ARCHIVAL AND FAKE FOUND FOOTAGE
AS MEDIAL FIGURATIONS IN HUNGARIAN
EXPERIMENTAL FILMMAKING [1]

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Abstract: In the theoretical discourse of archival footage a shift can be detected from the paradigm of recontextualization to that of rhetorical strategy. In terms of this shift, archival footage is no longer regarded as a mode of transparent representation of "reality", but rather as *figuration* that creates productive tension in the course of interaction of moving images. Archival footage acquires a prominent role in Hungarian experimental filmmaking. The present paper focuses on films by two Hungarian experimental filmmakers, Gábor Bódy and András Jeles, in which the archival material stages the confrontation between private memory and historical consciousness. The article especially focuses on the role of fake found footage and archival footage in Gábor Bódy's *American Torso* (*Amerikai anzix*, 1975) and András Jeles's *Parallel Lives* (*Senkiföldje*, 1993).

Keywords: archival footage, fake found footage, indexicality, remediation, figuration, film archaeology, Gábor Bódy, András Jeles

The Use of Archival/Found Footage as Remediation and Figuration

The film medium was born out of a desire of archiving, that is, the wish to preserve visual material on a long-term basis. As Thomas Ballhausen points out in his essay entitled *On the History and Function of Film Archives*, once this desire is fulfilled, the subsequent need to preserve films themselves was born, implying an ethical responsibility, that of saving the values of the past from cultural amnesia, of preventing them from becoming obsolete. As Ballhausen notes, the Avant-Garde "discovered film history by following in the path of archives: it returned to the beginnings of film with the purpose of confronting the medium's origins and its tradition". Already in the early period of film history, in the period of Avant-Garde cinema, the utilization of found material, of prior images, goes beyond the mere effort of preservation: the found footage becomes "an interface which enables the avantgarde director to evoke the subversive potential and quality of early cinema".[2]

The use of archival/found[3] footage has been a general practice of film throughout cinema history, present in the filmmaking practice of Esfir I. Shub (co-worker of Eisenstein and Kuleshov), Joseph Cornell, Bruce Conner, Ken Jacobs, Hollis Frampton, to mention but a few of the most outstanding examples.[4] Ever since the Avant-Garde endeavours of

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[2] BALLHAUSEN, Thomas. 2008. *On the History and Function of Film Archives*. *http://www.efgproject.eu/downloads/Ballhausen%20-%20On%20the%20History%20and%20Function%20of%20Film%20Archives.pdf* (Last accessed on 30. 11. 2015.)

[3] Michael Zyrd clarifies the distinction between archival footage and found footage as follows: "The found footage film is a specific subgenre of experimental (or avant-garde) cinema that integrates previously shot film material into new productions. The etymology of the phrase suggests its devotion to uncovering 'hidden meanings' in film material. [...] Found footage is different from archival footage: the archive is an official record from the outtake; much of the material used in experimental found footage films is *not* archived but from private collections, commercial stock shot agencies, junk stores and garbage bins, or has literally been found in the street. Found footage filmmakers play at the margins, whether with the obscurity of the ephemeral footage itself (filmmaker Nathaniel Dorsky likes to call it 'lost' footage) or with the countercultural meanings excavated from culturally iconic footage. Found footage filmmaking is a metahistorical form commenting on the cultural discourses and narrative patterns behind history. Whether picking through the detritus of the mass mediascape or redefining (through image processing and optical printing) the new in the familiar, the found footage artist critically investigates the history *behind* the image, discursively embedded within its history of production, circulation, and consumption." ZYRD, Michael. "Found Footage Film as Discursive Metahistory: Craig Baldwin's Tribulation 99", in *The Moving Image*, v. 3, n. 2, Fall 2003, p. 41-42.

[4] Cf. YEO, Rob. "Cutting through History. Found Footage in Avant-Garde Filmmaking". In: BASILICO, Stefano (ed.). *Cut: Film as Found Object in Contemporary Video*. Milwaukee, MI: Milwaukee Art Museum, 2004, p. 13–27.

utilizing found material in the spirit of Marcel Duchamp's *objet trouvée*, the span of film history from the early Avant-Garde to the post-media age, with the significant contribution of the experimental filmmaking of the 1970s and 1980s, has assigned an emphasized role to the found/archival footage, implying – but going far beyond – the intent of preservation.

