonial critique expressed in the cinematic form of what I call “concrete metaphors:” tropes where elemental material anchors abstract meaning in specific places. I propose this notion as an extension of multimodal conceptual metaphor theory (CMT). While CMT clarifies the dynamic structure of Tahimik's cinematic metaphors, due to its emphasis on universal cognitive structures it cannot account for the concrete situatedness of meaning that is vital to Tahimik's decolonial discourse. Concrete metaphors address this limitation by binding critique to the physical environment of the Philippines.

In the second half of the essay, I situate Tahimik's complex position within decolonial cinema, arguing that his subversion of traditional East-West binaries requires understanding his location in the Malay Archipelago. In this period, his 16mm filming of concrete elements emphasizes the material specificity of landscape as site of decolonial critique. I next consider how Tahimik's later films complicate these aesthetic processes, exemplified by *Balikbayan #1: Memories of Overdevelopment* (1980–2023): while Tahimik's positioning shifts from strategic ambivalence to explicit grounding in the Cordillera region, he also increasingly interweaves celluloid and digital formats. This creates an evolved approach to concrete metaphors, sustained through Tahimik's thoroughgoing use of material elements.

1) Kidlat de Guia, interrogating his father, Kidlat Tahimik, in the section “We Are Colonial Red White and Blue,” in *Why is Yellow the Middle of the Rainbow* (Bakit Dilaw ang Gitna ng Bahaghari?; Kidlat Tahimik, 1994).

2) Tahimik, in *Japanese Summers of a Filipino Fundoshi* (1996).

Crossing the Bridge

The bridge in the opening scene of *Perfumed Nightmare* arches over a river in a tropical forest, with chirping birds and croaking frogs pervading the soundtrack. Shot on expired 16mm stock, with abundant foliage concealing much of the frame, only a colorful jeepney crossing accentuates the bridge's curvature.³⁾ The visuals are accompanied by a voice-over, which we come to recognize as Tahimik's voice, first speaking in Tagalog, quickly followed by Tahimik dubbing the same lines in English:

This is the bridge to our village. It is the only way into Balian. [pause; the jeepney reverses] And it is the only way out. Our bridge is three meters wide by ten meters long. It is our bridge of life.⁴⁾



Fig. 1: An expired 16mm film image showing a bridge perched over a river, as a jeepney crosses the bridge. Screengrab from *Perfumed Nightmare* (Kidlat Tahimik, 1979). [Image courtesy of dafilms.com.]

A fade to black. The next instance shows the bridge filmed from the front, with a large truck loaded with logs of wood. Tahimik's voice-over explains (in English) that this bridge was built by the Spanish colonizers — destroying the bamboo version his grandfather built — and was subsequently expanded under U.S. imperialism. “The bridge is used by everybody. It is used by those who make big profits [pause]” (i.e., the wood industry), and

3) Jeepneys are converted military jeeps, left by the United States army, converted into abundantly decorated, chrome-adorned vehicles for public transport, ubiquitous in the Philippines. As Tahimik explains at this juncture in *Perfumed Nightmare*, jeepneys are “vehicles of war which we made into vehicles of life.”

4) *Perfumed Nightmare*, 0’41”.



Fig. 2: Kidlat Tahimik acting as a four year old version of himself, pulling a toy jeepney over the bridge. Screen-grab from *Perfumed Nightmare* (1979). [Image courtesy of dafilms.com.]

it is used by those who make small profits” (showing a few kids selling ice cream).⁵⁾ Merely ninety seconds into the film, Tahimik has already charged his metaphor (“this is our bridge of life”) with both colonial and economic connotations — and this is just the start.

The next scene introduces Tahimik on-screen (a grown-up Philippine man in a colorful shirt and a distinct bowl cut hairdo), traversing the bridge on foot, pulling a small string over his left shoulder. “I first tried to cross the bridge when I was three years old,” says the voice-over, now displaying in close-up a tiny toy jeepney, pulled forward by the string. In the next close-up, the protagonist squarely addresses the camera: “I am Kidlat Tahimik, I choose my vehicle, and I can cross *this* bridge.”⁶⁾ This scene is repeated twice more, intercut with scenes of local life, with Tahimik’s voice-over explaining (accompanying grainy images filmed in hand-held shots, documenting residents’ life) that the bridge is used for parades of beauty contests, “those who promote discipline and uniformity” (as images show marching military men), as well as for church processions.⁷⁾ These spectacles are punctuated, however, by interjecting the images of the bridge a few times — Tahimik wearing the same outfit; the pattern of close-ups repeating those of before, the narration virtually reiterating the same lines:

5) Ibid., 1’17”.

6) Ibid., 1’52”.

7) As Christopher Pavsek points out, this quote echoes “an old propaganda slogan of the martial law regime,” which during the time of *Perfumed Nightmare*’s release was still in full form. Christopher Pavsek, *The Utopia of Film: Cinema and Its Futures in Godard, Kluge, and Tahimik* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 159.

Again, I tried to cross the bridge by myself, when I was four years old. “I am Kidlat Tahimik, and I can cross any bridge!”

[...]

Today I am still trying to make that final crossing [pause] to freedom. “I am Kidlat Tahimik. I choose my vehicle, and I can cross *all* bridges.”⁸⁾

In the second recurrence, when Tahimik is supposed to be four years old, he pulls a string with only a slightly larger jeepney model, rolling off the bridge. In the third and final iteration of this act, a mature Tahimik pretends to pull a real-life jeepney over the bridge of life, where the images leave little doubt that the car’s engine is doing the heavy lifting.

— — —

Just four minutes into the film, the sequence burdens the bridge with various abstract connotations, negotiating the protagonist’s comedic maturation with Tahimik’s sociopolitical observations. Through some of the simplest cinematic means — minimalist camera set-ups, editing, and repetition — Tahimik evokes a playful, lively ricocheting of inventive associations that, stupendously, lightheartedly address some of the country’s burdensome history. His rich range of connotations playfully retains its figurative force without undermining any of its various connotations; rather, these inferences effortlessly amalgamate into complexly layered, meaningful musings. To pun: how does Tahimik incrementally increase the burden carried by the bridge (or pull the magnified jeepney), without breaking its arch (or his back)?

It might be tempting to render Tahimik’s unfolding of powerful tropes as symbols, or perhaps even as allegory, but neither aesthetic category fits exactly.⁹⁾ For his crossing of the bridge to be framed as an allegory, the entire film would have to *structurally* elaborate the figure of the bridge, as e.g., the lifeboat narrative does in *Life of Pi* (Ang Lee, 2012). However, framing *Perfumed Nightmare*’s whole story world in one order of narrative meaning (e.g., “escaping” rural Balian) would insufficiently account for these other dominant tropes.¹⁰⁾ Nor is Tahimik’s interweaving of cultural conventions strictly symbolical, as it is precisely aimed at *uprooting* the quasi-established nature that symbols seek to create: that is, rather than fixing meaning, he systematically undermines and contradicts these.¹¹⁾

8) *Perfumed Nightmare*, 2’45”; and *ibid.*, 3’56”. Quotation marks indicate the on-screen text uttered by the protagonist, addressing the camera.

9) Thanks to the reviewers for pressing the need for this clarification.

10) Brevity requires me to bracket out such themes — e.g., Tahimik commentators frequently comment on his space travel metaphors; cf. Harrod Suarez, “Among the Sensuous: Listening to Film, Listening to the Philippines,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 8, no. 1 (2011); Pavsek, *The Utopia of Film*, in *passim*; and Charles Fairbanks, “Great Directors: Tahimik, Kidlat,” *Senses of Cinema*, January, 2022, accessed May 25, 2025, <https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2022/great-directors/tahimik-kidlat/>.

11) Cognitive linguist Zoltán Kövecses states that “symbols” are “well-entrenched metaphors” in culture, see Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 65. Similarly, hermeneutician Paul Ricœur explains that symbols have a “bound” nature, whereas a “metaphor is a free intervention of discourse” (cf. *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995), 53). Thanks to Martin Rossouw for the reference to Ricœur.

Therefore, I suggest that much of the complex *dynamic process* that produces abstract meaning in Tahimik's film can be explained by turning to the contemporary paradigm of "cinematic metaphor."¹² Building on the cognitive linguistic framework pioneered by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, the central idea of conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) is that our everyday thought and action is fundamentally shaped by our use of embodied-linguistic concepts.¹³ In this instance, Tahimik's *BRIDGE* becomes what Johnson calls a "location metaphor," carrying the "event structure" that conceives of events as *moving along a path* toward some destination.¹⁴ For instance, one of CMT's major schemata, the *LIFE IS A JOURNEY* metaphor, renders the *BRIDGE* as location and the *JEEPNEY* carrying the event structure of the conceptual metaphor.¹⁵ This means that Tahimik utilizes the figure of the Balian bridge to map the action as a *structure* from the "source domain" (traditional life in the community, at one shore) to the "target domain" (an as-of-yet undisclosed future, at the other shore).¹⁶ As such, the *BRIDGE* — literally, a concrete, stable entity — carries the (figurative) aspiration of the film's protagonist: from the rural village to Manila and beyond: to freedom.

But clearly, this initial gleaning unduly relies on Tahimik's verbal expression (i.e., on the soundtrack): by staying within the linguistic basis of CMT, this overlooks what Charles Forceville has called the "multimodal discourse" fundamental to the medium of cinema.¹⁷ Multimodal scholarship on CMT extends Noël Carroll's observation that metaphors in moving images are primarily visual depictions,¹⁸ suggesting that cinema combines — besides spoken words and visual images — also sounds, as well as movements, in a complex, edited form.¹⁹ Such multimodal expansions of CMT help to clarify the *dynamic structure*

12) Cf. Kathrin Fahlenbach, ed., *Embodied Metaphors in Film, Television, and Video Games: Cognitive Approaches* (New York: Routledge, 2016); and Cornelia Müller and Hermann Kappelhoff, *Cinematic Metaphor: Experience, Affectivity, Temporality* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2018).

13) See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, "Conceptual Metaphor in Everyday Language," *The Journal of Philosophy* 77, no. 8 (1980); and George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago University Press, 2003) [First published in 1980]. NB. Henceforth I adopt the CMT practice to render metaphors in small caps.

14) "Many of our actions — both physical actions toward spatial locations, and mental actions directed toward abstract goals — are metaphorically construed as journeys toward destinations," see Mark Johnson, *Moral Imagination: Implications of Cognitive Science for Ethics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 39.

15) *Ibid.*, 39. Below I say more about the *JEEPNEY* metaphor.

16) In contrast to metonyms, discussed below, in metaphors the "source" and "target" domains are of different orders. See *ibid.*, 39, for more detail.

17) Forceville, "Non-Verbal and Multimodal Metaphor in a Cognitivist Framework: Agendas for Research," in *Cognitive Linguistics: Current Applications and Future Perspectives*, eds. Gitte Kristiansen, Michel Achard, Michel Dirven, and Francisco Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez (Berlin: de Gruyter Mouton, 2006), 379–402.

18) My use of "cinematic metaphor" is, however, distinct from Carroll's narrower concept of "strict film metaphor," which relies on what he calls "homospaciality" (where two disparate elements are fused *in the same figure*) that are "physically noncompossible" in the real world. Carroll also discusses what he calls the "concreteness objection," i.e. the concern that photographic specificity resists metaphorical abstraction. I address this below in relation to Kracauer's film ontology, in the section "Concrete Situations of Meaning." See Noël Carroll, "A Note on Film Metaphor," in *Theorizing the Moving Image* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 212–223, esp. 213, 217–219.

19) The most recent succinct overview of the current state of the field is provided by Charles Forceville, "Metaphor: A Key Instrument to Guide Perspective in Moving Images," *In Media Res (MediaCommons)*, October 6,

of Tahimik's use of metaphors in the sequence described phenomenologically above. In what follows, I provide a detailed micro-level analysis of the opening sequence by highlighting what Cornelia Müller and Hermann Kappelhoff call the "expressive movements" of the audiovisual forms of Tahimik's cinematic metaphor, that is, the temporally structured composition of movement-images that modulate the viewer's affective experience, shaping the dynamic flow from which the metaphorical meaning emerges.²⁰⁾

Multimodal Complications

Let us start with the movement across the bridge. Visually, this is amplified by the playful, reiterated depiction of the jeepney: pulled as toy vehicles over the bridge by an enacted three-year-old, a four-year-old, and later as the matured protagonist inside the motorized car. In multimodal CMT idiom, the visual modality highlights the JEEPNEY as a *moving* object, in contrast to the stable, stagnant entity of the built BRIDGE — which Tahimik emphasizes by repeating the same photographic framing of the bridge (i.e., from the same angle) and a continuous soundscape. The visual comedy comes in combination with other modalities: besides the voice-over ("I choose my vehicle, and I can cross *all* bridges"), we should add the clever editing of interjections (as we shall see shortly). As a *multimodal* conceptual metaphor, then, the JEEPNEY comes to convey Tahimik's development from toddler to adult, indicating the significance of Tahimik's ability to traverse the BRIDGE.

First, the modality of visual movement complicates the application of CMT's (linguistic) LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor mentioned above, turning it into a highly *dynamic* structure.²¹⁾ For instance, its so-called SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema usually implies a single, forward-moving trajectory, where the BRIDGE (location) and JEEPNEY (event structure) stand for leaving the village.²²⁾ Yet committing to a monodirectional reading would result in ignoring Tahimik's powerful evocation of the inverse direction, expressed both visually (i.e., traffic coming into the village) and verbally (recall the opening lines: "It is the only way into Balian. And it is the only way out").²³⁾ Instead, the dynamic bidirectionality provides the tension to the BRIDGE metaphor. Additionally, CMT's LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor also needs to accommodate the figurative weight of the multiple additional connotations that the JEEPNEY metaphor carries, intensified by its multimodal expressive movement. For instance, like the bridge, this motorized vehicle is a relic of an imperial past; at the same time, as it comedically accumulates in size, it dynamically represents the

2025, accessed October 10, 2025, <https://mediacommons.org/imr/content/metaphor-key-instrument-guide-perspective-moving-images>.

20) My approach takes guidance from the "CinMet" methodology developed by Müller and Kappelhoff (cf. their "Appendix," in *Cinematic Metaphor*, 226–247).

21) Forceville provides a productive reading of this trope in two of Agnès Varda's essay films, recasting the metaphor as A QUEST IS A JOURNEY metaphor, in Charles Forceville, "The Journey Metaphor and the Source-Path-Goal Schema in Agnès Varda's Autobiographical Gleaning Documentaries," in *Beyond Cognitive Metaphor Theory*, ed. Monika Fludernik (London: Routledge, 2011), 281–297.

22) Johnson suggests a moral norm: deviation from the path appears immoral (Johnson, *Moral Imagination*, 43).

23) As I shall show shortly, Tahimik's decolonial discourse relies precisely on the insertions (through his editing) that undermine the monodirectional attempt to "escape" his village.

inflated burden of leaving the rural village. Combined, these multimodal dimensions in Tahimik's sequence turn CMT's LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor into an expressive, polysemic layering of several related conceptual schemas — to which we must still add further modalities.

A second multimodal factor in this sequence is, as noted, Tahimik's clever use of montage. His cinematic metaphor complicates connotations by carrying content across scenes, accruing salience and further polysemic complexity via shot transitions and through scaffolded repetition. Consider the aforementioned series of interjections punctuating Tahimik's figurative maturation — brief interruptions showing rural life in the village. On one level, one might take *the content* of these interpolations at face value, as innocent ethnographic glimpses of the Philippine countryside establishing the *couleur locale*.²⁴⁾ Yet, on closer scrutiny, one cannot disregard that Tahimik's threefold assemblage elicits precisely those social domains that order village life from the outside: i.e., beauty contests (a biopolitical regime introducing Western standards); the national army (at a time when the conjugal dictatorship increased its command on the country), and the Catholic Church (preserving a metaphysical organization justifying foreign habits and worldview). Therefore, the montage of this intricate combination requires a twofold commentary.

First, note that, structurally, each of these interjections operates independently as an autonomous *metonym*; it is Tahimik's sequential juxtaposition that affords them *metaphorical* force.²⁵⁾ That is, taken separately, every interpolation functions *metonymically*, since it maps parts onto a whole *within* one conceptual domain (e.g., the army is part of the authoritative dictatorship). Tahimik's editing combines these into visual parallels, which renders them onto a proper metaphorical structure: i.e., mapping their meaning on a higher conceptual order. This first comment clarifies how his specific series of metonymic interjections become cinematic metaphors precisely by virtue of their multimodal form — setting into motion the gradual escalation that solicits the ideological discourse of Tahimik's decolonial critique. Second, recall that these interpolations not only mirror each other; they also “supercharge” the already-established visual-dynamic BRIDGE and JEEPNEY metaphors: that is, the editing implies a causal relation (or at least a correlation) between, on one hand, these threefold ideological domains and, on the other, the protagonist's emphatic (monodirectional) attempts to *leave* the village as represented by the Balian bridge and Tahimik's jeepney. Combined, these brief sociopolitical interjections signal how, as built infrastructure, the BRIDGE plays a key role in imposing discipline onto Balian, turning it into a “glocal” village.²⁶⁾

24) Catherine Russell convincingly argues against such overly naïve interpretations; see her *Experimental Ethnography: The Work of Film in the Age of Video* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 295–301, to which I return below.

25) The following distinction between metonyms and metaphors draws on Maarten Coëgnarts, “Analyzing Metaphor in Film: Some Conceptual Challenges,” in *Current Approaches to Metaphor Analysis in Discourse*, ed. Ferrando Ignasi i Navarro (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2019), 295–320.

26) Cf. Roland Robertson, “Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity,” in *Global Modernities*, eds. Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson (London: Sage Publications, 1995, 25–44). Tahimik's short film *Japanese Summers of a Filipino Fundoshi* (1996) [henceforth “*Japanese Summers...*”] displays his most explicit critique of the effect of how Western aesthetics alienated Filipino culture from the inside out.



Fig. 3: Brief inserts show the bridge being used by beauty pageant contests, Catholic processions, and here, military parades. Screengrab from *Perfumed Nightmare* (1979). [Image courtesy of dafilms.com.]

In juxtaposition, then, this dialectic progressively invokes — without showing — an imagined reverse, historical trajectory, into the village: to be clear, the conceptual elicitation of the decolonial discourse is only accomplished on a conceptual plain — i.e., fulfilled by the viewer.²⁷⁾ Decisive in making this a *cinematic metaphor*, then, is that the abstract layer of connotation (the conceptual domain) is never explicitly “in” the image: based on the content supplied by Tahimik, the spectator mentally *combines* these metonyms, *completing* them as abstract metaphor.

Decolonial Discourse

Taking stock of my analysis so far, my diagnostic turn to multimodal extensions of CMT has helped to clarify the formal structure of Tahimik’s conceptual metaphor in the opening sequence of *Perfumed Nightmare*. My interpretation has foregrounded the expressive dynamic set up by a push-and-pull tension between the *depicted* source domains (the BRIDGE and JEEPNEY; in conjunction with its counterpoints, the three ideological metonyms) that consistently appeal to an inferred target domain — namely, Tahimik’s decolonial critique. And yet, while multimodal CMT accounted for the dynamic aspects of this metaphor, the more culturally specific aspects are insufficiently explained by CMT.

This explanatory gap is quite reasonable, though, given the theoretical premise of CMT: if cognitive linguistics’ chief explanatory power is its *universal application*, inversely

27) Cf. Müller and Kappelhoff, *Cinematic Metaphor*, ch. 3.

its assumed “globality” inevitably subsumes the more idiosyncratic cultural-historical context of an expressed metaphor.²⁸⁾ Film-theoretical proponents of CMT also observe that, since the theory explains metaphors “through the recourse to a physiological level of universal hard-wired cognitive structures,” the theory turns “the *concrete situatedness of meaning* [...] into something secondary.”²⁹⁾ However, as noted, my analysis so far has established that these concrete situatedness of meaning are anything but of a second order of meaning; even if ever so subtly evoked, the various modalities clearly indicate that Tahimik’s anticipated target domain is evidently at the level of *decolonial critique*. At this juncture, it is therefore necessary to expand my multimodal CMT analysis by including the director’s sociohistorical context in his geographic region — the Philippines, situated in the Malay Archipelago, in South-East Asia.

As noted, Tahimik is widely regarded as a decolonial filmmaker.³⁰⁾ In fact, scholars consistently turn to the Balian bridge in *Perfumed Nightmare*: even if their interpretations vary, they consistently interpret the built structure as a decolonial trope. Alison Boldero theorizes it as a “liminal space” in the narrative, while Danielle Bouchard interprets the bridge as a “loaded metaphor of ongoing imperial ‘encounter.’”³¹⁾ Most influential — and also notorious — is, however, Fredric Jameson’s reading of Tahimik.³²⁾ He maps Tahimik along an East-West axis, interpreting both the bridge and the jeepney as facilitating an “exchange” between the Philippines and Europe (and, by extension, the United States). In fact, his observation that a “First-World / Third-World dialectic is [...] inscribed within the film, *in its very form and the structure of its viewing*,” largely corroborates my multimodal CMT interpretation so far.³³⁾ Moreover, Jameson incidentally suggests a relevant, critical expansion of CMT by describing the process set up by a film like Tahimik’s as “cognitive mapping,” which he defines as a political aesthetic “pedagogy” that “seeks to endow the individual subject with some new heightened sense of its place in the global system.”³⁴⁾ His notion captures well how the viewer establishes a connection between the localized experience of the individual while “mapping” it within the globalized totality of the late-capitalist system.

28) For this line of criticism on linguistic applications of CMT, see e.g., Zoltán Kövecses, *Extended Conceptual Metaphor Theory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

29) Müller and Kappelhoff, *Cinematic Metaphor*, 19, emphasis added. For other critiques, see e.g. Kathrin Fahlenbach, “Audiovisual Metaphors as Embodied: Narratives in Moving Images,” in *Embodied Metaphors in Film, Television, and Video Games: Cognitive Approaches*, ed. Kathrin Fahlenbach (New York: Routledge, 2016), 33–50; and Maike Sarah Reinert, “Metaphors of the Mind in Film: A Cognitive-Cultural Perspective,” in *Embodied Metaphors in Film*, ed. Kathrin Fahlenbach (New York: Routledge, 2016), 218–233.

30) See, besides the sources cited subsequently, also Suarez (“Among the Sensuous”), Pavsek (*The Utopia of Film*), and Fairbanks (“Tahimik”).

31) See Alison R. Boldero, “Rituals of Remaindered Life in the Films of Kidlat Tahimik” (Master’s Thesis, Graduate Faculty Liberal Studies, The City University of New York, 2019), 14; Danielle Bouchard, “The Limits of the Anthropocene: Anticolonial Humanity in Kidlat Tahimik’s *Mababangong Bangungot* [*Perfumed Nightmare*] and Souleyman’s *Cissé’s Yeelen*,” *Interventions* 24, no. 7 (2022), 1166. This discussion skips the CMT convention of using small caps for metaphors, as none of these scholars work within this paradigm.

32) Fredric Jameson, *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

33) *Ibid.*, 204, emphasis added.

34) Cf. Jameson, *Geopolitical Aesthetic*, 188–189. The definition I quote from his *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* ([London: Verso, 1991], 54).

Despite its merits, Jameson's interpretations have become tarnished some three decades later, as some of his vocabulary betrays his own colonial prejudice. If Jameson takes the Balian bridge as mediating the different "cultural stages," one might forgive him the superseded idiom (i.e., "Third World" vs "First World") if his temporal hierarchy ("past" and "future") were not as dubious.³⁵⁾ A similar problem is his insistence on framing Tahimik as a naïve "clown," with Tahimik uniquely situated in "the East" [my scare quotes]: he delivers a "particular story," Jameson writes, "one feels like saying, no European or First-World writer or film-maker could tell."³⁶⁾ As Charles Fairbanks points out, some of Tahimik's gags clearly operate in the burlesque tradition of Jacques Tati and Charlie Chaplin in order to "extend their logic, just as children do in an imaginative play."³⁷⁾ Still, this does not justify Jameson's reducing Tahimik's comedic talent to the positionality of the exotic Other. Roland J. Tolentino aptly identifies the problem with this extensive reiteration of *simplified* binary structures: on Jameson's reading, it seems that "the 'First World' remains the site of modernity and rationality while the 'Third World' remains the site of nativism and rituals."³⁸⁾ Indeed, if anything, my analysis of Tahimik's elaborate metaphorical compositions so far establishes that the Philippine filmmaker clearly thrusts his enactment of East-West binaries with not a little frivolous ambiguity. Tahimik's embrace of this binary logic plays out on at least three layers.

On one level, there is an elusive performativity to his on-screen personage, where his "Kidlat Tahimik" is neither fact nor fiction, but instead an abstruse, indescribable in-between.³⁹⁾ This ambiguity is further complicated on another level, as Catherine Russell convincingly argues, by Tahimik's inclusion of "autoethnographic" rituals.⁴⁰⁾ These rituals are ironic, self-aware "performance[s] of the primitive," Russell claims, specifically referring to Tahimik's use of a toy model jeepney as another form of "acting out" and "playing primitive."⁴¹⁾ Third, we must consider Tahimik's intended audience: as Joel David notes, at this point in his career Tahimik "catered more to the tastes of European cineastes rather than of the Hollywood-influenced star- and genre-oriented Filipino moviegoers."⁴²⁾ In short, his witty undermining of conventional Orientalist discourse is anything but straightforward: on the contrary, by embracing global arthouse conventions — diametrically opposing domestic mainstream cinema — Tahimik intentionally *destabilizes* the supposed East-West or First World / Third World binaries.

35) Cf. Jameson, *Geopolitical Aesthetic*, 196.

36) *Ibid.*, 195.

37) Fairbanks, "Tahimik," n.p.

38) Roland B. Tolentino, "Jameson and Tahimik," *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints* 44, no. 1 (1996), 120. See also Deborah Dixon and Leo Zonn, "Confronting the Geopolitical Aesthetic: Fredric Jameson, *The Perfumed Nightmare* [sic] and the Perilous Place of Third Cinema," *Geopolitics* 10, no. 2 (2005), 304.

39) Space does not permit me to say more about this performative character of Tahimik's style; while partially jesting, the multiple personae also partake in the autobiographical essay film, which — as Tolentino points out — reflects on the building of the Philippine nation, cf. Roland B. Tolentino, "Subjectivity and Nation in Filipino Autobiographical Documentaries," in *National/Transnational: Subject Formation, Media, and Cultural Politics in and on the Philippines* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2001), 112–124, esp. 115.

40) Cf., Russell, *Experimental Ethnography*, 295–301.

41) Russell argues that the inclusions of toy figures is a common trope; cf. *ibid.*, 299.

42) Joel David, *Wages of Cinema: Film in Philippine Perspective* (Diliman, Quezon City: University of Philippines Press, 1998), 69.

This amounts to the observation that Tahimik's geographical positioning in *Perfumed Nightmare* is quite paradoxical. On the one hand, his films speak from the Philippines about the country's complex postcolonial situation: with its diverse Indigenous cultures shaped by Spanish colonization, U.S. imperialism, and ongoing globalization; and political problems during the postwar period, alternating martial law with protracted dictatorship (~1965–1986), amounting to a difficult post-authoritarian transition (~1980s–present). On the other hand, in his early films — such as *Perfumed Nightmare* — he ironically embraces Western discourse and aesthetics to develop a careful deflation of precisely these Orientalist framings. As I shall demonstrate below, what is compelling about Tahimik is how, over his five-decade career, the filmmaker's own relation to — and his positioning within his geographical region — progressively evolves. As we shall see, this is visible in his aesthetic style.

Concrete Situations of Meaning

The best way to ground my argument regarding Tahimik's evolving cinematic aesthetics is to consider one further crucial aspect of *Perfumed Nightmare*. Striking in my phenomenological description is how his imaginative evocations are expressed through a rather modest set of audiovisual techniques. As I shall argue presently, it is precisely this cinematic form that grounds Tahimik's complex compositions of decolonial metaphors in the “concrete situatedness of meaning.”

Notice, first, that the cinematic means he serves himself with are quite minimalist.⁴³⁾ For instance, within the first four minutes of *Perfumed Nightmare* Tahimik emphatically refrains from visually depicting life *beyond* the village.⁴⁴⁾ The screen's granular images remain curiously static and uncommonly repetitive, showing the bridge first from the side (with tropic foliage partially obscuring the view), then from the front, with (as mentioned) a few scenic shots of the village edited into the sequence. Second, it merits emphasis that Tahimik recurrently addresses his spectator directly, breaking the fourth wall, willfully rousing our imagination. As each next interjection adds further metaphorical force onto the figure of the bridge, phenomenologically speaking, each odd, slightly varying repetition of Tahimik's direct appeal lingers a little longer, gradually opening poetic space. Third and finally, on an aural level, *Perfumed Nightmare* is also highly intricate: as Harrod Suarez persuasively shows, Tahimik's shifts between Tagalog and English are particularly meaningful, as in this scene “the volume of his Tagalog is steadily decreased in favor of the English translation” with each next iteration.⁴⁵⁾

43) I save for a later essay the argument that his aesthetic choice arguably stems from his critique of commercial filmmaking, in that his alternative “cups-of-gas” approach delivers yet another form of decolonial critique. Cf. Kidlat Tahimik, “Cups-of-Gas Filmmaking Vs. Full Tank-Cum-Credit Card Filmmaking,” *Discourse* 11, no. 2 (1989), 80–86.

44) Certainly, much of *Perfumed Nightmare* takes place in the Global North, and yet Tahimik always edits it in counterpoint to life in the Philippines.

45) Suarez, “Among the Sensuous,” 73.

Moreover, the coarse texture of his film practice evokes Siegfried Kracauer's ontology of film, where the striking materiality of Tahimik's gritty photochemical film stock lends a strong indexicality to these depictions.⁴⁶⁾ Crucially, the acute physical reality *within* Tahimik's images amplify this very indexicality: compared to other realist film ontologies, Kracauer emphasizes so-called "indeterminate" elements — rustling leaves, undulating waves, moving clouds — as *revealing* worldly phenomena.⁴⁷⁾ As Jordan Schonig clarifies, such incidental elements cannot be staged; they let "the autonomy of the world unfold independently of authorial control."⁴⁸⁾ These contingencies add a radical realism to the photographic image: the incidentals are revelatory of rural life in the Philippines; and, critically, these elemental phenomena are captured by the photochemical process of physical cinematography. As Kracauer explains, these elements "would hardly be perceived *were it not for the motion picture camera's ability* to catch them on the wing."⁴⁹⁾ In *Perfumed Nightmare*, both the photographic materialism of the 16mm film stock *and* the accrued contingent elements (the repeated audiovisual depiction of the stone bridge; tropical foliage; croaking frogs...) lend an *ontological depth* to the images — a realism firmly rooting the abstract connotations of Tahimik's conceptual metaphors in the historical, geographical context of the film's recording.

In fact, we might amplify this claim by considering it as a cinematic version of what I termed a concrete metaphor, an ecomaterialist extension of Lakoff and Johnson's CMT.⁵⁰⁾ Concrete metaphors capture how, in certain material images, a "slippage appears between matter, ideas, and concepts" because the elemental imagery hints "at more abstract notions while also relying on the sheer concreteness of the material elements."⁵¹⁾ Employed as metaphors, the elements mediate between the concrete and the conceptual: distinctive of concrete metaphors is that they set into action a so-called "leap of imagination" of conceptual abstraction, while their elemental nature guarantees the abstraction remains grounded in concrete reality.⁵²⁾ This helps bring out a theoretical tension I flagged earlier, where Carroll rightly associates Kracauer with the concreteness objection: his realist ontology renders Kracauer fundamentally skeptical about film metaphor; for him, every filmed particular refers to a specific specific instance.⁵³⁾ While Kracauer appears unconvinced about conceptual thought in narrative film more generally — a stance that has since been critiqued by a score of film-philosophers — my concept of concrete metaphor

46) Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997) [First published in 1960].

47) *Ibid.*, 27–28.

48) Schonig, "Contingent Motion: Rethinking the 'Wind in the Trees' in Early Cinema and cgi," *Discourse* 40, no. 1 (2018), 31.

49) Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, xlix, emphasis added.

50) Ludo de Roo, "The Elements: Threshold Concept, Medium, Metaphor," *Genealogy of the Posthuman*, March 18, 2025, accessed October 31, 2025, <https://criticalposthumanism.net/the-elements-threshold-concept-medium-metaphor/>.

51) *Ibid.*, n.p.

52) *Ibid.*, n.p. The mention of abstraction here does not mean to suggest the idea that metaphorical language is necessarily always abstract. Donald Davidson gives a robust argument for taking linguistic metaphors literally, in Donald Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean," *Critical Inquiry* 5, no. 1 (1978), 31–47.

53) Carroll, "A Note on Metaphor," 217–219. I acknowledge that this tension requires more detailed unpacking in future research.

specifically accounts for the way concrete instances can evoke abstraction.⁵⁴⁾ I employ Kracauer's realist ontology without endorsing his skepticism about film metaphor to bring out the *indexical salience* of the material elements of the bridge of Balian village: the stone humpback construction; the earthen soil of the two connected riverbanks; the stream of water streaming underneath; and the tropical forest environment oozing in the background. These material elements affectively *anchor* the atmospheric context of the bridge's location in rural Philippines, and simultaneously carry the metaphor's source domain of the BRIDGE and JEEPNEY metaphors firmly in its specific, local geographic region. This combination amplifies my assessment of Tahimik's decolonial position, as argued in the previous section: the ontological force of his deployment of concrete metaphors augment his rootedness within the location from which he speaks, in *Perfumed Nightmare*: it is emphatically *from* his specific region — sensorily and affectively emphasized through the natural elements, rendered in 16mm film stock — that Tahimik asks us to imagine his life elsewhere, beyond the bridge, beyond Manila.

Yet, as flagged earlier, over his five-decade career, Tahimik's own relation to, and positioning within, his geographical region progressively evolves, and this is highly noticeable in his aesthetic style. Unlike his earlier work's general "orientation" to Europe, from the mid-1980s onward his films become increasingly *grounded* in Tahimik's native Ifugao province, at the periphery of the country.⁵⁵⁾ As Patrick Campos argues, "chronicling events in Baguio City and Ifugao" in fact *liberates* Tahimik from participating in the "burden of attacking or differentiating against the Manila-centric film industry."⁵⁶⁾ This freer form is especially noticeable in his later shorts (e.g., *Japanese Summers...* [1996], and *Banal Kahoy* [*Holy Wood*] [2002]), focusing specifically on the Asian Pacific region and Indigenous Ifugao culture, aiming to preserve Filipino traditions before they are absorbed by global monoculture.⁵⁷⁾ His style also comes to rely increasingly on essayist collage meditations, often with longer production cycles, while also combining different cinematic formats over time. This is exemplified by the mid-career film *Why is Yellow the Middle of the Rainbow?* (henceforth *Why is Yellow...*) (completed in 1994), chronicling major events in the Philippines between 1980 and 1994. While its opening scene is set in Monument Valley — John Ford's emblematic *Western* setting — Tahimik soon spirals back to his country's political affairs in the archipelago: the so-called "yellow revolution" (1986) of the Philippines' post-dictatorship transition. As Tahimik becomes increasingly grounded in his native region, crucially, these long gestation periods result in a few peculiar aesthetic effects. For instance, while an early version of *Why is Yellow...* has Tahimik and his family celebratory *supporting* the "People Power Movement," this is later revised, "for it was now clear that

54) In *Theory of Film*, Kracauer even categorizes abstract reasoning as "uncinematic content" (262–265). See, for example, Daniel Sullivan, "Kracauer and Tarkovsky's Cinema of Redemptive Estrangement," *Film-Philosophy* 29, no. 1 (2025), 50–51. Moreover, Miriam Hansen has explicitly countered the longstanding reputation of presenting Kracauer as a naive realist; cf. Miriam Bratu Hansen, *Cinema and Experience: Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), ch. 1.

55) This is in the rugged Cordillera Region, landlocked in northern Luzon — the country's largest island.

56) Patrick F. Campos, "Kidlat Tahimik and the Determination of a Native Filmmaker," *Kritika Kultura*, no. 25 (2015), 60.

57) For instance, *Japanese Summers...* deals with what Tahimik calls the "Micky Mousification" of native culture; see Campos's detailed analysis (in "Determination") of Tahimik's relation to Philippine Indigenous culture.

Aquino's [the candidate opposing Marcos' regime] promises regarding economic, political, and cultural liberation, land reform, and decolonization have been betrayed."⁵⁸) Akin to the effect of the dialectical interjections in his earlier film (as we have seen in *Perfumed Nightmare*), his arranging of scenes — typically filmed at different periods — enable him to seamlessly insert metacommentaries through cinematic means (rather than voice-over alone). Now, as mentioned, in this period Tahimik also starts combining various cinematic formats, giving Tahimik's later essay style its distinct, indefinable form. As we shall see, these types of revisions and alternating alterations distinctly characterize *Balikbayan #1*.

In the concluding section I will consider this geographic turn in view of my analysis of Tahimik's evolved use of cinematic metaphors. I argue that while his decolonial critique becomes firmly grounded in his home region, his use of concrete metaphors has evolved even more powerfully in his mature style — an argument I exemplify by analyzing a central scene in *Balikbayan #1*, where the mixing of celluloid and digital film formats manifests an even more complex relationship to his use of concrete metaphors.

Geographic Repositioning Tahimik's Later Work

The film project that is now called *Balikbayan #1* started in 1980, with a first version wholly focused on narrating how Enrique, played by Tahimik himself in his trademark self-reflexive way, accompanied Ferdinand de Magellan in the circumnavigation of the globe (1519–1522).⁵⁹ In its various iterations, Tahimik's film recounts the story of Enrique of Malacca, the historical Malay-Philippine help, acquired at fourteen, who accompanied Magellan. The film's subtitle, "balikbayan number one," is a contemporary Tagalog word for "overseas worker returning home." As Magellan died in 1521 in the chiefdom of Mactan (i.e., never returned to Europe), Tahimik's stated goal with *Balikbayan #1* is to revise global history and show that (this historical) Enrique is the first person to traverse the entire Earth and return home.⁶⁰

Today, however, seven "redux" versions of *Balikbayan #1* exist (or existed, as one version was lost when Tahimik's film archives burnt down).⁶¹ Remarkable is how every consecutive version of *Balikbayan #1* slightly alters the narrative and appearance by adding new material to existing footage. The multiformat practice might seem to abandon the concrete metaphor framework I have established above, given digital video's different on-

58) Campos, "Kidlat Tahimik and the Determination of a Native Filmmaker," 62. *Why is Yellow...* poignantly documents how Corazon Aquino was elected as first female president of the country, after Ninoy Aquino, her husband and opponent of Marcos, was killed by the regime.

59) Tahimik's topic overlaps with Lav Diaz's recent Cannes premiere, *Magellan* (Magalhães) (2025), which—unlike Tahimik's essay film—is filmed as an epic historical drama.

60) Cf. Christopher Small's interview with Tahimik (Christopher Small, "'That's Thirty Years of Footage I've Accumulated': Kidlat Tahimik on *Balikbayan #1: Memories of Overdevelopment* and His Pioneering Career in the Philippines," *Filmmaker Magazine*, April 16, 2019, accessed October 31, 2025, <https://filmmakermagazine.com/107382-thats-thirty-years-of-footage-ive-accumulated-kidlat-tahimik-on-balikbayan-1-memories-of-overdevelopment-and-his-pioneering-career-in-the-philippines/>).

61) Several versions have been released: the first in 1984 (33 minutes); as well as *Redux III* (2015, 150 minutes); *Redux VI* (in 2017, 159 minutes); and *Redux VII* (in 2023, 180 minutes).

tological status. Yet as the following descriptions reveal, an elemental continuity persists across these different formats, where the medium of water conduits Tahimik's decolonial critique. With original footage for *Balikbayan #1* (thirty-three minutes, exclusively concerned with depicting Enrique's story) shot in the early 1980s, newer versions of the film progressively situate Tahimik's decolonial theme in the context of twenty-first-century issues. As film journalist Olaf Müller suggests, it is as if

the material shot in the Eighties now functions something like a message from an earlier age — a magic artifact unearthed at the beginning, with Enrique/Kidlat now settled in the backwater of Ifugao, carving his story into wood and otherwise enjoying life.⁶²⁾

This progressive revision positions Tahimik uniquely in the essay film genre: as a work-in-progress, each subsequent version offers insight into his ongoing reflection about the decolonial narrative of Enrique. Early footage from the 1980s presents a *fictional* account of historical figures' travels, with each redux version of *Balikbayan #1* adding a commentary layer that shifts between diary form, home movie, non-fiction commentary, and personal reflection. Significantly, each version incorporates different filmmaking techniques accumulated over decades: small-format celluloid film (6mm, 8mm, 16mm) is intercut with digital footage (VHS, Hi-8, mini-DV), and the most recent version even includes footage shot on iPhones.⁶³⁾ This temporal layering of formats mirrors a shift in location: much of the earlier footage included in *Balikbayan #1* (filmed on celluloid) enacts historical fiction, often in indeterminate places (on sea, on the coast) or else in places away from the Philippines (i.e., in Europe); instead, the later digitally-filmed scenes increasingly ground the narrative in Baguio and the Cordillera region. A scene in the middle of *Balikbayan #1 Redux VI* (2017) deserves a detailed phenomenological description, as it is exemplary for demonstrating this curious interweaving of filmic formats, shifting his use of concrete metaphor to execute his decolonial critique.

Tahimik starts with a fictional scene of Enrique (played by Tahimik), staged in the sixteenth century, somewhere mid-journey on a vessel carrying Magellan around the globe.⁶⁴⁾ Enrique prepares a bath for his master Magellan; this was one of Enrique's main tasks for his master, Tahimik's voice-over explains. Addressing Magellan (who remains off-screen until the end of the scene), Enrique pours water into a bath, wondering why "Europeans have to use hot water" for a bath.⁶⁵⁾ Just as in *Perfumed Nightmare*, these early images of Enrique are underexposed, grainy 16mm celluloid, clearly filmed in the 1980s;

62) Olaf Müller, "Lost Horizons," *Film Comment*, May–June 2015, accessed June 2, 2025, <https://www.filmcomment.com/article/berlinale-2015-coverage/>.

63) Few commentators devote much attention to this film, let alone to this multiformat aspect of *Balikbayan #1*. For instance, Pavsek, *The Utopia of Film*, 121–122, but briefly analyses *Balikbayan #1* in the context of his more detailed reading of *Why is Yellow the Middle of the Rainbow*; and Campos ("Portrait," 202) shows how *Balikbayan #1* is incorporated in Tahimik's short mid-career diary film, *Celebrating the Year 2021, Today* (1995).

64) My description is based on the *Redux VI* version (2017), 52'00"–54'06".

65) *Balikbayan #1 Redux VI*, 52'25".

again, a simple camera set-up, this time consisting of only two medium shots, with sound (Tahimik's voice-over sharing Enrique's thoughts; diegetic sounds of splashing water) seemingly added in postproduction. The instant when, in the fiction version, the historical Enrique takes off his *bahag* [traditional loincloth] to furtively try the hot bath, rather than showing him step into the bath, the next shot jolts into a present-day bathroom — a significant aesthetic shock. Suddenly, the flat digital film image depicts, for two seconds, a shaky, handheld close-up, showing a semi-transparent plastic shower curtain, accompanied by a change in sound quality. Despite peculiarly quick cuts back and forth between these two historical locales, temporal layers, and cinematic styles, the elemental connection — especially the sound of lapping water — seamlessly bridges the two settings: as Magellan calls Enrique off-screen on the staged sixteenth century boat, in the twenty-first century bathroom, Tahimik (now as himself) opens the shower curtain to show a naked toddler (his grandson) in a large red water tub.