Archival/found footage knows a great variety of cultural uses, designated by a great number of terms such as recontextualization, recycling, reuse, repurpose, rewriting, and has become "a, if not the, dominant critical procedure in independent film and videomaking".[5] Steve F. Anderson highlights the significance of the use of archival/found footage in terms of representation criticism: "The appropriation and reuse of 'found footage' inaugurates multiple possibilities for reinscription and critique of previously articulated codes of representation, and invites us to question the manner and extent to which 'history' may be constituted through images at the most basic level".[6]

In his volume *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Films* William C. Wees speaks about three modes of found footage use corresponding to three paradigms/political positions: using archival/found footage for the purpose of documentation (documentary realism), collage (along the aesthetic principles of modernism), and appropriation (in the context of postmodernism).[7] These three modes rely on distinct perceptions of archival/found footage, from serving as the evidence of the past, in the case of documentation, to more subtle medial and representational games relying on the tension between authenticity and mediatedness of the embedded archival/found footage that can be encountered in modern and postmodern cinematic productions. As Steve F. Anderson puts it, "The appropriation and use of found footage may be understood as a tactical maneuver within which the simultaneous deployment and subversion of ontological certainty is a crucial factor. The discursive import of found footage thus relies upon its claim to a prior, indexical connection to the world, at the same time it is inscribed in a fully articulated and conventionalized system of filmic signification".[8]

Along Steve F. Anderson's considerations, a shift can be detected in the theoretical discourses of the archival/found footage from recontextualization to rhetorical strategy.[9]

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[5] McDONALD, qtd. in YEO 2004.
[6] ANDERSON, Steve F. *Technologies of History: Visual Media and the Eccentricity of the Past*. Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press/ University Press of New England, 2011, p. 70.
[7] WEES, William C. *The Art and Politics of Found Footage Films*. New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1993.
[8] ANDERSON, *Technologies of History*, p. 70-71.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 72.

This shift provides a distinct standpoint, from where the archival/found footage can be viewed not as a set of images – simply – standing for "the real," rendering some kind of transparent representation within the body of cinematic discourse, but rather as *figuration* in itself, as an alternative modality of mediation and representation, creating productive tension and opening up the possibility of interaction between two distinct sets of moving images.

Thus, we arrive at the paradox of the archival/found footage: the "less" becomes "more," the apparently "transparent" turns into the "figural" and becomes the carrier of manifold – cultural, temporal, medial – significations. In a phenomenological approach, it is this – ontological and temporal – disparity and tension of the distinct visual registers implied by the use of archival/found footage that becomes significant, together with the question of what kind of cinematic experience this ontological and temporal rupture provides.

Indexical archival footage embedded into feature film, as an ontological *niché*, creates a dynamic structure, induces fluctuation, and inscribes a sense of difference together with a displacement of spectatorial positions. Its presence as *figuration* may serve as the locus of meditation upon time and history, it may as well open up a more profound, existential dimension, as, for instance, in Andrei Tarkovsky's *The Mirror* (*Zerkalo*, 1975), in which the sequences taken over from a war documentary – exhausted soldiers are trailing a cannon in the shallow water of Lake Syvash – deepen the discourse of film and endow it with an additional metaphysical dimension, activating in the spectator the documentary consciousness in the sense Vivian Sobchack discusses the term, that is, "a particular mode of embodied and ethical spectatorship that informs and transforms the space of the irreal into the space of the real".[10]

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[10] SOBCHACK, Vivian. "The Charge of the Real: Embodied Knowledge and Cinematic Consciousness". In: *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*. Berkeley/ Los Angeles/ London: University of California Press, 2004, p. 261. It has to be noted here that documentary consciousness, as Vivian Sobchack puts it, goes beyond the generic distinction between fiction and documentary; the terms fiction and documentary designate subjective relations rather than cinematic objects. In *Toward a Phenomenology of Nonfictional Film Experience* she defines documentary as "less a *thing* than an *experience* – and the term names not only a cinematic object, but also the experienced 'difference' or 'sufficiency' of a specific mode of consciousness and identification with the cinematic image" (SOBCHACK 1999, p. 241, emphases in the original). In the chapter entitled *The Charge of the Real. Embodied Knowledge and Cinematic Consciousness* of her volume *Carnal Thoughts. Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* she thinks further the phenomenological model of cinematic identification, stating that "fiction and documentary, as supposedly *different* logical types as *genres*, are reducible to the *same* logical types *as cinematic images*" (SOBCHACK 2004, p. 260, emphases in the original). Thus what Sobchack calls "the charge of the real" is not particularly related to documentary as a genre, but it is the specificity of the phenomenological experience of the cinema.