Fig. 4: Tahimik playing Enrique de Malacca, filling the bath for his master aboard a vessel. Screenshot from *Baklibayan #1 Redux VI* (2017). [Image courtesy of dafilms.com.]

— — —

It is worth considering the powerful effect of the clashing tactile qualities of the footage brought together here: the hard, flat, and partially bleached-out colors of the numerical images clash with the saturated yet underexposed depiction of the scenes filmed on gritty 16mm, in the 1980s.⁶⁶ Here, one should consider that, narratively, the fictional, sixteenth-

66) Notice that since this is in the middle of the film, it is not the first time that Tahimik combines divergent footage in the work; indeed, the preceding hour offers many such film-ontological back-and-forths.



Fig. 5: This sequence alternates material filmed in the 1980 (Fig. 4 above) with digital video (here) showing the Mercator map on the shower curtain, with Tahimik's grandson behind the map. Screenshot from *Balikbayan #1 Redux VI* (2017). [Image courtesy of dafilms.com.]

century bathtub scene seems to take place somewhere on a vessel in an unspecified place on the globe — i.e., in flux, in a non-specific place; alternatively, the contemporary bathroom is clearly set in a domestic setting in the Philippines. As I shall show now, this geographical contrast is directly tied up with — and inverts — the film-ontological basis of both these scenes.

Firstly, much like in his earlier films, the indexical quality afforded by 16mm cinematography is undermined by Tahimik's self-reflective, ironic tone. Yet while in *Perfumed Nightmare* the purpose seemed to destabilize the Orientalist discourse, here its purpose seems to highlight the unmistakably staged character of the footage filmed in the 1970s and 1980s; in this case, rather than giving an objective account of history, Tahimik wants to underline that rewriting history is a *narrative practice*. Hence, for *Perfumed Nightmare* it is crucial to anchor the narration in the region, which, as I have argued above, is achieved by capturing contingent elements on film. Inversely, in *Balikbayan #1*, the indeterminacy of Magellan's bathing scene is clearly staged with an inflated make-believe sense (as if it occurs somewhere at sea, although it is conceivably filmed closer to home). Secondly, this authorial sense of chronicling is amplified by the juxtaposition of the modern bathroom scene. Compared to the staged historical scenes in the older footage, instead a surprising aura of "presentification" pervades the home-movie quality of the present-day footage.⁶⁷⁾ Despite (film-ontologically) challenging Kracauer's insistence on the photochemical in-

67) Cf. Lourdes Esqueda Verano, "Home Movies as Reliquaries of Memory: A Phenomenological Perspective," *Film-Philosophy* 28, no. 2 (2024), 350–374.

scription of matter, the shaky, home-made quality of the digital images lends an authentic quality to the contemporary scenes; the fact that they appear to be filmed in the intimacy of the Baguio family home affords them further intimacy.⁶⁸ In fact, Schonig's scrutiny of contingent incidentals' relation to cinematic ontology (considered above) is again insightful, for he has also commented on the oft-expressed contempt for digital cinematic materiality.⁶⁹ He argues that even when elements' unplanned movements are captured by digital film — to take my example the splashing water in Tahimik's present-day scenes — motion is still “inscribed” onto the (numerical) image, which is what I have categorized above (in accord with realist film theory) as the film's indexical quality.⁷⁰ In short, the fact that the two geographically remote settings are filmed in essentially different filmic matter is powerfully eclipsed by the phenomenological impact of the continuity of the contingent element of water. Upon reflection, even the angles of the two shots in fact mirror each other: both subjects are filmed from a high angle; and, despite their dissimilar film-ontological bases, the sound of splashing water in both bathrooms provides further continuity between the two realms.

In other words, the two scenes — including the diegetic four hundred years of history between them — are conceptually bridged by the material means of *water*, a fundamentally dynamic medium providing a continuous flow to these scenes. In line with my interpretation of Tahimik's concrete metaphor of the BRIDGE metaphor in *Perfumed Nightmare*, again elemental matter grounds the various domains. As spectators, we conceptually link the fictional-historical chronicle of Enrique's circumnavigation (somewhere on the globe) to Tahimik's domestic scenes of his grandson, at home in the Philippines. Yet simultaneously, we map the source domain of these combined, yet diverse historical locales *onto* the abstract level — Tahimik's ultimate target domain — of decolonial critique. This is evidenced by the continuation of the scene where we left it.

The scene continues with Tahimik lingering a bit longer in the present-day bathroom. He addresses (as himself) the boy, referring to the plastic ball he plays with, a toy-sized Earth. “Oh, yes, the Globe is in the Pacific Ocean, I see,” Tahimik says in a pedagogic tone.⁷¹ “No jet planes back then [...]” he says, as he slowly closes the shower curtain, which now reveals a Mercator map of the world, “[...] then they cross [sic] the Atlantic Ocean [...],” zooming in to the southern tip of South America, showing Terra del Fuego, “[...] finding the Strait of Magellan, then traversing the Pacific Ocean, finally arriving at Limasawa Island [i.e., in the Philippines].”⁷² The depiction of the shower curtain's Mercator map — incidentally itself a colonial product, like the Balian bridge in *Perfumed Night-*

68) This line of thought is inspired by Vivian Sobchack's meditation on Jean-Pierre Meunier's notion of the *film-souvenir*, the neologism he coined for the home-movie. See Vivian Sobchack, “‘Me Myself, and I’: On the Uncanny in Home Movies,” in *The Structures of the Film Experience by Jean-Pierre Meunier: Historical Assessments and Phenomenological Expansions*, eds. Daniel Fairfax and Julian Hanich (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 204–217.

69) Jordan Schonig, “The Haecceity Effect: On the Aesthetics of Cinephiliac Moments,” *Screen* 61, no. 2 (2020).

70) *Ibid.*, 264. I retain “indexicality” for consistency, even though it conflicts with Schonig's charge to depart “from theories grounded in the index” (*ibid.*, 256).

71) *Balikbayan #1 Redux VI*, 53'12”.

72) *Balikbayan #1 Redux VI*, 53'51”.

mare — evokes Jameson's cognitive mapping: it concretely places the global trajectory enacted in Enrique's story of servitude (filmed on celluloid as historical fiction) onto the modern-day footage (filmed digitally, as home-movie) in the Cordillera bathroom. Tahimik's pedagogical purpose is evident: by juxtaposing different historical and ontological layers (while connecting them with the medium of water), he prepares us to rhetorically interrogate the historical chronicle from the place of his domestic situatedness. The return to grainy celluloid completes the loop: when Tahimik asks whether his grandson is done with his bath, the next shot — in granular 16mm — reveals the fictional Magellan stepping out of the bathtub.

Tahimik's use of elemental matter uniquely weaves together these film-ontologically distinct scenes. His historic-fictional and autobiographical characters are separated by a couple of centuries and perhaps by half a globe, and filmed on dissimilar formats, yet in this cut the medium of water connects them: from Enrique preparing Magellan's bath aboard a ship, diegetically somewhere at sea, to Tahimik's bathing his grandson in Baguio, the vital presence of water carries the colonial context into his intimately domestic setting. This deceptively simple bathtub scene in *Balikbayan #1* exemplifies the structure of concrete metaphors: the sensory grounding of abstract, conceptual meaning — in Tahimik's case, decolonial critique. This critique is amplified in Tahimik's depiction of the map (both on the shower curtain and in the globe the toddler is toying with) to literally place this story onto the world — while remaining firmly placed in the domestic scene in the Malay Archipelago.

Conclusion

In this essay, I have traced how concrete metaphors operate across Tahimik's five-decade-long career. In *Perfumed Nightmare*, he deploys playful yet precisely calibrated metaphors to deliver cultural critique. My close reading of the bridge metaphor shows how, even as Tahimik's conceptual structure persistently gestures elsewhere (away from the rural Philippines, beyond Manila), his audiovisual style anchors the abstraction in rural Luzon: contingent elements captured on 16mm cinematography (the stone bridge over the river with tropical foliage at the background) root the metaphor in the Malay Archipelago of Southeast Asia.

My notion of concrete metaphor builds on multimodal extensions of conceptual metaphor theory (CMT), which illuminates the dynamic tension between, (a) depicted source domain (a bridge, jeepney, and ethnographic insertions) in the Philippines and, (b) the inferred target domains (i.e., global decolonial critique). Yet CMT's emphasis on universal cognitive structures cannot account for what proves central to Tahimik's filmmaking practice: the concrete situatedness of meaning. His cultural critique emerges from the thrice-colonized Philippines; and as his career develops, Tahimik's geographic concern becomes increasingly explicit: from the mid-1980s onward, his films turn decisively toward the Ifugao province and culture. Shifting away from his strategic undermining of East-West dialectic (as characterized by *Perfumed Nightmare*), his later work clearly evokes global cultural critique while being explicitly located at the periphery of the Philippines.

Crucially, the combination of different film formats complicates his use of concrete metaphors. Whereas earlier work like *Perfumed Nightmare* relies on the indexical presence of 16mm film to anchor metaphor in place, later work such as *Balikbayan #1* inverts this logic. Here 16mm footage filmed in the 1980s stages historical placelessness, while present-day material shot on digital devices amplifies the situatedness of Tahimik's discourse. *Balikbayan #1* exemplifies how in juxtaposing digital and celluloid footage, accumulated over several decades, the use of concrete metaphor as decolonial critique is inverted: while 16mm footage filmed in the 1980s stages historical placelessness, in the present-day material the situatedness of Tahimik's discourse is instead amplified by its being filmed on digital devices. This allows Tahimik's decolonial critique to operate on the global map while remaining rooted in the backwaters of northern Luzon.

Hence, the decolonial critique remains consistent throughout; what changes is his tactical deployment of the concrete metaphor, with the film ontology playing an inverted role in the later juxtapositions. While the physical reality of the photographic image anchored the bridge metaphor of *Perfumed Nightmare* in its region, in *Balikbayan #1* the indexicality of the photographic is purposefully undermined by the digital footage of the contemporary material. The critique persists: the concrete metaphor evolves without relinquishing its elemental matter.

Bibliography

- Boldero, Alison R. "Rituals of Remaindered Life in the Films of Kidlat Tahimik" (Master's Thesis, Graduate Faculty Liberal Studies, The City University of New York, 2019).
- Bouchard, Danielle. "The Limits of the Anthropocene: Anticolonial Humanity in Kidlat Tahimik's *Mababangong Bangungot* [Perfumed Nightmare] and Souleymane's Cissé's *Yeelen*," *Interventions* 24, no. 7 (2022), 1161–1176.
- Campos, Patrick F. "Kidlat Tahimik and the Determination of a Native Filmmaker," *Kritika Kultura*, no. 25 (2015), 46–81.
- Carroll, Noël. "A Note on Film Metaphor," in *Theorizing the Moving Image* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 212–223.
- Coëgnarts, Maarten. "Analyzing Metaphor in Film: Some Conceptual Challenges," in *Current Approaches to Metaphor Analysis in Discourse*, ed. Ignasi Ferrando i Navarro (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2019), 295–320.
- David, Joel. *Wages of Cinema: Film in Philippine Perspective* (Diliman, Quezon City: University of Philippines Press, 1998).
- Davidson, Donald. "What Metaphors Mean," *Critical Inquiry* 5, no. 1 (1978), 31–47.
- de Roo, Ludo. "The Elements: Threshold Concept, Medium, Metaphor," *Genealogy of the Posthuman*, eds. Stefan Herbrechter, Ivan Callus, and Manuela Rossini, March 18, 2025, accessed March 2025, <https://criticalposthumanism.net/the-elements-threshold-concept-medium-metaphor/>.
- Dixon, Deborah, and Leo Zonn. "Confronting the Geopolitical Aesthetic: Fredric Jameson, *The Perfumed Nightmare* and the Perilous Place of Third Cinema," *Geopolitics* 10, no. 2 (2005), 290–315.
- Esqueda Verano, Lourdes. "Home Movies as Reliquaries of Memory: A Phenomenological Perspective," *Film-Philosophy* 28, no. 2 (2024), 350–374.

- Fahlenbach, Kathrin. "Audiovisual Metaphors as Embodied: Narratives in Moving Images," in *Embodied Metaphors in Film, Television, and Video Games: Cognitive Approaches*, ed. Kathrin Fahlenbach (New York: Routledge, 2016), 33–50.
- Fahlenbach, Kathrin, ed. *Embodied Metaphors in Film, Television, and Video Games: Cognitive Approaches* (New York: Routledge, 2016).
- Fairbanks, Charles. "Great Directors: Tahimik, Kidlat," *Senses of Cinema*, January 2022, accessed May 25, 2025, <https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2022/great-directors/tahimik-kidlat/>.
- Forceville, Charles. "Metaphor: A Key Instrument to Guide Perspective in Moving Images," *In Media Res (MediaCommons)*, October 6, 2025, accessed October 10, 2025, <https://mediacommons.org/imr/content/metaphor-key-instrument-guide-perspective-moving-images>.
- Forceville, Charles. "Non-Verbal and Multimodal Metaphor in a Cognitivist Framework: Agendas for Research," in *Cognitive Linguistics: Current Applications and Future Perspectives*, eds. Gitte Kristiansen, Michel Achard, René Dirven, and Francisco Ruiz (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2006), 372–402.
- Forceville, Charles. "The Journey Metaphor and the Source-Path-Goal Schema in Agnès Varda's Autobiographical Gleaning Documentaries," in *Beyond Cognitive Metaphor Theory*, ed. Monika Fludernik (London: Routledge, 2011), 281–297.
- Hansen, Miriam Bratu. *Cinema and Experience: Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).
- Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991).
- Jameson, Fredric. *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).
- Johnson, Mark. *Moral Imagination: Implications of Cognitive Science for Ethics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993).
- Kövecses, Zoltán. *Extended Conceptual Metaphor Theory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020).
- Kövecses, Zoltan. *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
- Kracauer, Siegfried. *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).
- Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. "Conceptual Metaphor in Everyday Language," *The Journal of Philosophy* 77, no. 8 (1980), 453–486.
- Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago University Press, 2003).
- Müller, Cornelia, and Hermann Kappelhoff, *Cinematic Metaphor: Experience, Affectivity, Temporality* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2018).
- Müller, Olaf. "Lost Horizons," *Film Comment*, May–June 2015, accessed June 2, 2025, <https://www.filmcomment.com/article/berlinale-2015-coverage/>.
- Pavsek, Christopher. *The Utopia of Film: Cinema and Its Futures in Godard, Kluge, and Tahimik* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).
- Reinerth, Maike Sarah. "Metaphors of the Mind in Film: A Cognitive-Cultural Perspective," in *Embodied Metaphors in Film, Television, and Video Games: Cognitive Approaches*, ed. Kathrin Fahlenbach (New York: Routledge, 2016), 218–233.
- Ricoeur, Paul. *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination*, trans. David Pellauer, ed. Mark J. Wallace (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995).

- Robertson, Roland. "Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity," in *Global Modernities*, eds. Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson (London: Sage Publications, 1995), 25–44.
- Russell, Catherine. *Experimental Ethnography: The Work of Film in the Age of Video* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).
- Schonig, Jordan. "Contingent Motion: Rethinking the 'Wind in the Trees' in Early Cinema and CGI," *Discourse* 40, no. 1 (2018), 30–61.
- Schonig, Jordan. "The Haecceity Effect: On the Aesthetics of Cinephiliac Moments," *Screen* 61, no. 2 (2020), 255–271.
- Small, Christopher. "'That's Thirty Years of Footage I've Accumulated': Kidlat Tahimik on *Balikbayan #1: Memories of Overdevelopment* and His Pioneering Career in the Philippines," *Filmmaker Magazine*, April 16, 2019, accessed October 31, 2025, <https://filmmakermagazine.com/107382-thats-thirty-years-of-footage-ive-accumulated-kidlat-tahimik-on-balikbayan-1-memories-of-overdevelopment-and-his-pioneering-career-in-the-philippines/>.
- Sobchack, Vivien. "Me Myself, and I': On the Uncanny in Home Movies," in *The Structures of the Film Experience by Jean-Pierre Meunier: Historical Assessments and Phenomenological Expansions*, eds. Daniel Fairfax and Julian Hanich (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 204–217.
- Suarez, Harrod. "Among the Senuous: Listening to Film, Listening to the Philippines," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 8, no. 1 (2011), 67–84.
- Sullivan, Daniel. "Kracauer and Tarkovsky's Cinema of Redemptive Estrangement," *Film-Philosophy* 29, no. 1 (2025), 46–71.
- Tahimik, Kidlat. "Cups-of-Gas Filmmaking vs. Full Tank-Cum-Credit Card Fillmaking" [sic], *Discourse* 11, no. 2 (1989), 80–86.
- Tolentino, Roland B. "Jameson and Tahimik," *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints* 44, no. 1 (1996), 113–125.
- Tolentino, Roland B. "Subjectivity and Nation in Filipino Autobiographical Documentaries," in *National/Transnational: Subject Formation, Media, and Cultural Politics in and on the Philippines* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2001), 112–124.

Filmography

- Balikbayan #1: Memories of Overdevelopment Redux III* (Kidlat Tahimik, 2015)
- Balikbayan #1: Memories of Overdevelopment Redux VI* (Kidlat Tahimik, 2017)
- Balikbayan #1: Memories of Overdevelopment, Redux VII* (Kidlat Tahimik, 2023)
- Banal Kahoy (Holy Wood)* (Kidlat Tahimik, 2002)
- Celebrating the Year 2021, Today* (Kidlat Tahimik, 1995)
- Japanese Summers of a Filipino Fundoshi* (Kidlat Tahimik, 1996)
- Life of Pi* (Ang Lee, 2012)
- Magellan* [Magalhães] (Lav Diaz, 2025)
- Memories of Overdevelopment* (Kidlat Tahimik, 1984)
- Perfumed Nightmare* (Mababangong Bangungot; Kidlat Tahimik, 1979)
- Some More Rice* (Kidlat Tahimik, 2005)

Why is Yellow the Middle of the Rainbow aka I am Furious ... Yellow? (Bakit Dilaw ang Gitna ng Bahaghari?; Kidlat Tahimik, 1994)

Biography

Ludo de Roo obtained his Ph.D. in Philosophy at Macquarie University, Sydney with a dissertation on film-philosophy. His research investigates elemental imagination in film, combining phenomenological film-philosophy and ecocinema theory. Current projects incorporate insights from environmental humanities and comparative philosophy. For *Film-Philosophy*, he has co-edited a dossier on Heideggerian film-philosophy, with other work appearing in *New Review of Film and Television Studies* and *Projections*.

Email: ludo-beau.de-roo@mq.edu.au

<https://doi.org/10.58193/ilu.1823>

Floris Paalman  <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-7906-7263>
(University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands)

Moving in Circles: Space and Place in Media Archaeology and the Art of Jop Horst

Abstract

This article is a media-archaeological investigation of the work by Dutch artist and experimental filmmaker Jop Horst (1961–2014). He was interested in the defining principles and features of moving image media: stillness/movement, on/off, light/dark, present/absent. He built his own zoetropes and produced Super 8 and 16mm trick films. Old appliances, such as ventilators, toasters, and washing machines, were turned into media machines, while overhead projectors showed truly moving images of larvae. The *dispositif* of his installations collided with the exhibition spaces, such as an old mill, a former school, or an aviary, often in his hometown, Hengelo. This article examines the spatial implications of Horst's work to understand the spatial equivalent of non-linear time as a premise of media archaeology. To that end, the dual concept of *sur place* (the state of being in motion yet going nowhere) and the “circular trace” (a physical inscription or pathway that links space and time) is proposed.

Keywords

sur place, media archaeology, expanded cinema, Jop Horst

— — —

Prologue

A Dutch windmill. Stripped of its wings. It has lost both its iconic form and function. In Hengelo, a town in the Netherlands, such a mill housed the artist-run gallery De Molen (The Mill), operated by Art Foundation Ag from 1989 to 1997.¹⁾ One of its first exhibitions was dedicated to video art, which included an installation by the Dutch artist Jop Horst,

1) “De Molen,” *Stichting beeldende Kunst Ag*, accessed October 16, 2025, www.kunstag.eu/de-molen.

called *Grote Random Zoötroop* (Large Random-Around Zoetrope, 1989).²⁾ Although not a piece of video art per se, it revived the moving image principle of the zoetrope (1833–1834). Hanging from the ceiling, it looked like an ancient image-producing apparatus. Inside the cylinder appeared (the illusion of) a little girl acting as a Creator, animating the world through images. Half a year later, Horst participated again in an exhibition at De Molen (*De Reuzendoders*, The Giant Killers, March 1990).³⁾ He then transformed an entire floor into a kind of zoetrope. This installation, *Neushoorn* (Rhinoceros, 1990), consisted of a projector mounted on a record player. It projected a loop of a rhinoceros walking across the mill's circular wall.

This flour windmill was built in 1861,⁴⁾ before Hengelo's industrialization. But already in 1886, a steam engine was installed here, and the wings were removed. By converting the structure into a bioscopic device and introducing animal locomotion — hinting at the studies by Muybridge and Marey, likewise from the 1880s — Horst highlighted motion-picture technology as an ongoing effort to capture bodily movement. Yet the animal's motion also enveloped the viewer, positioned inside the work. Like a treadmill (which also existed in Hengelo⁵⁾), De Molen resumed activity in a world fed by images, which in this case also reference Horst's own past. Jop Horst (Rome, 1961 — Hengelo, 2014) spent his early youth in Tanzania, where he was impressed by the animals he saw, like the rhinoceros.⁶⁾

Besides media installations, Horst produced experimental films, staged film and music performances, and made drawings and paintings, extending the traditions of expanded cinema, site-specific art, and Fluxus. His work echoes artists such as Stan VanDerBeek, Marie Menken, and filmmakers linked to Electric Cinema in the Netherlands.⁷⁾ As part of the next generation within this lineage, he participated in several Dutch artistic circles, including Art Foundation Ag and the magic-lantern collective Diascoop.⁸⁾ Working with both old and new media, he manipulated the cinematic principle of motion through stillness, often in specific environments. In this way, Horst acted as a media-archaeological artist who traced and situated media within the world around him.

2) "Videokunst," *Stichting beeldende Kunst Ag*, accessed October 16, 2025, www.kunsttag.eu/video-september-1989.

3) "Reuzendoders," *Stichting beeldende Kunst Ag*, accessed October 16, 2025, www.kunsttag.eu/reuzendoders.

4) "Molen van Trip / Molen van Weggeman," *De Nederlandsche Molendatabase*, accessed October 16, 2025, www.molendatabase.nl/molens/ten-bruggencate-nr-16719?page=142&paging=true.

5) "Grutterij van Berend ter Marsch," *De Nederlandsche Molendatabase*, accessed October 16, 2025, www.molendatabase.nl/molens/ten-bruggencate-nr-16719?page=142&paging=true.

6) Notes by Jop Horst, 2002, Archive Jop Horst, and information provided by Diana de Vries, May 2025, Hengelo, the Netherlands.

7) Meike Bartlema, "Monumenten voor vluchtigheid: De films van Barbara Meter," *Eye Filmmuseum Magazine* November 9, 2023, accessed October 16, 2025, <https://www.eyefilm.nl/magazine/monumenten-voor-vluchtigheid-de-films-van-barbara-meter/1158664>.

8) Stijntje Blankendaal, "De ongrijpbare magie van de toverlantaarn," *Trouw*, December 23, 1999, accessed October 16, 2025, www.trouw.nl/voorpagina/de-ongrijpbare-magie-van-de-toverlantaarn~b3163898; "Diascoop presenteert: Nieuw werk," *theatercollectie.uva*, 2000, accessed October 16, 2025, www.theatercollectie.uva.nl/Details/audioVisuals/300135742.

Introduction

By linking 19th-century media technology to the mechanics of a mill, Jop Horst anticipated approaches later common in media archaeology, which situates media as technological and material artifacts within broader historical contexts. Scholars and artists alike, explicitly since the 1990s, have traced media genealogies and examined the affordances of old and new media in relation to each other.⁹⁾ This is evident in the work of William Kentridge, whose “rich body of animation, graphic art, installation, and performance work draws from a wide array of media-archaeological sources.”¹⁰⁾ In contrast, Wineke Gartz focuses on combining old and new projection methods and using screens as spatial, physical objects to create layered imagery.¹¹⁾ The art of Jop Horst shares features of both, yet remains distinct in its heuristic, deliberately unpolished character.

Theoretically, media archaeology contends that there is no linear historical progress; media-archaeological theory rejects the teleological idea that history works toward a single, unifying goal. Instead, as Erkki Huhtamo notes, media phenomena often recur as *topoi*. Something appears, disappears, and reappears, albeit in different contexts and with different purposes.¹²⁾ Old technologies can be rediscovered as viable alternatives, but the opposite happens as well: “the facade of innovation may mask tradition...”¹³⁾ While this thinking primarily concerns time, the question arises how this may also apply to space and place. How does it inform an understanding of the place of media in the world?

The spatial counterpart to non-linear temporality seems to be the “network.” As Thomas Elsaesser notes, media archaeology “set the notions of networks and nodes against ‘vertical’ causality and ‘linear’ chronology.”¹⁴⁾ The concept of network refers to a decentralized structure of hubs and clusters with distinct identities, and sometimes opposing movements. Jussi Parikka adds that networks take many forms and evolve over time: “Networks are processual and not just a stable diagram of nodes connected.”¹⁵⁾ Yet networks also serve systems — e.g. the nervous system, a traffic system, or an information system — that pursue specific outcomes through feedback loops, steered by attractors and implied goals.¹⁶⁾ Kristoffer Gansing therefore argues that networks are still teleological, a point already emphasized and instrumentalized in 1940s cybernetics.¹⁷⁾ Through networks, “old media

9) Huhtamo, “Art in the Rear-View Mirror,” 85.

10) Ibid., 97. Exemplary are his animation short, *Ubu Tells the Truth* (1997), and his cinematic shadow play, *Shadow Procession* (1999).

11) Annette Balkema, “Desire for the Screen,” in *Screen-Based Art*, eds. Annette Balkema and Henk Slager (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000), 21–28 [24]. Exemplary is Gartz’s installation *Gold Hurts* (1998).

12) Erkki Huhtamo, “Dismantling the Fairy Engine: Media Archaeology as Topos Study,” *Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications, and Implications*, eds. Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 27–47.

13) Huhtamo, “Dismantling the Fairy Engine,” 28.

14) Elsaesser, *Film History as Media Archaeology*, 43.

15) Braxton Soderman and Nicole Starosielski, “Circulating Concepts: Networks and Media Archaeology: An Interview with Jussi Parikka,” *Amodern*, no. 2 (2013), accessed October 16, 2025, <https://amodern.net/article/jussi-parikka-interview>.

16) J. Stephen Lansing, “Complex Adaptive Systems,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 32, (2003), 183–204 [189].

17) Kristoffer Gansing, “The Transversal Generic: Media-Archaeology and Network Culture,” *The Fibreculture Journal* 123, no. 18 (2011), 92–117 [94].

content is constantly repurposed for new consumption.”¹⁸⁾ Old media fuel today’s database-driven logic. Moreover, old media forms and technologies are absorbed into larger systems, causing historical specificities and local operations to dissolve into generic hybridity. This contradicts media archaeology, although it cultivates a special interest in “oxymoronic entities.”¹⁹⁾ According to Elsaesser, media archaeology may even contribute to the developments it seeks to deconstruct.²⁰⁾ Can it still offer a critical perspective on the place of media in the world?

Regarding the current state of affairs in media archaeology, Erkki Huhtamo and Doron Galili have identified five commonly shared attributes: non-linear history; engagement with material, technical, and operational properties of media; focus on intermedial relations; interest in forgotten, obsolete, failed, and imagined media technologies; and meta-criticism of media historiography.²¹⁾ As prospects, they argue for more cross-cultural research, the inclusion of perspectives on gender and race, and a self-reflexive engagement with the goals of media archaeology.²²⁾ Surprisingly, no “spatial support” is mentioned for any of the issues. The same applies to the book *New Media Archaeologies*.²³⁾ Alternatively, the spatial dimension is addressed by Tim van der Heijden and Aleksander Kolkowski in their book *Doing Experimental Media Archaeology: Practice*. They write that media-archaeological experiments can “bring about more awareness of the spatial and topographical information inscribed in media practices, the role of space and location for the production and consumption of media technologies, as well as the social dynamics involved in past media usages.”²⁴⁾ This, however, remains a possibility yet to be explored. Some concepts in media archaeology could nevertheless offer starting points for developing a media-archaeological theory of space and place, which this article pursues through the art of Jop Horst. His works often deal with particular objects and movements, and things found locally, while at the same time addressing larger existential questions. Before analyzing his works, in order to illuminate different spatial dimensions of media, I outline existing media-archaeological ideas related to space and place, presented here as four successive calls: the sites of media production; the spatial arrangements of media and how they implicate the viewer; the places where media manifest across different moments in time; and the broader environments and ecologies in which media-historical developments unfold.

18) Ibid., 98.

19) Jussi Parikka, *Digital Contagions: A Media Archaeology of Computer Viruses* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 3.

20) Elsaesser, *Film History as Media Archaeology*, 351.

21) Erkki Huhtamo and Doron Galili, “The Pasts and Prospects of Media Archaeology,” *Early Popular Visual Culture* 18, no. 4 (2020), 333–339 [334].

22) Ibid., 335.

23) Ben Roberts and Mark Goodall, eds., *New Media Archaeologies* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019).

24) Tim van der Heijden and Aleksander Kolkowski, *Doing Experimental Media Archaeology: Practice* (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2023), 2.

Space and Place: Four Calls

1. Sites of production. As a companion volume to van der Heijden and Kolkowski's book, Andreas Fickers and Annie van den Oever have written *Doing Experimental Media Archaeology: Theory*, in which they aim "to describe the overlapping and interfering 'spaces' of knowledge production: the space of experiment, the space of protocols and documentation, and the space of ex-post rationalisation or interpretation, eventually leading to the production of some format of scientific output."²⁵ This echoes Grazielle Lautenschlaeger's media-archaeological approach to the production of media art, through her concept of "translation" as a move from one "discrete" field to another, such as observations made in a certain place that are rendered as a mental image.²⁶ In order to make sense of the world, sensorial experiences are translated into forms of knowledge, which in turn are translated into, for example, film plans and scripts — whether produced by Hollywood's studio system, or by the *munshi* in India.²⁷ Eventually, films are also "documents" in a chain of translations. Each translation takes place in another space, including academic spaces and "the archive as laboratory."²⁸ This applies when "documentation" has indeed been preserved, but this is not always the case, as Rakesh Sengupta explains in regard to *munshi* scripts.²⁹ The same applies to expanded cinema.³⁰

The spaces of translation, and the problem of preservation, can already be observed in Horst's site-specific installation of *Neushoorn* (Rhinoceros). The first space of translation is Tanzania, which gave rise to an idea. Bridging many years and connecting different spaces, various translations followed. Eventually, the old mill in Hengelo linked spaces of production and exhibition. Due to its nature, as a site-specific artwork, it has not been preserved, except for its "translations" in the form of documentation, including this text.

2. Spatial arrangements of media. Considering the space of exhibition, the concept of the *cinematic dispositif* comes to the fore. Conventionally, within film studies, this concept describes the arrangement of a theatrical space with a projector showing images on a screen watched by the audience seated in front of it.³¹ Familiar from Jean-Louis Baudry's writings from the 1970s, which used the concept to explain the ideological and psychological implications of cinema, this *dispositif* has been considered historically contingent by Thomas Elsaesser. In doing so, Elsaesser takes into account that film history has been more of an

25) Andreas Fickers and Annie van den Oever, *Doing Experimental Media Archaeology: Theory* (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2022), 15.

26) Grazielle Lautenschlaeger, *Sensing and Making Sense: Photosensitivity and Light-to-sound Translations in Media Art* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2021), 165.

27) Rakesh Sengupta, "Towards a Decolonial Media Archaeology: The Absent Archive of Screenwriting History and the Obsolete *Munshi*," *Theory, Culture & Society* 38, no. 1 (2021), 3–26 [13].

28) Fickers and van den Oever, *Doing Experimental Media Archaeology*, 41.

29) Sengupta, "Towards a Decolonial Media Archaeology," 5.

30) Julian Ross, "Preserving and Exhibiting 1960–70s Japanese Expanded Cinema" (Presentation for the Research Group Moving Images: Preservation, Curation, Exhibition [University of Amsterdam], Eye Film Museum, Amsterdam, March 11, 2022).

31) Thomas Elsaesser, *Film History as Media Archaeology: Tracking Digital Cinema* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), 101.

experimental, exploratory, and pragmatic process: “There was little in this history confirming the determinism underpinning Baudry’s ideological critique of cinema’s illusionism.”³²⁾ Baudry’s view implies an essentialism and a teleology that Elsaesser rejects.

While acknowledging a dominant *cinematic dispositif*, Frank Kessler also argues that there is not one transhistorical *dispositif*. Instead, there are multiple *dispositifs*, characterized by their own “spaces of communication.”³³⁾ For example, one can find, juxtaposed to Hollywood’s illusionism, the audience-activating California Newsreel that constituted a “parallel cinema,”³⁴⁾ while in Japan expanded cinema emerged prior to most other countries, with site-specific shows,³⁵⁾ in contradistinction to mainstream media culture.³⁶⁾ Kessler concludes that, in the end, the concept of the *dispositif* best serves as an analytical tool for describing how people physically engage with moving images rather than as a theoretical tool to define cinema.³⁷⁾ As such, the concept of the *dispositif* will enable an analysis of Horst’s works, most of them having distinct manifestations, which imply different (spatial) relations and the way viewers are positioned (see, e.g., *Floor for the Blind*, discussed below on pages 187–188).

3. Places where media manifest. While Huhtamo and Galili do not refer to spatial considerations in their survey of media archaeology, Huhtamo’s own concept of *topoi* may actually be understood in spatial terms. He explicitly hints at a spatial dimension when he writes: “Identifying topoi, analyzing their trajectories and transformations, and explaining the cultural logics that condition their ‘wanderings’ across time and space is one possible goal for media archaeology.”³⁸⁾ The wanderings, like those of the zoetropes featuring in Horst’s oeuvre, imply actual locales, which is no surprise, as *topos* in Greek literally means place. Nevertheless, Huhtamo has taken the concept of *topos/topoi* from literary scholar Ernst Robert Curtius, for whom it denotes something anonymous and omnipresent,³⁹⁾ thereby rendering it a generic spatial concept. Huhtamo, however, has approached *topoi* differently: “When a topos emerges, it should be treated as a node in a complex network of references and determinants. Topos study is steeped in the issue of cultural contextualization, no matter how difficult and elusive it may be.”⁴⁰⁾ This means that, diverging from Curtius, Huhtamo argues for specificity, and proposes a network-based approach to trace connections. Of interest here is the way particular media manifestations are seen in a

32) Elsaesser, *Film History as Media Archaeology*, 107.

33) Frank Kessler, “The Multiple Dispositifs of (Early) Cinema,” *Cinémas* 29, no. 1 (2018), 51–66 [54].

34) Michael Renov, “Newsreel: Old and New: Towards An Historical Profile,” *Film Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (1987), 20–33; Paul Douglas Grant, *Cinéma Militant: Political Filmmaking and May 1968* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 26.

35) Julian Ross, “Beyond the Frame: Intermedia and Expanded Cinema in 1960–1970s Japan” (Unpublished PhD dissertation, School of Modern Languages and Cultures, University of Leeds, 2014).

36) Examples of other *dispositifs* and their histories are discussed in the books by Wanda Strauven, *Touchscreen Archaeology: Tracing Histories of Hands-On Media Practices* (Lüneburg: Meson Press, 2021), and Steve Gibson, Stefan Arisona, Donna Leishman, and Atau Tanaka, eds., *Live Visuals: History, Theory, Practice* (London and New York: Routledge, 2023).

37) Kessler, “The Multiple Dispositifs of (Early) Cinema,” 63.

38) Huhtamo, “Dismantling the Fairy Engine,” 28.

39) *Ibid.*, 31.

40) *Ibid.*, 33.

broader context through their connections, constituting larger structures. The small and the big define each other. However, a network approach might not be enough to fathom the complexities at stake. Beyond mapping connections, the dynamics and spatial features that enable them must be analyzed.

4. Environment and ecology. An alternative to the network metaphor is the concept of ecology, proposed already by Gene Youngblood in his book *Expanded Cinema* (1970).⁴¹⁾ In the chapter “The Artist as Ecologist,” he discusses “the burgeoning of intermedia art,” noting that he chose the term *intermedia* over *mixed media* because “an environment in which the organisms are merely mixed is not the same as an environment whose elements are suffused in meta-morphosis.”⁴²⁾ Intermedia art follows ecological interconnections rather than network logic. As Sean Cubitt writes: “Ecologies are not networks connecting previously separate things: Every element of an ecology mediates every other.”⁴³⁾ Environmental conditions enable media to emerge and operate, which in turn affect their environments.⁴⁴⁾ Such environments can nest within one another — as in Horst’s case, from the local setting of Hengelo, to the broader Dutch art scene, to international circuits.

Interdependence in ecology means that small and large elements can directly affect one another. In media archaeology, such relations — pertaining to scale and spatial valences — are not sufficiently theorized. Although Huhtamo and Galili emphasize interrelated media developments and thus argue for “the rejection of medium-specific historiographies,”⁴⁵⁾ an intermedia perspective does not have any such implication. Regarding the history of expanded cinema, Jonathan Walley argues that it “neither abandoned the project of specifying cinema and distinguishing it from other art forms, nor cast off cinema’s historical traditions, formal conventions, or familiar materials.”⁴⁶⁾ His disciplinary approach contrasts with Youngblood’s outward perspective — and by implication Marshall McLuhan’s view, which has significantly informed media archaeology. Yet Walley’s argument may prompt media archaeologists to account for human agency: how people create categories, which have real effects, and how artists use media to reflect on media. This latter point also reintroduces media content, which Huhtamo and Galili do not consider a concern in media archaeology. An ecological approach can thus employ methodological triangulation, examining conditions, material manifestations, and content.

In self-reflexive media art, such as Horst’s *Grid*, a conceptually dense installation (see: § Light), we can thus see the artist’s positionality, and his environment, and through the artwork’s “space of communication,” we can situate the viewer as well. Something similar applies to media archaeology as a field, with Huhtamo and Galili proposing a reflection on its own goals, which invites the reader to take a critical stance. It raises the question of how

41) Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1970), 346.

42) *Ibid.*, 347.

43) Sean Cubitt, *Finite Media Environmental Implications of Digital Technologies* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017), 4.

44) Michael Goddard, “Opening up the Black Boxes: Media Archaeology, ‘Anarchaeology’ and Media Materiality,” *New Media & Society* 17, no. 11 (2015), 1761–1776 [1762].

45) Huhtamo and Galili, “The Pasts and Prospects of Media Archaeology,” 334.

46) Jonathan Walley, *Cinema Expanded: Avant-garde Film in the Age of Intermedia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 15.

one can understand an evolutionary development of which one is a part, or, alternatively, what it means when a balance is being maintained.

Environmental theory has long focused on “equilibrium dynamics,” which allegedly create a stable balance within an ecosystem. Over the last few decades, this has been questioned, highlighting instability instead.⁴⁷⁾ Such an understanding has also informed Elsaesser’s media archaeology. It situates media in the context of “precarious equilibrium,” which implies “constructive instability.”⁴⁸⁾ A subtle change may open up new possibilities, but it has its downside too: an existential balancing act. Yet, Elsaesser’s formulation still assumes productivity and a direction: *construction* means giving shape to interests, purposes, and ideals, mediated by (cinematic) narratives and visions of how to inhabit the world. In other words: this view might still be teleological. What if the concept of equilibrium does not imply any direction? Can it still explain how audiovisual media exist in the world, give shape to it, and position us within it?

Sur Place and the Circular Trace

Translating the notion of “precarious equilibrium” into spatial terms, I propose the dual concept of *sur place* and the “circular trace.” In track cycling, *sur place* is a situation during a race in which the two cyclists stand still for tactical reasons, challenging each other to find the right moment to move away, with the other being slightly too late.⁴⁹⁾ In academic literature, *sur place* has been mentioned in economic game theory,⁵⁰⁾ when competitors stand still, waiting for the other to move first. However, irrespective of tactical aims, I propose this concept to understand an existentialist engagement with place in relation to audiovisual media.⁵¹⁾ In fact, *sur place* implies a double “going nowhere.” As in track cycling, like in other track races, the purpose is not to reach a destination: the same spot is crossed several times.

Sur place sets specific constraints, which requires skills, sensibility, and understanding of the conditions in order to be in control. Mastering such capacities leads to inward complexity: what cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz calls “cultural involution.”⁵²⁾ This is the opposite of cultural evolution. The latter implies progress, but may lack depth, as one is continuously moving ahead. Involution may suffer from the reverse, being an inward, spiral-like movement. But the spiral could also move outward. In either case, *sur place* can be described by circular patterns. To follow them, I propose the concept of the “circular

47) Sian Sullivan, “Towards a Non-equilibrium Ecology: Perspectives from an Arid Land,” *Journal of Biogeography* 23, no. 1 (1996), 1–5.

48) Elsaesser, *Film History as Media Archaeology*, 213.

49) Bill Mallon and Jeroen Heijmans, “Sur Place,” in *Historical Dictionary of Cycling* (Lanham, Toronto, and Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2011).

50) Fabien Gensbittel, Stefano Lovo, Jérôme Renault, and Tristan Tomala, “Zero-sum Revision Games,” *Games and Economic Behaviour* 108, (2018), 504–522.

51) The idea of *sur place*, where something *can* happen, in the context of urban design, was first mentioned by designer Arno van der Mark, director of DRFTWD, in 2003 — personal communication with the author.

52) Clifford Geertz, *Agricultural Involution: The Processes of Ecological Change in Indonesia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963).

trace.” Any trace, as physical inscription or pathway, links time and space.⁵³⁾ As a dual concept, *sur place* is the spatial anchor, while “circular trace” implies the temporal dimension and a layering of movements.

In order to develop this proposal, I will analyze the art of Jop Horst. To that end, I was granted access to Horst’s collection by its curator Diana de Vries, who has also provided background information. In addition, I have made use of the book *Jop Horst: Werk*, the website jophorst.nl, and my recollections of a retrospective exhibition in 2018.⁵⁴⁾ After an initial survey of Horst’s work, I recognized four major strands in it, which are basically four dimensions that define the physical manifestation of audiovisual media: Matter, Movement, Sound, and Light. For the analysis of each strand, I have subsequently selected works in which the respective strand comes to the fore most explicitly.

I will examine Matter, Movement, Sound, and Light through the proposed dual concept in order to elaborate it. I will first consider how matter delineates *sur place* and defines its oxymoronic characteristics. Circular movement is a *motif* in Horst’s work that visualizes *sur place*, while it also displays the circular trace. Sound and light play on presence and absence, and inform the existentialist nature of the dual concept. As sound implies both matter and movement, it has an indexical relation to them, while the imprint of light on film is literally a trace, through which the medium of light manifests itself. By following traces, locales are identified, whose features help to articulate the dual concept spatially. In doing so, I apply the concepts of *dispositif* and *topoi*, as introduced earlier.