The use of archival/found footage can also be discussed in terms of *remediation*, in the sense Jay Bolter and David Grusin rethink the term in their volume entitled *Remediation. Understanding New Media*.[11] Differently from former conceptions of the term (that is, the process by which new media technologies improve upon or remedy prior technologies), Bolter and Grusin suggest by remediation the formal logic by which new media refashion prior media forms. In the case of the use of archival/found footage the gesture of revitalizing earlier forms of moving images is present; this revitalization can take place in the gesture of offering the earlier images as they are, without manipulating them (but also in this case the reuse itself can be considered as a subtle form of touch and selective/authoritative intervention, activating an altered spectatorial gaze, sensitive to cultural, temporal, and medial differences) or manipulating the archival/found material with various techniques and with various purposes, including the intent of creating a fruitful dialogue with the history and identity of the cinematic medium itself.

The use of archival footage in film art can also be approached by adapting the idea of the anachronism of images to cinema: Hans Belting borrows the term and its meaning from the art historian and philosopher Georges Didi-Huberman, who by the anachronism of the images refers to the fact that the set of inner images that we dispose of have been created in an earlier stage of our life.[12] Accordingly, the intent of establishing connection with earlier motion pictures betrays the wish to explore the images that form the identity of the medium.

Archival and Fake Found Footage in Gábor Bódy's and András Jeles's Films

Archival material has been widely used in Hungarian film history ever since the 1960s, however, it becomes a peculiar means of expression in the Béla Balázs Studio by the end of the decade, under the influence of Dezső Magyar's two films, *Agitators* (*Agitátorok*, 1969)

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[11] BOLTER, Jay David; GRUSIN, Richard. *Remediation. Understanding New Media*. Cambridge, MA/London: The MIT Press, 2000.
[12] Cf. BELTING, Hans. "Echte Bilder und falsche Körper. Irrtümer über die Zukunft des Menschen". In: BURDA, Hubert; MAAR, Christa (ed.). *Iconic Turn. Die Neue Macht der Bilder*. Köln: DuMont, 2004, p. 350-365.

and *Punishment Expedition* (*Büntetőexpedíció*, 1970), inspiring Gábor Bódy, Péter Tímár, Miklós Erdély, and Péter Forgács.[13]

In his study examining the stylistic figurations of archival footage András Murai points out three traditions as regards the use of archival material in Hungarian film history: one is the reflective representation of the relationship between film and reality as the feature of the European modernist cinema (e.g. in Bergman's, Antonioni's and Godard's art); the second is the attraction of Hungarian films towards historical themes, which also provides a possibility for them to formulate their critical attitude towards contemporary society; and the third is the use of archival footage or filmmaking in the spirit of/imitating archival footage as film language experiment within the creative workshop of the Béla Balázs Studio. As opposed to the practice of films dealing with history which resort to archival material in order to display the recorded reality and irrefutable evidence of the past, in experimental films, especially in Gábor Bódy's works, archival footage does not serve as the place of memory but rather as a means of analysing the signification structure of the moving image.[14]

Gábor Bódy (1946–1985) was a charismatic figure of the Hungarian filmmaking of the 1970s and 1980s, created his first films in the Béla Balázs Studio; he was the first to direct films in the BBS already before graduating the College of Theatre and Film Art. He founded the Film Language Series, the first experimental film project of the studio, then he created his diploma film, *American Torso* (*Amerikai anzix*, 1975). He presented himself in front of the large public with his feature film *Narcissus and Psyche* (*Nárcisz és Psyché*, 1980), a screen adaptation expanded into a self-reflexive and intermedial hypernarrative. On his initiative the first international video magazine was founded; he established the experimental section of the MAFILM. He held lectures on film theory; in his theoretical writings he elaborated his views on serialism and the attribution of meaning in motion picture. He himself acted the main role of his third – and last – feature film entitled *Dog's Night Song* (*Kutya éji dala*, 1983), characterized by manifold generic and intermedial transgressions.

For Gábor Bódy's experimentation with archival footage the model was provided by Dezső Magyar's *Agitators*, in which Bódy himself acted the part of one of the protagonists and he was also the script-writer of the film. In the disguise of the historical

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[13] Cf. MURAI, András. "Emlék-nyom-követés. Az archív felvételek stílusalakzatai". In: GELENCSÉR, Gábor (ed.). *BBS 50. A Balázs Béla Stúdió 50 éve*. Budapest: Műcsarnok, Balázs Béla Stúdió, 2009, p. 115–127.
[14] Cf. *ibid.*

film dealing with a controversial episode of Hungarian history, namely the 1919 Hungarian Soviet Republic, the *Agitators* provides a profound analysis of the model of revolution at an abstract level, applicable to further examples of revolution in the twentieth century. In line with the historical theme, Dezső Magyar's film includes indexical archival material, but with a subversive stance: the ideological purport of the film is juxtaposed with figures of the "second publicity," artists and intellectuals of the end of the 1960s, and presented in such an excessive and exaggerated way that it becomes the target of its own criticism. The film material is elaborated in the style of the embedded archival material, revealing the intent of offering the film as if it had been recorded in 1919. Thus, a peculiar interaction is created between the actual film recordings and the inserted indexical archival material, undermining the grand narrative and ideological discourse of the historical past; recording the film in the style of the archival material releases a potential of creative freedom that will inseminate films to come, also including Gábor Bódy's experimenting with film language and attribution of meaning.

The remediation of found/archival footage was central to Gábor Bódy's reflexive-analytical filmmaking and film-theoretical thinking. Moved also by the ethical responsibility of preservation, but more intensely by the film language researcher's curiosity, he turned towards found footage as a suitable means with the help of which the very nature of the moving image can be analysed, and also as a peculiar material suitable to displace the passive, uneventful spectatorial gaze.

Bódy's films can be regarded as alternative film-theoretical reflections, as "direct theory" in the sense Edward S. Small (1994) proposes the term, i. e. making theory in the language of film. In his short film entitled *After Jappe and Do Escobar Fought How Did the World Come to Fight* (*Hogyan verekedett meg Jappe és Do Escobar után a világ*, 1974), an adaptation to screen of a short story by Thomas Mann, the text of the short story that is read is juxtaposed with old TV news, film sequences and own material recorded in an archaic style. Thus the film plays upon the relationship between sound and image, while the spectator gets confused about which sequence actually constitutes the archival material. The short film entitled *Four Bagatells* (*Négy bagatell*, 1975), created in the Béla Balázs Studio, experiments with the possibilities of reinterpreting the moving image by subsequent masking of the archival material. In the first part, the archival ethnographic recording is restructured by motion of the cross-hairs, guiding the spectator's attention.

In terms of the poetics of archival footage, Gábor Bódy's most important film language experiment is his diploma film, at the same time his first feature film, *American*
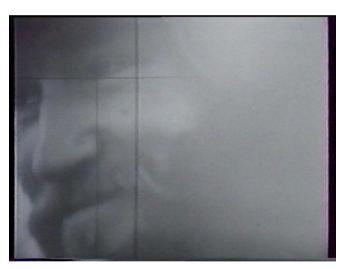
Torso (*Amerikai anzix*, 1975)*.* Through the visual archaisms and the deliberate act of creating (the impression of) fake found footage, Bódy reveals his intentions as an archaeologist of images, searching for the reality of the medium beyond the time frame of cinema history. *American Torso* carries out the dating of "found" footage back into the pre-cinematic times. The spectator is invited to sign a pact with the director, according to which the film is supposed to have been created in 1865, offering itself as an overtly "impossible documentary," following the fate of Hungarian revolutionaries emigrating to America after the suppression of the 1848 revolution and taking part in the American Civil War. The film displays liminal situations in which human character and behaviour are tested. The protagonists, János Fiala and Ádám Vereczky, embody two types of human conduct: János Fiala does service to the army as a land surveyor by making calculations of distance with the help of the theodolite, and he is challenged to compromise by the American Railway Association; Ádám Vereczky becomes the legendary hero of the American Civil War due to his uncompromised behaviour, due to his *action-gratuite*, standing with legs spread and arms crossed in the heat of the battle, and later jumping off the huge swing. They are drawn into decisions that represent models of possible individual behaviour against the backdrop of history.