Matter

Jop Horst was interested in matter as an expression of existence, but also in its negation: ephemerality and disappearance. Horst was similarly interested in the materiality of media and how it generates imagery. In a catalog published by X-Pact, an organization to foster collaborations between art and technology, Horst’s practice is described as follows:

All of his works, including the pieces he is still going to make, are present in his studio, as parts in a big pile. In the simplest way, and therefore the most efficient, works are being assembled, with rope, scotch, cardboard, and iron wire. When a work has been exhibited, it subsequently disappears again, as parts in the big pile. Assimilation, dissimulation. [translated by the author]⁵⁵⁾

53) Verne Harris, “Genres of the Trace: Memory, Archives and Trouble,” *Archives and Manuscripts* 40, no. 3 (2012), 147–157.

54) Book: Diana de Vries, ed., *Jop Horst: Werk* (Hengelo: Werkgroep Jop Horst, 2018); Website: “Jop Horst,” jophorst.nl, accessed October 16, 2025, <https://jophorst.nl>; Exhibition: “Jop Horst,” Zaal Zuid, Hengelo, and Rijksmuseum Twenthe, Enschede, 2018, accessed October 16, 2025, www.rijksmuseumtwenthe.nl/content/2129/en/jop-horst. The films made by Jop Horst are preserved by the Eye Filmmuseum in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

55) X-Pact, “Centenar: Jop Horst,” *X-Pact: Art, Business, Technology, Science* (Enschede: X-Pact, 1999).

Horst's studio was also his home. Fickers and van den Oever, in their theory of doing experimental media archaeology, call the former a space of "complex interaction," and the latter a "socio-technical topography," where the biographies of objects and their users are intertwined.⁵⁶⁾ It is here where Horst's works originated, and where they would return, as a manifestation of *sur place*. Moreover, the pile of things already contained his future works, which adds a prospective dimension to the circular trace.

The pile also included photochemical films. The Super 8 film *Het gele bakje is rode draad* (The Yellow Cup Is Red Thread; Jop Horst and Joris Baudoin, 1989) shows how an ordinary object, a plastic cup, starts to live a life of its own through the technique of stop motion animation: a manipulation of film as matter. The cup serves as a container to pick something from, or as a shell to hide something; it turns itself, or it makes its surroundings turn; it is an object of joy, or an object of frustration. It seems to fit certain settings, for example, when a chicken eats from it, which it dislikes, while it seems to be a mismatch



Fig. 1: Still from the film *Het gele bakje is rode draad* (Jop Horst and Joris Baudoin, 1989)

in other settings, for instance, when it climbs a ladder, which it enjoys (Fig. 1). The "red thread" that the yellow cup spins strings all oppositions together. Although it suggests linearity, the cup does not arrive at any destination. Only its willfulness counts, as a *topos* in film history.⁵⁷⁾

56) Fickers and van den Oever, *Doing Experimental Media Archaeology*, 46.

57) It recalls such practices from the silent era, see: Thomas Elsaesser, "Cinema, Motion, Energy, and Entropy," in *New Media Archaeologies*, eds. Ben Roberts and Mark Goodall (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 107–134 [119].

Horst also engaged in making actual objects willful, as in *Traffic Light* (shown in the exhibition *De Afwijking*, Kunstenlab, Deventer, 2005).⁵⁸⁾ He made its green and red lights blink, quickly alternating between the signals “go” and “no-go.” This typifies *sur place*. The red light indexes “here” and “standstill,” and the green light indexes “elsewhere” and “movement.” A normal traffic light thus creates discrete units of space and time. According to Lautenschlaeger, such a “discretization” stands in contrast to “human space-time perception, providing an idea of reality as a continuous entity.”⁵⁹⁾ Horst’s installation shows this mismatch. However, discretization also shapes human perception and cognition.⁶⁰⁾ Through discrete units of stimuli, humans perceive things. In order to make sense of something, small or big, the human mind synthesizes different impressions. These are acts of translation: from material shapes to cognitive data, to any idea and subsequent form of expression. The tension between discretization and the understanding of things in a space-time continuum causes a gap. This may cause loss of information, but it can also create a space for ideas to emerge.⁶¹⁾

Using the gap between perception and understanding, and working through contradiction, likewise characterize Horst’s artistic methodology. In this way, he activated objects beyond their intended function.⁶²⁾ Exemplary are his experiments with a toaster, resulting in his *Broodroostertekeningen* (Toaster Drawings, 2003–2004). He inserted bands of thermal fax paper into a toaster. Dark shapes appeared on the paper, like light leaving traces on photographic material (Fig. 2). Had temperature historically been a factor in filmmaking, it might have shaped another ontology of film. Echoing surrealist automatic drawing, the toaster drawings highlight, through contradistinction, the idea that cinema’s photographic realism is also historically contingent, just like the conventional *cinematic dispositif*. Alternatively, “thermal recording” is still an unfulfilled potential. The toaster drawings are therefore conceptual cinematic artifacts that belong to a counterfactual media history. And yet they also address Elsaesser’s view that cinema is, beyond photographic recording, a matter of energy conversion, as part of larger chains of work and motion.⁶³⁾ The toaster drawings are cinema’s placeholder, and serve as a conceptual map.

Analog film recordings were affected by the specificities of film stock and cameras, leaving certain marks and traces, especially when imperfections occurred. They may reveal particular historical conditions, as Jiří Anger has argued.⁶⁴⁾ The same would apply to the toaster drawings, being the result of the paper type and toaster brand, as well as the environments from which they originated. They contain the traces of a production chain. As conceptual maps, the drawings invite us on a hypothetical journey to picture their ontology.

58) Herman Haverkate, “September is niet meer wat het was,” *Twentsche Courant Tubantia*, September 2005 [Archive Jop Horst, Hengelo, the Netherlands].

59) Lautenschlaeger, *Sensing and Making Sense*, 165.

60) Ibid.

61) Lautenschlaeger, *Sensing and Making Sense*, 205.

62) Joris Baudoin, “Zwaar oké,” in *Jop Horst: Werk*, ed. Diana de Vries (Hengelo: Werkgroep Jop Horst, 2018).

63) Elsaesser, “Cinema, Motion, Energy, and Entropy,” 125.

64) Jiří Anger, *Towards a Film Theory from Below: Archival Film and the Aesthetics of the Crack-Up* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2024), 98.



Fig. 2: Curator Diana de Vries holds a "Toaster Drawing" (Jop Horst, 2003–2004).

Photo by the author, 2018

The fax paper has no clear markers that reveal its provenance. However, its (now forbidden) chemical compound Bisphenol A was probably produced in Germany. The paper itself might have come from woods in Scandinavia (just like the cellulose acetate used for film), although most paper in the Netherlands is made from recycled paper. This circular trace implies the "re-placement" of matter, which nuances singular provenance.⁶⁵⁾

The toaster, in its turn, bears the label "Reactor," a 1970s–1980s brand from the Dutch department store HEMA.⁶⁶⁾ Most Reactor appliances were reportedly made by AKA Electric in Eastern Germany (GDR), though sources are scarce.⁶⁷⁾ Inversely, the Stork machine factory in Hengelo exported products to many countries, among them the GDR, including machines for the manufacturing of home appliances.⁶⁸⁾ It is thus possible that the

65) Joanne Bernardi, Paolo Cherchi Usai, Tami Williams, and Joshua Yumibe, eds., *Provenance and Early Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020).

66) "Huismerken: Reactor," *HEMA B.V.*, accessed October 16, 2025, www.hema.nl/geschiedenis/huismerken.

67) "Hema," *Wikipedia*, last update January 4, 2025, accessed June 12, 2025, <https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/HEMA>. Many newspaper articles (from 2014) report that HEMA sourced products from the GDR. AKA Electric produced for Western countries under different labels; "AKA Electric: Household Gadgets From the GDR," *DDR Museum* (Berlin), accessed October 16, 2025, www.ddr-museum.de/en/blog/2016/aka-electric-household-gadgets-from-the-gdr.

68) Stork collaborated with trading company PEJA, which had a branch in the GDR (PEJA Holding N.V. Berlin, GDR). "History," *PEJA Vietnam*, accessed October 16, 2025, <https://pejavietnam.com/peja-sea-bv>.

toaster was fabricated using Stork machines. If this is the case, we have found a long circular trace: the toaster drawings, made in Hengelo, show traces of interactions between energy and matter, through the specific features of the toaster, which was manufactured by a specific type of machine in the GDR, which in its turn was produced by a machine in Hengelo. As conceptual maps, the toaster drawings ultimately lead back to their point of departure.

In the 1920s, Stork built for its workers the garden village 't Lansink in Hengelo. At its center is a pond. On one bank stands Horst's metal sculpture, *Blik* (2011), made from black-coated metal plate. It resembles a ghostlike guard watching the pond. Its eyes have become a film frame, or the gate of a cinemascope projector. The Dutch title, *Blik*, means both "gaze" and "tin-plate," linking viewpoint to materiality. A visitor can stand behind the metal figure and look through the frame in order to see plants and trees growing on the bank as well as the reflection of light in the pond. Above all, one sees a perfect manifestation of *sur place*: the subtle movement of the water, with the potential of intense movement, as the pond is also a swimming pool. This aligns with Sean Cubitt when he writes: "Mediation implicates us not only in the doings of other humans but with the local and cosmic environment. Sunlight and rock, water and plants are media implicating us in the world. All the media we are implicated in implicate themselves in us."⁶⁹) This double implication is also manifest in the possibility to walk around the sculpture and watch through its "eyes" from the other side. From there, one sees the houses, built on sand dug from what is now the pond. By walking around the sculpture, and looking through it, one follows the circular trace of matter, industry, labor, and perception.

Movement

The animals that Horst saw in his youth — besides rhinoceroses there were giraffes, elephants, and monkeys — opened up a mental spectrum of (im)possible forms of life and animated movement.⁷⁰) Engaging with moving images, Horst became fascinated by the paradox that motion emerges from still images. It motivated him to make films and installations in which he animates objects. Central to his work is the *motif* of circular movement.

In *Ei, ei, ei* (Egg, Egg, Egg, 1987–1988), a Super 8 film lasting seven minutes, an egg is just turning around — made possible by an invisible record player, with only some changes in speed, camera distance, and lighting. The image of a revolving egg is minimalist, playing on the phenomenon of stationary movement. After all, an egg is not moving itself, but as latent life it has this future potential. In his attempt to "animate the egg," Horst also copied *Ei, ei, ei* to video, and modified it multiple times. Moreover, a similar artwork was made from plywood mounted on a record player (3-5-15, 1994), of which he made a computer simulation that looks like a digital version of *Ei, ei, ei*. Each is a translation from one

69) Sean Cubitt, "Against Connectivity" (Paper presented at in/Between: Cultures of Connectivity, NECS Conference, Potsdam, July 28–30, 2016), 11.

70) Notes by Jop Horst, 2002, Archive Jop Horst, and information provided by Diana de Vries, May 2025, Hengelo, the Netherlands.



Fig. 3: Still from video documentation of *Spullentheater* (Jop Horst, 1991), De Bank, 1991

mode of perception and coding to another, opening up space for imagination and reflection, or, as Lautenschlaeger writes: “Analogously to poetry translation, the translation of materialities in media artworks is essentially sustained by the role of imagination. Especially because they aim to animate matter, translation-based media artworks become alive like new poems.”⁷¹⁾

Movement is both a device and a subject in Horst’s performances, such as *Spullentheater* (Theater of Things, 1991 — “Videodagen Enschede,” in: De Bank, Enschede).⁷²⁾ In the first five minutes of this show, of twenty minutes in total, the audience — positioned in a theatrical *dispositif* — watched a cloth with a shadow play of abstract shapes, while mechanical sounds and noises were to be heard in a darkened space. The cloth was then suddenly taken away by a machine, while the space lit up, revealing a kind of *ballet mécanique*.⁷³⁾ Its characters were a revolving slide projector, two Super 8 film projectors, five video monitors, modified drums and a guitar, zoetrope-like carousels and boxes mounted on record players, amplifiers and other sound equipment, and a part of a washing machine (Fig. 3).

71) Lautenschlaeger, *Sensing and Making Sense*, 222.

72) Diana de Vries, “Performance van Jop Horst ‘Spullentheater’ in De Bank in Enschede 1991,” *YouTube*, accessed October 16, 2025, www.youtube.com/watch?v=-aGLAQaNjO0.

73) “Fernand Léger: *Ballet mécanique*, 1924,” *MoMA*, accessed October 16, 2025, www.moma.org/collection/works/303856.

A video camera recorded a ventilator, its six wings painted in red, greenish yellow, and blue. The image was streamed to five monitors, which looked like the propellers of the installation.⁷⁴⁾ With the ventilator moving at different speeds, the image got distorted, due to interferences with the RGB color technology of the monitors. With this image, the limits of the video technology became visible, as it generated imagery that did not exist in the ventilator. Horst thus showed the functioning of the medium itself, with his theatrical “space craft” being a vehicle to trace the inner, generative space of media. Something similar applied to other parts of the installation, such as a revolving Super 8 projector. Its light projected a sinusoidal pattern, as an amplification of what light is. It moved along the walls of the entire room, opening up the *dispositif* and positioning the viewers inside it.

As an “experience machine,” *Spullentheater* is akin to Stan VanDerBeek’s *Movie-Drome* (1964–1965).⁷⁵⁾ In Horst’s theater of things, all media-objects are connected. However, VanDerBeek envisioned “expanded cinema” to become something like what the internet would become.⁷⁶⁾ “VanDerBeek’s interest in communication technology’s ability to accelerate ‘human sensitivities’ and ‘expand sense organs’ through integrated circuits, computers, and satellite networks is constituent of the period’s heady rhetoric, which is most closely associated with Marshall McLuhan’s writings.”⁷⁷⁾ Walley classifies McLuhan’s work as “utopian, quasi-scientific theories,”⁷⁸⁾ and together with Youngblood’s view of “expanded consciousness,”⁷⁹⁾ he considers this way of thinking typical for the first phase of expanded cinema (mid 1960s–early 1970s).⁸⁰⁾ While VanDerBeek’s work is outward-oriented, in the spirit of this “techno-utopian period,”⁸¹⁾ *Spullentheater* is more like a mechanical orchestra, creating a sculptural *dispositif* that shows its own workings. Unpolished and grounded, it is a deconstruction of media while fostering a sense of wonder through simplicity. In *Spullentheater*, moreover, each part is not just an element that performs a function in a system, hence fulfilling a purpose outside itself, but a thing that has its own agency.

While Horst demonstrated the agency of moving images, he also engaged with their *anima*. Liveness was most explicit in a work with larvae in a glass box, projected onto a wall via an overhead projector at an art exhibition in a former school building (Wemenschol, Hengelo, 1992 — a later version of the work was called *Muggenhoofd* [Mosquito Head]). Upon entering the space, visitors were confronted with crawling larvae around them and projected upon them, participating in what Steve Gibson calls “a symbiotic encounter in which both the visuals and the participants are alive.”⁸²⁾ This temporal *dispositif*

74) This is a variant of a work made by Jop Horst and Victor Elberse, exhibited at Stichting AIR, Amsterdam; Re-née Steenbergen. “AIR,” *NRC Handelsblad*, March 1, 1992, Cultureel Supplement, 4.

75) Gloria Sutton, *The Experience Machine: Stan VanDerBeek’s Movie-Drome and Expanded Cinema* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2015).

76) Explanatory text “Stan VanderBeek,” accompanying the work “Movie Mural,” in the exhibition “Underground: American Avant-Garde Film in the 1960s” (2024–2025), Eye Filmmuseum, Amsterdam, accessed October 16, 2025, www.eyefilm.nl/en/programme/underground/1321900. See also: Sutton, *The Experience Machine*, 196–197.

77) Sutton, *The Experience Machine*, 45.

78) Walley, *Cinema Expanded*, 72.

79) *Ibid.*, 236.

80) *Ibid.*, 12, 109.

81) Sutton, *The Experience Machine*, 7.

82) Steve Gibson, “Introduction: The Long History of Moving Images Becoming Alive,” *Live Visuals: History*,

is based on the encounter between forms of life. To this we can add iterations of the circular trace: overhead projectors, originally classroom tools, “were repurposed by live visual artists in the 1960s to mix coloured oils live at music concerts” (the so-called liquid light shows).⁸³⁾ By using one in a former school, Horst brought the device full circle, showing larvae as if in a biology lesson. But the actual subject of the lesson was something else. In contrast with film images, based on intermittent motion, this work showed actual movement. Humans have not (yet) been able to develop a technology to record actual movement, something that Étienne-Jules Marey was looking for in his studies of birds in the 1880s.⁸⁴⁾ Recalling Marey, Horst work implies a circular trace spanning a hundred years, a *topos* according to Huhtamo, which suggests an alternative path for motion pictures. Here, the materiality of moving images is life itself — both subject and technology.

Sound

Sound emerges when things move and cause friction. Sound implies both matter and movement, and thus has an indexical relation to them. However, recorded sound causes an ontological rupture, more so than recorded images, since images can quickly be assessed as representations. Recorded sound instead comes across as truthful, while it can in fact be easily manipulated. Alternatively, recorded sound can add a reality effect to fictional work, and create indexical confusion. To that end, Horst often used animal sounds, which fascinated him just like animal locomotion. A case in point is his sculpture of a giant dog made from paper (*Hond* [Dog], in: Villa De Bank, Enschede, 1992), accompanied by its growling, played from tape. But Horst, who was also a drummer in a band, IQ-loze Mietjes, mostly experimented with acoustic sounds, produced by musical instruments, machines and ordinary objects, the latter often set in motion through record players as mechanical devices.

While the record player was Horst’s favorite device for building installations, in *Ploetje droaje* (Play a Record; Jop Horst and Joris Baudoin, 1993), a 16mm trick film of 10 minutes, the player becomes the main focus. The film shows Horst inside a house trying records on old players, but unexpected events occur. For example, the player itself spins instead of the record — an effect achieved with stop-motion animation. And when the music plays, Horst and the record player suddenly appear in a field among cows (Fig. 4) until the music stops — an effect created through montage. Mostly silent, the film comes alive with the music, suggesting that the player brings a different reality into being. But there is also the confusion of sonic ontology, through the suggestion of liveness. In the film, playing records literally produces living beings: cows and a dog.

While *Ploetje droaje* explicitly addresses the ontology of recorded sound, most of Horst’s Super 8 films are silent. Instead, he used sound as a medium in and of itself, in

Theory, Practice, eds. Steve Gibson, Stefan Arisona, Donna Leishman, and Atau Tanaka (London and New York: Routledge, 2023), 1–5 [4].

83) Gibson, “Introduction,” 3.

84) Étienne-Jules Marey, *Le Vol des Oiseaux* (Paris: G. Masson, 1890).



Fig. 4: Still from the film *Plootje droaje* (Jop Horst and Joris Baudoin, 1993)

soundscapes, radio talks, and sound installations. An example of the latter is *Klop klop — Ja* (Knock Knock — Yes, in: GHL, Middelburg, 2000). There is a sound of knocking on a door, and a voice responding: “Yes.” There is no one present, and there is no movement. There is only sound, emphasizing a voice without a physical body, an *acousmètre*.⁸⁵ The work is absurdist: something that does not have a physical body can neither exist outside nor come inside, while the impossible being that is supposedly inside can similarly never become a host. The sonic figures have no physical bodies and no spatial dimensions, and yet they try to be somewhere. This *sur place* highlights a presence that is an absence, without being here or there.

Nevertheless, sound has its own *dispositif*. In Horst’s sound sculpture *Soldaatjes* (Toy Soldiers, 1998), a loudspeaker produces a noise that sounds like echoes of rattling guns. Its vibration moves two toy soldiers on top of the speaker, randomly moving and fighting with each other. There is no direction or purpose in their movement. There is just that vibration that characterizes *sur place*, which has a destructive connotation in this case. Yet the vibration, as a trace leading back to the apparatus itself, is the echo of an alternative future. The sonic apparatus holds a haptic potential still to be recognized.

The relation between sound, apparatus, hapticity, and space also informed the installation *Floor for the Blind* (Joris Baudoin and Jop Horst, 1990). In an exhibition for blind people, *Aanraken geboden IV* (Touching Required IV, in: Oude Kerkje, Regional Ecumenical

85) Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

Community, Kortenhoef, 1990), Jop Horst and Joris Baudoin built a floor in a little old church, which produced various sounds when walking on it. This particular *dispositif*, and how it positions the visitor, provides an additional perspective on what Wanda Strauven has called “touchscreen archaeology,” which is focused on touch by hands.⁸⁶⁾ In a darkened space of about eight square meters, the floor consisted of sixteen tiles and a gangplank. Baudoin has recounted how they constructed it, with all kinds of equipment, objects, and materials installed under the tiles, creating the sounds. Stepping on one tile would start, for example, a cassette tape with the sound of a growling dog; another would blow a cow-bell, or let marbles roll in a film can. “The sighted walked carefully and groped in the dark, afraid of every unexpected sound or feeling because there were also tiles that vibrated. The blind ran around enthusiastically.”⁸⁷⁾

Baudoin has published a list with all the tiles, their sounds, and explanations of how they were made.⁸⁸⁾ For example: “C4) An elastic string is connected to a propellor [sic] of a toy airplane. Very fast it rotates and hits a number of strings of an old acoustic musical instrument. A floaty howling is the result.” Various other devices created a combined sonic-haptic effect. “D1) A vibrator puts the tile in motion and under a deep roar your feet get a massage.” Of particular interest is how sounds caused surprise. “D3) A computer sample. Someone shouts behind you: ‘Hey, catch.’ Then you hear a whistle from behind, it crosses the room, and then, in front of you, it falls like a shattering rubbish heap. The blind people were highly appreciative of this tile.” Horst and Baudoin used sound spatially, to create an illusory presence. As a self-contained space (*sur place*), the installation was layered — a potential to be playfully discovered by identifying and tracing the sounds.

Light

While following Elsaesser’s argument for an archaeology of film in terms of energy, I argue that light remains important in terms of spatial relay, playing on absence and presence. This is exemplified by the ultra-short Super 8 film *Lichtuit* (Lights Out; Jop Horst, 1983). It shows a room with Horst walking into the frame, seen from the back, pulling out a plug, and then it is all dark. This act is repeated several times. The source of the light cannot be seen, but it is electric light, which enables the camera to record the room, while electric light also transfers the light onto the film screen through projection. Rather than the photographic image, electricity is the actant here.

In his book *Understanding Media*, Marshall McLuhan refers to electric light as the first electronic medium, which historically and conceptually provides a ground for a media-archaeological understanding of space. What is made visible by electric light is not part of the medium. “The electric light escapes attention as a communication medium just because it has no ‘content.’”⁸⁹⁾ McLuhan argues that it is not the thing made visible that changed the world, but the act of illumination and its effect: nights became like days, fos-

86) Strauven, *Touchscreen Archaeology*.

87) Baudoin, “Zwaar oké,” [translated by the author].

88) “Floor for the Blind,” Joris Baudoin, accessed October 16, 2025, www.jorisbeton.nl/page/255.

89) Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 9.

tering a different use of urban environments, as well as interior spaces, with people developing different rhythms of living and working. This is what *Lichttuit* shows: Horst works in his studio, pulling out the plug multiple times, which becomes a rhythm of appearance and disappearance, eventually of himself. At the same time, this self-reflexivity, with the film demonstrating light as medium, is the film's content. After all, what we see is not mere light as the product of electricity, but literally Horst's agency to manipulate it, and hence his own (dis)appearance. This provides a cinematic reflection that elaborates on, but also nuances McLuhan.

The premise of *Lichttuit* came back in Horst's site-specific installation *Stadswacht* (City Guard, in: De Volière, 2001),⁹⁰⁾ installed in a former aviary in a park in Hengelo, run by Art Foundation Ag that previously operated De Molen. After investigating the characteristics of the place, and drafting an elaborate work plan, Horst finally just hung a big lamp in the space, visible from outside through the aviary's mesh. The lamp went on and off at irregular times at night, as if a city guard were pointing a torch at people to inspect what they were doing. Rather than itself being visible, the light illuminated something else, by transversing the mesh. It changed the gaze, from the onlooker contemplating art to the artwork watching the viewer. However, being installed inside an aviary, the immaterial guard was caged, while passers-by enjoyed their freedom that the guard could only highlight. Moreover, the opposition between absence and presence of something immaterial was stressed through the absurdity of caging light in an aviary. *City Guard* stressed light as a medium of control, through the effect of illusion. It exemplifies a reversal of positions, as a feature of *sur place*.

McLuhan's remark that the electric light escapes attention as a medium applies to light in general. Light makes something visible, but remains invisible itself. Light is only indirectly visible, when illuminating a surface. The thing made visible becomes a trace of the medium. This is exemplified by Horst's *Grid* (2008), a painting of a warped checkered pattern, illuminated by a big round lamp mounted on a tripod, going on and off (Fig. 5). The lamp's presence draws attention to the light itself, rather than to the images that it illuminates (or not). Between the white squares, reflecting light, and the black squares, retaining light, a tension emerges, creating a virtual movement of the grid, like a wave. It is here that light waves projected onto the painting become image, as coordinates and surfaces through which to locate light as a medium, which then elicits meaning: biographically, spatially, and religiously.

Grid was first exhibited in 2008 at Het Agterhuis, the third location of Art Foundation Ag, situated in the former information center of the city of Hengelo — an annex to its town hall. In his search for what would become *Grid*, Horst first developed ideas about the city's development plans, as he explained in an interview with Diana de Vries.⁹¹⁾ Horst saw the town hall's tower as a rook from chess. While monumental, it can still move: a paradox that matched Horst's interest in animating objects. Square A1 of the chessboard is occupied by a rook; thinking about movement, Horst associated it with highway A1 that con-

90) "De Volière," *Stichting beeldende Kunst Ag*, accessed October 16, 2025, www.kunstag.eu/ag-voliere.

91) Unpublished interview with Jop Horst by Diana de Vries, 2008, Archive Jop Horst, Hengelo, the Netherlands.



Fig. 5: *Grid* (Jop Horst, 2008), Zaal Zuid. Photo by the author, 2018

nects Hengelo with Amsterdam. He then wondered what A0 would mean, outside the grid — or network — and thought of it as God. These thoughts led to an ambitious exhibition plan, but due to personal issues, it was cancelled. Horst identified himself with the rook at square A1; moving away from this prime position in which he felt locked, he called his show “Plan B.”

Horst’s considerations found shape in the black-and-white checkered pattern, inspired by the *saput poleng* he had seen in Bali. In Balinese Hinduism, the combination of light and darkness represents harmony.⁹²⁾ It is used to cover a statue in which a spirit resides, in order to keep it and its energy inside. Some types of *saput poleng* contain grey squares too, in order to indicate a transition. In Horst’s exhibition, *Grid* was accompanied by a zoe-trope — a *topos*. It also showed a black-and-white checkered pattern, which blurred when turning, resulting in greyness, until one’s eyes adjusted to the movement and recognized the pattern again. The two works show in-betweenness as a condition of *sur place*.

Akin to *Grid* is *Ellipse* (2009), a painting of a black elliptical surface on paper, with a ventilator standing on a projector table in front of it. It is reminiscent of Malevich’s painting

92) I Nengah Agus Tripayana, Prayoga Bestari, Elly Malihah, and Syaifullah Syaifullah, “Maintaining and Shaping Ecological Citizenship of Indigenous Balinese Through Saput Poleng,” *Edueksos* 13, no. 2 (2024), 263–273.

Black Square (1915). Utmost abstract, Malevich's work had cosmic connotations, while he anticipated space travel.⁹³⁾ *Ellipse* evokes a similar sensation. The biggest galaxies are elliptical in shape. Turning around their own centers — a black hole — they are the sublime *sur place*, surrounded by total darkness. In Horst's work, however, the ellipse has become the darkness, while the ventilator, resembling propellers of an aircraft, merely creates vibration, without moving. The movement is implied but absorbed, as the light is being absorbed by the black surface. The work is an immobilized vehicle deemed to be nothing but itself.

Having examined manifestations of light related to *sur place*, the last work to be discussed will address the circular trace. *Golvenfilm* (A Film of Waves; Jop Horst and Joris Baudoin, 1992), a 16mm film of 9 minutes, was made in Horst's studio in Hengelo. It could be seen as *topos* similar to Marie Menken's canonical avant-garde film *Lights* (1966), for which she recorded Christmas lights as abstract patterns. "Menken's experimentation with light as a medium was informed both by her own fascination of transposing other media (painting, light, sculpture) into filmic contours, and also by the proliferation of art works that took 'light' as both subject and *modus operandi*."⁹⁴⁾ While similar in look and approach, Baudoin and Horst documented above all their method for capturing the shape of light. They installed multiple record players in vertical position, with lamps mounted on them, while the camera was put on a horizontally placed record player. The camera's gate was left open, with the camera itself slowly running for three hours.⁹⁵⁾ Produced semi-automatically, unsupervised but deliberately arranged, and tested previously, this resulted in recordings of sinusoidal patterns in different colors.

The light was directly imprinted onto the film strip, bypassing intermittent recording. The film became like a seismographic record of the earth's trembling at a particular time and place. *Golvenfilm* is therefore a "direct film," but different from most "cameraless" films that manipulate the materiality of film instead of recording light.⁹⁶⁾ *Golvenfilm* pushed indexicality to its extreme in capturing the ontology of light as continuous movement. However, due to the principle of intermittent motion, no projector can properly reenact the continuous movement through which the circular trace could be completed.

Conclusion

Within media archaeology, the spatial equivalent of non-linear history is often conceived in terms of networks (Elsaesser, Parikka), yet networks remain teleological (Gansing). To locate moving images — how they shape the world and our position within it — I have proposed the dual concept of *sur place* and the circular trace, developed through four physical dimensions of audiovisual media observed in Horst's work.

93) Aleksandra Shatskikh, "The Cosmos and the Canvas: Malevich at Tate Modern," *Tate Etc.*, no. 31 (2014), accessed October 16, 2025, www.tate.org.uk/tate-etc/issue-31-summer-2014/cosmos-and-canvas.

94) Melissa Ragona, "Swing and Sway: Marie Menken's Filmic Events," in *Women's Experimental Cinema: Critical Frameworks*, ed. Robin Blaetz (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007), 20–44.

95) Joris Baudoin, "Zwaar oké."

96) Esther Schlicht and Max Hollein, eds., *Zelluloid: Film ohne Kamera* (Frankfurt and Bielefeld: Schirn Kunsthalle and Kerbert Verlag, 2010).

Each of Horst's installations creates its own *dispositif*, being an interplay between physical elements of the artwork and the position of the viewer. This relationship between **matter** and living being is mirrored in the works. It is the tension between inanimate matter and the force it has to set something in motion. This is key to Horst's work, along with oppositions such as presence/absence, visibility/invisibility, and motion/stillness. While **movement** in motion pictures is illusory, it also allows for manipulation, as shown by Horst and Baudoin with their trick films. But Horst also explored the projection of continuous motion. In his work, movement often happened in circles, enabled by devices like record players and ventilators, which became part of the circular *motif*.

Sound is intangible and temporary, yet physical. It affects the material world. The indexicality of sound, however, is thwarted when recorded; the trace of sound is hard to follow, which creates a play between absence and presence. In Horst's work, haptic sound becomes a trace, which implicates both the maker and the viewer in a playful way. **Light** is similarly intangible, but physical, which Horst has used to reverse positions, between medium and subject, and between artwork and viewer. Light is an invisible medium that becomes manifest only through its traces.

By virtue of their physical dimensions, audiovisual media are connected to various places via traces, which are not leftovers from the past but constituents of the present. This has been exemplified by Horst's studio-home as a *dispositif* that connected the past and future through circular patterns. I have proposed **sur place** as an elaboration of Elsaesser's "precarious equilibrium," as the focus of an ecological approach. It is the interaction between possibility and impossibility. This creates a tension, or vibration, which allows for "go" and "no-go" at the same time. It is expressed in subtle movements, as in the film *Ei, ei, ei* and its "translations," or the warped checker pattern of *Grid*. While *sur place* may seem simple and quiet, there is complexity underneath. This is typical of media, as they operate "inside" our world and draw us — makers and viewers — inward, which leads to "cultural involution" (Geertz).

Spatially, *sur place* is a situation of being somewhere without going in any particular direction. There is neither a singular destination to it nor an ulterior purpose. Responding to local conditions and finds, Horst's works are often place-based but not bound by the place. *Sur place* is not confined to a single place, and is not disconnected from a larger environment. It is an inside without an outside, a sphere without clear boundaries. It can be described by multiple intersecting circles.

By following the **circular trace**, one may come back to one's departure point. By frequenting certain places again and again, as implied in the spatial dimension of *topoi*, there is an overlap between past, present, and future. The reuse of materials, images, and equipment similarly means "re-placement." It does away with the idea of a singular provenance. The circular trace exists at a small scale — when an installation or film shows its own functioning — and at a large scale — when a work consists of multiple elements coming from and referring to various places. *Sur place* changes scope accordingly. Horst's work may simultaneously play on both a small and a large scale.

The art of Jop Horst is characterized by the *motif* of circular movement, which is also a primary *motif* in human life — as seen in ordinary movements of people travelling between home, work, and leisure places, and in their routines within them. At the same time,

circular movement describes the cosmic phenomenon of galaxies. Recalling Cubitt's proposal that "Mediation implicates us not only in the doings of other humans but with the local and cosmic environment,"⁹⁷⁾ we can position ourselves through the mediation of circular movement and by following its trace.

It would be a challenge for a cartographer to include in a map its own ontology, but such is the case in Horst's work, showing its own being. At the same time, it is often elusive. Horst's oeuvre is like a geography of shadows and echoes of possible pasts and futures. It shows many familiar objects that have become willful; as such, they are hard to grasp and ultimately to preserve. Notwithstanding his engagement with materiality, most of Horst's works have disappeared.



Fig. 6: Still from the film *Molenjop* (Jop Horst and Joris Baudoin, 1985)

Epilogue

A Dutch mill. There is an issue with its wings. The mill is Jop Horst himself, standing in a room, his arms spread, in front of a film camera (Fig. 6). His collaborator, Joris Baudoin, tries to set these "wings" in motion. In vain. The anatomy of the human body simply does not allow it. But after several attempts, things take a different course, and the wings are finally rotating, and so does Jop Horst. In *Molenjop* (Jop Horst and Joris Baudoin, 1985), a

97) Cubitt, "Against Connectivity," 11.

Super 8 stop-motion film of one-and-a-half minute, Horst embodies the very mechanism of the film camera — the butterfly shutter — which is crucial to the creation of intermittent motion. While Horst fails to be a mill at first, stop-motion makes it happen. Horst has eventually turned into a functioning mill himself, moving *sur place*, turning around like his moving images, enabled by the ontology of cinema.

Bibliography

- “AKA Electric: Household Gadgets From the GDR,” *DDR Museum* (Berlin), accessed October 16, 2025, www.ddr-museum.de/en/blog/2016/aka-electric-household-gadgets-from-the-gdr.
- Anger, Jiří. *Towards a Film Theory from Below: Archival Film and the Aesthetics of the Crack-Up* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2024).
- Balkema, Annete. “Desire for the Screen,” in *Screen-Based Art*, eds. Annette Balkema and Henk Slager (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000), 21–28.
- Bartlema, Meike. “Monumenten voor vluchtigheid: De films van Barbara Meter,” *Eye Filmmuseum Magazine* (November 9, 2023), accessed October 16, 2025, <https://www.eyefilm.nl/magazine/monumenten-voor-vluchtigheid-de-films-van-barbara-meter/1158664>.
- Baudoin, Joris. “Zwaar oké,” in *Jop Horst: Werk*, ed. Diana de Vries (Hengelo: Werkgroep Jop Horst, 2018).
- Bernardi, Joanne, Paolo Cherchi Usai, Tami Williams, and Joshua Yumibe, eds. *Provenance and Early Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020).
- Blankendaal, Stijntje. “De ongrijpbare magie van de toverlantaarn,” *Trouw*, December 23, 1999, accessed October 16, 2025, www.trouw.nl/voorpagina/de-ongrijpbare-magie-van-de-toverlantaarn~b3163898.
- Chion, Michel. *The Voice in Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).
- Cubitt, Sean. “Against Connectivity” (Paper presented at In/Between: Cultures of Connectivity, NECS Conference, Potsdam, July 28–30, 2016).
- Cubitt, Sean. *Finite Media Environmental Implications of Digital Technologies* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017).
- “De Molen,” *Stichting Beeldende Kunst Ag*, accessed October 16, 2025, www.kunsttag.eu/de-molen.
- “De Volière,” *Stichting Beeldende Kunst Ag*, accessed October 16, 2025, www.kunsttag.eu/ag-voliere.
- “Diascoop presenteert: Nieuw werk,” 2000, *theatercollectie.uva*, 2000, accessed October 16, 2025, www.theatercollectie.uva.nl/Details/audioVisuals/300135742.
- Elsaesser, Thomas. “Cinema, Motion, Energy, and Entropy,” *New Media Archaeologies*, eds. Ben Roberts and Mark Goodall (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 107–134.
- Elsaesser, Thomas. *Film History as Media Archaeology: Tracking Digital Cinema* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016).
- Exhibition: “Jop Horst,” Zaal Zuid, Hengelo, and Rijksmuseum Twenthe, Enschede, 2018, accessed October 16, 2025, www.rijksmuseumtwenthe.nl/content/2129/en/jop-horst.
- “Fernand Léger: *Ballet mécanique*, 1924,” *MoMA*, accessed October 16, 2025, www.moma.org/collection/works/303856.
- Fickers, Andreas, and Annie van den Oever. *Doing Experimental Media Archaeology: Theory* (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2022).

- Gansing, Kristoffer. "The Transversal Generic: Media-Archaeology and Network Culture," *The Fibreculture Journal* 123, no. 18 (2011), 92–117.
- Geertz, Clifford. *Agricultural Involution: The Processes of Ecological Change in Indonesia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963).
- Gensbittel, Fabien, Stefano Lovo, Jérôme Renault, and Tristan Tomala. "Zero-sum Revision Games," *Games and Economic Behaviour* 108, (2018), 504–522.
- Gibson, Steve. "Introduction: The Long History of Moving Images Becoming Alive," *Live Visuals: History, Theory, Practice*, eds. Steve Gibson, Stefan Arisona, Donna Leishman, and Atau Tanaka (London and New York: Routledge, 2023), 1–5.
- Gibson, Steve, Stefan Arisona, Donna Leishman, and Atau Tanaka, eds. *Live Visuals: History, Theory, Practice* (London and New York: Routledge, 2023).
- Goddard, Miachel. "Opening up the Black Boxes: Media Archaeology, 'Anarchaeology' and Media Materiality," *New Media & Society* 17, no. 11 (2015), 1761–1776.
- Grant, Paul Douglas. *Cinéma Militant: Political Filmmaking and May 1968* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).
- "Grutterij van Berend ter Marsch," *De Nederlandsche Molendatabase*, accessed October 16, 2025, www.molendatabase.nl/molens/ten-bruggencate-nr-16719?page=142&paging=true.
- Harris, Verne. "Genres of the Trace: Memory, Archives and Trouble," *Archives and Manuscripts* 40, no. 3 (2012), 147–157.
- Heijden, Tim van der, and Aleksander Kolkowski. *Doing Experimental Media-Archaeology: Practice* (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2023).
- "Hema," *Wikipedia*, last update January 4, 2025, accessed June 12, 2025, <https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/HEMA>.
- "History," *PEJA Vietnam*, accessed October 16, 2025, <https://pejavietnam.com/peja-sea-bv>.
- Huhtamo, Erkki. "Art in the Rear-View Mirror," in *A Companion to Digital Art*, ed. Christiane Paul (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 69–110.
- Huhtamo, Erkki, and Doron Galili. "The Pasts and Prospects of Media Archaeology," *Early Popular Visual Culture* 18, no. 4 (2020), 333–339.
- Huhtamo, Erkki. "Dismantling the Fairy Engine: Media Archaeology as Topos Study," *Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications, and Implications*, eds. Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 27–47.
- "Huismerken: Reactor," *HEMA B.V.*, accessed October 16, 2025, www.hema.nl/geschiedenis/huismerken.
- "Jop Horst," *jophors.nl*, accessed October 16, 2025, <https://jophorst.nl>.
- Kessler, Frank. "The Multiple Dispositifs of (Early) Cinema," *Cinémas* 29, no. 1 (2018), 51–66.
- Lansing, J. Stephen. "Complex Adaptive Systems," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 32, (2003), 183–204.
- Lautenschlaeger, Grazielle. *Sensing and Making Sense: Photosensitivity and Light-to-sound Translations in Media Art* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2021).
- Mallon, Bill, and Jeroen Heijmans. "Sur Place," in *Historical Dictionary of Cycling* (Lanham, Toronto, and Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2011).
- Marey, Étienne-Jules. *Le Vol des Oiseaux* (Paris: G. Masson, 1890).
- McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964).
- "Molen van Trip / Molen van Weggeman," *De Nederlandsche Molendatabase*, accessed October 16, 2025, www.molendatabase.nl/molens/ten-bruggencate-nr-16719?page=142&paging=true.

- Parikka, Jussi. *Digital Contagions: A Media Archaeology of Computer Viruses* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007).
- Ragona, Melissa. "Swing and Sway: Marie Menken's Filmic Events," in *Women's Experimental Cinema: Critical Frameworks*, ed. Robin Blaetz (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007), 20–44.
- Renov, Michael. "Newsreel: Old and New: Towards An Historical Profile," *Film Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (1987), 20–33.
- "Reuzendoders," *Stichting Beeldende Kunst Ag*, accessed October 16, 2025, www.kunstag.eu/reuzendoders.
- Roberts, Ben, and Mark Goodall, eds. *New Media Archaeologies* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019).
- Ross, Julian. "Beyond the Frame: Intermedia and Expanded Cinema in 1960–1970s Japan" (Unpublished PhD dissertation, School of Modern Languages and Cultures, University of Leeds, 2014).
- Ross, Julian. "Preserving and Exhibiting 1960–70s Japanese Expanded Cinema" (Presentation for the Research Group Moving Images: Preservation, Curation, Exhibition [University of Amsterdam], Eye Filmmuseum, Amsterdam, March 11, 2022).
- Sengupta, Rakesh. "Towards a Decolonial Media Archaeology: The Absent Archive of Screenwriting History and the Obsolete *Munshi*," *Theory, Culture & Society* 38, no. 1 (2021), 3–26.
- Schlicht, Esther, and Max Hollein, eds. *Zelluloid: Film ohne Kamera* (Frankfurt and Bielefeld: Schirn Kunsthalle and Kerbert Verlag, 2010).
- Shatskikh, Aleksandra. "The Cosmos and the Canvas: Malevich at Tate Modern," *Tate Etc.*, no. 31 (2014), accessed October 16, 2025, www.tate.org.uk/tate-etc/issue-31-summer-2014/cosmos-and-canvas.
- Soderman, Braxton, and Nicole Starosielski. "Circulating Concepts: Networks and Media Archaeology: An Interview with Jussi Parikka," *Amodern*, no. 2 (2013), <https://amodern.net/article/jussi-parikka-interview>.
- Steenbergen, Renée. "AIR," *NRC Handelsblad*, March 1, 1992, Cultureel Supplement, 4.
- Strauven, Wanda. *Touchscreen Archaeology: Tracing Histories of Hands-On Media Practices* (Lüneburg: Meson Press, 2021).
- Stutton, Gloria. *The Experience Machine: Stan VanDerBeek's Movie-Drome and Expanded Cinema* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2015).
- Sullivan, Sian. "Towards a Non-equilibrium Ecology: Perspectives from an Arid Land," *Journal of Biogeography* 23, no. 1 (1996), 1–5.
- Tripayana, I Nengah Agus, Prayoga Bestari, Elly Malihah, and Syaifullah Syaifullah. "Maintaining and Shaping Ecological Citizenship of Indigenous Balinese Through Saput Poleng," *Edueskos* 13, no. 2 (2024), 263–273.
- "Videokunst," *Stichting Beeldende Kunst Ag*, accessed October 16, 2025, www.kunstag.eu/video-september-1989.
- Vries, Diana de, ed. *Jop Horst: Werk* (Hengelo: Werkgroep Jop Horst, 2018).
- Walley, Jonathan. *Cinema Expanded: Avant-garde Film in the Age of Intermedia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).
- X-Pact, "Kunstenaar: Jop Horst," *X-Pact: Art, Business, Technology, Science* (Enschede: X-Pact, 1999).
- Youngblood, Gene. *Expanded Cinema* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1970).