The Hungarian revolutionaries experience the drama of becoming futile; thus, Bódy chooses to represent a liminal state thematically (the drama of a historical role becoming anachronistic, in the course of dissolution), culturally (Hungarians in American emigration, experiencing the loss of home and cause), linguistically (the mixed use of Hungarian and English in the course of the film), and also medially (through the inventive use of the "pre-cinematic documentary" as well as through the generic/ontological confrontation of fiction and documentary). *American Torso* allows the spectator to view it neither as documentary nor as fiction, since the conventions of feature film sporadically present in the alleged documentary undermine the above mentioned pact of found footage, in this way, the sense of both "the real" and the "the cinematic" will be compromised. Thus the film extends the situation of liminality to the spectatorial position as well.

His model and master, Miklós Erdély wrote about *American Torso*: "Under the ruffled surface the presence of a denied adventure film can be felt all through the film. Above the film, separated from it so to say, there floats its artistic essence, which manifests almost never during film watching, but rather in form of a painful memory full of

anxiety".[15] Erdély's appreciation of the graduate director's diploma work draws our attention to the fact that Bódy's film resists certain generic expectations and simultaneously redirects our gaze to the "ruffled surface" of film, to the texture and materiality of motion picture, which comes to the fore in the process of making the moving images seem "older" than they actually are. For this is what is effected through "the second gaze," that is, in the phase of post-production: with the help of techniques of manipulating the black-and-white recordings, such as light editing, scratching and deteriorating the images, manipulating the soundtrack, slowing down the image and the sound, masking, the use of filters, etc., the impression of erstwhile recordings is created. The method called by Bódy himself light editing or light cutting [*fényvágás*], that is, the change of sequences is carried out by burning the image instead of cutting, significantly contributes to the creation of visual archaisms, to the effect of found footage.

Light cutting in *American Torso* (*Amerikai anzix*, Gábor Bódy, 1975)

American Torso is conceived as if arising from a kind of collective subconscious or mythical pre-existence of cinema; the cinematic images it consists of assume the status of some kind of memories of the medium. Gábor Gelencsér highlights the term memory in Miklós Erdély's appreciation quoted above: "The term 'memory' is suitable also as regards the film's basic structure, as it refers to something that used to be but what no longer exists, what can only be recollected. In the context of cinematic expression this precisely outlines the specific character of the medium: on the screen we can see something past,

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[15] ERDÉLY, Miklós. *A filmről*. Budapest: Balassi Kiadó/BAE Tartóshullám/Intermedia, 1995, p. 186-187.

which in its conreteness evokes exactly what no longer exists in the moment of viewing the film".[16] By connecting the acts of mediation present in memory as well as in the film medium, the fake found footage gets closest to the spirit of the cinematic medium itself.

Bódy is especially interested in the damaged, deteriorated image; he adjusts the toolkit of film language to the particularities of found footage. Every erroneous recording or composition, every deteriorated form, unset focus, accidental movement of the camera (the camera imitating the viewpoint of the theodolite comes across figures and events accidentally, through panning the field, or it does not record what should be recorded, it is not where the events and happenings of the "grand history" are taking place), together with the burning of the film reel creating the impression of an erroneous copy, derive from the imaginary situation of the one-time amateur filmmaker.[17]

The fake found footage displaces the indexical quality of moving image. The *that-has-been* that Roland Barthes in his *Camera Lucida*[18] calls the essence or *noème* of photography is profoundly challenged once the moving images *perform* the indexical role in form of *simulacra* of old images, imparting the experience of the cinema as a disquieting paradox. Gábor Bódy's experiment sets up a paradox, not merely in the above mentioned sense that it carries out the impossible project of a film recorded in pre-cinematic times, but also in that, by creating the "unconditioned spectacle" in the course of post-production, it confronts – along Bolter and Grusin's terms – the *immediacy of experience* (the authenticity of representation) and the *hypermediacy of experience* (the mediated character of representation). The film is directly aimed at clashing the two kinds of experience (an expressive film moment in this respect is the non-identical superimposition of the cross-hairs of the theodolite and the image of the cross, constituting a special case of what Ágnes Pethő calls the paradox of the "hypermediated cinematic experiences of the real".[19]