List of Artworks

- 3-5-15 (Jop Horst, 1994) [installation and film]
Blik (Jop Horst, 2011) [sculpture]
Broodroostertekeningen (Toaster Drawings; Jop Horst, 2003–2004) [drawings]
Ei, ei, ei (Egg, Egg, Egg; Jop Horst, 1987–1988) [film]
Ellipse (Jop Horst, 2009) [installation]
Floor for the Blind (Joris Baudoin and Jop Horst, 1990) [sound installation]
Gold Hurts (Wineke Gartz, 1998) [installation]
Golvenfilm (A Film of Waves; Joris Baudoin and Jop Horst, 1992) [film]
Grid (Jop Horst, 2008) [installation + zoetrope]
Grote Random Zoötroop (Large Random-Around Zoetrope; Jop Horst, 1989) [zoetrope]
Het gele bakje is rode draad (The Yellow Cup Is Red Thread; Jop Horst and Joris Baudoin, 1989) [film]
Hond (Dog; Jop Horst, 1992) [installation]
Lichtuit (Lights Out; Jop Horst, 1983) [film]
Lights (Marie Menken, 1966) [film]
Molenjop (Joris Baudoin and Jop Horst, 1985) [film]
Movie-Drome (Stan VanDerBeek, 1964–1965) [film installation]
Muggenhoofd (Mosquito Head; Jop Horst, 1992) [installation]
Neushoorn (Rhinoceros; Jop Horst, 1990) [film installation]
Ploetje draaje (Play a Record; Joris Baudoin and Jop Horst, 1993) [film]
Shadow Procession (William Kentridge, 1999) [film]
Soldaatjes (Toy Soldiers; Jop Horst, 1998) [sound sculpture]
Spullentheater (Jop Horst, 1991) [performance]
Stadswacht (City Guard; Jop Horst, 2001) [installation]
Ubu Tells the Truth (William Kentridge, 1997) [film]

Biography

Floris Paalman, PhD, is a researcher and lecturer in the Department of Media Studies, University of Amsterdam. He is coordinator of the MA program “Preservation & Presentation of the Moving Image.” and teaches courses on archiving, curating, media history, and research methods. He holds degrees in filmmaking, cultural anthropology, and media studies, and has a special interest in architecture and urbanism.

Email: F.J.J.W.Paalman@uva.nl

<https://doi.org/10.58193/ilu.1828>

Tereza Frodlová  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3482-3166>

(Národní filmový archiv, Česká republika)

Jakub Egermajer  <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-9274-5497>

(Národní filmový archiv, Česká republika)

Středověký partyzán v barvě

Restaurování filmu Jan Roháč z Dubé jako pramen kulturní historie

Abstract

The presented study is based on research carried out on the occasion of the digital restoration of the film *The Warriors of Faith* (Jan Roháč z Dubé; Vladimír Borský, 1947) undertaken between 2022 and 2024 with the participation of Národní filmový archiv, Prague. The study reconstructs the circumstances of the film's creation, its complex distribution history and its place in the social and cultural-political context of post-war Czechoslovakia. At the same time, it addresses the issue of the ideological dimension of the subgenre of historicist historical film and the production and distribution practices of nationalized Czechoslovak cinematography in its formative years, i. e. during the so-called Third Republic (1945–1948). In the part dedicated to restoration, it traces the procedures and approaches chosen with regard to the possibilities and limitations of preserved film materials and the level of current knowledge about film. To capture the complex nature of the work, the research is based on a hierarchical model used to describe cultural and information objects, which distinguishes between the work, its variant, manifestation and physical item. This approach is relevant not only in the context of archival practice and restoration, but also makes it possible to understand film stock as an important historical source that can open up new topics and perspectives within cinema historiography.

Klíčová slova

Jan Roháč z Dubé, restaurování, archivní výzkum, produkční historie, kulturní historie

Keywords

The Warriors of Faith, restoration, archival research, production history, cultural history

Film *Jan Roháč z Dubé* (Vladimír Borský, 1947) drží dvojí prvenství. První celovečerní barevný hraný snímek československé kinematografie je zároveň prvním filmovým zpracováním husitské tematiky. Navzdory tomuto prvenství dosud zůstal v odborné literatuře reflektován jen okrajově.¹⁾ Diváci jej mohli po desítky let vídat jen ve zkrácené verzi, což samo o sobě naznačuje komplikovanou distribuční historii, do které se promítly proměny kulturního klimatu v prvních poválečných letech. Nadto kolem filmu dlouho přetrvávaly interpretační nejasnosti včetně tvrzení, že k jeho zkrácení došlo až u příležitosti obnoveného uvedení v 60. letech.²⁾ Výzkum písemných archiválií ovšem dokázal, že ke vzniku druhé stříhové verze došlo již několik měsíců po premiéře filmu, a sice v souvislosti s prodejem snímku do Sovětského svazu. Toto překvapivé zjištění nás vedlo k dalším otázkám souvisejícím s uvedením snímku a se zásahy do jeho materiální podstaty.

Pro komplexnější poznání a porozumění tomu, jak film vznikl a následně se v čase proměňoval, na něj nestačí v tomto případě nahlížet z pozice formální a stylistické analýzy, tedy jako na dílo pojaté v duchu historismu (směru odkazujícího na starší reprezentace dané tematiky v jiných médiích), které má jednu ustálenou podobu. Ve skutečnosti se při každém sledování filmu setkáváme s některou z jeho možných variant, jak je manifestuje konkrétní filmová kopie nebo digitální médium. Abychom zachytili složitou povahu filmového díla v kontextu jeho vzniku i proměny v čase a zohlednili jeho materiální pluralitu, vycházíme z hierarchického modelu popsaného v *The FIAF Moving Image Cataloguing Manual*, který je používán pro popis kulturních a informačních objektů v paměťových institucích, typicky ve filmových archivech. Rozšířený model popisu rozlišuje čtyři úrovně: work, variant, manifestation a item.³⁾ Work představuje abstraktní dílo, jeho obsah a historický kontext, přičemž toto dílo není vázáno na konkrétní nosič. Variant označuje abstraktní verzi díla, která se liší v určitých charakteristikách, například délkou či jazykovou úpravou. Manifestation pak popisuje konkrétní realizaci této verze, vydání na 35mm filmu či digitálním nosiči, a reflektuje teoretické vlastnosti formátu. Nejnižší úroveň, item, je fyzický či digitální nosič, který archiv uchovává, a jeho popis zahrnuje technický stav, formát či případné poškození. Tento model umožňuje při katalogizaci v paměťových institucích vytvářet strukturované metadatové záznamy. Současně umožňuje sledovat, jak se dílo proměňuje v čase, rozlišit mezi abstraktním dílem a jeho konkrétními realizacemi

1) Téma filmu *Jan Roháč z Dubé* jako první od jeho premiéry rozsáhleji otevřel Pavel Taussig v roce 1983. Pavel Taussig, „Marginálie VII.: Barevný debutant (Historie filmu Jan Roháč z Dubé)“, *Film a doba* 29, č. 7 (1983), 399–402.

Dále srov. Petr Čornej, „Husitská tematika v českém filmu (1953–1968) v kontextu dobového nazírání na dějiny“, *Iluminace* 7, č. 3 (1995), 16–21.

Kamil Činátl, „Filmová paměť stalinismu: Obrazy minulosti jako stabilizátor paměti a sociálních rámců kolektivního vzpomínání“, in *Film a dějiny 3: Politická kamera – film a stalinismus*, eds. Kristian Feigelson – Petr Kopal (Praha: Casablanca – Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů, 2012), 304–320.

Kryštof Doležal, „Československý poválečný nacionalismus v mediální recepci snímku Jan Roháč z Dubé“, *Historický časopis* 70, č. 1 (2022), 87–113.

Okrajově též srov. Ivan Klimeš – Jiří Rak, „Husitský film: Nesplněný sen české meziválečné kinematografie“, in *Filmový sborník historický* 3, ed. Ivan Klimeš (Praha: Československý filmový ústav, 1992), 75–85.

2) Kolektiv, *Český hraný film III: 1945–1960* (Praha: Národní filmový archiv, 2001), 83.

3) Natasha Fairbairn – Maria Assunta Pimpinelli – Thelma Ross, *The FIAF Moving Image Cataloguing Manual*, ed. Linda Tadic (Brussels: FIAF, 2016), 7.

a systematicky evidovat materiály ve sbírce. Jeho aplikace ve filmově-historickém výzkumu může podpořit čtení filmu nejen jako textu, ale i jako historického pramene.

Práce s filmovým materiálem coby pramenem nicméně představuje v rámci filmové historiografie spíše menšinový přístup. S postupnou digitalizací se sbírky filmových archivů sice stávají dostupnější, ovšem samotný kontakt s filmovým materiálem se tak paradoxně ještě více omezuje. Vytrácí se povědomí o spojení díla s materiálem, což postupně proměňuje i chápání a interpretaci dějin filmu.⁴⁾ Zejména unikátní či silně poškozené materiály jsou nadto badatelům obtížně přístupné z důvodu jejich ochrany. Jejich interpretace coby historického pramene navíc vyžaduje specifické znalosti, které nejsou mezi badateli mimo archivní instituce příliš rozšířené.

Jedinečnou příležitostí k detailnímu průzkumu bývá restaurování filmu. To totiž není jen technickým procesem obnovy filmového díla do zamýšlené podoby, ale i formou pramenného výzkumu, která spojuje klasický výzkum historický s analýzou a porovnáním filmových materiálů. Zejména při něm se často ukazuje, že filmový pás coby pramen nemusí jen doplňovat informace z pramenů nefilmových, ale může přinášet nové otázky a témata k výzkumu, vést nás k nečekaným zdrojům překračujícím přímou souvislost s daným distribučním titulem, případně do výzkumu vnést zcela novou perspektivu.

Naše studie vychází právě z této zkušenosti s digitálním restaurováním *Jana Roháče z Dubé*, které probíhalo v letech 2022–2024. Jeho výsledkem nebylo pouze navrácení snímku do jeho původní podoby a obnovené uvedení do distribuce, ale také jeho zasazení do dobového společenského a kulturního kontextu a revize některých dosud přijímaných závěrů. Na film proto studie nahlíží nejen jako na objekt restaurování, ale také jako na klíčový pramen, který rozšiřuje naše porozumění dobové filmové výrobě, distribuční praxi i kulturní a společenské situaci v poválečném Československu.

Digitální restaurování filmu

Restaurování není pouze technickou disciplínou, ale i nástrojem, jak nově nahlížet a revidovat dějiny kinematografie a (re)interpretovat kulturní kontext vzniku filmového díla a jeho verzí. *Jan Roháč z Dubé* představuje v tomto ohledu specifický případ. Jako jeden z prvních českých barevných filmů odráží dobu, kdy se domácí filmový průmysl teprve učil pracovat s barevnou surovinou, jejíž limity se zásadně promítly do výsledné podoby děl. Současně jde o film, jehož uvádění bylo poznamenáno politickými a společenskými zvraty prvních poválečných let a jehož původní podoba byla po desetiletí divákům nedostupná. Restaurování realizované v letech 2022–2024 otevřelo otázky, které přesahují samotné dílo.⁵⁾ Jak přistupovat k filmu, jehož podoba se v čase proměňovala? Jak lze rekonstruovat rané barevné snímky, jejichž vizuální kvalita je podmíněna limity dobové technologie? A jaké poznatky o české kinematografii 40. let můžeme díky restaurování získat?

4) Franziska Heller, „Proč se zabývat dějinami filmu? Několik poznámek k otázce, jak digitalizace mění náš obraz minulosti“, *Iluminace* 27, č. 2 (2015), 41–55.

5) Film byl pod dohledem Národního filmového archivu digitálně restaurován ve společnostech Universal Production Partners (UPP) a Soundsquare v Praze.

Restaurování a znovuuvedení primárně otevírá cestu k tomu, aby se dílo vrátilo do povědomí filmového publika a stalo se součástí živé kulturní paměti. V případě *Jana Roháče z Dubé* byla dalším, a ještě závažnějším důvodem pro restaurátorský zásah skutečnost, že scény, které byly ze snímku vystřižené, se dochovaly pouze na prudce hořlavém a chemicky nestabilním nitrátním filmovém materiálu. Tím byla ohrožena samotná existence nemalé části filmu. Restaurování tak umožnilo nejen rekonstrukci a zpřístupnění díla, ale i jeho zabezpečení a uchování pro budoucí generace, což je jedním z poslání Národního filmového archivu coby paměťové instituce.

Výběr titulu k restaurování vždy předpokládá detailní znalost dochovaných filmových materiálů a jejich fyzického stavu. Na základě toho je možné kvalifikovaně rozhodnout, zda daný film restaurování vyžaduje a z jakých důvodů, a současně posoudit, zda technický stav materiálů restaurování vůbec umožňuje. Prvním krokem bývá systematické shromáždění všech dostupných filmových materiálů a průzkum domácích i zahraničních archivních sbírek. Ten poskytuje základní informace o původu, stáří a fyzickém stavu jednotlivých materiálů a může rovněž odhalit, zda snímek existuje či historicky existoval ve více než jedné verzi. Následná analytická fáze se zaměřuje na přesnější zhodnocení fotografické, respektive zvukové kvality a míry kompletnosti. Výsledky kritické analýzy určují, které materiály budou zvoleny jako zdrojové pro digitalizaci a do jaké podoby bude film restaurován.⁶⁾ Nezbytnou součástí výzkumu je i analýza nefilmových pramenů, zahrnující především archivní dokumenty z doby výroby a uvádění, články z dobových periodik a relevantní odborné studie. Nezastupitelnou úlohu zde mohou mít také orální prameny, ať již formou spolupráce se žijícími tvůrci, nebo prostřednictvím zaznamenaných rozhovorů s tvůrci, kteří se již restaurátorského procesu nemohli účastnit. Cílem tohoto výzkumu je souhrnné vyhodnocení informací o výrobě, uvádění a případných dodatečných zásazích do díla a jejich relevance pro výsledné rozhodnutí o podobě restaurovaného filmu.

V následujících kapitolách proto sledujeme nejen historii snímku v jeho kulturně-politických souvislostech a průběh digitálního restaurování, ale také přesah do prehistorie projektu, ideologického rozměru subžánru historicistně pojatého historického filmu a produkční a distribuční praxe zestátněné československé kinematografie v jejich formativních letech, tedy v období tzv. třetí republiky

Aktualizační potenciál tragédie

Období první republiky bylo bohaté na nezrealizované filmové projekty, které si za námět plánovaly vzít život Jana Husa nebo působení jeho následovníků. Mnohé z nich se zaštiťovaly jmény populárního literáta Aloise Jiráska či dramatika Arnošta Dvořáka.⁷⁾

6) Zuzana Bauerovalá – Tereza Frodlová, „Možnosti aplikace principů dokumentace konzervování-restaurování uměleckých a uměleckořemeslných děl na dokumentaci restaurování filmu“, *Illuminace* 33, č. 2 (2021), 88–89.

7) Srov. Arnošt Dvořák, *Husité: Tragédie národa o pěti dějstvích* (Praha: Městská knihovna, 2023).

Klimeš – Rak, „„Husitský“ film“, 75–85.

K tématu vztahu literatury a meziválečného českého filmu blíže srov. Ivan Klimeš, „Český filmový průmysl a svět literatury 1919–1945“, *Illuminace* 34, č. 3 (2022), 165–189.

Ke vzniku a dobovému přijetí největšího filmového projektu historického žánru v meziválečném Českoslo-

Když však k realizaci „husitského filmu“, o němž dlouho snili mnozí domácí filmoví publicisté,⁸⁾ skutečně došlo, sáhla nově zestátněná československá kinematografie k Jiráskovu dramatu *Jan Roháč*. Tato hra odehrávající se v letech 1434 až 1437 začíná bitvou u Lipan, tedy porážkou radikálního křídla utrakvistického hnutí koalici umírněných kašlišníků a katolíků. Většina dobové veřejnosti se v návaznosti na obraz dějin v Jiráskově díle i ve starších vědeckých i popularizačních výkladech s tímto radikálním proudem ztotožňovala a bitvu vnímala jako „svou“ porážku.⁹⁾

Autor v dramatu zobrazuje poražený odboj táboritského hejtmána Jana Roháče z Dubé proti císaři Zikmundovi a vyprávění zakončuje protagonistovou porážkou a popravou. V závěru pak zdůrazňuje myšlenku nezničitelnosti českého odporu proti utlačovatelům. Přesto nelze opomenout, že popisovaná hra je v první řadě tragédií, čímž se liší od většiny dobových literárních děl s tematikou husitství, která se věnují buď období zrodu tohoto hnutí (např. Jiráskův román *Mezi proudy*), či jeho vítězstvím (Jiráskovo drama *Jan Žižka*, román *Proti všem*, Dvořákova hra *Husité* apod.).

Již v době schvalování filmového scénáře pochybovali někteří posuzovatelé, zda je vhodné otevřít v československé kinematografii téma husitského hnutí snímkem o jeho porážce.¹⁰⁾ Důvod rozhodnutí tak učinit lze najít v inscenační historii divadelní předlohy.

Z důvodu opatření válečné cenzury se Jiráskova hra *Jan Roháč* dočkala uvedení v pražském Národním divadle až 25. října 1918. Inscenace režiséra Jaroslava Kvapila, v níž titulní roli ztvárnil Eduard Vojan, svým národoveckým patosem dokonale zapadla do atmosféry nadšeného očekávání české samostatnosti.¹¹⁾ Po její derniéře v roce 1921 se ovšem drama, které si později vzal za předlohu Borského film, překvapivě dočkalo dalšího pražského uvedení až v pomnichovském období.

Nastudováním *Jana Roháče*, jež mohla veřejnost v premiéře zhlédnout 1. února 1939, zahájila svou nedlouhou aktivitu Lidová scéna Unitaria. Za tímto levicově orientovaným divadlem, stejně jako za samotnou inscenací, stál tehdy sedmatřicetiletý režisér Antonín Kurš. Hlavní roli ztvárnil Karel Hradilák a v úloze císaře Zikmunda se objevil Vladimír Šmeral.¹²⁾ V atmosféře posledních týdnů existence druhé republiky se druhé pražské nastudování hry, plné záměrných aktualizacích alegorií, setkala s bouřlivým úspěchem. Šmeral s odstupem dvanácti let vzpomínal:

vensku srov. Martin Kos, „Ochránit křesťanskou ideu proti čachrům židovské kšeft-kliky: Svatý Václav jako střet ambicí, představ a zájmů“, *Iluminace* 32, č. 1 (2020), 41–60.

8) Klimeš – Rak, „Husitský film“, 75–85.

9) Petr Čornej, „Vnímání husitství v české moderní a postmoderní společnosti“, *Acta Universitatis Carolinae: Historia Universitatis Carolinae Pragensis: Příspěvky k dějinám Univerzity Karlovy* 53, č. 1 (2014), 30.

10) „Roháč z Dubé / Scénář: Vl. Borský / Posudek Jana Sajíce“, Praha, 26. 3. 1946, Národní filmový archiv (NFA), f. Československá filmová společnost II., k. 26.

11) Čornej, „Husitská tematika v českém filmu (1953–1968)“, 16.

„Jan Roháč (činohra). Národní divadlo, od 25. 10. 1918 do 15. 11. 1921 (19×)“, *Archiv ND*, cit. 25. 6. 2025, <http://archiv.narodni-divadlo.cz/inscenace/1819>.

12) Bořivoj Srba, *Prozření Genesiovo: Inscenační tvorba pražských českých činoherních divadel za německé okupace a druhé světové války 1939–1945* (Brno: Janáčkova akademie múzických umění, 2014), 397–401.

Měl jsem dojem, jako by *Roháč* byl napsán z nenávisti ke zrádné buržoasii, o níž Jirásek věděl, že jednou přijde doba, kdy znovu zradí lid nové, tentokrát ne ryšavé, ale zato zrudnější šelmě.¹³⁾

Kurš doplňuje popis Šmeralova hereckého výkonu:

Byl to opravdu hitlerovský skřet, šilící vztekem, když jeho hrozby a proklínání se mu vracejí bez účinku zpět a za jednoho Roháče jich vystávají tisíce. Lidé rozuměli jeho obrazu a rozuměli celému představení.¹⁴⁾

Inscenace se během šesti týdnů dočkala celkem padesáti představení.¹⁵⁾ Po okupaci zbytku českých zemí drama z repertoáru zmizelo a o několik měsíců později ukončila činnost i Lidová scéna.¹⁶⁾ Pozoruhodný je Šmeralův popis účinku, který inscenace měla na diváky:

Denně byl tímto představením mobilisován lid k odporu proti loupeživým vetřelcům. Tento svůj odpor dával v hledišti nepokrytě najevo. Při studentských představeních propukal takový řev odporu proti Zikmundovi, že jsem musel na jevišti čekat, až ztichne bouře, kterou jsem pociťoval jako demonstraci proti Hitlerovi a s ním spolené české buržoasii.¹⁷⁾

Podle divadelního historika Bořivoje Srby Jiráskova hra v tomto podání

nabývala významu až agitačně působícího protestu [...] na jedné straně diskreditovala české politiky, snažící se čelit zesilujícímu tlaku nepřítelů ustavičnými ústupky [...] na druhé straně vyzdvihovala mravní kvality těch, kdo se takovému počinání protivili a byli ochotni jako jacísi dědici Roháčovi vzdorovat náporu nepřátel až do stádia sebezničení.¹⁸⁾

Obojí uvedení Jiráskovy hry v Praze před vznikem Borského filmu bylo tedy spojeno s přelomovými událostmi své doby. Jak uvádí historik Petr Čornej, roháčovská látka „prokázala neobyčejnou schopnost aktualizace“.¹⁹⁾

Děj hry v očích veřejnosti získal rozměr alegorie národního odporu. Kuršovo zpracování navíc tento aktualizací potenciál textu dotvářelo a zdůrazňovalo zcela zřetelně a s jasným záměrem. Mimo jiné díky živé účasti publika se tak dle vzpomínek pamětníků proměnila samotná událost představení v akt protinacistického odboje, a his-

13) Vladimír Šmeral, „Jak představení Jiráskova ‚Jana Roháče‘ mluvilo k lidu v pomnichovské republice roku 1939“, *Divadlo* 2, č. 7–8 (1951), 602.

14) Antonín Kurš, „Jiráskův ‚Jan Roháč‘ v roce 1939“, *Divadlo* 2, č. 7–8 (1951), 601.

15) Srba, *Prozření Genesiovo*, 400.

16) Tamtéž, 400.

17) Šmeral, „Jak představení Jiráskova ‚Jana Roháče‘ mluvilo k lidu v pomnichovské republice roku 1939“, 604.

18) Srba, *Prozření Genesiovo*, 399–401.

19) Čornej, „Husitská tematika v českém filmu (1953–1968)“, 16.

torické drama se stalo nositelem společenského významu přesahujícího jeho vlastní sdělení.²⁰⁾

Vzpomínka na bojovnou inscenaci z roku 1939 a snad i na její předchůdkyni z roku 1918 významně ovlivnila poválečné rozhodnutí *Jana Roháče* zfilmovat.²¹⁾ O spojení mezi inscenací Lidové scény a snímkem Vladimíra Borského svědčí také fakt, že Kurš ve filmové verzi ztvárnil postavu radikálního kněze Jakuba Vlka. Jedná se o jeho jedinou filmovou roli.²²⁾

Drama o krizi a rozrůznění husitského hnutí a následném odboji jeho části proti silnějšímu protivníkovi posloužilo v roce 1939 k jinotajnému útoku nejen proti Německu, ale také proti té části českého obyvatelstva, kterou tvůrci vinili z ustupování nacistům. Po druhé světové válce, v době účtování se skutečnými i domnělými kolaboranty, idea filmové adaptace Jiráskova dramatu nabízela tvůrcům možnost zdůraznit skrze zjevné alegorie historickou legitimitu novodobých „pokrokových“ sil a odsoudit síly „reakční“. Váha, kterou poválečný establishment filmu *Jan Roháč z Dubé* přisoudil, zjevně nevycházela ani tak ze záměru oslavit jeho historického protagonistu, jako spíše z dobového renomé divadelní předlohy, jakož i z jejího aktualizačního potenciálu.

Tragika, velikost a úvodnickářská cvičení

Scénář s názvem „Jan Roháč z Dubé“, který třiačtyřicetiletý Vladimír Borský napsal se svým dlouhodobým spolupracovníkem Otakarem Růžičkou a se spisovatelkou Sonjou Špálovou, se za chaotických poměrů prvních poválečných let objevuje v archivních fondech Československé filmové společnosti zdánlivě zničených.

Borský a jeho spolupracovníci provedli v Jiráskově textu významné změny.²³⁾ První dějství nahradili montáží výjevů z boje u Lipan doplněné prologem, respektive dvěma prology. První, psaný a navazující na úvodní titulky, je citací z předmluvy Františka Palackého k *Dějčinám národu českého v Čechách a v Moravě*.²⁴⁾ Druhý, mluvený, doprovázející montáž, je kompilací úryvků z dvou textů komunistického novináře Jana Švermy, který padl ve Slovenském národním povstání: *Proti panské jednotě* (1936) a *Hus, Tábor a naše doba* (1937).

Šverma v citovaných pasážích husitství, respektive „táborskou revoluci“, prezentuje jako sociální hnutí s nadnárodním přesahem. Zápas „lidu“ a „pánů“, konstatuje,

trvá v našem národě podnes. Naplnil půl tisíciletí našich dějin a uložil národu obětí nevýslovných. Je v něm našich dějin hluboká tragika, je v něm však i jejich velikost a sláva.²⁵⁾

20) Srov. Janet Staiger, *Perverse Spectators: The Practices of Film Reception* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 161–178.

21) Čornej, „Husitská tematika v českém filmu (1953–1968)“, 17.

22) Kurš, „Jiráskův ‚Jan Roháč‘ v roce 1939“, 600.

Šmeral, „Jak představení Jiráskova ‚Jana Roháče‘ mluvilo k lidu v pomnichovské republice roku 1939“, 604.

23) Na samotném strojopisu není autor uveden. Posuzovatelé za jediného autora označují Borského, jehož podíl na scénáři byl zjevně dominantní.

24) Srov. František Palacký, *Dějiny národu českého v Čechách a v Moravě: Díl I.* (Praha: L. Mazáč, 1939), 2.

25) „Jan Roháč /podle dramatu Aloise Jiráska/. Technický scénář“, Praha, 1946, Knihovna Národního filmového archivu (KNFA), ATS – Technické scénáře.

Tvůrci tak spojili autoritu Palackého i Jiráska s otevřeně ideologizujícím výkladem Švermy, který se z komunistických pozic dopouští apropriace husitské „tradice“. Divadelní kritik Jan Sajíc v posudku na scénář mluvený prolog (zjevně bez znalosti jeho zdroje) kritizoval jako „nevhodné řečnické parády, ať již jsou čerpány odkudkoli, úvodnickářské cvičení, překonaný žurnalismus“. ²⁶⁾

Nejvýznamnějších změn se Jiráskův text dočkal v závěrečné části adaptace. Dramatik pouze předjímá nepokoje, které přesvědčí Zikmunda k urychlenému odjezdu z Prahy, a císařovu brzkou smrt. ²⁷⁾ Filmový scénář naproti tomu nepokoje, kterým dodává dimenzi lidového povstání, a císařův úprk přímo zobrazuje. Sugeruje tak, že Roháčova poprava vedla k tomu, že se moci v Čechách chopila znovusjednocená strana kališníků. Zdůrazňuje tak optimistické vyznění příběhu a současně vytváří metafikční aktualizací alegorii porážky německého nacismu, která mimo jiné legitimizuje dobově oblíbená hesla o nutnosti jednoty národa. ²⁸⁾

„Jakmile dnes povolíme barevný film jednomu režiséru...“

V březnu 1946 obdržely scénář k posouzení Ústřední filmová dramaturgie a tvůrčí kolegium ministerského zplnomocněnce pro správu filmových výroben Vladimíra Kabelíka. Archivované posudky se většinou nesou v negativním duchu. Jsou plné upozornění na dramaturgické i dialogické nedostatky a v nemálo ohledech předjímají výhrady, které se po premiéře filmu objeví v mnohých recenzích. Vyzývají rovněž, aby tvůrci vyhledali pomoc odborníka z řad historiků. ²⁹⁾ Již citovaný Jan Sajíc vedle toho neutrálně konstatuje, že scénář na mnoha místech skrytě evokuje „minulé poměry okupační, a tím nabývá jisté aktuální chuti“. ³⁰⁾

Tvůrčí kolegium na své schůzi 9. května 1946 vyzvalo Borského k přepracování scénáře na základě rozsáhlých připomínek posuzovatelů. ³¹⁾ V té době na Barrandově již tři týdny probíhaly stavby kulis pro filmovou verzi *Jana Roháče*, ³²⁾ která byla do výroby – byť

Jan Šverma, „Proti panské jednotě“, in František Kavka, *Husitská revoluční tradice* (Praha: Státní nakladatelství politické literatury, 1953), 310–311.

Jan Šverma, „Hus, Tábor a naše doba“, in Kavka, *Husitská revoluční tradice*, 314.

26) „Roháč z Dubé /Scénář: Vl. Borský/. Posudek Jana Sajíce“.

Při přepracování velké části dialogů se Borský, Růžička a Špálová pokusili napodobit Jiráskův sloh. Ještě více než Jirásek pak vsadili na košatou mluvu, plnou archaismů a mnohdy nechtěně komickou (např. neúmyslné rýmy či polské pozdravy pronášené jinak dokonale česky hovořícím Výškem Račinským). Také tato tvůrčí rozhodnutí byla v Sajícově posudku kritizována.

„Jan Roháč /podle dramatu Aloise Jiráska/. Technický scénář“.

27) Srov. Alois Jirásek, *Jan Roháč: Historická hra o pěti jednáních* (Praha: Nakladatelství J. Otto, společnost s r. o., 1922), 79–82.

28) Jakub Egermajer, „Stát a historický film (1945–1956)“ (Diplomová práce, Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy, 2024), 38–43.

29) „Posudek A. Černíka“, Praha, 26. 3. 1946, NFA, f. Československá filmová společnost II., k. 26.

„Roháč z Dubé /Scénář: Vl. Borský/. Posudek Jana Sajíce“.

30) Tamtéž.

31) „Opis ze zasedání tvůrčího kolegia“, Praha, 9. 5. 1946, NFA, f. Československá filmová společnost II., k. 27.

32) Anon., „Jan Roháč z Dubé – 1. stav. den“, *Věstník Československého filmu* 1, č. 13 (1946), 75.

v černobílé provedení – schválena 15. dubna.³³⁾ S natáčením se mělo podle původního plánu začít 14. května.³⁴⁾

Den po plánovaném začátku natáčení Ústřední filmová dramaturgie konstatuje v dopise výrobní skupině Karla Feixe, v jejímž rámci projekt vznikal, že Borský požadované změny dosud nepředložil, a že orgán „nemůže proto převzít odpovědnost za tento scénář, neb nařízené změny byly velmi závažného obsahu“.³⁵⁾ Režisér a jeho spoluscenáristé se pro přepracování nerozhodli ani poté, a výsledný film se od verze scénáře předložené v březnu 1946 liší pouze v detailech.

V úvodních titulcích hotového snímku se lze dočíst, že scénář byl napsán „podle Aloise Jiráska a nových historických dokumentů“. O jaké dokumenty se má jednat, lze však pouze hádat. Nic nenasvědčuje tomu, že by Borský uposlechl rady posuzovatelů a vyhledal pomoc historika.³⁶⁾

Samotné natáčení nakonec patrně začalo 20. května.³⁷⁾ Poslání filmu do výroby ještě před schválením definitivní verze scénáře, stejně jako fakt, že Borský připomínky tvůrčího kolegia a ústřední dramaturgie prostě ignoroval, svědčí o tom, že pevně dané aprobační postupy, které charakterizují pozdější fungování zestátněné kinematografie, nebyly v roce 1946 ještě plně etablovány.³⁸⁾ Další důvod tvůrčí autonomie, které se Borskému dostalo, a jiných neregulérních prvků v produkční historii *Jana Roháče z Dubé* lze spatřovat v mimořádných zásazích funkcionářů ministerstva informací. Archivní výzkum zjistil, že tyto ingerence se týkaly především rozhodnutí natočit film v barvě.

Když Prozatímní správní výbor Československé filmové společnosti (ČFS) v dubnu 1946 schválil vstup adaptace Jiráskova dramatu do výroby, současně ustanovil, že snímek, jehož rozpočet byl vyměřen na 18 298 000 korun, má být natočen na černobílý materiál.³⁹⁾ Toto rozhodnutí podporovalo také vedení Státní výroby filmů, konkrétně obě její příslušná kolegia, tvůrčí a hospodářské, zplnomocněnc Kabelík i ústřední ředitel ČFS Lubomír Linhart.⁴⁰⁾

33) „Dopis týkající se debat o natáčení filmu barevně/černobíle“, Praha, 16. 5. 1946, NFA, f. Československá filmová společnost II., k. 27.

„Opis ze zasedání schůze Prozatímního správního výboru ČFS“, Praha, 15. 4. 1946, NFA, f. Československá filmová společnost II., k. 27.

34) Anon., „Jan Roháč z Dubé – 1. film. den“, *Věstník Československého filmu* 1, č. 16 (1946), 92.

35) „Informace o (ne)předložení scénáře“, Praha, 15. 5. 1946, NFA, f. Československá filmová společnost II., k. 27.

36) Jediným odborným poradcem, který se na natáčení podílel, byl major jezdecký a bývalý dostihový závodník Jan Pulkrábek, jenž ovšem v oboru historie – obecné ani vojenské – neměl odbornou průpravu.

„Jan Roháč z Dubé“, *Filmový přehled*, cit. 5. 7. 2025, <https://www.filmovyprehled.cz/cs/film/396046/jan-rohac-z-dube>.

Srov. Ivo Pejčoch, „Major Jan Pulkrábek – vězeň policejní věznice gestapa v Terezíně ve světle vlastních vzpomínek“, *Tereziánské listy: Sborník Památníku Terezín* 47, č. 1 (2017), 76–93.

37) Anon., „Z naší výroby: Jan Roháč z Dubé“, *Věstník Československého filmu* 1, č. 20 (1946), 111.

38) K tématu zrodu aprobačních postupů zestátněné kinematografie srov. Petr Szczepanik, *Továrna Barrandov: Svět filmařů a politická moc 1945–1960* (Praha: Národní filmový archiv, 2016).

Pavel Skopal, ed., *Naplánovaná kinematografie: Český filmový průmysl 1945–1960* (Praha: Academia, 2012). Jan Černík, „Technický scénář a sovětizace československého filmu (1945–1954)“, *Iluminace* 26, č. 4 (2014), 77–93.

39) „Opis ze zasedání schůze Prozatímního správního výboru ČFS“, Praha, 15. 4. 1946, NFA, f. Československá filmová společnost II., k. 27.

40) „Dopis týkající se debat o natáčení filmu barevně/černobíle“, Praha, 16. 5. 1946, NFA, f. Československá filmová společnost II., k. 27.

Zdá se, že myšlenka realizovat *Jana Roháče z Dubé* v barevném provedení byla přítomná již od ranějších fází projektu. Velká část představitelů zestátněné kinematografie však tento postup nepokládala za vhodný, a to z ekonomických i uměleckých důvodů. Někteří členové správního výboru ČFS byli skeptičtí k samotnému zahájení agfacolorové produkce za daných hospodářských podmínek. Jiní se pouze stavěli proti tomu, aby se privilegia barevného zpracování dočkal právě Borského scénář.⁴¹⁾ Sám Linhart vedle toho vyjádřil další důvod svých obav:

Jakmile dnes, kdy nejsme na přechod produkce k barevnému filmu ještě dostatečně připraveni, povolíme barevný film jednomu režisérovi, budou totéž žádat režiséři druzí.⁴²⁾

Zastánci barevného zpracování, kteří ve správním výboru představovali menšinu, pak argumentovali zejména „kulturně-politickou vhodností námětu“ a zkušenostmi s Agfacolorom, které Borský a kameraman Jan Stallich nabyli spoluprací s režisérem Willim Forstem⁴³⁾ a se sovětskými filmaři po válce.⁴⁴⁾ Zvyšující se rozpočet filmu navrhovali kompenzovat například zvýšeným vstupným. K tomuto kroku však distribuce nezískala povolení od Nejvyššího cenového úřadu a Ústřední rady odborů.⁴⁵⁾

Za zásadní zlom v rozhodování, na jaký materiál film natočit, lze považovat 8. květen 1946, kdy se v kanceláři sekčního šéfa kinematografického odboru ministerstva informací Vítězslava Nezvala konala dvouhodinová neformální schůzka za účasti několika členů správního výboru. Nezval při této příležitosti úředně rozhodl, že snímek bude realizován v barvě. Argumentoval při tom posudkem, který pro něj vypracovala čtveřice členů výboru: Jindřich Elbl, Emil Sirotek, Karel Dvořák a Josef Hlinomaz, tedy vesměs již dřívější zastánci agfacolorového provedení.⁴⁶⁾

41) „Dopis Františka Piláta pro Lubomíra Linharta“, Praha, 16. 5. 1946, NFA, f. Československá filmová společnost II., k. 27.

„Dopis Lavoslava Reichla pro Lubomíra Linharta“, Praha, 16. 5. 1946, NFA, f. Československá filmová společnost II., k. 27.

„Dopis Františka Papouška pro Lubomíra Linharta“, Praha, 16. 5. 1946, NFA, f. Československá filmová společnost II., k. 27.

42) „Dopis Lubomíra Linharta v záležitosti filmu ‚Jan Roháč z Dubé‘“, Praha, 16. 5. 1946, NFA, f. Československá filmová společnost II., k. 27.

43) Stallich spolupracoval s Forstem vedle několika černobílých filmů také na agfacolorovém snímku *Wiener Mädeln*, natáčeném ve vídeňských a pražských studiích v letech 1944–1945, ale uvedeným do kin až v roce 1949. Na stejném filmu se Borský podílel jako asistent režie.

„Wiener Mädeln“, *IMDb*, cit. 21. 7. 2025, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0042043/>.

44) „Dopis Lavoslava Reichla pro Lubomíra Linharta“, Praha, 16. 5. 1946, NFA, f. Československá filmová společnost II., k. 27.

„Stanovisko pro Linharta k barevnému provedení“, Praha, 16. 5. 1946, NFA, f. Československá filmová společnost II., k. 27. „Dopis o barevném provedení“, Praha, 16. 5. 1946, NFA, f. Československá filmová společnost II., k. 27.

45) „Zápis z 24. produkční pracovní rady“, Praha, 5. 3. 1947, NFA, f. Československá filmová společnost II., k. 25.

„Zápis z 26. produkční pracovní rady“, Praha, 19. 3. 1947, NFA, f. Československá filmová společnost II., k. 25.

46) „Dopis pro Linharta o barevném provedení filmu“, Praha, 8. 5. 1946, NFA, f. Československá filmová společnost II., k. 27.

Tímto arbitrárním krokem byla otázka v podstatě rozhodnuta.⁴⁷⁾ Nelze se tedy vyhnout závěru, že konečné rozhodnutí natočit *Jana Roháče z Dubé* v barvě je výsledkem zákroku ministerstva informací. Bez tlaku z vyšších míst by Československá filmová společnost v roce 1946 k barevné produkci zřejmě nepřistoupila.

Agfacolor jako tvůrčí výzva

Pochybnosti Lubomíra Linharta o tom, zda je česká kinematografie připravena k výrobě celovečerních barevných filmů, se v případě *Jana Roháče z Dubé* ukázaly jako oprávněné. Barevná filmová surovina Agfacolor, která byla použita pro natáčení i výrobu kopií, zásadně ovlivňovala nejen vizuální podobu filmu, ale i výrobní a laboratorní postupy. Tato specifika však nebyla při natáčení plně zohledněna, a tak se ve výsledném filmu projeví i její technické limity.

Filmy na této surovině byly charakteristické svými pastelovými barvami a světlými obrysy okolo předmětů. Tlumené odstíny zelené, modré a béžové často kontrastovaly s červenou, kterou Agfacolor naopak reprodukoval jako výrazně saturevanou. Ve srovnání s americkým Technicolorem, pro který byly charakteristické zářivě syté odstíny, působil Agfacolor přirozeněji a méně oslnivým dojmem.⁴⁸⁾

Čeští filmaři se s touto surovinou, respektive s německým systémem Agfacolor Neu,⁴⁹⁾ setkali už v první polovině 40. let, neboť během okupace vzniklo v barrandovských ateliérech jedno z center německé filmové produkce. Do roku 1945 bylo v pražských studiích vyrobeno šest barevných celovečerních hraných filmů, jeden dokumentární a tři kreslené. Po osvobození zůstaly na Barrandově moderně vybavené laboratoře pro barevný film a ateliérové haly s osvětlovacím parkem, vhodným pro natáčení barevných filmů.⁵⁰⁾ Zůstali také techničtí a tvůrčí pracovníci (mezi nimi, jak již bylo zmíněno, Borský a Stallich), kteří s natáčením na Agfacolor a s jeho laboratorním zpracováním měli zkušenost.

Použitá barevná surovina Agfacolor na sebe v *Janu Roháčovi z Dubé* upozorní už na začátku filmu. V úvodní montážní sekvenci sledujeme vozy a jezdce na koních, jak projíždějí krajinou. Tato sekvence obsahuje několik prolínaček a stíraček, v nichž se charakter obrazu viditelně změní. Rozlišovací schopnost materiálu se místy výrazně zhorší a dochází ke zdánlivému zploštění obrazu v důsledku snížení barevného rozsahu a redukce barev-

47) Ještě 20. května, v den, kdy Borský pravděpodobně začal na barevný materiál natáčet, ovšem informoval pisatel podepsaný iniciálou „M“ ministra informací Václava Kopeckého na jeho žádost o názoru Prozatímního správního výboru ČFS. Dopis uvádí, že sedm přítomných se vyslovilo pro barevné zpracování, zatímco třináct bylo stále proti.

„Dopis pro Kopeckého“, Praha, 20. 5. 1946, NFA, f. Československá filmová společnost II., k. 27.

48) Dudley Andrew, „The Post-war Struggle for Color“, in *Color: The Film Reader*, eds. Angela Dalle Vacche – Brian Price (New York: Routledge, 2006), 44.

49) Původně inverzní barevný systém Agfacolor Neu se dostal na trh už v roce 1936. V profesionální kinematografii se prosadil až po roce 1939, kdy byl přizpůsoben na proces negativ–pozitiv, který umožnil vznik originálního negativu a tím i masovou výrobu kopií pro kinodistribuci.

50) Tereza Frodlová, „V barvách Agfacoloru: Zavádění barevného filmu v československé kinematografii čtyřicátých a padesátých let“, in *Zpět k českému filmu*, ed. Lucie Česálková (Praha: Národní filmový archiv, 2017), 265–266.

né škály do méně barevných odstínů. Tento jev, který se ve filmu později opakuje ještě několikrát, je důsledkem zhotovení přechodů mezi záběry laboratorní cestou. Při jejich výrobě jsou standardně oba záběry natočeny nezávisle na sobě a následně je efektu prolnutí či setření dosaženo postupnou expozicí obou záběrů na trikové kopírce. Dochází k několika krokům duplikace na jiný filmový materiál, což vede k více či méně patrné ztrátě původních vlastností filmového obrazu.

Dnes používané duplikační materiály umožňují kopírování bez výrazné ztráty fotografické informace, nicméně v době výroby filmu žádné duplikační materiály určené pro barevný film prakticky neexistovaly. Zatímco barevné filmy z následujících let už tento fakt zohlednily úpravou výrobních postupů, *Jan Roháč z Dubé* ještě odráží pionýrské období, kdy se kinematografie na práci s barvou postupně adaptovala.

Nadto se filmaři potýkali s dalšími nedostatky této barevné suroviny. Jednotlivé emulze měly různou citlivost k barvám a barevný posun nebylo možné kompenzovat ani laboratorní cestou. Světlé části se obvykle zbarvovaly do azurova, zatímco tmavé do purpurova. To je v *Janu Roháčovi z Dubé* patrné nejen v nočních a málo osvětlených scénách, ale také v roztmíváčkách a zatmíváčkách. Nerovnoměrný polev materiálu emulzní vrstvou způsoboval charakteristické hustotní změny, které se projevují jako barevné dýchání. Pozitivní materiály nadto vykazovaly zhoršenou ostrost v důsledku silné první emulzní vrstvy, která způsobovala nežádoucí rozptyl světla.⁵¹⁾

Na specifika barevné suroviny i dosavadní zkušenosti reagoval v roce 1947 Filmový technický sbor vydáním *Směrnic pro práci s barevným filmem*.⁵²⁾ Ty přinesly soubor doporučení, jak přizpůsobit výrobní postupy barevné suroviny a vyhnout se tak některým technickým úskalím, která se v *Janu Roháčovi z Dubé* ještě projevují.

Středověký partyzán

Natáčení filmu *Jan Roháč z Dubé* skončilo v listopadu 1946. Tvůrci zaplnili obsazení převážně divadelními herci. Pro nemalou část vedlejších představitelů se jednalo o jedno z prvních výraznějších vystoupení před kamerou, pro mnohé pak rovněž o jedno z posledních, respektive o jediné.⁵³⁾

Obsazení vysokého počtu divadelních herců lze vnímat jako jeden z projevů uměleckého pojetí filmu v duchu historismu. Husitské období sice nebylo do té doby v kinematografické podobě zpodobněno, ale ve výtvarném umění, jakož i v dramatické a hudební tvorbě představovalo již po desítky let oblíbený námět. Snad proto se tvůrci *Jana Roháče z Dubé* rozhodli film doplnit množstvím odkazů na etablovaná díla z jiných médií, ale se stejnou tematikou. Výtvarné pojetí, které je dílem uměleckých malířů Zdeňka Buriana, Miloslava Dvořáka a Františka Pavlíka, stejně jako kostýmy, za jejichž návrhy stojí J. M. Gottlieb, se viditelně inspirovaly v obrazech a kresbách umělců 19. století. Hudba

51) „Zpráva filmových laboratoří Františku Pilátovi“, Praha, 23. 7. 1959, NFA, f. Československý státní film [nezpracovaný fond].

52) „Směrnice pro práci s barevným filmem“, Praha, 20. 4. 1947, NFA, nezpracované fondy.

53) Jl., „Úspěšná premiéra filmu Jan Roháč z Dubé v Rokycanech: Co nám řekli O. Korbelář, J. Vojta a O. Čermák“, *Právo lidu: Západočeské vydání*, 4. 4. 1947, 3.

Otakara Jeremiáše si zase vzala za dominantní prvek chorál *Ktož jsú boží bojovníci*. A konečně vedení herců dotvářelo výkony plné přepjatých emocí a teatrálních gest.

Nutno dodat, že toto pojetí se v dobovém tisku setkal navzdory jinak pozitivnímu přijetí snímku se spíše rozpačitou reakcí. V otázce výtvarného řešení se po uvedení filmu rozvinula debata nad otázkou, zda stylizace vychází spíše z Mikoláše Alše, Václava Brožíka či snad z Věnceslava Černého a zda je to tak „správně“ či nikoliv.⁵⁴⁾ Jeremiášova hudba byla v nemálo recenzích kritizována za svou prvoplánovost, malou invenci a přílišnou intenzitu.⁵⁵⁾ A z hereckých výkonů byly jednoznačně pozitivně přijaty pouze ty, které se od teatrálního pojetí v očích kritiků odchylovaly. Většina recenzentů nicméně z patetických projevů zbytku obsazení nevinila samotné herce, nýbrž právě Borského, který byl rovněž kritizován za celkovou divadelnost filmu.⁵⁶⁾

Film *Jan Roháč z Dubé* byl veřejnosti poprvé předveden na předpremiéře ve městě Dubá na Českolipsku 21. března 1947. Zřícenina tamního hradu byla prezentována jako rodové sídlo historického protagonisty snímku. Čestným hostem slavnostní akce byl ministr informací Václav Kopecký, který se při této příležitosti také zúčastnil přejmenování jedné z ulic města na ulici Jana Roháče.⁵⁷⁾

Město, kde se filmová premiéra uskutečnila, nemá ve skutečnosti s Roháčem nic společného,⁵⁸⁾ na což v pamětech vydaných v roce 1980 upozorňuje sám vedoucí výroby snímku Bohumil Šmída. Producent uvádí, že záměna severočeské Dubé s hejtmanovým skutečným rodovým sídlem, středočeskou zříceninou Stará Dubá, byla výsledkem upřímného omylu, o němž se on sám dozvěděl až s odstupem času.⁵⁹⁾ Není důvod pochybovat o jeho pravdomluvnosti. Na druhou stranu si nelze nevšimnout politického rozměru slavnostní předpremiéry českého historického filmu konané v pohraničním městě, které o pouhé dva roky dříve bylo integrální součástí nacistického Německa a v němž po několik staletí převažovalo obyvatelstvo německé etnicity. Pro čerstvě vysídlený kraj se jednalo o jistě vítané (byť v této podobě mylné) připomenutí místní české historie a současně o důkaz zájmu pražského centra na kulturním povznesení periferie. Celou akci, zejména slavnostní pojmenování ulice, pak lze vnímat také jako součást legitimizace odsunu německojazyčného obyvatelstva a zavádění dominance českého živlu v pohraničí.⁶⁰⁾

54) Bohumil Břejcha, „Aleš nebo Brožík?“, *Kulturní politika*, 4. 4. 1947, 4.

jibr., „Jan Roháč z Dubé (Lucerna, Moskva, Sevastopol)“, *Svobodné noviny*, 30. 3. 1947, 5.

vbr., „Český film po prvé v barvách“, *Mladá fronta*, 30. 3. 1947, 5.

věk, „Epopěj síly a odvahy: Náš první celovečerní barevný film“, *Rudé právo: Severočeské vydání*, 2. 4. 1947, 2.

55) Viktor Srkal, „Ještě k filmu Jan Roháč“, *Svobodné slovo*, 5. 4. 1947, 4.

vbr., „Český film po prvé v barvách.“

56) A. M. Brousil, „První československý barevný film“, *Zemědělské noviny: Venkovské vydání*, 1. 4. 1947, 7.

MČ, „Symbolické filmové dílo: Premiéra ‚Roháče z Dubé‘: První český barevný film“, *Obrana lidu*, 1. 3. 1947, 5.

vbr., „Český film po prvé v barvách“.

Srkal, „Ještě k filmu Jan Roháč“.

tu, „Jan Roháč z Dubé“, *Národní obroda*, 5. 4. 1947, 5.

57) Bohumil Šmída, *Jeden život s filmem* (Praha: Mladá fronta, 1980), 80.

58) Severočeská Dubá se pojí s pány z Dubé z rozrodu Ronovců, zatímco husitský hejtman patřil ke stejnojmennému rodu z rozrodu Benešoviců se sídlem na hradě Stará Dubá nedaleko středočeské obce Přestavlkvy u Čerčan.

Srov. Kolektiv, *Ottův slovník naučný VIII*. (Praha: Nakladatelství J. Otto, 1894), 76.

59) Šmída, *Jeden život s filmem*, 80.

60) Tendence zestátněné kinematografie vnímat v souvislosti s Borského filmem dávnou historií jako živou věc

Těsně předtím, než *Jan Roháč z Dubé* koncem března vstoupil do běžné distribuce, si vedoucí skupiny Feix stěžoval na produkční poradě, že se začaly z různých míst objevovat četné žádosti o „tu neb onu dodatečnou změnu neb úpravu na filmu“. Jednu takovou žádost vzápětí přednesl na poradě náměstek pro výrobu Lavoslav Reichl, v minulosti jeden z nejrozhodnějších odpůrců natáčení snímku v barvě. Přál si, aby z filmu byla odstraněna píseň (patrně ta, kterou zpívá Roháčova dcera Ludmila Výškoví Račinskému). Feix reagoval odmítavě a avizoval, že distribuční kopie jsou již hotové a schválené cenzurním sborem.⁶¹⁾ Tyto snahy o umělecké zásahy na poslední chvíli svědčí o pokračující nejistotě, která na Barrandově panovala ohledně kvalit Borského filmu.

Samotná slavnostní premiéra, která se konala 28. března 1947 v pražském kině Sevastopol, byla patrně největší jednorázovou filmovou událostí třetí republiky. Na seznamu jejích účastníků lze nalézt mimo jiné prezidenta Edvarda Beneše, členy vlády a vedení parlamentu, stejně jako nemálo členů pražského diplomatického sboru.⁶²⁾ K 28. březnu film rovněž vstoupil do standardní distribuce. V premiérových kinech v okolí Václavského náměstí (Sevastopol, Moskva, Lucerna) se hrál po tři až čtyři týdny.⁶³⁾

Jak již bylo naznačeno, kritika přijala snímek *Jan Roháč z Dubé* s jistou vnitřní rozpolceností. Málokterá domácí recenze se k filmu stavěla otevřeně negativně. Ačkoliv většina periodik kritizovala Borského teatrální a historicistní pojetí látky, prvnímu československému celovečernímu barevnému filmu současně vyjadřovala uznání coby historickému milníku a úspěchu zestátněné filmové výroby.

Dobové přijetí snímku nelze pochopit bez vědomí sociálního kontextu období třetí republiky. Oficiálně proklamovaný narativ o sjednocení československých „pokrokových sil“, jehož institucionalizovanou formou byla Národní fronta, vytvářel navzdory pokračující (byť pevně omezené) politické pluralitě dojem společné odpovědnosti všech občanů na úspěchu nového politického systému.⁶⁴⁾ Jedním z viditelných důsledků zavádění tohoto systému bylo také znárodnění kinematografie.⁶⁵⁾ Filmová kritika se tak stávala — ať autor chtěl či nikoliv — věcí veskrze politickou.⁶⁶⁾

se projevila také, když se v únoru 1947 Státní půjčovně filmů přihlásil jistý Ladislav Roháč z Bánské Bystrice označující se za přímého potomka protagonisty. Ze související korespondence vyplývá snaha půjčovny použít případné doklady o pisatelově původu k propagaci filmu. Roháč takové důkazy nebyl schopen poskytnout. Navzdory tomu se jemu a jeho matce dostalo pozvání na slavnostní premiéru.

„Ladislav ROHÁČ, údajně přímý potomek Jana Roháče z Dubé. Dopisy Státní půjčovně filmů se žádostí o poskytnutí vstupenek na premiéru filmu Jan Roháč z Dubé. Rukopisy ve slovenštině + 1 foto. Odpovědi státní půjčovny filmů. Strojopisy“, Bánská Bystrica – Praha, únor–březen 1947, NFA, f. Československá filmová společnost II., k. 11.

61) „Zápis z 27. produkční pracovní rady“, Praha, 26. 3. 1947, NFA, f. Československá filmová společnost II., k. 25.

62) „Slavnostní premiéry“, Praha, březen 1947, NFA, f. Československá filmová společnost II., k. 22.

Anon., „Premiéry tohoto týdne: Jan Roháč z Dubé“, *Lidová demokracie*, 30. 3. 1947, 8.

63) Anon., „Slavnostní premiéra filmu v Rokycanech: V rámci oslav 550. narozenin M. Jana Rokycany“, *Svobodný směr*, 1. 4. 1947, 4.

64) Karel Kaplan, *Národní fronta 1948–1960* (Praha: Academia, 2012), 9–12.

65) Srov. Ivan David, „Zrození předpisu z ducha doby: Dlouhá legislativní cesta k vládnímu nařízení č. 72/1948 Sb., o zřízení a organizaci státního podniku „Československý státní film“, *Iluminace* 28, č. 1 (2016), 5–38.

K tématu přechodu od soukromé filmové výroby ke státní blíže srov. Jaroslav Lopour, „Filmy soukromých výroben ve státní kinematografii: Zestátnění a jeho vliv na kontinuitu české filmové výroby“, *Iluminace* 28, č. 3 (2016), 49–69.

66) Jiří Knapík, *Únor a kultura: Sovětizace české kultury 1948–1950* (Praha: Libri, 2004), 67–70.

To současně neznamená, že by se recenzenti po roce 1945 programově dopouštěli autocenzury a vyhýbali se negativním reakcím na produkty zestátněné kinematografie.⁶⁷⁾ Často ovšem své kritiky zastřešovali tezí, že nepovedená díla jsou residuem minulosti, od níž se nová filmová produkce musí oprostit. Odsudky neméně často mírnili chválou záměru nebo „výchovnosti“ námětu. Vedle umělecké a technické kvality díla brali v potaz politický a společenský význam produktu. Na druhé straně periodika, která se k novému režimu stavěla s kritickým odstupem, pak na znárodněnou kinematografii (potažmo zestátnění obecně) útočila právě skrze její umělecké výsledky.

Veřejný život v poválečné republice se totiž přes na odiv dávanou jednotu vyznačoval vsudypřítomnou stranickostí. Toto rozdělení lze snadno vysledovat i v recenzích na film *Jan Roháč z Dubé*. Nepočítáme-li tiskoviny spjaté přímo se zestátněnou kinematografií jako *Filmové noviny*, pak se nejpřívětivější reakce snímek dočkal v periodikách komunistických (*Rudé právo*, slovenská *Pravda*) a sociálnědemokratických (*Právo lidu*, *Svět práce*).

Recenze v *Rudém právu* chválí téměř všechny složky filmu, ale jeho hlavní přínos vidí již v samotné látce. Upozorňuje na paralelu mezi situací českých zemí v Roháčově době s obdobím mnichovské krize a okupace a vyzdvihuje panslavistickou myšlenku zastoupenou ve filmu postavou Poláka Račinského. Snímek pak považuje za důkaz o tom, „že teprve znárodněný film je s to splnit všechny kulturně-politické i umělecké úkoly, které filmu klademe“.⁶⁸⁾

Sociálnědemokratický *Svět práce* se k samotnému filmu stavěl rezervovaněji. Svou mírnou kritiku mířil výhradně na Borského, který dle publicisty Jaroslava Brože na námět „prostě nestačil a s nedostatky svého scénáře se pochopitelně už nedovedl vypořádat ani jako režisér“. Na druhou stranu text zdůrazňuje kvalitu technického provedení snímku a oslavuje jej jako velký počin zestátněné kinematografie.⁶⁹⁾

Nejrozpolcenější kritiky lze nalézt v národněsocialistickém tisku. Recenze ve *Slovu národa* vyjmenovává nedostatky filmu, které spatřuje hlavně v mnohomluvnosti a strojenosti dialogů, ve zmatečném ději, který není prost „několika scén plytkých a románkových“, v umenšování náboženského rozměru husitství⁷⁰⁾ a především v tom, že tvůrci film dostatečně „nevybalili z divadelních plenek“. Text na druhou stranu uznává, že v oněch příslovečných plenkách není československá kinematografie sama, a vyjadřuje naději, že se jich do budoucna zbaví. Následně pak zmíněné závažné výhrady bagatelizuje: „I když je tomu tak, musíme za první barevný český film poděkovat. Svědčí o nesmírném úsilí vytvořit něco velikého, co odpovídá duchu národa...“⁷¹⁾

67) Srov. přijetí filmů *Velký případ* (Václav Kubásek a Josef Mach, 1946), *Alena* (Miroslav Cikán, 1947), *Portáši* (Václav Kubásek, 1947), *Nikdo nic neví* (Josef Mach, 1947).

Oldřich Kautský, „Žena chytřejší čerta“, *Filmové noviny* 1, č. 33 (1947), 8.

Anna Tučková, „Alena proti očekávání zklamala“, *Rovnost*, 7. 8. 1947, 2.

Anon., „Portáši“, *Národní osvobození*, 30. 10. 1947, 4.

O.K., „Ani ryba, ani rak“, *Filmové noviny* 1, č. 44 (1947), 7.

Bohumil Brejcha, „Film a historie“, *Filmové noviny* 1, č. 32 (1947), 4.

68) věk, „Epoje síly a odvahy“.

69) Jaroslav Brož, „V barvách je síla a moc: O Janu Roháčovi z Dubé ne pouze politicky“, *Svět práce*, 3. 4. 1947, 12.

70) Rozsáhlejší výhrady na stejné téma se objevily v tiskovině Církve československé *Kostnické jiskry*.

Anon., „Jan Roháč z Dubé“, *Kostnické jiskry*, 3. 4. 1947, 4.

71) V. Kantor, „Jan Roháč z Dubé: První český barevný film“, *Slovo národa*, 6. 4. 1947, 5.

Zvláště pozoruhodná je autorova reflexe domnělého důvodu k zfilmování právě roháčovské látky. Byla jím dle něj

nedávná doba, kterou jsme prožívali, kdy na nás plnou tíhou doléhala okupace a poroučeli nám Němci, kdy mezi námi byli zrádci, a kdy čeští lidé statečně umírali za pravdu.⁷²⁾

Nejrozsáhlejší výhrady vůči filmu se vyskytují v periodikách spojených s Československou stranou lidovou. *Lidová demokracie* se nepřekvapivě vymezuje v první řadě opět vůči scénáři a režii, zejména pak práci s herci. Konstatuje, že tvůrci Jiráskovo drama zaktualizovali,

a tak nám vyšla česko-polská vzájemnost a výraz odporu proti Němcům a Maďarům. Tedy politické ovzduší zcela obdobné současné situaci.⁷³⁾

Zásadně pak autor protestuje proti tomu, že film nakládá se Svatováclavským chorálem jako s „písni panstva“, spojenou s „pasivitou a poraženectvím“.⁷⁴⁾ Lidovecký tisk je tedy z pochopitelných důvodů prost nadšení ze snímku, v němž je katolictví ukázáno výhradně coby nástroj cizího útlatku. Nicméně oceňuje alespoň práci jednotlivců. Článek v plzeňském lidoveckém listu *Stráž českého západu* pak recenzi Borského filmu využívá ke kritice zestátněné kinematografie, konkrétně v reakci na výroky jejích představitelů o tom, že soukromí podnikatelé by obdobné dílo nebyli schopni vyprodukovat.⁷⁵⁾

Všechny citované recenze a mnohé další spojuje reflexe paralely mezi dějem a dobou současností či událostmi předcházejících let. Proti snaze tvůrců tuto paralelu budovat se nikdo přímo nevymezuje. Zatímco část kritiků ji pouze konstatuje (občas jako něco téměř samozřejmého), komunistický tisk a některá periodika vázaná přímo na stát či na Národní frontu zacházejí dál a na budování tohoto alegorického významu filmu se samy podílejí. Nereflektují jej jako výsledek tvůrčího rozhodnutí filmařů, nýbrž jako danost, která legitimizuje poválečné uspořádání.⁷⁶⁾

Tato tendence je nejpatrnější na článku uveřejněném v tiskovém orgánu ministerstva obrany *Naše vojsko*, který mimo jiné o Roháčovi hovoří jako o „středověkém partyzánovi“, jeho postoj srovnává s výroky Tomáše Garrigua Masaryka a Zikmundovy „kolaboranty“ přirovnává k agrárníkovi Rudolfovi Beranovi, jehož proces před Národním soudem právě probíhal.⁷⁷⁾

Tím ovšem svou doslovnou aktualizaci nekončí:

Nejde však jen o několik lidí souzených našimi soudy za zradu, jde o ty, kteří jsou na svobodě, obhajují kapitulantství a vlastní zbabělost či zradu.⁷⁸⁾

72) Tamtéž.

73) Anon., „Premiéry tohoto týdne: Jan Roháč z Dubé“, *Lidová demokracie*, 30. 3. 1947, 8.

74) Tamtéž.

75) I, „Kolem premiéry prvního českého barevného filmu „Jan Roháč z Dubé“, *Stráž českého západu*, 5. 4. 1947, 3.

76) Egermajer, „Stát a historický film (1945–1956)“, 41.

77) H. Vinohradský, „Živý odkaz“, *Naše vojsko*, 11. 4. 1947, 13.

78) Tamtéž.

Citovaný text tak navíc využívá Borského film k výzvě po další represi údajných kolaborantů. Film získává roli nástroje aktuální politiky (ponechme stranou otázku, zda právě to bylo záměrem tvůrců, či nikoliv).⁷⁹⁾

Alegorické sdělení s autoritou historismu a barvy

Kamil Činátl, který československou poválečnou produkci historických snímků analyzuje z hlediska systémů reprezentací, si všímá, že filmová verze *Jana Roháče* úmyslně vytváří aktualizací paralely k předválečným, válečným i poválečným letům, a to jak prací s historickými postavami, tak zapracováním dílčích motivických paralel odkazujících zejména na léta 1938–1939.⁸⁰⁾

Komunističtí a s dobovou rétorikou komunistické strany souznějící publicisté neváhali filmové postavy z řad českého panstva ztotožnit s dobovou „reakcí“ (roky následující po premiéře filmu ukázaly flexibilitu tohoto pojmu). Implicitně také své hnutí stavěli do role filmových „pravověrných“ bratří, „avantgardy“ vyvolené vést „národ“ sjednocený obětí „mučedníků odboje“.⁸¹⁾ Jedná se o názorný příklad komunistické apropriace českých historických tradic, která probíhala současně s postupným ovládnutím československého státu (state capture) a sloužila k ideové legitimizaci rozrůstající se totalitní moci.⁸²⁾

Nepočítáme-li dílčí výhrady lidoveckých recenzentů, nikdo ze zástupců nekomunistických politických proudů v české žurnalistice se vůči této aktualizací interpretaci historické látky nevymezil. Možné vysvětlení nabízí sám zkoumaný snímek.

Výpravný konvenčně pojatý historický film koncipovaný v duchu historismu představuje specifickou souhru žánrových, stylistických a ideologických kategorií. Využívá jednak domnělou transparentnost filmového média, které skrývá své nástroje reprezentace, dále jinými médii zavedené představy cílového publika o historii, legitimizační potenciál, kterými historické reminiscence disponují ve vztahu k dané současnosti, a schopnost historického žánru maskovat aktuální ideologická sdělení. Výsledkem – vědomě či podvědomě zamýšleným – je předání subjektivního, leč divácky akceptovatelného pohledu na minulost, a neméně subjektivního, ovšem legitimizovaného sdělení o dobové současnosti, které se skrývá za patinu domnělé dějinné autentičnosti a zakrývá nejen nástroje reprezentace, ale také svůj záměr. Diváka tak nevede ke kritickému uvažování o viděné interpretaci historie, nýbrž se pokouší o jednoznačné nastolení konkrétního narativu. S takto předávaným sdělením je mnohem obtížnější polemizovat než s ideologicky zabarvenými obrazy současnosti.

Film *Jan Roháč z Dubé* souzněl v době svého uvedení s převažujícím názorem laické veřejnosti na husitské války. Jeho alegorické sdělení zase souznělo se stále dominantnějším pohledem na nedávnou minulost. Odráželo atmosféru doby vzniku snímku, ale sou-

79) K tématu mediální reflexe Borského snímku blíže srov. Doležal, „Československý poválečný nacionalismus v mediální recepci snímku Jan Roháč z Dubé“, 87–113.

80) Činátl, „Filmová paměť stalinismu“, 318.

81) Doležal, „Československý poválečný nacionalismus v mediální recepci snímku Jan Roháč z Dubé“, 93–94.

82) Bradley F. Adams, *The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation: Czech Culture and the Rise of Communism* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004), 89–92.

časné samo přispívalo k jejímu budování. Toto poselství navíc nelze považovat na výsledek rozsáhlejší reinterpretační zdrojového materiálu, ale spíš za využití prvků v něm přítomných. Obdobný přístup zvolili autoři v tematice česko-polské – a potažmo všeslovanské – vzájemnosti. Zdůraznili motiv přítomný již v předloze, který však v poválečné republice nesl rozdílné ideové konotace.

Pojmenovat v roce 1947 aktualizační ideologické poselství důmyslně skryté za autoritou obrazu slavné historie nákladně realizovaného znárodněnou kinematografií podle Jiráskovy předlohy a s prologem v podobě citace Palackého se samo o sobě zdá obtížné. Oč náročnější by muselo být vymezit se vůči němu.

Účinnost filmu a jeho alegorického sdělení přitom v době premiéry ještě podporoval fakt, že byl snímek realizován v barvě. V dobových reflexích agfacolorového zpracování lze vedle estetických hodnocení barevné kamery, které v zásadě kopírují přijetí filmu jako celku (obecně pozitivní s dílčími výhradami, většinou ke vzhledu exteriérových sekvencí), vysledovat několik dominantních myšlenkových proudů s ideologickým přesahem.

V jedné z mála recenzí postrádajících jakoukoli výhradu k Borského tvůrčímu pojetí Jiří Voldán chválí mimo jiné (aniž by jej tímto slovem pojmenoval) historismus obrazové stránky: „Takový Jaroslav Vojta v roli husitského bojovníka je přímo jakoby z historických pláten mistra Brožíka.“ Dále pak rozvádí, proč barevné zpracování napomáhá spektakulárnosti a „věrnosti“ snímku.⁸³⁾

Kritik A. M. Brousil označil „výtvarně vkusnou“ barevnou kameru Jana Stallichea za vůbec nejhodnotnější složku filmu, která československé kinematografii otevírá „světové obzory“.⁸⁴⁾ Jaroslav Brož zase hned v úvodu výstižně nazvaného článku „V barvách je síla a moc“ vyjadřuje vděčnost sovětským úřadům, díky jejichž „blahověli a ochotě“ má československý filmový průmysl na rozdíl od většiny západních zemí zajištěn přiděl německého materiálu Agfacolor, což mu umožňuje vlastní výrobu barevných filmů, aniž by se musel „podrobit“ monopolu hollywoodského Technicoloru.⁸⁵⁾

Dobová publicistika, jak ilustrují citované texty, barevnou realizaci vnímala nejen jako filmářskou složku, která dílu poskytuje speciální prestiž, či jako mezinárodní úspěch československé kinematografie, ale také v jiných, nečekaných kontextech. Především jako nástroj podporující „autentičnost“, tedy legitimitu zobrazení historie nesoucího aktualizační sdělení. Dále pak jako pozitivní důsledek blízkých vztahů se Sovětským svazem. Jednu z mála negativních reflexí barevného pojetí, která přesahuje rozměr estetické kritiky, pak lze nalézt v již citovaném článku z lidoveckého deníku *Stráž českého západu*. Její autor v reakci na výroky zástupců zestátněné kinematografie o domnělé kvalitativní nadřazenosti Agfacoloru nad Technicolorem upozorňuje, že Sověty dodaný systém je ve skutečnosti německým vynálezem, a kritizuje jej za „nepříjemnou pronikavost“ zejména červené barvy.⁸⁶⁾

83) Jiří Voldán, „Slavnostní premiéra ‚Jana Roháče z Dubé‘“, *Právo lidu*, 29. 3. 1947, 3.

84) Brousil, „První československý barevný film“.

85) Brož, „V barvách je síla a moc“. V obdobném duchu psal i komunistický deník *Rovnost*. AN, „Ve znamení barev: Jan Roháč z Dubé“, *Rovnost*, 6. 4. 1947, 8.

86) I, „Kolem premiéry prvního českého barevného filmu ‚Jan Roháč z Dubé‘“.

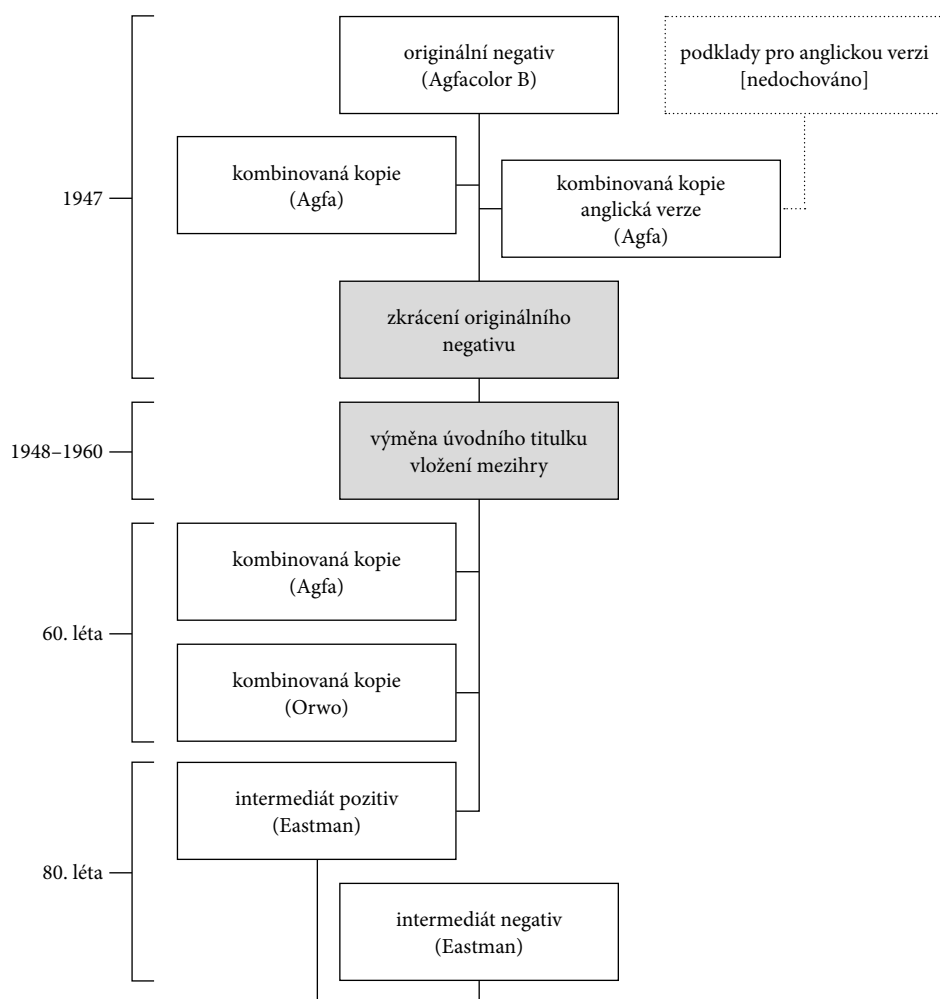
Průzkum materiálové podstaty díla

K *Janu Roháčovi z Dubé* se v Národním filmovém archivu dochoval originální negativ obrazu a zvuku spolu se dvěma duplikačními materiály (intermediát pozitiv a intermediát negativ) a čtyřmi 35mm kombinovanými kopiemi z různých období. Zatímco oba duplikační materiály a dvě kombinované kopie na acetátní podložce odpovídají délkou zkrácenému originálnímu negativu, obě kombinované kopie na nitrátní podložce jsou o téměř 500 metrů delší než originální negativ i ostatní filmové materiály, což při běžné promítací frekvenci 24 okének za sekundu představuje více než 18 minut.

Během přípravných restaurátorských prací jsme s dotazem na filmové materiály oslovili archivy sdružené v Mezinárodní federaci filmových archivů (FIAF), zejména v těch ze-
mích, kam byl film prodán krátce po svém uvedení v roce 1947. Na základě průzkumu v zahraničních filmových archivech jsme zjistili, že několik světových archivů (jmenovitě ruský Gosfilmofond, švédský Svenska filminstitutet, nizozemské Eye Filmmuseum a britský British Film Institute) má ve svých sbírkách filmové materiály, fotografie a dobové propagační materiály k filmu, avšak v žádném z nich se nepodařilo nalézt materiály vyrobené před zkrácením filmu.

V rámci analýzy byla provedena detailní kontrola fyzického stavu vybraných filmových materiálů na převíjecím stole a jejich oprava. K materiálům určeným k digitalizaci byly vypracovány podrobné protokoly o stavu filmových materiálů. Ty dokumentují jejich současný stav a nezbytné opravy, jež byly na materiálech provedeny, aby se předešlo možnému poškození při další manipulaci, jako je promítání či digitalizace. Z protokolů vyplývá, že fyzický stav uvedených materiálů umožňuje jejich další využití za předpokladu použití techniky určené pro práci s historickými filmovými materiály.

Originální negativ obrazu rozdělený do 11 dílů měří 2 355,1 metrů a je exponovaný na materiálu Agfacolor B, který byl v Československu v době natáčení jedinou dostupnou barevnou surovinou pro profesionální kinematografii. Filmový archiv získal tento negativ do sbírky z Ústřední půjčovny filmů v roce 1962. Míra smršťení materiálu na nitrátní podložce se napříč jednotlivými díly pohybuje mezi 0,4–0,8 %. Materiál je značně opotřeбенý a ve všech dílech se objevují rysky, slabé rýhy na podložce i emulzi, skvrny a nečistoty. Vzhledem k tomu, že negativ vznikl sestavením natočeného materiálu, obsahuje značné množství slepek mezi jednotlivými záběry. Na řadě míst se nachází zástřihy, jimiž byla opravena poškozená perforace. V případech rozsáhlejších poškození jsou pak perforační otvory opraveny adhezni páskou, která místy zasahuje i do obrazového pole. Chybějící části obrazu byly v materiálu v minulosti nahrazeny čířým blankem, aby obraz zůstal synchronní s negativem zvuku, který je na samostatném filmovém pásu. Během kontroly materiálů před digitalizací byly provedeny opravy, které umožnily předejít dalšímu poškození filmového pásu. Na řadě míst byly v negativu slepky a okrajové zářezy pro filmové kopírky zpevněny adhezni páskou. V rámci průzkumu bylo nadto zjištěno, že na konci 8. dílu se nachází 13 metrů filmového materiálu Gevaert Belgium na acetátní podložce, která nebyla v Československu v době výroby filmu standardně používaná ani dostupná. Tento dodatečně vložený materiál neobsahuje žádnou obrazovou informaci, nicméně následným průzkumem negativu zvuku bylo zjištěno, že do zvuku byla v tomto místě vložena mezihra, kterou žádný z původních filmových materiálů neobsahuje. Negativ zvuku na



Filmové materiály ve sbírce Národního filmového archivu

černobílém materiálu značky Agfa je rovněž rozdělený do 11 dílů a míra smrštění dosahuje 0,2–0,4 %. Materiál na nitrátní podložce je méně opotřebovaný než negativ obrazu, nicméně i zde se v průběhu všech dílů vyskytují rýhy a rysy na emulzi i podložce a husté zarýhování, označované jako zapršení. V místech, kde došlo k poškození perforace, je okraj filmu podlepen adhezivní páskou, nicméně stav negativu zvuku nevyžadoval kvůli digitalizaci žádné opravy.

Originální negativ byl počátkem 80. let zabezpečen duplikačními materiály na nehořlavé acetátní podložce barevné suroviny americké výroby Eastman. V laboratořích z něj byl vykopírován intermediát pozitiv a z toho následně intermediát negativ. Tím došlo k fotochemickému zabezpečení originálního negativu na chemicky stabilnější a bezpečnější filmový materiál. Tím zároveň vznikla možnost vyrábět další kopie do distribuce

z intermediátu negativu, a ochránit tak originální negativ coby unikátní materiál před dalším opotřebením. Oba materiály se dochovaly ve velmi dobrém technickém stavu s minimem mechanických poškození, intermediát pozitiv v délce 2 354,2 metru, intermediát negativ v délce 2 350,4 metru.

Pro rekonstrukci snímku bylo zásadní, že se ve sbírce Národního filmového archivu zachovaly vedle originálního negativu také dvě dobové kopie na nitrátní podložce na původním barevném materiálu Agfa. Obě kopie byly vyrobeny ještě před zkrácením negativu v roce 1947, a jako jediné tak obsahují i pasáže, které byly z negativu posléze vystřiženy.

Průzkum kopií nadto ukázal, že byl film v roce 1947 paralelně distribuován v české a anglické verzi. Kopie o délce 2 820,9 metru totiž obsahuje verzi filmu pod názvem „The Warriors of Faith“ („Bojovníci víry“), která je vedle anglických úvodních titulků opatřena anglicky mluveným komentářem a anglickými podtitulky. Do této kopie je před úvodními titulky vlepna krátká pasáž na materiálu Kodak s nápisem „Czechoslovak Film Festival Presents“ a malým státním znakem Československa. Kódy od výrobce filmového materiálu, které umožňují jeho dataci, odkazují k roku 1947.⁸⁷⁾



Obr. 1 a 2: Úvodní titulková sekvence z dobové kopie s anglickou verzí filmu. Zdroj NFA

Obraz obou dochovaných kopií vyrobených před zkrácením filmu je silně degradovaný do purpurového tónu v důsledku chemické nestability barviv používaných při výrobě barevného pozitivu Agfa. Originální negativ na téže surovině naproti tomu vykazuje výrazně vyšší stálost barev. Tento rozdíl však nemusí být dán jen odlišnou povahou použitých materiálů. Zatímco negativ byl většinu času uložen převážně v kontrolovaných podmínkách, pozitivní kopie byly opakovaně promítány a vystaveny tak nejen světlu a teplu z promítacích přístrojů, ale také změnám klimatických podmínek během transportu a skladování v nevyhovujících prostorách, což mohlo proces barevné degradace výrazně urychlit.

Obě kopie jsou silně mechanicky poškozené, křehké a shodně vykazují míru smrštnění 0,9 %, což značně ztěžuje jejich projekci i digitalizaci a vyžaduje maximální opatrnost, aby nedošlo k jejich dalšímu poškození. Kopie s českou verzí filmu v délce 2 832,4 metru byla v minulosti patrně v důsledku nevhodného uložení napadena plísní a v roce 2012 proto

87) Jiří Havelka, *Čs. filmové hospodářství 1950–1945* (Praha: Československý filmový ústav, 1970), 70.

prošla odplisněním ve filmových laboratořích Atelierů Bonton Zlín. Poškození způsobené plísní se dnes projevuje nepravidelnými světlými skvrnami a mramorováním v obraze po téměř celé délce filmu. Tato kopie také obsahuje výrazně více slepek, a tedy i chybějících částí, obvykle v rozsahu jednotek až desítek obrazových okének, zejména na začátcích a koncích dílů, které bývají standardně nejvíce namáhané.

Pokud bychom se na tyto filmové materiály podívali z hlediska čtyřúrovňového hierarchického modelu, jak je definován v *The FIAF Moving Image Cataloguing Manual*, pak dílem (work) je film *Jan Roháč z Dubé*, vyrobený v letech 1946–1947. Dílo existuje ve třech verzích (variants): původním sestřihu, zkráceném sestřihu z přelomu let 1947–1948 a anglickojazyčné verzi z roku 1947. Tyto verze jsou realizovány jednotlivými manifestacemi (manifestations): původní sestřih je manifestován nitrátní kopií z roku 1947, anglickojazyčná verze nitrátní kopií z roku 1947 a zkrácená verze ostatními filmovými materiály. K jednotlivým manifestacím pak náleží konkrétní exempláře 35mm kopií s unikátním přírůstkovým číslem, které jsou uloženy ve sbírce Národního filmového archivu (items).⁸⁸⁾ Tento model umožňuje vedle vytváření strukturovaných metadatových záznamů při katalogizaci také jasné sledování toho, jak filmové dílo přechází do různých verzí a fyzických či digitálních kopií, jak se uchovává a zpřístupňuje.

Londýn, Brusel, Moskva, zapomnění

Zástupci zestátněné kinematografie a část filmových kritiků počítala (alespoň ve veřejných vyjádřeních) s tím, že se snímek *Jan Roháč z Dubé* dočká velkého mezinárodního úspěchu.⁸⁹⁾ Již před realizací projektu se ovšem začaly objevovat hlasy, které optimismus ohledně jeho zahraničního přijetí mírnily. Důvodem skepticismu byl již samotný námět, který předpokládá alespoň základní obeznámenost diváků s českou historií první poloviny 15. století. František Papoušek v posudku z května 1946 upozorňoval, že dle jeho názoru „s exportem nelze počítat vůbec“.⁹⁰⁾

Pesimistické vyhlídky ohledně mezinárodní exploatace Borského snímku se nakonec z velké části naplnily. Prvního uvedení za hranicemi se *Jan Roháč z Dubé* neboli *The Warriors of Faith* dočkal v květnu 1947 na Týdnu československého filmu v Londýně, a sice ve formě již zmíněné anglické exportní verze.⁹¹⁾ Chladné přijetí filmu bylo v domácím tisku původně dáváno na vrub podtitulkům, které nechávaly dlouhé pasáže bez překladu.⁹²⁾

V porovnání s nezkrácenou českou verzí chybí v anglickojazyčné kopii z roku 1947 několik záběrů i delších sekvencí. Z kopie byl odstraněn například detailní záběr na obnažené nohy ženy tančící na stole, scéna s prostitutkami ve vězení, umírání polského panoše Zbyška či poprava Jana Roháče z Dubé u šibenice, z níž visí mrtvá těla dříve popravených.

88) Natasha Fairbairn – Maria Assunta Pimpinelli – Thelma Ross, *The FIAF Moving Image Cataloguing Manual*, ed. Linda Tadic (Brussels: FIAF, 2016), 7.

89) Rudolf Patera, „Film Jan Roháč z Dubé“, *Filmové noviny* 1, č. 14 (1947), 5.

90) „Dopis Františka Papouška pro Lubomíra Linharta“.

91) „Festival československého filmu v Londýně“, Praha, 1947, NFA, f. Československá filmová společnost II., k. 220.

92) Jiří Lehovec, „Vzpoura hraček‘ nadchla bruselské diváky“, *Práce*, 29. 6. 1947, 7.

Z dochovaných pramenů bohužel není zřejmé, kdy byly tyto části z filmu odstraněny, zda byla kopie na festivalu předvedena v původní nebo již pozměněné délce, a jestli ke zkrácení došlo z iniciativy československé nebo britské strany. Fakt, že se většina změn týká sekvencí souvisejících s tělesností nebo s násilím, otevírá možnost, že zkrácení mohlo být výsledkem zásahu britské cenzury, případně snahy mu předejít.⁹³⁾



Obr. 3 a 4: Záběry vystřižené z dobové kopie s anglickou verzí filmu. Zdroj NFA

Vyloženě negativní reakce se snímek dočkal koncem června na Světovém festivalu krásných umění a filmu v Bruselu, kde byl uveden pod francouzským ekvivalentem anglického názvu: „Les Combattants de la Foi“. Kompilace zahraniční kritiky pro Československou filmovou společnost zaznamenala několik belgických recenzí. Jean Pasteur z listu *L'Indépendant* konstatoval, že „nestačí hodně peněz a barva někdy krásná k tomu, aby vznikl dobrý film“.⁹⁴⁾ Denis Marion z večerníku *Le Soir* kritizoval dle něj „nevkusné“ využití barvy a ze svého pohledu nepochopitelný děj vysvětloval tím, že se zjevně jedná o látku „nesdělitelnou pro cizince“.⁹⁵⁾ Věcného zhodnocení se uvedení v Londýně a Bruselu dočkalo v článku Oldřicha Kautského „Přemýšlejte s námi o samochvále, která nevoní“ z července 1947, který jako jeden z mála upozornil na to, že festivalový neúspěch *Jana Roháče z Dubé* nelze svádět výhradně na neuchopitelnost tématu pro zahraniční publika.⁹⁶⁾

Také citovaným belgickým kritikám se navzdory glosátorskému přístupu podařilo pojmenovat některé zásadní nedostatky snímku: nepřehledný děj, málo imaginativní režii a přehnaně teatrální pojetí. Předzvěst takových deficitů, respektive obavu z nich, přitom lze najít již v citovaných posudcích na scénář i ve vyjádřeních některých filmových funkcionářů k otázce využití barevného materiálu. Nemalá část domácí kritiky byla ochotna tyto vady bagatelizovat kvůli domnělé „ideologické závažnosti“ díla.⁹⁷⁾

93) K politice britské filmové cenzury v poválečném období srov. Paul Frith, „The most objectionable story I have ever had to report on: Film Censorship in Post-WWII Britain and the ‚Horrific‘ Realism of The Body Snatcher“, *Horror Studies* 9, č. 1 (2018), 7–19.

94) „Festival krásných umění a filmu v Bruselu“, Praha, 1947, NFA, f. Československá filmová společnost II., k. 220.

95) Tamtéž.

96) Oldřich Kautský, „Přemýšlejte s námi o samochvále, která nevoní“, *Kino* 2, č. 27 (1947), 523. Anon., „Roháč z Dubé versus Jindřich V.“, *Svět práce*, 3. 4. 1947, 12.

97) Důvody negativního přijetí filmu v Londýně a Bruselu se v říjnu 1947 pokusil zformulovat časopis *Kino*. Anon., „O námětech, hodných filmování“, *Kino* 2, č. 44 (1947), 879.

Z politického hlediska však bylo pro zestátněnou kinematografii nejdůležitější vřelé přijetí filmu v Sovětském svazu. Deník *Filmové zpravodajství* oznámil prodej *Jana Roháče z Dubé* Sovexportfilmu počátkem srpna 1947. Snímek byl zakoupen na pět let a za dva miliony korun, což (jak tiskovina upozorňovala) byla do té doby nejvyšší částka zaplacená za film československé provenience.⁹⁸⁾ Samotná prodejní smlouva však byla ještě v polovině prosince stále předmětem vyjednávání a k jejímu podpisu tedy patrně došlo na přelomu let 1947 a 1948.⁹⁹⁾ Jedním z důvodů dlouhého jednání mohly být speciální požadavky sovětské strany. Československá filmová společnost zaslala již předtím do Moskvy kopii snímku, patrně za účelem jeho schválení do distribuce v SSSR. Tato kopie byla Sověty (podle informací vedoucího výrobní skupiny Jana Sinnreicha) na místě zkrácena o „450–600 metrů“.¹⁰⁰⁾

Podle tohoto sestřihu byl v listopadu 1947 upraven negativ filmu, který byl dán Sovexportfilmu k dispozici. Již v této době se představitelé zestátněné kinematografie zabývali možnostmi využití moskevský sestřih pro svou vlastní potřebu.¹⁰¹⁾ Střihač původní podoby snímku Jan Kohout byl ve stejné době pověřen, aby i další filmové materiály upravil podle sovětské kopie. Režisér Borský mu měl zůstat k dispozici k případným konzultacím.¹⁰²⁾ Verze sestřižená pro účely Sovexportfilmu byla následně využívána i československou distribucí pro domácí uvádění filmu.

Zachovaná kopie původní střižové verze ukázala, že naprostá většina materiálu odstraněného podle moskevského vzoru pochází z prvních dvou třetin filmu. Nemění význam filmu a zásadněji ani strukturu děje. Pouze činí již tak chvillemi chaotickou naraci ještě zmatenější. Došlo ke zkrácení některých nedialogových (např. katolický zpěv během odchodu radikálních husitů ze Staroměstské radnice) i dialogových sekvencí (např. jednání v Táboře, z něhož střihem zmizelo závěrečné hlasování i argument Jana Rokycany proti panslavistické řeči Račinského, či tajná bohoslužba podobením, z níž zcela vypadla společná modlitba). Zcela pak zmizel zpěv Svatováclavského chorálu po korunovaci, všechny scény se zajatci drženými Roháčem na hradě Sion, vražda Rokycanova studenta a kazatelovo vyhnání z týnské fary i scéna ze Zikmundovy ložnice, v níž si císař pochvaluje věrnost Uherska.

Co vedlo sovětské činitele ke zkrácení snímku, zůstává českým badatelům pro tuto chvíli skryto. V popsaných zásazích lze vidět jisté ideologické linky, zejména linku protináboženskou. Přesto se zdá pravděpodobnější, že spíše než ideově bylo toto rozhod-

Výše citovaný článek Oldřicha Kautského pak uvádí jako možný motiv přehnaného optimismu ohledně uvádění *Jana Roháče z Dubé* v zahraničí dle něj falešnou věru v „exportní samospasitelnost námětů historických“.

Kautský, „Přemýšlejte s námi o samochvále, která nevoni“.

98) Anon., „Jan Roháč z Dubé“ do SSSR“, *Filmové zpravodajství* 3, č. 154 (1947), 1.

99) „Smlouva na film se SSSR“, Praha, 16. 12. 1947, NFA, f. Československá filmová společnost II., k. 36.

„Dopis pro Reichla od Linhart“, Praha, 4. 8. 1947, NFA, f. Československá filmová společnost II., k. 24.

100) „Dopis pro Linhart od Sinnreicha“, Praha, listopad 1947, NFA, f. Československá filmová společnost II., k. 28.

101) „Dopis pro L. Linhart. J. Sinnreich“, Praha, 24. 11. 1947, NFA, f. Československá filmová společnost II., k. 28.

102) „Dopis pro Kohouta. Skupina Borský-Sinnreich“, Praha, 4. 12. 1947, NFA, f. Československá filmová společnost II., k. 28.

nutí motivováno požadavky distribučního okruhu na nižší stopáž, respektive kombinací obou těchto faktorů. Roli samozřejmě mohl sehrát také estetický názor sovětských posuzovatelů.

Z historického hlediska je pozoruhodnější přístup československého filmového průmyslu k těmto zásahům. Ochota provést změny v negativu, který byl zaslán Sovexportfilmu, může být vysvětlitelná v té době rekordní částkou, kterou sovětský distributor zaplatil. Překvapivější se zdá okamžité rozhodnutí barrandovských funkcionářů začít podle sovětského vzoru upravovat materiály, které se v té době nacházely v jejich držení a s nimiž počítali pro budoucí využití.

Vedení zestátněné kinematografie se k *Janu Roháčovi z Dubé* během příprav stavělo rezervovaně, jeho realizaci v barvě schválilo pouze na zásah ministerstva informací a až do slavnostní premiéry projevovalo nervozitu ohledně jeho výsledné podoby. Snímek následně propagovalo jako velký úspěch československého filmu, aby s odstupem pouhých několika měsíců od premiéry neváhalo oslavované dílo začít upravovat podle cizího vzoru. Lze se jen dohadovat, nakolik tak činilo ze své vlastní iniciativy, jakou roli hrály v rozhodnutí vyšší instance a jak (pokud vůbec) se do procesu zapojil sám režisér.

Moskevské premiéry se zkrácená verze *Jana Roháče z Dubé* dočkala v druhé polovině března 1948. *Filmové zpravodajství* o uvedení referovalo a citovalo článek, který o snímku do deníku *Pravda*, ústředního tiskového orgánu sovětských komunistů, napsal spisovatel Boris Polevoj. Autor jednoho z nejznámějších socialisticko-realistických románů *Příběh opravdového člověka* (1946) nešetřil chválou a vedle herectví a „bohatství barev“ oceňoval především

vyčníkající námět filmu, který velmi připomíná důležité politické události v Československu z nedávné doby, kdy jako tehdy před staletími československý národ s hutsitským heslem „Pravda vítězí“ povstal k ochraně své nezávislosti proti zahraničním žoldnérům a zrádcům.¹⁰³⁾

Vezmeme-li v úvahu, že Polevoj psal tato slova necelý měsíc po komunistickém puči v únoru 1948, není zcela jasné, zda oním „nedávným povstáním“ míní (v souladu se zamýšleným alegorickým poselstvím filmu) protinacistický odboj, nebo zda ideologické vyznění posunul a snímek interpretoval jako předzvěst únorové porážky „reakce“.

Vřelé přijetí Borského filmu v Moskvě, tolik rozdílné od reakcí v Londýně a Bruselu, lze vysvětlit nejen omezeností veřejné diskuze v Sovětském svazu, ale rovněž rozdílností tamních estetických požadavků oproti západní Evropě. K tomuto závěru navádí sám Polevoj: „Režisér Borský a celý tvůrčí kolektiv vytvořili dílo dýchající pathosem boje a proniknuté hlubokým vlasteneckým citem. Tento cit je sovětským lidem velmi blízký a srozumitelný.“¹⁰⁴⁾

V květnu 1948 byl *Jan Roháč z Dubé* znovu nasazen do československých kin v rámci programu k oslavám třetího výročí osvobození Československa. V zápisu z pracovní porady filmové rozdělovny z konce dubna je uvedeno, že se při opětovném nasazení využije

103) Anon., „Úspěch ‚Jan Roháč z Dubé‘ v Moskvě“, *Filmové zpravodajství* 4, č. 56 (1948), 1.

104) Tamtéž.

„dosavadních zahraničních úspěchů tohoto filmu, zejména v SSSR.“¹⁰⁵⁾ Při této příležitosti byla patrně již promítána zkrácená verze.

V měsících a letech po premiéře byl film prodán také bulharským, švédským, polským, rumunským, nizozemským, jugoslávským a finským distributorům, stejně jako krajan-ským spolkům v Curychu a New Yorku.¹⁰⁶⁾ Sovexportfilm zajistil již koncem roku 1947 uvedení (patrně ve formě Sověty zkrácené verze) v okupovaném Berlíně.¹⁰⁷⁾

Přes většinově pozitivní přijetí v domácím tisku i nadšenou reakci v Sovětském svazu pověst snímku v průběhu času klesala. Příznačná je v tomto ohledu již rozsáhlá recenze filmu *Revoluční rok 1848* (Václav Krška, 1949) z prosince 1949, v níž kritik Jan Žalman uvádí jako negativní příklad staršího nákladného filmu s „myšlenkovou hodnotou ohromné bubliny“ vedle *Svatého Václava* (Jan S. Kolár, 1929) a *Roziny sebrance* (Otakar Vávra, 1945) také *Jana Roháče z Dubé*.¹⁰⁸⁾

Ani pro svého režiséra neznamenal snímek o obránci hradu Sion dlouhodobě uznávaný úspěch. Po zániku I. výrobní skupiny, kterou vedl, připravoval Borský na konci roku 1948 životopisný snímek o Josefu Kajetánu Tylovi s pracovním názvem „Miláček národa“¹⁰⁹⁾ (společně s Františkem Kožíkem) a adaptaci divadelní hry Jaroslava Vrchlického *Noc na Karlštejně* (spolu s Otakarem Vávrou).¹¹⁰⁾ Tyto projekty se však nedočkaly realizace. Minimálně v případě druhého jmenovaného hrála při odmítnutí roli také obava z Borského „sklonů k theatricalnosti“.¹¹¹⁾

Nakonec musel režisér čekat čtyři roky, než se zpracováním povídky Svatopluka Čecha *Jestřáb kontra Hrdlička* (1953) vrátil k filmové režii. Jeho nejnákladnějšímu dílu zůstal postupem času pouze status prvního československého celovečerního barevného filmu. V jakékoli jiné rovině zmizelo na dlouhou dobu, podobně jako sám režisér, z veřejného i akademického povědomí.

Rozhodnutí o restaurované verzi

Na základě historického výzkumu a analýzy filmových materiálů bylo třeba rozhodnout o verzi filmu, která bude restaurována. Obvyklou praxí nejen v paměťových institucích bývá směřování zásahu do té podoby, jak jej mohlo vidět první publikum. Film byl po desítky let uváděn pouze ve své zkrácené verzi, která vznikla dodatečným sestřižením origi-

105) „Zápis z 8. pracovní rady rozdělovny“, Praha, 28. 4. 1948, NFA, f. Československá filmová společnost II., k. 50.

106) „Vývoz filmu Jan Roháč z Dubé“, Filmexport, Praha, nedatováno, NFA, nezpracované fondy. Anon., „Slavnostní uvedení čs. filmů v Sofii“, *Filmové noviny* 2, č. 46 (1948), 1.

107) Tamtéž.

108) Jan Žalman, „Revoluční rok 1848“, *Kino* 4, č. 26–27 (1949), 404.

109) „Zápis ze schůze“, Praha, 14. 9. 1948, NFA, f. Filmová rada, k. 4.

František Kožík, „Miláček národa. Filmová povídka o životě Josefa Kajetána Tyla“, Praha, 1949, Knihovna Národního filmového archivu (KNFA), OFP – Filmová povídka v rukopisu/strojopisu.

110) „Zápis ze schůze“, Praha, 16. 2. 1949, NFA, f. Filmová rada, k. 1.

„Zápis ze schůze“, Praha, 6. 4. 1949, NFA, f. Filmová rada, k. 2.

„Noc na Karlštejně“, Praha, 21. 3. 1949–15. 4. 1949, NFA, f. Filmová rada, k. 2.

111) „Zápis ze schůze“, Praha, 16. 2. 1949.

nálního negativu. Průzkum potvrdil, že díky dochovaným filmovým materiálům z doby před zkrácením snímku je možné vystřížené pasáže do filmu vrátit.¹¹²⁾

Záměrem digitálního restaurování *Jana Roháče z Dubé* bylo zpřístupnit dílo ve stávajících technologických podmínkách digitálních kin tak, aby bylo co nejvěrnější hypotetické podobě v době jeho prvního uvádění v roce 1947. A to v souladu s novými poznatky o výrobě a uvádění filmu a při zachování jeho původní podoby, znění a dalších výše uvedených charakteristických vlastností.

Jako možné zdrojové materiály pro restaurování obrazu byly vybrány originální negativ obrazu, intermediát negativ, intermediát pozitiv a dvě dobové kombinované kopie na nitrátní podložce. Všechny materiály byly digitalizovány a následně vyhodnoceny z hlediska fotografických vlastností obrazu.

Jako výchozí materiál pro restaurování byl zvolen originální negativ obrazu na původně použité barevné surovině Agfa. Pro doplnění chybějících okének byly zvoleny intermediát pozitiv, respektive intermediát negativ, kvalitativně nejbližší obrazu z originálního negativu. Tam, kde se pasáže z důvodu poškození nebo dodatečných zásahů do negativu nedochovaly v žádném z uvedených materiálů, sloužily jako zdrojový materiál původní kombinované kopie. Jako lépe dochovaná byla preferována kopie s anglickou verzí filmu, nicméně v případě u částí, které se v této kopii nedochovaly nebo obsahovaly anglické podtitulky, sloužila jako zdroj kopie s českou verzí filmu.

Obdobně jako u výběru zdrojového materiálu pro restaurování obrazu bylo při výběru vhodného zdroje pro restaurování zvuku nutné zohlednit rozhodnutí o restaurované verzi snímku. Jako vhodné kandidátní materiály byly vybrány originální negativ zvuku, intermediát negativ a obě dobové kopie. Na základě poslechových testů digitalizovaného zvuku byla vyhodnocena technická kvalita a současně byla posouzena kompletnost vzhledem k restaurované verzi. Jako hlavní zdroj byl následně vybrán negativ zvuku, který vykazoval nejmenší úroveň zkreslení, vhodný šumový profil a nejmenší míru technického opotřebení.

Digitální rekonstrukce

Obraz vybraných zdrojových materiálů byl digitalizován na filmovém skeneru Lasergraphics Scanstation v rozlišení 6,5 K. Retuším a barevným korekcím předcházelo detailní porovnání naskenovaných materiálů a jejich sestavení. Barevná a jasová odlišnost použitých zdrojů byla následně kompenzována tak, aby byly rozdíly mezi nimi co nejméně patrné. V místech, kde se dochovala jen zvuková stopa, ale obraz se nedochoval v žádném z materiálů, zůstala ponechána černá okénka.

Rekonstrukce filmu spočívala nejen v navrácení částí, které v něm dlouho chyběly, ale také v odstranění nepůvodních částí, jež byly do originálního negativu přidány později, a nebyly tedy součástí původní verze. Z tohoto důvodu nebyla do finální skladby filmu zahrnuta mezihra, která se vyskytuje na konci 8. dílu negativu. Téměř půlminutová pasáž

112) Podle údajů z cenzurního spisu byla původní délka filmu 3 089 metrů. „Cenzurní spis č. 178“, 1947. Národní archiv, f. Ministerstvo vnitra — filmová cenzura, k. 100.

bez obrazu s hudebním motivem, který už dříve ve filmu zazní, je v negativu zastřížena až za původní prolínací značkou označující konec dílu a nenachází se ani v jedné z dobových kopií z roku 1947.

Do filmu byl vrácen také úvodní titulek „Československá filmová společnost uvádí 1. český barevný film“ s původní grafikou na pozadí a úvodní fanfárou ve zvuku. Tento titulek byl v originálním negativu i v materiálech následujících generací nahrazen titulkem „Československý státní film uvádí film“, který do něj mohl být vložen nejdříve v roce 1948, kdy byl státní podnik Československý státní film založen. Patrně k tomu však došlo až v následujících letech při dodatečných úpravách filmu. Nahrazování částí či dokonce celých úvodních titulků starších filmů, které se vracely do distribuce, bylo po roce 1948 běžnou praxí. V některých případech šlo pouze o formalitu, někdy však umožnila výroba nových úvodních titulků vynechat režimu nepohodlné tvůrce či nabídnout jiné čtení starších filmů.¹¹³⁾ Část původního úvodního titulku v české verzi se dochovala jen v jedné z dobových kopií, a to v rozsahu 21 obrazových oken, což je při standardní projekční rychlosti méně než 1 sekunda. Titulek byl proto digitálně rozkopírován a vložen do finální kompozice filmu.



Obr. 5: Původní úvodní titulek z dobové kopie. Obr. 6: Nový titulek, kterým byl původní titulek v originálním negativu nahrazen. Zdroj NFA

Barevné korekce

Teprve po dokončení rekonstrukce následovaly další postprodukční úpravy obrazu a zvuku. Cílem barevných korekcí bylo přiblížit se podobě filmu tak, jak jej mohli vidět diváci z kopií na barevném materiálu Agfa. Pro tyto účely bývá z dostupných materiálů standardně zvolena referenční kopie, ke které je možné se vztahovat při rozhodování o výsledné podobě restaurovaného filmu. Obvykle jde o dobovou kopii, která je kvalitně laboratorně zpracovaná a nevykazuje výrazné známky chemických změn, jako je například barevný posun. Poněvadž obě dobové kopie trpěly silnou barevnou degradací, byly promítnuty zbývající dvě kopie ze sbírky Národního filmového archivu, které byly vyrobeny u příležitosti opakovaného uvedení filmu do distribuce. Vzhledem k problematické kvalitě jejich

113) Pavel Skopal, „Filmy z nouze: Způsoby rámcování filmových projekcí a divácké zkušenosti v období stalinismu“, *Illuminace* 21, č. 3 (2009), 71–92.

laboratorního zpracování a projevům barevné degradace však nebyla v tomto případě vybrána žádná reference.

Barevné a jasové úpravy digitalizovaných dat probíhaly za pomoci nástroje FilmLight Baselight 5.3. V první fázi došlo ke kompenzaci barevné degradace a sjednocení barevného a jasového nastavení tak, aby byl rozdíl mezi použitými filmovými materiály co nejméně patrný. Vzhledem k absenci spolehlivé referenční kopie bylo barevné a jasové podání následně nastaveno s přihlédnutím k možnostem a limitům použité filmové suroviny, existujícím výzkumům a dosavadním zkušenostem s barevným systémem Agfacolor ze 40. let. Pro zmírnění intenzivního barevného neklidu v nočních scénách, které pocházely z dobových pozitivů, byla použita lehká desaturace. Sjednocení barevného a jasového nastavení použitých zdrojových materiálů se podařilo dosáhnout jen v omezené míře, a rozdíly tak zůstávají patrné i v restaurovaném filmu. Také změny barevného podání, které vznikly v důsledku výroby přechodů mezi záběry laboratorní cestou, byly pouze zmírněny, neboť jde o původní vlastnost díla, která vznikla v důsledku použitých výrobních postupů.

Obrazové retuše

K odstranění poškození obrazu bylo využito automatického zpracování v programu Digital Vision Phoenix a následně manuálních retuší v programu Pixel Farm PFClean. V rámci digitálních obrazových retuší byly odstraněny pouze známky stárnutí, opotřebení a mechanického poškození filmového materiálu. Ponechány naopak zůstaly ty prvky, které vznikly při natáčení nebo laboratorním zpracování, a jsou tedy dokladem dobových technologií či tvůrčích postupů. Rozhodnutí o ponechání či odstranění těchto prvků probíhalo vždy individuálně s ohledem na to, aby ve vyčištěném obraze ve vysokém rozlišení nepůsobily ponechané defekty příliš rušivě a neodváděly pozornost od díla samotného. Zvolený přístup byl v průběhu práce vzhledem k jednotlivým případům opakovaně revidován tak, abychom dosáhli rovnováhy mezi respektem k filmu jako uměleckému dílu a coby materiálnímu objektu se svojí vlastní charakteristikou a historií.

Mezi prvky, které byly digitálně retušovány, patří rýhy a rysky, nečistoty a dodatečně provedené opravy filmového materiálu, které viditelně zasahují do obrazového pole. Ponechána zůstala ta poškození, která nebylo možné odstranit bez vzniku nových — digitálních artefaktů, jako jsou například skvrny, které vznikly v důsledku napadení materiálu plísní. Současně zůstaly ponechány také prvky způsobené výrobními postupy a limity filmové suroviny. Po celé délce bylo aplikováno také zmírnění blikání obrazu v takové míře, aby nenarušilo původní charakteristiku filmového obrazu a současně sjednotilo odlišné vlastnosti použitých filmových materiálů.

Digitální restaurování zvuku a finalizace a zabezpečení

Analogicky se při digitalizaci i následných úpravách postupovalo i při restaurování zvukové stopy. Cílem digitálního restaurování zvuku bylo, stejně jako v případě obrazu, zprostředkovat současnému divákovi za odlišných technologických podmínek zkušenost do-

bového diváka. Zvuk byl rekonstruován z originálního negativu a dvou nitrátních kopií. Materiály byly digitalizovány pomocí systému Sondor Resonances a následně byl zvukový záznam retušován tak, aby byly odstraněny ty artefakty, které vznikly v důsledku stárnutí a opotřebení filmových materiálů. V rámci manuálního čištění proběhlo odstranění praskání zkreslení, slepek a přechodů mezi jednotlivými filmovými materiály, dále pak ekvalizace a mírné odšumění, jehož cílem bylo sjednocení šumového profilu v rámci celého filmu. Celkové podání a nastavení hlasitosti je uzpůsobeno parametřům zvukového reprodukčního řetězce současných kin tak, aby simulovalo akustické podmínky v době uvedení filmu do kin.

Obraz a zvuk byly následně spojeny a synchronizovány a po celé délce filmu byla provedena kontrola synchronu kontaktních zvuků s obrazem. V rámci finalizace byl obraz oříznut v rozsahu projekční okničky podle dobové normy ČSN 1275 z roku 1939 pro klasický formát 1:1,37.¹¹⁴⁾ Restaurovaný film má výslednou stopáž 01:47:41:01 (hodiny:minuty:sekundy:okénka). Při standardní snímkové frekvenci 24 fps odpovídá u 35mm filmu tato stopáž délce 2 954 metrů.

Digitálně restaurovaný film je spolu se surovými skeny všech použitých filmových materiálů uložen v digitálním systému Národního filmového archivu. Pro dlouhodobé uchování je vhodné, aby byl restaurovaný film zaznamenán zpět na filmový materiál, neboť ve sbírce Národního filmového archivu není dílo kompletně fotochemicky zabezpečeno na nehořlavé podložce. Téměř 600 metrů částí vystřižených z originálního negativu se dochovalo jen na dobových nitrátních kopiích vykazujících silnou barevnou degradaci. S ohledem na limity fotochemického zabezpečení by pouhé kopírování znamenalo zakonzervování již přítomné degradace. Převod digitalizovaného filmu zpět na filmový pás proto představuje vhodný způsob, jak zajistit dlouhodobou prezervaci díla v co nejvěrnější podobě.

Závěr

Restaurování umožnilo nejen přiblížit film jeho hypotetické podobě z doby prvního uvedení, ale současně se stalo formou pramenného výzkumu, který přispěl k revizi dosavadního poznání a rozšíření o nové informace o filmu samotném i o obecnější kulturně-politické praxi v období třetí republiky. Přístup, který rozlišuje mezi dílem, jeho verzemi, manifestacemi a konkrétními nosiči uloženými ve sbírce, nám dovolil sledovat postupné proměny filmu a rozlišit paralelně existující a postupně vznikající varianty.

Výzkum ve filmových materiálech otevřel pro historické bádání řadu otázek včetně té nejdůležitější: kdy a proč došlo ke zkrácení původního negativu, a tudíž ke vzniku alternativní stříhové verze, která byla po léta jako jediná uváděna? Tato otázka určila směr výzkumu v písemných pramenech. Přesvědčila nás o nutnosti zmapovat produkční a distribuční historii filmu a revidovat jeho chápání v kontextu dobové kulturní politiky i společenského významu jeho předlohy, tedy Jiráskovy divadelní hry.

114) ČSN 1939–1275: *Filmy 35 mm, 16 mm a 8 mm* (Praha: Českomoravská společnost normalizační, 1939), 8.

Původní předpoklad o zkrácení filmu v 60. letech se na základě výzkumu ukázal jako nepodložený a nová zjištění o zásazích do filmu podle sovětského sestřihu už v roce 1947 otevírají další otázky. Přes rozsáhlý výzkum se naše poznání setkává s určitými limity a některé otázky zůstávají nezodpovězeny, jako například důvody krácení filmu pro sovětskou distribuci či iniciativa odstranit některé scény z verze pro distribuci anglickojazyčnou. Také míra zapojení režiséra Vladimíra Borského do rozhodování o úpravách filmu po premiéře a důvody pro uvádění sovětského sestřihu v Československu zůstávají nejasné. Nedostatek dobových pramenů, které by tyto konkrétní zásahy detailněji osvětlovaly, omezuje naši schopnost nabídnout definitivní odpovědi.

Restaurování snímku *Jan Roháč z Dubé* ukazuje, že práce s historickým filmovým materiálem zdaleka není jen technickou disciplínou, ale především nástrojem poznání. Průzkum verzí, materiálů i dobových souvislostí umožnil revidovat některé zakořeněné předpoklady o vzniku, uvádění a ideologickém rámování snímku. Současně ukázal, že film lze chápat nejen jako estetický nebo ideový produkt své doby, ale také jako historický pramen, který odráží mocenské struktury, technologické limity i proměny kulturní paměti. Znovu-uvvedení filmu v jeho nezkrácené verzi tak nepředstavuje jen návrat restaurovaného díla v digitální podobě, ale také možnost jeho nového čtení a reinterpretace v širším historickém kontextu poválečné československé kinematografie.

Financování

Tento recenzovaný odborný článek vznikl na základě institucionální podpory dlouhodobého koncepčního rozvoje výzkumné organizace poskytované Ministerstvem kultury.

Bibliografie

- Adam, Bradley F. *The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation: Czech Culture and the Rise of Communism* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004).
- Andrew, Dudley. „The Post-war Struggle for Color“, in *Color: The Film Reader*, eds. Angela Dalle Vacche – Brian Price (New York: Routledge, 2006), 61–75.
- Bauerová, Zuzana – Tereza Frodlová. „Možnosti aplikace principů dokumentace konzervování-restaurování uměleckých a uměleckořemeslných děl na dokumentaci restaurování filmu“, *Iluminace* 33, č. 2 (2021), 77–96.
- Činátl, Kamil. „Filmová paměť stalinismu: Obrazy minulosti jako stabilizátor paměti a sociálních rámců kolektivního vzpomínání“, in *Film a dějiny 3: Politická kamera – film a stalinismus*, eds. Kristian Feigelson – Petr Kopal (Praha: Casablanca – Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů, 2012), 304–320.
- Čornej, Petr. „Husitská tematika v českém filmu (1953–1968) v kontextu dobového nazírání na dějiny“, *Iluminace* 7, č. 3 (1995), 13–43.
- Čornej, Petr. „Vnímání husitství v české moderní a postmoderní společnosti“, *Acta Universitatis Carolinae: Historia Universitatis Carolinae Pragensis: Příspěvky k dějinám Univerzity Karlovy* 53, č. 1 (2014), 25–34.

- ČSN 1275–1939: *Filmy 35 mm, 16 mm a 8 mm* (Praha: Českomoravská společnost normalizační, 1939).
- Doležal, Kryštof. „Československý poválečný nacionalismus v mediální recepci snímku Jan Roháč z Dubé“, *Historický časopis* 70, č. 1 (2022), 87–113.
- Egermajer, Jakub. „Stát a historický film (1945–1956)“ (Diplomová práce, Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy, 2024).
- Fairbairn, Natasha – Maria Assunta Pimpinelli – Thelma Ross. *The FIAF Moving Image Cataloguing Manual*, ed. Linda Tadic (Brussels: FIAF, 2016).
- Frodlová, Tereza. „V barvách Agfacoloru: Zavádění barevného filmu v československé kinematografii čtyřicátých a padesátých let“, in *Zpět k českému filmu*, ed. Lucie Česálková (Praha: Národní filmový archiv, 2017), 263–285.
- Havelka, Jiří. *Čs. filmové hospodářství 1945–1950* (Praha: Československý filmový ústav, 1970).
- Heller, Franziska. „Proč se zabývat dějinami filmu? Několik poznámek k otázce, jak digitalizace mění náš obraz minulosti“, *Illuminace* 27, č. 2 (2015), 41–55.
- Kaplan, Karel. *Národní fronta 1948–1960* (Praha: Academia, 2012).
- Klimeš, Ivan – Jiří Rak. „Husitský film: Nesplněný sen české meziválečné kinematografie“, in *Filmový sborník historický* 3, ed. Ivan Klimeš (Praha: Československý filmový ústav, 1992), 75–85.
- Knapík, Jiří. *Únor a kultura: Sovětizace české kultury 1948–1950* (Praha: Libri, 2004).
- Kolektiv. *Český hraný film III: 1945–1960* (Praha: Národní filmový archiv, 2001).
- Kurš, Antonín. „Jiráskův ‚Jan Roháč‘ v roce 1939“, *Divadlo* 2, č. 7–8 (1951), 599–601.
- Skopal, Pavel. „Filmy z nouze: Způsoby rámcování filmových projekcí a divácké zkušenosti v období stalinismu“, *Illuminace* 21, č. 3 (2009), 71–92.
- Srba, Bořivoj. *Prozření Genesiovo: Inscenační tvorba pražských českých činoherních divadel za německé okupace a druhé světové války 1939–1945* (Brno: Janáčkova akademie múzických umění, 2014).
- Šmeral, Vladimír. „Jak představení Jiráskova ‚Jana Roháče‘ mluvilo k lidu v pomnichovské republice roku 1939“, *Divadlo* 2, č. 7–8 (1951), 601–605.
- Šverma, Jan. „Hus, Tábor a naše doba“, in František Kavka, *Husitská revoluční tradice* (Praha: Státní nakladatelství politické literatury, 1953), 314–317.
- Šverma, Jan. „Proti panské jednotě“, in František Kavka, *Husitská revoluční tradice* (Praha: Státní nakladatelství politické literatury, 1953), 310–314.
- Taussig, Pavel. „Marginálie VII: Barevný debutant (Historie filmu Jan Roháč z Dubé)“, *Film a doba* 29, č. 7 (1983), 399–402.

Filmografie

- Svatý Václav* (Jan S. Kolár, 1929).
- Wiener Mädeln* (Willi Forst, 1945).
- Rozina sebranec* (Otakar Vávra, 1945).
- Jan Roháč z Dubé* (Vladimír Borský, 1947).
- Revoluční rok 1848* (Václav Krška, 1949).
- Jestřáb kontra Hrdlička* (Vladimír Borský, 1953).

Biografie

Tereza Frodlová působí jako restaurátorka a kurátorka Národního filmového archivu. Vystudovala Teorii a dějiny filmu a audiovizuální kultury na Filozofické fakultě Masarykovy univerzity v Brně a Audiovizuální studia na FAMU, kde se specializovala na archivní prezervaci a restaurování filmu. Vedle prezervace a restaurování historických filmových materiálů se věnuje vztahu kinematografie a filmové techniky, multiplicitní povaze filmového média a zavádění barevného filmu v československé kinematografii 40. a 50. let. Vyučuje dějiny filmu na Střední umělecké škole grafické v Jihlavě a externě přednáší o prezervaci a restaurování filmu na Ústavu filmu a audiovizuální kultury FF MU v Brně.

Email: tereza.frodlova@nfa.cz

Jakub Egermajer je filmový historik a v současné době doktorand na Katedře filmových studií Filozofické fakulty Univerzity Karlovy. Specializuje se na českou kinematografii v období protektorátu, třetí republiky a 50. let. Zabývá se rovněž vztahem státu a filmové výroby, úlohou kinematografie v kulturní politice a hospodářskými dějinami filmu. Publikoval mimo jiné v recenzovaných periodikách *Iluminace* a *Judaica Bohemiae* či na *Revue Filmového přehledu*. Od roku 2022 působí v Oddělení filmografie a katalogizace Národního filmového archivu.

Email: jakub.egermajer@nfa.cz

<https://doi.org/10.58193/ilu.1829>

Jakub Egermajer  <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-9274-5497>

(Národní filmový archiv, Česká republika)

Chudáci chlapci a ti druzí

Pavel Skopal a kol., *Lidé – práce – animace: Světy animovaného filmu na Kudlově* (Brno: Host, 2024).

Monografie nazvaná *Lidé – práce – animace: Světy animovaného filmu na Kudlově* je výsledkem dlouholetého projektu, za kterým stojí sedmičlenný autorský kolektiv v čele s Pavlem Skopalem, vedoucím Ústavu filmu a audiovizuální kultury Filozofické fakulty Masarykovy univerzity.¹⁾ Přehledná publikace o historii animované tvorby ve zlínských ateliérech od konce druhé světové války až do zániku státního monopolu v oblasti filmové produkce čítá vedle úvodu šest různě obsáhlých studií, většinou doplněných bohatou obrazovou přílohou.

Starší, většinou popularizační práce o vývoji animovaného filmu v českých zemích se převážně soustředily na vůdčí umělecké osobnosti typu Jiřího Trnky či zlínských stálíc Karla Zemana a Hermíny Týrlové.²⁾ Autorský kolektiv se rozhodl téma zpracovat se zaměřením na průmyslové, institucionální a především sociální dějiny. V jednotlivých studiích zvolil různé metodologické přístupy prosopografického zaměření. Individuální příspěvky vycházející z prací Howarda S. Beckera, Pierra Bourdieua, Briana Jacobsona či Bruna Latoura pak spojuje především důraz na etnografický rozměr, tedy na sociální vazby filmových pracovníků a pracovníc a na jejich zázemí.

Jak napovídá název publikace, v centru pozornosti autorského kolektivu jsou lidé pracující v kudlovských ateliérech. Nikoliv coby tvůrci a tvůrkyně úspěšných a ceněných audiovizuálních děl, nýbrž coby zaměstnanci a zaměstnankyně pravidelně mezi sebou komunikující, scházející se, tvořící profesionální, společenské i osobní vazby. Samotné filmové produkty disponují ve výzkumu pouze omezenou rolí — jako komponenty potenciálního zvýšení sociálního kapitálu.

1) Projekt byl podpořen Grantovou agenturou České republiky.

2) Srov. Marie Benešová, *Od Špalíčku ke Snu noci svatojanské* (Praha: Orbis, 1961); František Tenčík, *Hermína Týrlová* (Brno: Krajské nakladatelství, 1964); Pierre Tillieux, *Jirí Trnka* (Mons: Ciné Jeunesses, 1964); Marie Benešová, *Hermína Týrlová* (Praha: Československý filmový ústav, 1982). Kolektiv, *Jiří Trnka: Malíř, ilustrátor, bábkář a básník filmového plátna* (Bratislava: Slovenský filmový ústav, 1987); L. H. Augustin, *Jiří Trnka* (Praha: Academia, 2004); Ludmila Zemanová – Linda Zeman-Spaleny, *Karel Zeman a jeho kouzelný svět* (Brno: CPRESS, 2015); Ondřej Slanina, *Česká animovaná klasika* (Praha: Charon media, 2016); Jan Benda, *Týrlová, Zeman a ti druzí: Historie zlínského (gottwaldovského) studia animovaného filmu* (Praha: Powerprint, 2019).

Důležitější roli hraje v monografii institucionální, industriální a geografická historie studií, v minulosti podrobně popsaná v pětidílné publikaci *FA Kudlov*,³⁾ kterou vydalo pořadatelstvo zlínského filmového festivalu. I tento rozměr vývoje zvoleného prostoru je ovšem primárně nahlížen z etnografického hlediska a vztahován k sociálním sítím v prostoru existujícím.

Největším kladem sborníku je jeho koherence. Studie se vzájemně doplňují a za využití příbuzných metodologií z různých hledisek představují zlínskou výrobu animovaného filmu jako komplexní společenství v proměnách času. Texty spojuje rovněž přehlednost, příkladná práce s archivními a periodickými zdroji i účelné zapojení orálně-historických materiálů zaznamenaných v rámci výzkumu. Příspěvky se bez výjimky vyznačují odbornou erudicí i literární kvalitou a většina z nich je pojata čtenářsky atraktivním způsobem.

První studie „Systém produkce animovaného filmu v zestátněné kinematografii: Případ filmového studia ve Zlíně/Gottwaldově“, jejímiž autory jsou Lukáš Skupa a Michal Večeřa, se z celé publikace nejvýrazněji soustředí na institucionální vývoj kudlovských ateliérů. Tento příspěvek, nejrozsáhlejší z celé publikace, přiznaně slouží především k uvedení čtenářstva do zkoumaného prostředí a k poskytnutí pevného podkladu pro následující texty zabývající se dílčími aspekty tematiky. Popisuje vývoj vnitřní organizace, produkční a dramaturgické praxe i dalších prvků fungování studií od roku 1945 až do 90. let, včetně jejich periferní (31), leč důležité a zvláště v období tzv. normalizace vysoce ceněné role v rámci zestátněné kinematografie jako celku.

Metodologicky text navazuje na práci Petra Szczepanika *Továrna Barrandov: Svět filmařů a politická moc 1945–1970*, z níž přebírá koncepci státně-socialistického modu produkce coby specifického organizačního nastavení československé zestátněné kinematografie, které je povahou odlišné od fungování filmového průmyslu v systému tržního hospodářství.⁴⁾ Autoři rozdělují vývoj zlínského (od roku 1949 gottwaldovského) studia v éře státního monopolu na šest rozdílných fází, které s částečnou výjimkou 70. a 80. let kopírují vývoj státní filmové výroby jako celku, tedy na období kontinuity struktur a zkušeností protektorátního období (1945–1947), centralizaci (1948–1953), první (1954–1960) a druhou fázi decentralizace (1961–1968), opětovnou centralizaci (1969–1976) a dobu existence samostatného Filmového studia Gottwaldov, včetně jeho porevoluční transformace (1977–1992).

Za využití archivních fondů, jejichž rozsáhlost, jak autoři upozorňují, se v jednotlivých obdobích výrazně liší, a výpovědi pamětníků text rekonstruuje evoluci vnitřních mechanismů výroby animovaného filmu, potažmo celého zlínského studia. Jako jednu z charakteristik, kterými se zkoumaný prostor vyznačoval po celých čtyřicet pět let, autoři identifikují značnou interní stabilitu. Zatímco v roce 1945 ateliéry opustila kvůli šanci na lepší uplatnění v Praze velká část zaměstnanců včetně všech tvůrců animovaného filmu vyjma Týrlové a Zemana, po únorovém převratu ani během čistek 50. let se podobné personální otřesy již neopakovaly. Na rozdíl od barrandovských studií

3) Srov. Marcel Sladkowski a kol., *FA Kudlov 1 36–45: Kudlovská stodola: Založení a první léta filmových ateliérů ve Zlíně* (Zlín: Filmfest, s. r. o., 2016); Pavel Taussig a kol., *FA Kudlov 2 46–60: Kudlovská stodola: Filmové ateliéry ve Zlíně v poválečném období* (Zlín: Filmfest, s. r. o., 2017); Marcel Sladkowski a kol., *FA Kudlov 3 61–77: Kudlovská stodola: Filmové ateliéry v Gottwaldově/Zlíně žijí* (Zlín: Filmfest, s. r. o., 2018); Marcel Sladkowski a kol., *FA Kudlov 4 78–92: Kudlovská stodola: Filmové ateliéry v Gottwaldově/Zlíně se osamostatňují* (Zlín: Filmfest, s. r. o., 2019); Marcel Sladkowski a kol., *FA Kudlov 5 93–20: Kudlovská stodola: Zlínské filmové ateliéry v nové době* (Zlín: Filmfest, s. r. o., 2020).

4) Petr Szczepanik, *Továrna Barrandov: Svět filmařů a politická moc 1945–1970* (Praha: Národní filmový archiv, 2016), 33–34.

a dalších komponent státní kinematografie se potom Gottwaldova výrazněji nedotkly ani výsledky nechvalně proslulé banskobystrické konference v roce 1959 či normalizační prověrky.

Po celá desetiletí byla gottwaldovská animovaná tvorba v praxi rozdělena mezi dvě skupiny vedené Zemanem a Týrlovou. Studie popisuje přetrvávající autonomii těchto uskupení a jejich typické způsoby organizace práce. Obě skupiny se soustředily primárně na podporu autorské činnosti svých vedoucích, a to až do doby, kdy Týrlová a Zeman vlastní tvorbu opustili. Kolektiv Týrlové, soustředící se téměř výhradně na krátkometrážní a později seriálové projekty, začal brzy poskytovat jistý prostor také dalším pracovníkům s režijními ambicemi. Zemanova skupina tuto možnost až do 70. let nabízela jen ve zcela minimální míře. V době, kdy její vedoucí pracoval na některém ze svých kombinovaných celovečerních filmů, pak kolektiv jiné práce vždy zcela opouštěl (59).

Text rovněž věnuje pozornost stavu technického vybavení studií, který byl po dlouhá léta nevyhovující. Obdobné limity v oblasti ubytování zaměstnanectva přispívaly k oslabování personální základny, když se Gottwaldov dlouhodobě potýkal s nedostatečným zájmem mladých adeptů a adeptek filmových profesí o zaměstnání ve studiu. Průměrný věk zaměstnanců a zaměstnankyň v jednotlivých oborech se tak postupně povážlivě zvyšoval (91). Řešení se podařilo alespoň v omezené míře najít ve spolupráci výroby s uměleckými školami. Pozoruhodný je zejména poznatek autorstva o tom, jak gottwaldovské vedení později dokázalo toto nouzové řešení při komunikaci navenek převrátit v pozitivní obraz Kudlova coby instituce, která umožňuje debutovat mladým talentům.

Skupova a Večeřova studie představuje kompetentní ukázkou praktického využití postupů nové filmové historie obohaceného o vklady dalších metodologií. Široké časové i tematické rozpětí v kombinaci s přehledově pojatou strukturou, v níž autoři u jednotlivých fází vývoje studia zkoumají jeho vnitřní organizaci, vztah k nadřízeným institucím, produkční a dramaturgickou praxi i materiálovou a personální základnu, ovšem způsobují, že jak text postupuje, stává se nevyhnutelně monotónním. Tento postřeh nicméně nijak nesnižuje relevanci předložených informací ani samotného textu, jenž je klíčový pro pochopení následujících, úžeji zaměřených studií.

Text Pavla Skopala „Formování pole českého animovaného filmu“ aplikuje na subjekt zlínské/gottwaldovské animované tvorby teorie francouzského sociologa Pierra Bourdieu. Nahlíží tak na tuto geograficky a časově vymezenou společenskou strukturu jako na „pole“, tedy „strukturovaný prostor pozic, o něž soupeří aktéři (v našem případě tvůrci animovaných filmů) vybavení potřebnými dispozicemi“ (119). Mezi tyto dispozice patří zejména „specifický kapitál filmařského pole“ (profesní uznání, například na zahraničních filmových festivalech) a „kapitál sociální“, do něhož patřila i uznání z „pole moci“, tedy ze strany režimu (domácí státní pocty, například čestné tituly „zasloužilý“, respektive „národní umělec“) (156).

Studie se v první části věnuje rané historii českého animovaného filmu v meziválečném období a za druhé světové války. S obdivuhodnou pečlivostí zkoumá zejména pracovní zázemí zakladatelské generace animované tvorby. K tomuto postupu se Skopal vrací v pozdější podkapitole, když se u gottwaldovských pracovníků zabývá nejen jejich předchozími zaměstnáními, ale dokonce pracovním a společenským zařazením jejich rodičů (149). Sociálně-historický obraz zaměstnaneckého kolektivu text doplňuje údaji o jeho politicko-stranickém postavení v průběhu času. S vědomím dlouhodobé personální nouze studia autor popisuje mechanismy obnovy jeho „tvůrčích kapacit“ (150–151), tedy způsoby, jimiž se do něj mohli dostat noví lidé. Pozornost věnuje zejména úloze různých typů zprostředkovatelů, zejména profesních, kteří v zahajování nových kariér na Kudlově hráli obvykle větší roli než byrokratické mechanismy instituce. Zkoumá interakce mezi gottwaldovskými tvůrci a tvůrkyněmi a politickou mocí, přičemž dochází k závěru, že nízký výskyt přímých re-

žimních zásahů nebyl dán „ani tak výraznou autonomií pole, jako spíše průběžnou hladkou koordinací zájmů mocenského a uměleckého pole“ (159), která byla v kudlovských studiích ve všech fázích života poučnorového režimu přítomnější než na Barrandově. V této koordinaci sehrály podstatnou úlohu také výrazné osobnosti dlouholetých členů komunistické strany Zemana a Týrlové.

Na studii zaměřenou zejména na první dvě dekády po roce 1945 navazuje Skopalův text „Umělecké světy a sociální sítě na Kudlově“, který pracuje s konceptem „světa umění“ Howarda S. Beckera⁵⁾ a zabývá se mechanismy práce ve studiu zejména v období tzv. normalizace. „Svět umění“ v návaznosti na amerického sociologa chápe jako síť kooperačních vazeb mezi osobami jakkoli se podílejícími na vzniku a šíření díla považovaného jimi samotnými za umění. Skopal ze zcela pochopitelných důvodů Beckerovu metaforickou konstrukci (zahrnující také osoby spolupracující na distribuci díla, stejně jako všechny jeho konzumenty) zužuje a věnuje pozornost osobám podílejícím se na samotné produkci, zejména pak těm spolupracujícím pravidelně (utvářejícím pevné sítě). Celý koncept současně přesvědčivě přizpůsobuje podmínkám státně-socialistického modu produkce.

Po metodologickém úvodu studie pokračuje výkladem v chronologické ose započaté předchozím textem. Rozebírá průběh a důsledky politických čistek po roce 1969, stejně jako důvody kontinuálního výsadního postavení Zemana a Týrlové. K úloze zmíněných umělců, výsadní z hlediska politiky i produkční praxe, již přistupuje z hlediska Beckerova konceptu, takže zkoumá její místo ve výrobním systému studia. Ten si po celou dobu existence znárodněné kinematografie zachoval jistotou otevřenost. Jeho kontury byly určovány spíše vztahy uvnitř kudlovského „světa“ než byrokratickými pravidly.

Oddělení Zemana a Týrlové se podle Skopala v mnohém odlišovala od soudobých výrobních skupin. Fungovala na bázi stálého ansámblu *ad hoc* doplňovaného externisty, přičemž jeho členové a členky mnohdy střídavě zastávali různé role a partnerské či příbuzenské vztahy mezi nimi nepředstavovaly výjimku. Dominantní fokus na tvorbu dvou vedoucích osobností (přítomný zvláště v Zemanově skupině) sice omezoval otevřenost systému směrem k experimentu a možnosti uplatnění mladších umělců a umělkyní, nicméně právě v normalizační éře začal ustupovat. Jedním z důvodů bylo také dlouhodobé zvyšování produkce dané poptávkou po animované audiovizí ze strany Československé televize i zahraničních zadavatelů. Autorovo přirovnání kolektivů Týrlové a Zemana k uměleckým dílnám renesanční Itálie ovšem působí v rámci argumentu spíše nadbytečně a jeho relevanci umenšuje mimo jiné existence specifického rámce státního vlastnictví a kontroly, pro nějž v modelu renesanční dílny chybí ekvivalent.

Naopak velmi pozoruhodné je Skopalovo zkoumání vztahů mezi dvojicí výroben. Ty navzdory své organizační propojenosti i geografické blízkosti fungovaly přísně odděleně, a to jak v personálních otázkách (byť Skopal nachází také příklady přechodu z jedné dílny do druhé), tak co se týče pracovních prostor. Příslušnost k tomu či onomu kolektivu, specifickému tvůrčím uspořádáním i pracovní etikou, získala podle textu rozměr náležitosti k sociální skupině. Vztah mezi oběma dílnami se tak většinou nesl v duchu přátelské rivality. Emblematickým výrazem uvědomělé rozdílnosti mezi nimi byl výraz „chudáci chlapci“, kterým pracovní tým vedený Týrlovou označoval Zemanovy permanentně vytížené podřízené (178). Přísná oddělenost dvou skupin začala mizet až ve chvíli, kdy Zeman opustil aktivní tvorbu.

Skopalovy texty, které v rámci monografie tvoří kompaktní celek, umně využívají dvou svěbytných metodologií a s citem pro detail i pro jeho relevanci přibližují historii animované tvorby na

5) Srov. Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds: 25th Anniversary Edition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

Kudlově coby společenství, které na jednu stranu rozhodně neexistovalo ve vakuu, nicméně si za využití různých prostředků v různých obdobích zachovalo svou autonomii i personální stabilitu. Uznáme-li, že mezilidský faktor určuje každodenní život pracovního kolektivu a výsledky jeho práce stejně, ne-li více než shora dané organizační uspořádání, pak se nelze vyhnout závěru, že dvojice studií přináší navíc klíčové poznání o zkoumaném subjektu coby instituci. Etnografický směr, kterým se Skopal umírněně, ale sebejistě vydal, ukazuje možnou cestu budoucího mikrohistorického bádání v oblasti institucionálních dějin československé kinematografie.

Text Terezy Bochinové a Kateřiny Šrámkové „Obytná čtvrt Kolonka a míchání obytných a pracovních prostorů“ vychází z teorie aktérů–sítí francouzského sociologa Bruna Latoura⁶⁾ a práce Raye Oldenburga o urbanistickém vývoji komunit.⁷⁾ Zabývá se způsoby využívání prostor náležejících ke kudlovským ateliérům. V návaznosti na Oldenburga studie rozlišuje tři úlohy, které prostor může plnit: „první místo“ (domov), „druhé místo“ (pracoviště) a „třetí místo“ (prostor pro socializaci) (211–212). Ve výzkumu vychází zejména z rozhovorů s pamětníky, tedy bývalými uživateli zkoumaných míst, a z urbanistických plánů uchovaných v archivech.

Od Latoura text přejímá koncept rovnocennosti „lidských“ a „nelidských“ „aktérů“ (například prasklé žárovky, která způsobila požár studií 9. února 1944, viz 213) coby nestálých, flexibilních a dynamických bodů jimi tvořené sítě. To v praxi mimo jiné znamená, že autorky neberou v potaz otázku motivace těchto aktérů a zajímá je pouze jejich „působení“, tedy následky jejich jednání. Gottwaldovskou výrobní skupinu dětského hraného filmu pak, rovněž v návaznosti na Latoura, zavírají do pomyslné černé skříňky, tedy ji z výzkumu vynechávají.

Jak autorky hned v úvodu konstatují, „třetích míst“, tedy prostorů pro společenský kontakt, byl v kudlovském areálu a blízkém okolí dlouhodobě nedostatek. Text se proto soustředí zejména na prolínání funkcí jednotlivých míst, a to mimo jiné v rozsáhlé případové studii o vile, již si v areálu nechal postavit skladatel filmové hudby Zdeněk Liška a která byla později přetvořena na ateliér číslo 2. Autorky identifikují geografickou blízkost míst všech tří typů a jejich multifunkčnost jako specifický rys sítě aktérů gottwaldovské filmové výroby. Vazby mezi aktéry zmíněné sítě byly flexibilní a neomezovala je příslušnost k danému oddělení či profesi. Rozsah propojenosti jejich soukromého a pracovního života je zřejmý.

Text rovněž věnuje pozornost opomíjené otázce situace ženských filmařek (244). Blízce rekonstruuje nejrůznější druhy interakcí uvnitř zaměstnaneckého kolektivu studia, včetně společného trávení volného času za využití k tomuto účelu upravených pracovních prostor. Latourova metodologie, někdy kritizovaná jako reduktivní ve vztahu ke zkoumaným lidským aktérům,⁸⁾ v tomto případě umožňuje studii držet se přesně vymezeného zaměření. Právě to jí navzdory své zdánlivé užlosti dovádí k poznatkům nejen o urbanistickém vývoji studií a obytných prostor na Kudlově, ale také o životech lidí v nich pracujících, žijících a socializujících se. Textu se tak daří neobyčejně precizně vystihnout každodenní život ve zlínských ateliérech.

Studie Veroniky Podlipné a Kateřiny Kunkelové „Večerníček pro Bratislavu: Vliv zakázkové tvorby na animovanou produkci gottwaldovského studia“ se oproti předcházejícím textům více blí-

6) Srov. Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

7) Srov. Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 1999).

8) Srov. David Bloor, „Anti-Latour“, *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 30, č. 1 (1999), 81–112. Graham Harman, *Prince of Networks: Bruno Latour and Metaphysics* (Melbourne: re.press – Graham Harman, 2009); Graham Harman, *Bruno Latour: Reassembling the Political* (London: Pluto Press, 2014).

ží konvenčnějším příspěvkům z kategorie nové filmové historie. Jak napovídá jeho název, text se soustředí na spolupráci kudlovské výroby animovaných filmů s bratislavským studiem Československé televize od konce 60. let. Kooperaci na výrobě animovaných pohádek pro pořad *Večerníček* sleduje z hlediska dramaturgie, výroby, institucionálních vztahů i rozvíjení kontaktů na personální úrovni.

Studie identifikuje důvody vzájemné výhodnosti spolupráce. Zatímco pro Gottwaldov představovala výroba večerníčků významnou zakázku a nezanedbatelný zdroj financí, bratislavské studio pro kooperaci motivovala nejen víra ve kvalitu dodaných audiovizuálních děl, ale také snaha umožnit svým vlastním pracovníkům výškolení v oboru animace, což mělo slovenské televizi do budoucna dovolit zahájit vlastní výrobu večerních pořadů pro děti. Spolupráci svědčila také relativní geografická blízkost Gottwaldova a slovenského hlavního města. Nutnost pravidelného přejíždění tvůrců a tvůrkyně, respektive televizních dramaturgů a schvalovatelů mezi oběma lokalitami přesto představovala problém, který se za celou dobu trvání kooperace nepodařilo uspokojivě vyřešit. Naopak jazykové rozdíly dané situací, kdy čeští tvůrci vyrábějí díla ve slovenštině, nepředstavovaly až na jednu citovanou anekdotickou příhodu (307) vážnější potíže.

Text popisuje roli, kterou v celém procesu hrály stáže stávajících či pozdějších pracovníků bratislavské televize v gottwaldovských studiích. Neopomíná ani úlohu přátelských či rodinných vztahů. Věnuje se rovněž evoluci samotného konceptu večerníčku a jeho slovenské specifické verze. Nemalý prostor vyhrazuje vývoji politických a dramaturgických požadavků na tento typ pořadů a otázkám finančního ohodnocení. Velkou váhu při tom dává rozsáhle citovaným dobovým směrnícím a platovým výměrům.

Studie dochází k závěru, že oproti původním plánům stále se rozšiřující výroba večerníčků pro bratislavskou televizi ovlivňovala nejen život gottwaldovských zaměstnanců, ale také samotnou podobu tamní audiovizuální tvorby. K často opakované výtce,⁹⁾ že večerníčková „nadvýroba“ vedla ke kvalitativnímu úpadku gottwaldovské výroby, dodává, že pro kudlovské zaměstnanectvo představovala spolupráce s Bratislavou možnost lepšího finančního ohodnocení a nových pracovních možností (315). Neopomíná ani vliv, který popisovaná kooperace měla na rozvoj slovenské tvorby animovaných filmů. Hlavní přínos textu tak lze vidět nejen v precizním historiografickém zpracování zvoleného tématu, ale rovněž v tom, že rozpoznává důležitost onoho tématu a identifikuje jeho přesah mimo úzký kontext produkčních a dramaturgických otázek.

Monografii uzavírá mediálně-analytická studie Terezy Bochinové „Pan Prokouk a standardní figurka agitace“. Text sleduje vývoj zmíněné postavičky vytvořené Karlem Zemanem a vystupující v jím zahájené sérii krátkých agitačních snímků. Zejména pak věnuje pozornost mediální reflexi figurky pana Prokouka a způsobu, jakým se tento stal maskotem nejen svého tvůrce, ale do jisté míry také české animace jako celku. Charakter a funkci zkoumané postavičky Bochinová zkoumá ve vztahu ke konceptu tzv. standardní figurky, tedy častého nástroje sériové reklamy, s nímž měla československá veřejnost zkušenost již z meziválečného období a který po roce 1945 zažil rozmach v globálním měřítku (322–327).

Text se zabývá rovněž samotným rozvojem československé produkce „agitek“, které autorka definuje jako formu sociální reklamy specifickou pro poválečnou a poúnorovou společnost, a využitím animace v tomto subžánru. Pana Prokouka dává studie také do kontextu poválečného budovatelského optimismu, jehož je Zemanův výtvar jak produktem, tak nositelem. Sleduje jeho etablování coby

9) Jan Poš, *Výtvarníci animovaného filmu* (Praha: Odeon, 1990), 42.

oblíbené figurky, která funguje „jako symbol svědomí československého diváka“ (344). Nejprve odráží lidské „nešvary“, postupně se přetváří v pozitivní vzor „uvědomělého“ občana (331–332), aby se nakonec po několikaleté pauze a odchodu Zemana z režijního křesla stal symbolem domácího i mezinárodního úspěchu československé animace a maskotem Filmového festivalu pracujících, festivalu Brněnská šestnáctka či Filmotéky Československého filmového ústavu (353–357). V rámci analýzy mediální reflexe Bochinová moudře neopomíná ani Prokroukuv výskyt mimo audiovizuální díla (351–352).

Popularita pana Prokouka, který, jak text ukazuje, byl již v soudobé publicistice vnímán jako odrazový můstek Karla Zemana k finančně náročnější tvorbě, je konkrétním příkladem specifického kapitálu, kterým se v širší rovině zabývají zejména texty Pavla Skopala. Závěrečný příspěvek, v rámci publikace nejkonkrétněji zaměřený, tak slouží jako svého druhu případová studie vývoje postavení gottwaldovských animátorů a animátorek a skvěle doplňuje předcházející texty.

Zejména příbuznost povětšinou prosopografických metodologií zvolených v jednotlivých příspěvcích zaručuje koherenci monografie, kterou sice (také vzhledem k relativně nízkému počtu studií) nelze označit za definitivní historiografický pohled na vývoj kudlovských ateliérů mezi lety 1945 až 1991, ze všech dosud vydaných publikací se však k tomuto titulu rozhodně blíží nejvíce. Komplexní přínos práce autorského kolektivu spočívá zejména v zapojení etnografického hlediska, a to v míře na prostředí českojazyčné filmové výroby dosud neaplikované. Monografie tak může sloužit nejen jako mnohovrstevnatý informační zdroj o svém subjektu, ale také jako vzor kompetentního a konstruktivního využití uvedeného hlediska při zkoumání historického, geograficky a profesně vymezeného kolektivu.

Bibliografie

- Augustin, L. H. *Jiří Trnka* (Praha: Academia, 2004).
- Becker, Howard S. *Art Worlds: 25th Anniversary Edition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).
- Benda, Jan. *Týrlová, Zeman a ti druzí: Historie zlínského (gottwaldovského) studia animovaného filmu* (Praha: Powerprint, 2019).
- Benešová, Marie. *Hermína Týrlová* (Praha: Československý filmový ústav, 1982).
- Benešová, Marie. *Od Špalíčku ke Snu noci svatojanské* (Praha: Orbis, 1961).
- Bloor, David. „Anti-Latour“, *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 30, č. 1 (1999).
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Sociology in Question* (London: Thousand Oaks – Nové Dillí: SAGE Publications, 1993).
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Field of Cultural Production* (Cambridge: Polity, 1993).
- Harman, Graham. *Bruno Latour: Reassembling the Political* (London: Pluto Press, 2014).
- Harman, Graham. *Prince of Networks: Bruno Latour and Metaphysics* (Melbourne: re.press – Graham Harman, 2009).
- Kolektiv. *Jiří Trnka: Maliar, ilustrátor, bábkár a básnik filmového plátna* (Bratislava: Slovenský filmový ústav, 1987).
- Latour, Bruno. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
- Oldenburg, Ray. *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 1999).

- Poš, Jan. *Výtvarníci animovaného filmu* (Praha: Odeon, 1990).
- Skopal, Pavel, a kol. *Lidé – práce – animace: Světy animovaného filmu na Kudlově* (Brno: Host, 2024).
- Sladkowski, Marcel, a kol. *FA Kudlov 1 36–45: Kudlovská stodola: Založení a první léta filmových ateliérů ve Zlíně* (Zlín: Filmfest, s. r. o., 2016).
- Sladkowski, Marcel, a kol. *FA Kudlov 3 61–77: Kudlovská stodola: Filmové ateliéry v Gottwaldově/Zlíně žijí* (Zlín: Filmfest, s. r. o., 2018).
- Sladkowski, Marcel, a kol. *FA Kudlov 4 78–92: Kudlovská stodola: Filmové ateliéry v Gottwaldově/Zlíně se osamostatňují* (Zlín: Filmfest, s. r. o., 2019).
- Sladkowski, Marcel, a kol. *FA Kudlov 5 93–20: Kudlovská stodola: Zlínské filmové ateliéry v nové době* (Zlín: Filmfest, s. r. o., 2020).
- Slanina, Ondřej. *Česká animovaná klasika* (Praha: Charon media, 2016).
- Szczepanik, Petr. *Továrna Barrandov: Svět filmařů a politická moc 1945–1970* (Praha: Národní filmový archiv, 2016).
- Taussig, Pavel, a kol. *FA Kudlov 2 46–60: Kudlovská stodola: Filmové ateliéry ve Zlíně v poválečném období* (Zlín: Filmfest, s. r. o., 2017).
- Tenčík, František. *Hermína Týrlová* (Brno: Krajské nakladatelství, 1964).
- Tillieux, Pierre. *Jiri Trnka* (Mons: Ciné Jeunesses, 1964).
- Zemanová, Ludmila – Linda Zeman-Spaleny. *Karel Zeman a jeho kouzelný svět* (Brno: CPress, 2015).

Biografie

Jakub Egermajer je filmový historik a v současné době doktorand na Katedře filmových studií Filozofické fakulty Univerzity Karlovy. Specializuje se na českou kinematografii v období protektorátu, třetí republiky a 50. let. Zabývá se rovněž vztahem státu a filmové výroby, úlohou kinematografie v kulturní politice a hospodářskými dějinami filmu. Publikoval mimo jiné v recenzovaných periodikách *Iluminace* a *Judaica Bohemiae* či na *Revue Filmového přehledu*. Od roku 2022 působí v Oddělení filmografie a katalogizace Národního filmového archivu.

Email: jakub.egermajer@nfa.cz

<https://doi.org/10.58193/ilu.1830>

Josef Tichý

(FAMU, Česká republika)

Prostor a čas v japonských videoherních centrech

Jérémie Pelletier-Gagnon, *Space and Play in Japanese Videogame Arcades*
(New York: Routledge, 2024).

V jedné ze scén snímku *Ztraceno v překladu* (Lost in Translation; Sofia Coppola, 2003) ústřední protagonistka v podání Scarlett Johansson napůl bezcílně prochází videoherním centrem kdesi v tehdejší Tokiu. Prvotní úsměv na hrdinčině tváři však záhy mizí, jakmile si začne uvědomovat, že lidé, jež zde potkává, navzdory zdánlivé pospolitosti prodlévají ve spíše izolovaných módech existence. Pro Jérémieho Pelletier-Gagnona, odborného asistenta na torontské Université de l'Ontario français a autora dále pojednávané knihy *Space and Play in Japanese Videogame Arcades*, však bližší analýza zmíněné scény odhaluje spíše neblahý příspěvek do série stereotypních techno-orientalismů (26) západní kinematografie. Jinými slovy se jedná o schematizmy v zobrazení „přetechnizované“ japonské společnosti (26) a jejího vztahu k moderním technologiím (v důsledku upozadujícího reálné mezilidské vztahy). Vůči těmto tendencím se Pelletier-Gagnon zásadně vymezuje. Hlavním cílem jeho publikace je totiž přiblížit takováto arkádová centra v jejich mnohovrstevnaté struktuře, s důrazem na jedinečné propojení softwaru, materiality herních kabinetů i samotného prostoru, do něhož jsou situovány. Zároveň se pokouší nabídnout holistický pohled na zmíněná videoherní centra coby specifické kulturní úkazy, jež už po bezmála pět desítek let představují nedílnou součást kulturního přediava japonského městského života.

Samotný text představuje jednu ze stále početnější řady anglofonních publikací zkoumajících rozličné aspekty japonských videoher. Mnohé jejich autorky a autoři přitom v globálním kontextu formálně sdružuje výroční konference *Replaying Japan* a s ní i úzce spjaté periodikum *The Journal of Replaying Japan*, jež vydává kjótská univerzita Ritsumeikan. Z posledních let lze v této souvislosti zmínit např. Joleen Blom a její monografii *Video Game Characters and Transmedia Storytelling: The Dynamic Game Character*,¹⁾ dále Martina Rotha a jeho *Unboxing Japanese Videogames: A Meta-*

1) Autorka se zde zaměřuje na fenomén „transmediálních migrací“ fikčních postav s dominantním akcentem právě na japonskou videoherní kulturu, viz Joleen Blom, *Video Game Characters and Transmedia Storytelling: The Dynamic Game Character* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2023).

data-based Approach to the Production and Distribution of Spatial Instability,²⁾ popř. kolektivní dílo s názvem *Japanese Role-Playing Games: Genre, Representation, and Liminality in the JRPG*,³⁾ jež vedle zmíněného Pelletier-Gagnona editovala i nestorka v oboru japonských herních studií Rachael Hutchinson.

Zde recenzovaná kniha je rozdělena do dvou částí. První z nich, „Contextualizing Play in Japanese Amusement Spaces“, představuje teoretická východiska a přibližuje historii japonských zábavních parků: od jejich skromných počátků v podobě prvních mechanických atrakcí z roku 1928 na půdě zábavního komplexu Takarazuka (宝塚) na předměstí Kóbe (29) až po současné vícepodlažní megaplexy vlastněné dominantními finančními holdingy. Část druhá, „Case Studies of Play and Space in Japanese Game Centres“, pak prostřednictvím případových studií provedených ve třech různých typech soudobých herních center přesvědčivě demonstruje autorovu klíčovou tezi. Ta spočívá v přesvědčení, že neexistuje jeden všeobjímající typ těchto arkádových center, nýbrž mnohost paralelně existujících typů podniků: od menších a nezávisle provozovaných, jež se svou architekturou i provozním řádem blíží spíše lokálním komunitním centrům, až po velká zařízení vlastněná obřími korporacemi, která svým uspořádáním i způsoby managementu cílí prakticky výhradně na maximalizaci generovaných zisků.

Vzhledem k autorově původu v kanadské provincii Québec nepřekvapí, že zvláště první část knihy rozdělená do čtyř kapitol reaguje výraznou měrou na frankofonní akademický diskurz. Jmenovitě jde o přední francouzské filozofy 20. století typu Michela Foucaulta,⁴⁾ Guye-Ernesta Deborda⁵⁾ nebo Henriho Lefebvrea.⁶⁾ Ti se zvláště po Foucaultově formulaci termínu „heterotopie“ z roku 1967, jímž označoval specifické, společensky vyčleněné prostory s vícevrstevnou – utilitární i imaginární – funkcí (např. hřbitovy či divadla),⁷⁾ začali důsledněji zabývat úvahami o významových rovinách prostoru. Na základě pojednání dalšího z těchto myslitelů, a sice Pierra Mabilloho,⁸⁾ pak Pelletier-Gagnon formuluje i svůj stěžejní koncept s názvem *ludo-egregores* (či *ludo-égrégore*). Jím rozumí chvíle, v nichž hráč (či hráčka) prozkoumává ludický potenciál určité hry, zatímco takováto hra naopak prostřednictvím svého specificky situovaného účelu či možného využití „konfiguruje“ samotného hráče (77). Jinými slovy – tímto termínem označuje svůj holistický přístup ke studiu individuálně prožívaných, a tedy jedinečných i pomíjivých chvil, během nichž dochází k interakcím mezi lidmi a herními kabinety ve specifických prostorových podmínkách japonských herních center (77).

První z úvodní čtveřice kapitol přibližuje hraní v japonských arkádových centrech coby „kulturně situované praktiky“ (5), které se v zemi začaly rozvíjet záhy po importu prvních herních kabine-

2) Tato publikace představuje originální pokus o holistický přístup ke studiu výrobních podmínek japonské videoherní produkce na základě kvantitativní analýzy metadat, jež v tomto případě souvisejí s geograficky komplikovanou a spíše rozptýlenou produkcí i distribučními modely japonských výrobců videoherního softwaru. Viz Martin Roth, *Unboxing Japanese Videogames: A Metadata-based Approach to the Production and Distribution of Spatial Instability* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2025).

3) Rachael Hutchinson – Jérémie Pelletier-Gagnon, eds., *Japanese Role-Playing Games: Genre, Representation, and Liminality in the JRPG* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2022).

4) Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977).

5) Guy-Ernest Debord, *Guide psychogéographique de Paris: Discours sur les passions de l'amour* (Copenhagen: Bauhaus Imaginiste, 1957).

6) Henri Lefebvre, *Éléments de rythmanalyse: Introduction à la connaissance des rythmes* (Paris: Éditions Syllepse, 1992).

7) Hřbitov může být domovem jak pro tělo, tak i duši zesnulých, zatímco divadlo představuje juxtapozici reálně existujícího místa s bezpočtem imaginárních (74).

8) Srov. Pierre Mabillo, *Egrégore ou la vie des civilisations* (Marseille: Egrégore Editions, 2005).

tů s titulem *Pong* (Atari, 1972) na počátku 70. let minulého století – zejména však po uvedení prvního japonského hitu s názvem *Space Invaders* (スペースインベーダー, Supésu inbédá; Taitó, 1978). Pelletier-Gagnon v této sekci zdůrazňuje kulturní specifitu i zvláštní význam daného fenoménu v kontextu japonské společnosti, třebaže celkový počet herních center se dle dostupných statistických údajů Národní policejní agentury (警察庁, Keisacuó) v zemi snížil z celkových 64 851 v roce 1979 na pouhých 3 894 v roce 2022 (8). V kontrastu se situací na Západě, kde podobné provozovny již prakticky vymizely, se však tato centra v Japonsku i po významné konsolidaci trhu v průběhu posledních tří dekád těší značné oblibě všech věkových kategorií (9). Je tomu tak i proto, že zejména pro mladistvé osoby představují dle dětského psychologa Hirojukiho Aihary⁹⁾ v kontextu japonské společnosti spíše vzácné místo, jež umožňuje svobodnější vyjádření a socializaci mimo přísné vymezené struktury školského systému i rodinného života (9).

V první kapitole pak ještě Pelletier-Gagnon vymezuje cíl výzkumu a představuje metodologii, která v případech dále diskutovaných případových studií primárně spoléhá na metodu zúčastněného pozorování (13) ve vybraných japonských herních centrech, jmenovitě v Kjótu a Tokiu. Jak sám podotýká, zásadní výhodou tohoto přístupu (tj. bez provádění konvenčních výzkumných rozhovorů či dotazníkových šetření) byla možnost zachytit empirické příklady non-verbálních projevů zúčastněných osob (13) i jejich autentické interakce s herními přístroji. Zároveň mohl tímto přístupem minimalizovat dopad vlastní přítomnosti na přirozené chování pozorovaných subjektů a soustředit se na hlavní téma svého výzkumu. Tím je průsečík softwarového designu, dále technických vlastností samotných herních kabinetů a nakonec též vlivu prostorových podmínek. Tyto pak autor definuje coby „směsici architektonických prvků a prostorového uspořádání rozličných [nejen] herních zařízení“ (14) v kontextu zkoumaných arkádových center. V závěru úvodní kapitoly též neopomíná vymezit limity projektu, a sice své výhradní soustředění na arkádová centra v městském prostředí, pro něž jsou coby urbanistický fenomén příznačná, a naopak i záměrné nezohlednění podmínek takovýchto zařízení ve venkovských oblastech (18). Tam je však vlivem rozdílných socioekonomických podmínek celková úroveň společenského vývoje v mnohém odlišná, což může na základě vlastní zkušenosti z oblasti Hirošimské prefektury potvrdit autor této recenze.

Kapitola druhá mapuje vývoj japonských zábavních center od nultých let 20. století až po závěr let 70., v nichž identifikuje coby jeden z vývojových zlomů vzestup drobných a nezávisle provozovaných kaváren (喫茶店, kissaten). Ty vlivem různých faktorů, zejména však příznivých ekonomických podmínek nastupujícího „hospodářského zázraku“, začali právě ve zmíněné době¹⁰⁾ zakládat někteří bývalí příslušníci vrstvy „bílých límečků“ (35). Pro tyto kvalifikované a zpravidla s jedinou firmou doživotně spjaté¹¹⁾ muže se v Japonsku ujal specifický neologismus vytvořený na základě anglického jazykového substrátu, konkrétně výraz *salarymen* (サラリーマン, sararíman). Takového mnohdy individualisticky pojaté kavárny pak postupem doby vedle obvyklé možnosti rozptýlení prostřednictvím denního tisku či komiksů *manga* (漫画) začaly nabízet i stolky se zabudovaným vi-

9) Hirojuki Aihara, „Gému sentá to iu kúkan ni kodomo wa nani wo motomeru ka?“, *Džidó šinri* 55, č. 11 (2001), 1108–1113.

10) Merry White, *Coffee Life in Japan* (Berkeley – Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012), 74.

11) Ač spíše humornou, nicméně o hlubokou znalost japonských reálií se opírající esej na téma mizejícího fenoménu japonských *salarymen* s názvem „The Death of the Salaryman“ nabízí někdejší investigativní novinář deníku *Jomiuri šimbun* (讀賣新聞) Jake Adelstein, mj. autor knižní předlohy eponymního seriálu z produkce HBO *Tokyo Vice* (2022–2024). Viz Jake Adelstein, „The Death of the Salaryman“, *Tokyo Paladin with Jake Adelstein*, 29. 8. 2025, cit. 27. 9. 2025, <https://tokyopaladin.substack.com/p/the-death-of-the-salaryman>.

deoherním zařízením. Posledně zmíněný trend nakonec kulminoval s masovým úspěchem slavných *Space Invaders* v době kolem října 1979, kdy bylo po celém Japonsku instalováno více než 280 tisíc těchto přístrojů (36).

Třetí kapitola následně přibližuje dění po ústupu prvotní vlny obliby herních center, především snahy o zprísňení podmínek v tomto sektoru za pomoci legislativních opatření typu novely zákona regulujícího zábavní podniky (新風営法, Šinfúei-hó), a nakonec i konsolidaci trhu prostřednictvím korporátních fúzí a akvizic. Ty vyústily v dominantní postavení tří nejsilnějších firem, jmenovitě řeťzců spadajících pod holdingy Sega (セガ), Taito (タイトー, Taitó) a Namco (ナムコ, Namuko) (54). Jejich neotřesitelné postavení se na celostátní úrovni podařilo upevnit na úkor drobných nezávislých provozovatelů i díky zavedení výhradních online systémů a exkluzivních licencí na produkty spadající pod jejich duševní vlastnictví. Normativní charakter těchto podniků však nevyhnutelně eliminoval jedinečnost dřívějších drobných provozů, protože tato velkoryse pojatá centra dodnes působí genericky a spíše zaměnitelně.

Až ve čtvrté kapitole pak autor detailně představuje teoretická východiska případových studií. Při této příležitosti je však nutné poznamenat, že zmíněná explikace přichází poněkud pozdě a až po několika předcházejících avizacích. Přechodem do druhé části, kterou uvozuje první ze tří výňatků z autorova vědeckého deníku, celá kniha nicméně získává novou dynamiku i čtivost.

První ze zkoumaných míst představuje (dnes již neexistující)¹²⁾ středně velký podnik zvaný A-ó, který se nacházel na ulici Teramači-dóri v centrální části Kjóta, a sice nedaleko křižovatky s ústředním nákupním bulvárem Šidžó-dóri (Čtvrtá ulice). Pelletier-Gagnon v této sekci přejímá koncept *flâneurs*¹³⁾ tak, jak jej proslavil Walter Benjamin (101), na jehož základě charakterizuje jeden z převládajících typů zdejších návštěvníků. Jejich pouto či „společenská angažovanost“ vůči samotnému podniku je totiž spíše nízká. Zvláštní pozornost v této kapitole je proto vedle vyčerpávající analýzy jednoho ze zdejších herních turnajů v bojovém titulu *BlazBlue* (ブレイブルー, Burei burú; Arc System Works, 2008) z 25. února 2016 (102) věnována „extenzi“ zdejšího centra do prostoru virtuální reality. V praxi se tak dělo prostřednictvím sofistikované exploatace mladých zaměstnanců, a především zaměstnankyň zdejší kavárny. Ty zde totiž v rámci svého povolání byly nuceny k náročné a velmi špatně honorované emocionální práci (96). Příslušné ženy tak na sociálních sítích a zejména podnikovém blogu musely sdílet dokonce i „aktuality“ ze svého osobního života (95), tak aby pro návštěvníky podniku i za využití roztomile působících emotikonů *kaomodzi* (顔文字) vytvářely „hravou a komfortní“ atmosféru (96). Domnívám se přitom, že právě tyto sociálně angažované pasáže představují nejhodnotnější část celé knihy, neboť upozorňují na v mnoha aspektech stále nerovné postavení žen nejen v rámci videoherního byznysu, nýbrž i japonské společnosti jako celku.¹⁴⁾

12) Podnik dle dostupných informací ukončil provoz ke dni 31. ledna 2025, viz aktuální uživatelské recenze a ohlasy dostupné v rámci internetového vyhledávače Google.

13) V českém úzu též „flanér“. Tento „městský chodec“, a zároveň předchůdce dnes masově rozšířeného konceptu „turisty“, se objevil v Paříži na sklonku 19. století (101). Termín však poprvé formuloval již někdejší „prokletý“ básník Charles Baudelaire v esejí *Malíř moderního života* (Le Peintre de la vie moderne) z roku 1863. Srov. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, přel. Howard Eiland – Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002). Pelletier-Gagnon při aplikaci těchto původně evropských modernistických myšlenek do japonského prostředí nicméně nereflektuje samotnou problematičnost tohoto procesu, protože lze v jeho přístupu paradoxně spatřovat i ozvěny dřívějších „orientalismů“.

14) Pramáno na tom mění i fakt, že příští japonskou premiérkou se má coby první žena v tamní historii stát Sanae Takaiči, která uspěla v soutěži o předsednictví vládoucí Liberálně-demokratické strany (自由民主党, Džijū minšutó). Její dřívější (a nechvalně proslulé) sympatie k volebním taktikám Adolfa Hitlera a všeobec-

V ní totiž bývají delegovány do rolí „poskytovatelek komfortu“ v celém spektru služeb, a to opět na základě nevýhodných pracovních kontraktů.

Následující případová studie prováděná v malém a dnes již rovněž nefungujícím¹⁵⁾ podniku zvaném *Cudžišóten* (辻商店), který se nacházel jižně od kjótského hlavního vlakového nádraží, pak zachycuje docela jiný typ prostoru i samotných klientů. Jelikož šlo o jedno z mála zařízení, jež kontinuálně přežívalo od dob největšího rozmachu arkádových center na sklonku 70. let, autor se v tomto případě věnoval rozličným vrstvám identifikovatelným v architektonickém řešení tamního prostoru. Ten totiž i díky svému neformálnímu charakteru plnil do značné míry funkci lokálního komunitního centra pro mládež. Podnik *Cudžišóten* proto Pelletier-Gagnon charakterizoval figurativním využitím termínu *palimpsest*. Právě tento drobný, soukromě vlastněný provoz sloužil coby exemplární příklad „palimpsestního konstruktů“, v němž byly omezené prostorové podmínky „konstantně modifikovány“ (113), a to za účelem adaptace nových herních zařízení pro stávající klientelu v každém konkrétním momentu jeho historického vývoje. Důležité však dle Pelletier-Gagnona především je, že v těchto prostorech zůstávaly stopy dřívějšího využití, čímž umožňovaly nahlížet jejich transformace i vývoj v kontextu dlouhodobější historické perspektivy (113). Třebaže tedy skromné rozměry *Cudžišótenu* nemohly konkurovat technologickým a architektonickým možnostem korporátně vlastněných podniků, nabízely naopak onu „domácký“ působící atmosféru pro tamní mladistvé (126). Ti si pak jeho oficiálně „herní“ prostory mnohdy neortodoxním způsobem „přivlastňovali“ i ke zcela nesouvisejícím účelům typu konzumace instantních polévek, vypracování domácích úkolů nebo dokonce přechodnému spánku.

Závěrečná studie z (v tehdejší podobě již rovněž neexistujícího)¹⁶⁾ herního centra Sega Ikebukuro GIGO (セガ池袋ギョーゴ, Sega Ikebukuro Gígo) v eponymní tokijské čtvrti, jednom z ústředních dopravních uzlů tokijské megalopole, nakonec slouží jako příklad centra vlastněného jedním z dominantních korporátních subjektů, v tomto případě Sega SAMMY Holdings (セガサミーホールディングス, Sega Samí Hóruđingusu). V návaznosti na koncept „mediální konvergence“ (135) od Henryho Jenkinse¹⁷⁾ zde Pelletier-Gagnon analyzuje toto rušné zařízení coby vynalézavě segregovaný prostor, a to nejen tematicky, nýbrž především genderově. Třebaže se v daném podniku spojovaly trajektorie rozličných mediálních produktů, jež měly mnohdy společný původ v kreslené audiovizuální tvorbě žánru *anime* (アニメ), zaujme především fakt, že i navzdory gigantickým rozměrům se podniku dařilo vytvářet atmosféru „mikro-intimních prostor“ (153) prostřednictvím důmyslného systému individuálních clon zvaných *šakóbako* (遮光箱).

V rámci finálního shrnutí se autor knihy navrácí k Foucaultovu konceptu heterotopie, přičemž konstatuje, že provozovatelé herních center vycházejí ze dvou základních metafor, a sice arkádového centra coby pomyslné „arény“ (včetně úmyslného důrazu na performativní dynamiku soupeří-

ně „konzervativní“ založení očekávaný příklon k feminismu zřejmě nesignalizují. Viz Eric Johnston, „How Takaichi Won the LDP's Leadership Race“, *The Japan Times*, 5. 10. 2025, cit. 7. 10. 2025, <https://www.japan-times.co.jp/news/2025/10/05/japan/politics/vote-flow-ldp/>.

15) Společnost dle dostupných informací ukončila provoz ke dni 28. února 2025, viz opět recenze dostupné v rámci vyhledávače Google.

16) Centrum bylo ceremoniálně uzavřeno po celkem 28 letech své existence, a to dne 20. září 2021 za účasti shromážděného davu příznivců a poslechu skladby *Světlo světlušky* (蛍の光, Hotaru no hikari). Viz Brian Ashcraft, „Fans Gather To Say Goodbye To A Legendary Sega Arcade“, *Kotaku*, 21. 9. 2025, cit. 7. 10. 2025, <https://kotaku.com/fans-gather-to-say-goodbye-to-a-legendary-sega-arcade-1847713588>.

17) Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

cích hráčů a jejich obecnstev), anebo jakési „ložnice“ ve smyslu vytvoření bezpečného prostoru (169). Zdůrazněna je opět pluralita, simultaneita a efemérnost prožitků z hraní ve veřejném prostoru, a sice v souladu s autorovou myšlenkou *ludo-egregore* (165). Lze jen doplnit, že celou publikaci je možno v celkovém úhrnu považovat za velice hodnotnou, neboť přispívá k hlubšímu poznání zvláště té části herních studií, jež se zaměřuje na Japonsko. Poznatky z ní jsou však i díky pozoruhodným a přesvědčivě zpracovaným případovým studiím natolik zobecnitelné a přenositelné, že se mohou stát významným přínosem pro celé spektrum humanitních disciplín včetně filmové vědy, a to díky svému důrazu na temporálnost – obzvláště na pomíjivé aspekty recepce audiovizuálních děl.

Bibliografie

- Adelstein, Jake. „The Death of the Salaryman“, *Tokyo Paladin with Jake Adelstein*, 29. 8. 2025, cit. 27. 9. 2025, <https://tokyopaladin.substack.com/p/the-death-of-the-salaryman>.
- Aihara, Hirojuki. „Gému sentá to iu kúkan ni kodomo wa nani wo motomeru ka?“, *Džidó šinri* 55, č. 11 (2001), 1108–1113.
- Ashcraft, Brian. „Fans Gather To Say Goodbye To A Legendary Sega Arcade“, *Kotaku*, 21. 9. 2025, cit. 7. 10. 2025, <https://kotaku.com/fans-gather-to-say-goodbye-to-a-legendary-sega-arcade-1847713588>.
- Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project*, přel. Howard Eiland – Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002).
- Blom, Joleen. *Video Game Characters and Transmedia Storytelling: The Dynamic Game Character* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2023).
- Debord, Guy-Ernest. *Guide psychogéographique de Paris: Discours sur les passions de l'amour* (Copenhagen: Bauhaus Imaginiste, 1957).
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977).
- Hutchinson, Rachael – Jérémie Pelletier-Gagnon, eds. *Japanese Role-Playing Games: Genre, Representation, and Liminality in the JRPG* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2022).
- Jenkins, Henry. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).
- Johnston, Eric. „How Takaichi Won the LDP's Leadership Race“, *The Japan Times*, 5. 10. 2025, cit. 7. 10. 2025, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2025/10/05/japan/politics/vote-flow-ldp/>.
- Lefebvre, Henri. *Éléments de rythmanalyse: Introduction à la connaissance des rythmes* (Paris: Éditions Syllepse, 1992).
- Mabille, Pierre. *Egrégore ou la vie des civilisations* (Marseille: Egrégore Editions, 2005).
- Pelletier-Gagnon, Jérémie. *Space and Play in Japanese Videogame Arcades* (New York: Routledge, 2024).
- Roth, Martin. *Unboxing Japanese Videogames: A Metadata-based Approach to the Production and Distribution of Spatial Instability* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2025).
- White, Merry. *Coffee Life in Japan* (Berkeley – Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012).

Biografie

Josef Tichý (1992) absolvoval Japonskou filologii na FF UP v Olomouci a díky stipendiu japonské vlády (MEXT) též roční studijní pobyt se zaměřením na japonský jazyk a kulturu na Hirošimské univerzitě. Působí na Ministerstvu kultury a pražské FAMU, kde po absolutoriu doktorského studijního programu Výzkum a teorie audiovize vyučuje nově ustavený předmět „Japonský survival horror“. Je též autorem novely *Předvečer* (Minimum Difference, 2021), která byla r. 2022 nominována na Cenu Jiřího Ortena.

E-mail: josef-tichy@hotmail.cz

VÝZVA K AUTORSKÉ SPOLUPRÁCI

NA MONOTEMATICKÝCH BLOCÍCH DALŠÍCH ČÍSEL

Prostřednictvím monotematických bloků se *Illuminace* snaží podpořit koncentrovanější diskusi uvnitř oboru, vytvořit operativní prostředek dialogu s jinými obory a usnadnit zapojení zahraničních přispěvatelů. Témata jsou vybírána tak, aby korespondovala s aktuálním vývojem filmové historie a teorie ve světě a aby současně umožňovala otevírat specifické domácí otázky (revidovat problémy dějin českého filmu, zabývat se dosud nevyužitými prameny). Zájemcům může redakce poskytnout výběrové bibliografie k jednotlivým tématům. **Každé z uvedených čísel bude mít rezervován dostatek prostoru i pro texty s tématem nijak nesouvisející.**

S nabídkami příspěvků (studií, recenzí, glos, rozhovorů) se obraťte na adresu: lucie.cesalkova@nfa.cz.

V nabídce stručně popište koncepci textu; u původních studií se předpokládá délka 15–35 normostran. Podrobné pokyny pro bibliografické citace lze nalézt na webových stránkách časopisu: www.iluminace.cz, v rubrice Publikovat — Pokyny pro autory.

Short Film in the Balkans and Eastern Europe

Deadline for abstracts: February 15 2025; deadline for submissions: May 15 2025.

Guest Editors:

Fabio Bego (Independent Researcher)

Ana Grgic (Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania)

Irina Tcherneva (CNRS — Centre national de la recherche scientifique, France)

Archives are spaces of power expressions. They are places where power is stored and information is selected and converted (Azoulay 2019). At their foundation, archives are essentially patriarchal, paternal, and colonial institutions designated to preserve and expand the political order which founded them (Derrida 1996), however archives are also “sites of memory” (Nora 1989) which preserve traces of cultural and social experiences, practices, and resistances. For this special issue, we invite scholars to consider how short films reinforce and challenge archival power. Our aim is to draw attention to the way in which short films reverberate and reflect the (dis)continuities of state-building projects, political activism, and regime changes in the Balkans and Eastern Europe throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. More than thirty years after the end of the Cold war, the region now demands a decolonial view of its past, archives and memory, one that is shaped by “a multivocal discourse” (Sendyka 2022), encompassing multiplicity of creative expressions and intersected temporalities (Petkovska 2024). This special issue aims to shift film studies perspective in four ways: by focusing on short films (non-fiction, fiction, and hybrid forms) that tend to have a marginalised position within distribution circuits as a result of social, cultural, and economic practices, and technological advancements; by approaching their aesthetic, political and narrative specificities, their artistic and archival re-usage in contemporary times; by examining transnational connections, networks, and exchanges of filmmaking practices; and, finally, by decentering our gaze on the context of the Balkans and Eastern Europe. Doing so, we hope to make a contribution at the intersection of area studies, film studies and postcolonial studies (see Mazierska, Kristensen, & Naripea 2014). Ultimately, we seek to understand how the meanings, histories, and practices of the short film have contributed to reinforcing or challenging categories, taxonomies, and relations which have served to shape our knowledge of the Balkans and Eastern Europe, given that the short film has rarely attracted scholarly attention.

While the history of “author”-centric and national cinemas of Eastern Europe and the Balkans is quite well-established (see Imre 2005, 2012; Iordanova 2001, 2003; Mazierska & Goddard, 2014), the histories and filmmaking practices of abundant and varied short film forms are lesser known and rarely considered (see Česálková & al, 2024). We are interested in original research on hybrid and experimental works, newsreels, and documentaries made by filmmakers, artists, amateurs, and film professionals both within smaller state-funded studios and within film clubs, film collectives, and other institutions. This special issue also invites scholars to engage with the historicity of short formats by questioning the connections between short film practices, archives, and their dependence on the political conjectures throughout

the 20th and 21st centuries. What room for manoeuvre did the short format allow for collectives, minority groups, filmmakers and political activists? To what extent was the short film affected by censorship practices within specific national contexts? And how did the short format contribute to forms of alternative filmmaking practices (in terms of film expression and sometimes political orientation)? How did the intertwining of the market economy, political liberalism, and the predominant role of festivals and archives in the film industry since the 1990s shape the directions it took?

Furthermore, the uniqueness of short formats should be seen as contributing to cultural exchanges between the various blocs during the Cold War. After World War II, films were used as a way of stimulating collaboration and solidarity between the socialist Eastern European and Balkan countries and the communist and socialist movements of (post)colonial states and societies (see Salazkina 2023). With the end of communism, a major part of this film heritage was deemed as mere propaganda and marginalised by the dominant discourse in national film histories and historiographies. However, these films remain relevant today, since the discourses and events that marked the history of Eastern Europe and the Balkans echo the imperial and colonial politics prevalent in other parts of the world. Through the analysis of short films, we aim to reflect on the way in which the wake of democratic regimes and “Westernisation” affected conceptions of race and politics of transnational relations.

Through this special issue, we also hope to reconsider such films, in order to explore the memories and limits of decolonial politics in state socialism and beyond. What was the role of film in fostering direct and flexible transnational connections between the countries of Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and the rest of the world? How did coproductions affect short film plots, creativity and the perspectives through which stories are told? Could these connections be mapped out dynamically, and what form might they take at the beginning of the 21st century? We are especially interested in case studies which explore the relations between Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and (post)colonial states in Asia, Africa, and South America through fiction and non-fiction short films (e.g. films or newsreels documenting anti-colonial movements, such as the Angolan war of independence, the anti-apartheid movement, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Cuban revolution, the Vietnam war, etc.).

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- The aesthetics and history of an evolving short cinematic form (politics of production and usage of audiovisual archives in Eastern Europe and the Balkans; censorship in archival film practices and creative approaches used in short films to circumvent censorship, etc.)
- Exhibition practices and spaces (film festivals and short films; film collections and modes of programming short film; film museum exhibitions; curation and programming of archival short films in cinemas; short film programmes on TV and digital streaming platforms, etc.)
- Short film and archives (short film archives, regional cooperation and civic engagement; low budget and DIY approaches to experimenting with short forms and archives; queer film history and archiving in the context of the short form; community and collective archiving, resistance archives and short audiovisual forms)
- Short film and memory (transition from analog to digital in the context of film archives and accessibility; memory and short cinematic forms in a digital age; re-use of archival short films in compilation film; curating and exhibiting short films in film museums or cinemathèques)
- Transnational perspectives, inter-regional connections, and decolonial practices (third cinema; the non-aligned movement; militant films, newsreels and anti-colonial move-

ments; feminist movements and short film practice; short films and post-colonial/post-imperial histories in the Balkans and Eastern Europe)

Submission Guidelines:

We invite scholars to submit papers that engage with these topics, offering fresh perspectives and rigorous analysis. Submissions should be original, unpublished works that contribute to the study of the short film form in the Balkans and Eastern Europe.

Please send an abstract (250 words + 3–5 bibliographic references) and a short bio (150 words) to lucie.cesalkova@nfa.cz, jiri.anger@nfa.cz, irina.tcherneva@cnrs.fr, bego.fabio@gmail.com and ana.grgic@ubbcluj.ro by **February 15, 2025**. The authors will be informed of the decision by **February 28, 2025**. The deadline for submitting the full article is **May 10, 2025**. The special issue is slated for publication in January 2026. The detailed submission guidelines can be found on our journal's website here.

Bibliography:

- Azoulay, Ariella Aisha, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism*. (New York: Verso, 2019).
- Bedrane Sabrinelle, Colin Claire, Christine Lorre Johnstone, eds. *Le format court: récits d'aujourd'hui*, (Paris: Éditions Classiques Garnier Numérique, 2019).
- Česálková Lucie, Praetorius-Rhein Johannes, Val Perrine and Villa Paolo (eds.). *Non-Fiction Cinema in Postwar Europe. Visual Culture and the Reconstruction of Public Space*. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2024).
- De Certeau, Michel. *The Writing of History*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).
- Djagalo, Rossen. *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism: Literature and Cinema Between the Second and the Third Worlds*. (Montreal and Kingston: McGill's Queen's University Press, 2020).
- Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever. A Freudian Impression*. Translated by Eric Prenowitz. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
- Halbwachs, Maurice. *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*. (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1994).
- Lovejoy Alice, and Pajala, Mari (eds.). *Remapping Cold War Media: Institutions, Infrastructures, Translations*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2022).
- Mazierska, Eva, Lars Kristensen and Eva Naripea, eds. *Postcolonial approaches to Eastern European Cinema: Portraying Neighbours on Screen* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013)
- Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de mémoire", *Representations* 26, Spring, (1989): 7–24.
- Petkovska, Sanja S. eds. *Decolonial politics in European Peripheries: Redefining progressiveness, coloniality and transition efforts*, (New York: Routledge, 2024).
- Rexhepi, Piro. *White Enclosures: White Capitalism and Coloniality Along the Balkan Route*. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2023).
- Salazkina Masha. *World socialist cinema : alliances, affinities, and solidarities in the global Cold War*. (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2023).
- Sendyka, Roma. "Non-memory: Remembering beyond the discursive and the symbolic", *Memory Studies* 15 (3), (2022): 523–538.
- Thomson, Claire. *Short films from a small nation: Danish informational cinema, 1935–1965*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018).

Costume, Make-up, and Hairstyling in Small National Cinemas

Deadline for abstracts: February 27, 2026; deadline for submissions: June 15, 2026.

Guest Editor: Šárka Jelínek Gmitterková (Masaryk University)

Czech costume designer Ester Krumbachová defined film costumes as phantoms. Clothing, as seen on screen and worn by fictional characters, is a rather slippery visual expression, offering hints and clues instead of exhaustive description. Throughout the 1960s, Krumbachová's own costume creations resembled haunting images, fitting for modernist cinema and Czech New Wave aesthetics. Through her personal estate, she was rediscovered years later, being one of the few costume designers in the region whose work was became an unmistakable part of local film heritage (see Svatoňová and Jeřábková, 2022).

But what about other movies, which are not carried by strong artistic visions but by genre conventions, star associations and collaborations with fashion industries? How does costume assist with negotiations of global genre labels vis-a-vis their local adjustments? How does screen style articulate domestic notions of heritage or modernity? And what about people, who designed these visions; sometimes staying invisible and other times crossing over from peripheral, culturally and nationally specific industries onto global recognition and opportunities? Although the area of costume design analysis emerged no later than in the early 1990s, these questions in the context of cinemas of small nations have been addressed only rarely.

Existing research offers wide range of approaches, stemming from scrutinizing various movies, through identifying and naming crucial designers, their working conditions and collaborations up to exploring intersections between fashion and screen clothing (see Herzog and Gaines, 1991 or Bruzzi, 1997 or Church Gibson and Bruzzi, 2013). The combination of star studies and film costume investigations have been beneficial both ways, as evident in case studies of numerous stars (see for example Vincendeau on Brigitte Bardot, 2013) or in edited collections focusing on fashioning film stars (see Moseley 2005). However, European film costumes have been addressed on a much scale: in chapters in the above-mentioned edited volumes, scant monographs (such as Paulicelli, 2016 or Chapman, 2021) or in various curated instalments with adjacent publications.

The area of screen make-up and hairstyling attracts even less academic scrutiny. Similarly to costuming, make-up and hair not only facilitate artistic and genre visions but also articulates and/or undermines cultural stereotypes and disseminates beauty ideals and glamour (see Dootson, 2016). Although these topics can be found in research regarding stardom and celebrity culture (see Berry, 2002), there is a potential for further exploration of individual films, trends and careers. Various contributions can thus shed light on below-the-line personnel not previously analyzed, or industrial practices and hierarchies as well as turn our attention to individual films not readily associated with the canon; historical perspectives, case studies or explorations of contemporary situations.

Contributions to the issue can cover following areas, but are not limited to them:

- Analysis of individual movies or cluster of films, focusing on costumes and/or make-up contributions to genre aesthetic, narration, character construction, world building, and visual design
- Individual careers of costume designers / make-up artists / hairdressers; contemporary as well as historical personalities
- Case studies of intersections between costume design and fashion
- The notion of historical accuracy and authenticity in film costume and screen make-up
- Working conditions, communications, cooperations and hierarchies on sets; both on domestic films and/or tv projects as well as runway productions
- Education and training in both areas
- Investigation of star images from the costume and/or make-up perspectives
- Concepts of beauty and glamour across different regions, periods and political regimes
- Costume and make-up and / versus performance
- Credits, Prestige, values and awards: establishing costume designers, make-up artists and hairdressers as organic components of film crews and their position within
- Reception, appropriation and dissemination of film fashion, costume styles and screen make-up

Submission Guidelines:

We invite scholars to submit papers that engage with these topics, offering fresh perspectives and rigorous analysis. Submissions should be original, unpublished works that contribute to the study of the Costume, Make-up and Hairstyling in Small National Cinemas. **Please send an abstract** (250 words + 3–5 bibliographic references) and a short bio (150 words) **via this form** by **February 27, 2026**. The authors will be informed of the decision by March 20, 2026. The deadline for submitting the full article is **June 15, 2026**. The special issue is slated for publication in early January 2027. The detailed submission guidelines can be found on our journal's website.

Bibliography:

- Berry, Sarah. *Screen Style: Fashion and Femininity in 1930s Hollywood*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.
- Bruzzi, Stella. *Undressing Cinema: Clothing and Identity in the Movies*. New York/Abingdon: Routledge, 1997.
- Dootson, Kirsty Sinclair. „The Hollywood Powder Puff War“: Technicolor Cosmetics in the 1930s. *Film History* 28, 1 (2015), 107–131.
- Herzog, Charlotte – Gaines, Jane (eds.). *Fabrications: Costume and the Female body*. New York/London: Routledge, 1991.
- Chapman, Llewella. *Fashioning James Bond: Costume, Gender and Identity in the World of 007*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021.
- Moseley, Rachel (ed.). *Fashioning Film Stars: Dress, Culture, Identity*. London: BFI, 2005.
- Paulicelli, Eugenia. *Italian Style. Fashion & Film from Early Cinema to the Digital Age*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016.
- Svatoňová, Kateřina – Jeřábková, Edith (eds.). *Ester Krumbachová*. Praha: UMPRUM, 2022.
- Vincendau, Ginette. *Brigitte Bardot*. London: BFI and Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

ILUMINACE

je recenzovaný časopis pro vědeckou reflexi kinematografie a příbuzných problémů. Byla založena v roce 1989 jako půlletník. Od svého pátého ročníku přešla na čtvrtletní periodicitu a při té příležitosti se rozšířil její rozsah i formát. Od roku 2004 je v každém čísle vyhrazen prostor pro monotematický blok textů. Od roku 2005 jsou některé monotematické bloky připravovány ve spolupráci s hostujícími editory. Počínaje rokem 2022 Iluminace vychází třikrát ročně a v roce 2023 přešla do režimu Open Access. Iluminace přináší především původní teoretické a historické studie o filmu a dalších audiovizuálních médiích. Každé číslo obsahuje rovněž překlady zahraničních textů, jež přibližují současné badatelské trendy nebo splácejí překladatelské dluhy z minulosti. Velký prostor je v Iluminaci věnován kritickým edicím primárních písemným pramenů k dějinám kinematografie, stejně jako rozhovorům s významnými tvůrci a badateli. Zvláštní rubriky poskytují prostor k prezentaci probíhajících výzkumných projektů. Jako každý akademický časopis i Iluminace obsahuje rubriku vyhrazenou recenzím domácí a zahraniční odborné literatury.

POKYNY PRO AUTORY:

Nabízení a formát rukopisů

Redakce přijímá rukopisy v elektronické podobě v editoru Word, a to e-mailem na adrese lucie.cesalkova@nfa.cz. Doporučuje se nejprve zaslat stručný popis koncepce textu. U původních studií se předpokládá délka 15–35 normostran, u rozhovorů 10–30 normostran, u ostatních 4–15; v odůvodněných případech a po domluvě s redakcí je možné tyto limity překročit. Všechny nabízené příspěvky musí být v definitivní verzi. Rukopisy studií je třeba doplnit filmografickým soupisem (odkazuje-li text na filmové tituly — dle zavedené praxe Iluminace), abstraktem v angličtině nebo češtině o rozsahu 0,5–1 normostrana, anglickým překladem názvu, klíčovými slovy v češtině i v angličtině, biografickou notickou v délce 3–5 řádků, volitelně i kontaktní adresou. Obrázky se přijímají ve formátu JPG (s popisky a údaji o zdroji), grafy v programu Excel. Autor je povinen dodržovat citační normu časopisu (viz „Pokyny pro bibliografické citace“).

Pravidla a průběh recenzního řízení

Recenzní řízení typu „peer-review“ se vztahuje na odborné studie, určené pro rubriku „Články“, a probíhá pod dozorem redakční rady (resp. „redakčního okruhu“), jejíž aktuální složení je uvedeno v každém čísle časopisu. Šéfredaktor má právo vyžádat si od autora ještě před započatím recenzního řízení jazykové i věcné úpravy nabízených textů nebo je do recenzního řízení vůbec nepostoupit, pokud nesplňují základní kritéria původní vědecké práce. Toto rozhodnutí musí autorovi náležitě zdůvodnit. Každou předběžně přijatou studii redakce předloží k posouzení dvěma recenzentům. Recenzenti budou vybíráni podle kritéria odborné kvalifikace v otázkách, jimiž se hodnocený text zabývá, a po vyloučení osob, které jsou v blízkém pracovním nebo osobním vztahu s autorem. Autoři a posuzovatelé zůstávají pro sebe navzájem anonymní. Posuzovatelé vyplní formulář, v němž uvedou, zda text navrhuji přijmout, přepracovat, nebo zamítnout. Své stanovisko zdůvodní v přiloženém posudku. Pokud doporučují zamítnutí nebo přepracování, uvedou do posudku hlavní důvody, respektive podněty

k úpravám. V případě požadavku na přepracování nebo při protichůdných hodnoceních může redakce zadat třetí posudek. Na základě posudků šéfredaktor přijme konečné rozhodnutí o přijetí či zamítnutí příspěvku a toto rozhodnutí sdělí v nejkratším možném termínu autorovi. Pokud autor s rozhodnutím šéfredaktora nesouhlasí, může své stanovisko vyjádřit v dopise, který redakce předá k posouzení a dalšímu rozhodnutí členům redakčního okruhu. Výsledky recenzního řízení budou archivovány způsobem, který umožní zpětné ověření, zda se v něm postupovalo podle výše uvedených pravidel a zda hlavním kritériem posuzování byla vědecká úroveň textu.

Další ustanovení

U nabízených rukopisů se předpokládá, že autor daný text dosud nikde jinde nepublikoval a že jej v průběhu recenzního řízení ani nebude nabízet jiným časopisům. Pokud byla publikována jakákoli část nabízeného textu, autor je povinen tuto skutečnost sdělit redakci a uvést v rukopise. Nevyžádané příspěvky se nevracejí. Pokud si autor nepřeje, aby jeho text byl zveřejněn na internetových stránkách časopisu (www.iluminace.cz), je třeba sdělit nesouhlas písemně redakci.

Pokyny k formální úpravě článků jsou ke stažení na téže internetové adrese, pod sekci „Pokyny pro autory“.

Knihovna Národního filmového archivu nabízí zahraniční filmové databáze

<https://nfa.cz/cz/knihovna/licencovane-database/>

Ve studovně Knihovny NFA (KNFA) jsou v roce 2020 uživatelům (pro registrované uživatele i ve vzdáleném přístupu) k dispozici pro náš obor vybrané elektronické informační zdroje (EIZ). Kromě původních databází NFA (Filmový přehled, Digitální knihovna NFA, Online katalog Knihovny NFA), jsou to licencované elektronické zdroje (mediální databáze, zahraniční filmové databáze). Konkrétně v případě zahraničních filmových databází se jedná v rámci České republiky o jedinečnou kombinaci EIZ, která bude navíc našim čtenářům dostupná až do roku 2022.

Zahraníční filmové databáze v Knihovně NFA:

1. Screen Studies Collection (dříve FIO — Film Indexes Online)

nabízí komplexní nástroj pro přístup k aktuálním publikacím zaměřeným na filmovou vědu spolu s podrobnými a rozsáhlými filmografiemi.

Kolekce zahrnuje indexy a filmografie

- a) American Film Institute (AFI) Catalog
- b) Film Index International (FII)
- c) FIAF International Index to Film Periodicals

a) American Film Institute (AFI) Catalog

Filmografická databáze zaměřená na americkou produkci poskytující podrobné informace o dlouhometrážních hraných filmech vyrobených na území USA nebo financovaných americkými produkčními společnostmi v období 1893–1972. Databáze obsahuje více než 48000 záznamů filmů s produkčními informacemi, technickými údaji, údaji o tvůrcích, hereckém obsazení a ztvárněných postavách; dále záznamy obsahují podrobný obsah filmu, poznámkový aparát, žánrové zařazení filmu a citační odkazy. Nové údaje jsou vkládány dvakrát ročně. Klíčový zdroj doporučený pro výuku, výzkum a studium filmového umění.

b) Film Index International (FII)

Filmografický informační zdroj vytvářený British Film Institute (BFI). Představuje světově nejrozsáhlejší profesionálně budovanou filmovou knihovnu s více než 100000 podrobných záznamů o filmech ze 170 zemí od prvních němých filmů do současnosti s více než milionem odkazů na herecké obsazení a technické údaje. Dále 500000 odkazů na bibliografické citace k jednotlivým filmům a filmovým tvůrcům, 40000 profesních profilů filmových tvůrců, informace o získaných cenách na prestižních filmových festivalech.

c) FIAF International Index to Film Periodicals

Databáze obsahuje více než 230 000 záznamů o člancích s filmovou tematikou od roku 1972 do současnosti z více než 345 filmových akademických i populárních periodik z celého světa. Roční přírůstek činí 12000 záznamů. Každý záznam sestává z bibliografických údajů, abstraktu a záhlaví (jména autorů, filmové tituly, předmětová hesla). Databáze obsahuje také záznamy o televizi od roku 1979 (cca 50000 záznamů), od roku 2000 se omezila na články s televizní tematikou pouze z filmových periodik.

2. JSTOR

zkratka z anglického Journal Storage (úložiště časopisů)

Digitální knihovna pro studenty a výzkumníky poskytující přístup k více než 12 milionům akademických článků, knih a primárním zdrojům z mnoha disciplín včetně filmu.

Představuje špičkovou on-line databázi digitalizovaných plných textů z více než 2000 vědeckých časopisů. Každý časopis je plně digitalizován od prvního čísla prvního ročníku až po pohyblivou hranici (moving wall), což je obvykle „tři až pět let od současnosti“.

3. EBSCO

Megazdroj vědeckých informací pro společenské a humanitní obory.

Databáze EBSCO vychází vstříc požadavkům všech výzkumníků a nabízí elektronickou knihovnu obsahující desítky tisíc časopisů, magazínů a reportů a mnoha dalších publikací v plném textu.

EBSCOHost je jednotné rozhraní umožňující přístup k vybraným bibliografickým a plnotextovým databázím.

V Knihovně NFA jsou k dispozici dvě databáze megazdroje EBSCO:

a) Academic Search Ultimate

Databáze byla vytvořena v reakci na zvyšující se nároky akademické komunity a nabízí nejširší kolekci recenzovaných plnotextových časopisů, včetně mnoha časopisů indexovaných v předních citačních indexech. Obsahuje tisíce plnotextových časopisů v angličtině i jiných jazycích, publikovaných na severoamerickém kontinentu, v Asii, Africe, Oceánii, Evropě a Latinské Americe, a nabízí tím pádem jedinečné regionální pokrytí. Databáze integruje lokální obsah předních územně specifických zdrojů z celého světa a umožňuje tak studentům pohled na jejich studium a výzkum z globální perspektivy. Cennou součástí obsahu je i kolekce videozáznamů (více než 74000) od agentury Associated Press. Při vyhledávání se na seznamu výsledků zobrazují v karuselu relevantní videa. Databáze obsahuje videa předních zpravodajských agentur publikovaná od roku 1930 do současnosti a je aktualizována každý měsíc.

b) Film and Television Literature Index with Fulltext

Online nástroj pro výzkum v oblasti televize a filmu. Databáze pokrývá problematiku filmové a televizní teorie, uchovávání a restaurování, produkce, kinematografie, technických aspektů a recenzí. Obsahuje kompletní indexování a abstrakty 380 publikací (a selektivní pokrytí téměř 300 publikací), dále plné texty více než 100 časopisů a 100 knih. Databáze Film & Television Literature Index with Fulltext navíc obsahuje i filmové recenze z předního zdroje Variety, datované od roku 1914 do současnosti, a více než 36 300 obrázků z archivu MPTV Image Archive.

Databáze Evropské audiovizuální observatoře (European audiovisual observatory)

O Evropské audiovizuální observatoři

Evropská audiovizuální observatoř (EAO) vznikla roku 1992 jako následnická organizace Eureka Audiovisuel, jejím sídlem je Štrasburk. Činnost této instituce spočívá ve sběru a šíření informací o audiovizuálním průmyslu v Evropě. V současné době sdružuje 41 členských států a Evropskou unii, zastoupenou Evropskou komisí. Je financována přímými příspěvky členských zemí a příjmy z prodeje svých produktů a služeb.

Posláním EAO je poskytovat informace profesionálům v oblasti audiovizuace a tím také přispívat k větší transparentnosti audiovizuálního sektoru v Evropě. EAO sleduje všechny oblasti audiovizuálního průmyslu: film, televizní vysílání, video/DVD a nová média. O každé z těchto oblastí poskytuje informace ve sféře trhu a statistiky, legislativy a financování výroby audiovizuálních děl. EAO sleduje a podrobně analyzuje vývoj audiovizuálního sektoru v členských státech.

Působí v právním rámci Rady Evropy a spolupracuje s řadou partnerských a profesních organizací z oboru a se sítí korespondentů. Kromě příspěvků na konference jsou dalšími hlavními činnostmi vydávání ročenky, zpravodaje a zprávy, kompilace a správa databází a poskytování informací prostřednictvím internetových stránek observatoře (<http://www.obs.coe.int>).

Česká republika je členem EAO od roku 1994.

LUMIERE VOD je adresář evropských filmů dostupných na vyžádání v Evropě. Najdete služby a země, kde je film uveden na VOD, a zkombinujte vyhledávací kritéria a vytvořte seznam dostupných filmů podle režiséra, země nebo roku výroby.

Prezentační video je k dispozici https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wxp_SwD3BZg.

Tento projekt, spravovaný Evropskou audiovizuální observatoří, je podporován programem CREATIVE EUROPE Evropské unie.

LUMIERE VOD je databáze evropských filmů dostupných na placených videích na vyžádání (transakční a předplatné VOD). Poskytuje seznam filmů dostupných v daném okamžiku ze vzorku služeb na vyžádání působících v Evropské unii.

LUMIERE VOD je primárně určen pro profesionály v audiovizuálním průmyslu : autory, producenty, distributory, filmové fondy a regulátory, aby jim pomohl sledovat využití filmů na VOD a posoudit složení katalogů VOD. Účelem není usnadnit pronájem nebo nákup filmů ani předplatné služby.

LUMIERE VOD řídí Evropská audiovizuální observatoř na základě maximálního úsilí. Adresář je aktuálně v beta verzi a obsahuje asi 300 katalogů VOD. Počet sledovaných katalogů a frekvence aktualizací se bude postupně zvyšovat.

Poskytnuté informace

Databáze je prohledatelná podle řady kritérií. Upozorňujeme, že:

- všechna metadata jsou poskytována s maximálním úsilím;
- zahrnuli jsme možnost vyhledávat filmy podle originálních nebo alternativních titulů. Na stránkách výsledků se zobrazí pouze původní název;
- země produkce uvádějí různé země podílející se na výrobě filmu. Země produkce uvedená na prvním místě označuje zemi, která údajně nejvíce přispěla k financování filmu. Nejedná se o ofi-

ciální státní příslušnost filmu, jak je posouzeno národním filmovým fondem nebo národním regulátorem.

I když byla věnována maximální pozornost zajištění přesnosti, není poskytována žádná záruka, že materiál neobsahuje chyby nebo opomenutí. Naším cílem je udržovat tyto informace aktuální a přesné. Pokud budeme upozorněni na chyby, pokusíme se je vyřešit. Můžete nás kontaktovat ohledně jakýchkoli technických informací v adresáři pomocí kontaktního formuláře.

Evropská audiovizuální observatoř (EAO) vznikla roku 1992 jako následnická organizace Eureka Audiovisuel, jejím sídlem je Štrasburk. Činnost této instituce spočívá ve sběru a šíření informací o audiovizuálním průmyslu v Evropě. V současné době sdružuje 41 členských států a Evropskou unii, zastoupenou Evropskou komisí. Je financována přímými příspěvky členských zemí a příjmy z prodeje svých produktů a služeb.

Posláním EAO je poskytovat informace profesionálům v oblasti audiovize a tím také přispívat k větší transparentnosti audiovizuálního sektoru v Evropě. EAO sleduje všechny oblasti audiovizuálního průmyslu: film, televizní vysílání, video/DVD a nová média. O každé z těchto oblastí poskytuje informace ve sféře trhu a statistiky, legislativy a financování výroby audiovizuálních děl. EAO sleduje a podrobně analyzuje vývoj audiovizuálního sektoru v členských státech.

EAO vydává Statistickou ročenku, měsíčník IRIS se speciálními suplementy (v tištěné i elektronické podobě), účastní se různých konferencí a workshopů. Na webových stránkách EAO jsou veřejnosti dostupné tyto informační databáze: LUMIERE (obsahuje údaje o sledovanosti filmů distribuovaných v evropských kinech), IRIS MERLIN (informace o legislativě upravující audiovizuální sektor v Evropě), databáze poskytovatelů AVMS. Informace o provozování televizního vysílání v členských státech obsahuje databáze MAVISE. Všechny tyto informace jsou poskytovány v angličtině, francouzštině a němčině.

Nejvyšším orgánem EAO je Výkonná rada, v jejímž předsednictví se každý rok střídají jednotlivé členské země.



**Národní
filmový
archiv**



Národní
filmový
archiv

Sbírka orální historie v Národním filmovém archivu

NFA pečuje o nejrůznější typy dokumentů se vztahem k historii českého filmovnictví včetně zvukových a zvukově-obrazových nahrávek.

Vlastníte-li takové typy materiálů (rozhovory, záznamy událostí či jiné druhy audiozáznamů, eventuálně audiovizuálních záznamů rozhovorů, vztahující se k tématu české kinematografie, a to z jakéhokoliv období), a máte zájem o jejich bezpečné uchování, nabízíme vám bezplatné uložení v depozitářích NFA.

NFA splňuje všechny podmínky, které zaručují nejvyšší možnou kvalitu archivace.

Jakékoliv obohacení naší sbírky z vašich zdrojů je cenným příspěvkem k rozšíření povědomí o minulosti českého filmu a současně i naší kulturní historie.

Kontakt: kurátorka sbírky Marie Barešová
Marie.Baresova@nfa.cz



Filmový přehled, databáze Národního filmového archivu

Objemná filmografická databáze *Filmový přehled* Národního filmového archivu přináší rozsáhlá, ověřená a doposud dohledatelná data a filmografické údaje od počátků české kinematografie. Aktualizuje a nahrazuje tak informace, které byly dříve vydány v katalogích *Český hraný film I–VI* a *Český animovaný film I*. Uživatel tak nalezne především údaje o českých **hraných** (všechny od roku 1898), **dokumentárních** (prozatím výběrově 1898–1991, všechny od 1992) i **animovaných** (všechny 1922–1945 a od 1992, prozatím výběrově 1946–1991), studentských, dlouhých i krátkých filmech, jež byly uvedeny v kinech. Databáze je pravidelně aktualizována a stále doplňována.

Údaje o filmech: filmografická (všichni tvůrci, členové výrobního štábu, herecké obsazení a další), produkční (výrobci, všechny názvy, žánry, první a poslední natáčecí den, datum cenzury, schválení literárního a technického scénáře, první kopie a celého filmu, ateliéry, lokace a další), distribuční (předpremiéry, distribuční, slavnostní, festivalové premiéry, popřípadě obnovené premiéry, distribuční slogany nebo premiérová kina) a technická (distribuční nosič, poměr stran, barva, zvuk, mluveno, jazyková verze, podtitulky, mezititulky, úvodní/závěrečné titulky, animační technika, minutáž, původní metráž) data, anotace, obsahy, zajímavosti, fotografie i plakáty.

Údaje o osobnostech a společnostech: filmografie, profese, zjištěná data i místa narození a úmrtí, alternativní jména, životopisy, fotografie.

Údaje o ocenění a dotacích: česká ocenění, festivaly a přehlídky, zahraniční ocenění udělená českým filmům. Plánováno je též zveřejnění filmových dotací za léta 1992–2022.

<https://www.filmovyprehled.cz/cs/databaze>

Rešerše ve sbírce Národního filmového archivu

Odborné i laické veřejnosti nabízíme možnost **vypracování tematických rešersí** ve sbírce Národního filmového archivu. S žádostmi o ně se prosím obračejte na e-mailovou adresu **reserse@nfa.cz**.

Podrobnější informace viz

<https://nfa.cz/cz/sbirky/reserse/>.

Přehled jednotlivých částí sbírky Národního filmového archivu viz

<https://nfa.cz/cz/sbirky/sbirky-a-fondy/>.



**Národní
filmový
archiv**

ILUMINACE

Časopis pro teorii, historii
a estetiku filmu

The Journal of Film Theory, History,
and Aesthetics

3 2025

www.iluminace.cz

Redakce / Editorial Staff:

Jiří Anger, Matěj Forejt, Lucy Szemetova

Šéfredaktorka / Editor-in-Chief:

Lucie Česálková

Redakční rada / Editorial Board:

Petr Bednářík, Jindřiška Bláhová, Jana Dudková,
Tereza Cz Dvořáková, Šárka Gmitterková, Milan Hain,
Ivan Klimeš, Radomír D. Kokeš, Jakub Macek, Petr
Mareš, Pavel Skopal, Ondřej Sládek, Andrea Slovákova,
Kateřina Svatoňová, Petr Szczepanik, Jaroslav Švelch

Vydává / Published by:

Národní filmový archiv, www.nfa.cz

Adresa redakce / Address:

Národní filmový archiv, Oddělení podpory výzkumu
Závišova 502/5, 140 00 Praha 4;

Iluminace je recenzovaný vědecký časopis. Redakce
přijímá rukopisy na e-mailové adrese lucie.cesalkova@nfa.cz /
nfa.cz / Iluminace is a peer-reviewed research journal.
Submissions should be sent to lucie.cesalkova@nfa.cz

Korektury / Proofreading:

Soňa Weigertová, Lucie Česálková

Grafická úprava a sazba / Graphic design:

studio@vemola.cz

Tisk / Print: Tiskárna Protisk, s. r. o.

Iluminace vychází 3× ročně. /

Iluminace is published three times a year.

Rukopis byl odevzdán do výroby v prosinci 2025. /

The manuscript was submitted in December 2025.

Cena a předplatné:

Cena jednoho čísla: 120 Kč.

Předplatné jednoho ročníku pro Českou republiku
vč. manipulačního poplatku: 360 Kč.

Předplatné zajišťuje Národní filmový archiv,
obchodní oddělení — knižní distribuce,
Závišova 502/5, 140 00 Praha 4;
e-mail: obchod@nfa.cz

Prices and Subscription rates:

Each copy: € 10 (Europe) or \$ 12 (US)

Subscription: € 30 (Europe) or \$ 36 (US)

Prices include postage. Sales and orders are managed
by Národní filmový archiv, obchodní oddělení —
knižní distribuce, Závišova 502/5, 140 00 Praha 4;
e-mail: obchod@nfa.cz

Iluminace je k dispozici také v elektronické podobě
v licencovaných databázích Scopus, ProQuest, ERIH
PLUS a Ebsco. / Iluminace is available electronically
through Scopus, ProQuest, ERIH PLUS and Ebsco.

MK ČR E 55255; MIČ 47285,

ISSN 0862-397X (print), ISSN 2570-9267 (e-verze)

© Národní filmový archiv

CONTENTS ILUMINACE 3/2025

THEMED ARTICLES

Byron Davies – Jiří Anger: Toward a Geographically Specific Understanding of Filmic and Media Matter: An Introduction to a Special Issue

Marek Jancovic: Cinema's Atmospheric A Priori: How Weather and Environment Shaped Celluloid Film Manufacturing and Raw Material Supply at Fujifilm, Daicel, and Agfa

Jennifer Nightingale: Knitting on Location: The *Norfolk Knitting Pattern* Film Series

Libertad Gills: *Por un cine cachinero*: Reappropriation as a Survival Strategy in Contemporary Experimental Cinema from Guayaquil

Maxime Harvey: Language Matters in the Geography of AI: French-Language Uses of Generative Artificial Intelligence in Filmmaking

Aleksei Ziniuk – Margarita Galandina: Refiguring the Buryat Photographic Archive: Ethnographic Visuality, Vernacular Montage, and Shamanic Temporality

Laurence Kent: Hussein Shariffe's Filmic Ruins: Archival Noise and *The Dislocation of Amber* (1975)

Bori Máté: Ritualization and *Táltos* Procedures in Péter Lichter's *Nutrition Fugue* (2018)

Ludo de Roo: Kidlat Tahimik: Metaphorical Journeys in Decolonial Cinema

Floris Paalman: Moving in Circles: Space and Place in Media Archaeology and the Art of Jop Horst

ARTICLES

Tereza Frodlová – Jakub Egermajer: Medieval Partisan in Color. Restoration of the Film *Jan Roháč of Dubá* as a Source of Cultural History

REVIEWS

Jakub Egermajer: Poor Boys and the Others (Pavel Skopal a kol., *Lidé – práce – animace: Světy animovaného filmu na Kudlově*)

Josef Tichý: Space and Time in Japanese Videogame Centers (Jérémie Pelletier-Gagnon, *Space and Play in Japanese Videogame Arcades*)

OBSAH ILUMINACE 3/2025

ČLÁNKY K TÉMATU

Byron Davies – Jiří Anger: Toward a Geographically Specific Understanding of Filmic and Media Matter: An Introduction to a Special Issue

Marek Jancovic: Cinema's Atmospheric A Priori: How Weather and Environment Shaped Celluloid Film Manufacturing and Raw Material Supply at Fujifilm, Daicel, and Agfa

Jennifer Nightingale: Knitting on Location: The *Norfolk Knitting Pattern* Film Series

Libertad Gills: *Por un cine cachinero*: Reappropriation as a Survival Strategy in Contemporary Experimental Cinema from Guayaquil

Maxime Harvey: Language Matters in the Geography of AI: French-Language Uses of Generative Artificial Intelligence in Filmmaking

Aleksei Ziniuk – Margarita Galandina: Refiguring the Buryat Photographic Archive: Ethnographic Visuality, Vernacular Montage, and Shamanic Temporality

Laurence Kent: Hussein Shariff's Filmic Ruins: Archival Noise and *The Dislocation of Amber* (1975)

Bori Máté: Ritualization and *Táltos* Procedures in Péter Lichter's *Nutrition Fugue* (2018)

Ludo de Roo: Kidlat Tahimik: Metaphorical Journeys in Decolonial Cinema

Floris Paalman: Moving in Circles: Space and Place in Media Archaeology and the Art of Jop Horst

ČLÁNKY

Tereza Frodlová – Jakub Egermajer: Středověký partyzán v barvě. Restaurování filmu *Jan Roháč z Dubé* jako pramen kulturní historie

RECENZE

Jakub Egermajer: Chudáci chlapi a ti druzí (Pavel Skopal a kol., *Lidé – práce – animace: Světy animovaného filmu na Kudlově*)

Josef Tichý: Prostor a čas v japonských videoherních centrech (Jérémie Pelletier-Gagnon, *Space and Play in Japanese Videogame Arcades*)