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[16] GELENCSÉR, Gábor. "Önagyonfilmezők". In: DERÉKY, Pál; MÜLLNER, András (ed.). *Né/ma? Tanulmányok a magyar neoavantgárd köréből*. Budapest: Ráció, 2004, p. 205-226.
[17] Cf. MUHI, Klára. "A talált képek vonzásában. Archívok a magyar filmben", in *Metropolis*, n. 2, 1999. *http://www.c3.hu/scripta/metropolis/9902/muhi.htm* (Last accessed on 30. 11. 2015.)
[18] BARTHES, Roland. *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography* [1980]. New York: Hill and Wang, 1981.
[19] PETHŐ, Ágnes. "(Re)Mediating the Real. Paradoxes of an Intermedial Cinema of Immediacy", in *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Film and Media Studies*, v. 1, 2009, p. 47–68. In her study Pethő discusses types and cases when the cinematic image simultaneously triggers both the immediacy and hypermediacy of experience and points at the ways "the most transparent techniques can also end up as remediations" (p. 47).

The apparently amateur film recording of "the real" is in fact a collage of heterogeneous audio-visual material, relying on diverse literary sources such as the short story entitled *George Thurston* by Ambrose Bierce, nineteenth-century memoirs by János Fiala, László Árvay, and Gyula Kuné, a quote by Karl Marx, László Teleki's letters, Walt Whitman's and Sándor Csoóri's poems; the soundtrack also displays similar hybridity and heterogeneity, containing, besides the presence of acousmatic sounds (in its turn a collage of sounds of birds/nature and weapons/war), also a collage of distorted (slowed down) classical music (Franz Liszt) and folk music (Ferenc Sebő). The collage of sound and image as well as the mixed multilingual character of the film (the employment of both Hungarian and English native speaker actors, dialogues both in Hungarian and English) result in the uniquely multilayered, hybrid entity of Bódy's cinematic experiment.

Private History, directed by Gábor Bódy and Péter Tímár in 1978, is a 25-minute sound-image collage, embracing private recordings on the basis that they are less determined by the cultural-ideological conventions of the age. The time span that passed between the archival recordings and the presence of filmmaking endows the embedded images with new signification; even the previously uninteresting motifs can acquire new dimensions. The juxtaposition of the social and the private consciousness results in a productive asynchrony, leading to a distinct quality of reception. Private recordings are regarded by Bódy as being exposed to the passage of time more than any other previously recorded film material. Bódy said in his notes on the film that from the point of view of archiving it was the penultimate moment. Bódy's follower, Péter Forgács probably grabbed the ultimate moment in collecting private recordings for his *Private Hungary* series, the first piece of which, created in 1988, uses the same private recordings, those of Zoltán Bartos, as Bódy and Tímár's *Private History*, but with different accents and with a different poetics.

András Jeles (1945–), disciple, together with Gábor Bódy, of the great "father-figure" of Hungarian Neo-Avant-Garde, Miklós Erdély (1928–1986), wished to relieve Hungarian cinema of the ideological sediments that restricted the possibilities of expression. The cinematic discourse elaborated by him radically deviates from the classical mode of narration in the Bordwellian sense and aims to deconstruct the representational templates of both documentary and fiction. In his first feature film, *Little Valentino* (*A kis Valentinó*, 1979) the documentary-like tonality is mingled with stylised role-plays; the text written over the image signals the influence of Godard and the French New Wave cinema. Jeles's next film, the highly subversive *Dream Brigade* (*Álombrigád*,

1983), banned and presented to the public only after 1989, is a parody of the propaganda film of the 1950s. *The Annunciation* (*Angyali üdvözlet*, 1984) is a screen adaptation of canonical Romanticist philosophical poem of Hungarian literature, Imre Madách's *The Tragedy of Man*, which contains all the elements of Jeles's deconstructive experimental toolkit. *Joseph and his Brothers – Scenes from a Peasant Bible* (*József és testvérei – Jelenetek egy parasztbibliából*, 2003) counterpoints two stories of human exposedness told in different registers: the biblical story of Joseph and his brothers narrated in form of a shadow play, as well as a prostitute story recorded with an infrared camera.

András Jeles's *Parallel Lives*, a. k. a. *Why Wasn't He There?* (*Senkiföldje*, 1993), dealing with the unprocessable trauma of the Holocaust, is a full-length feature film which also contains archival footage. In her study entitled *Jewish Identities and Generational Perspectives* Catherine Portuges surveys the site of Hungarian films made after 1989 addressing the Holocaust, and discusses the variety of representational modes in fictional, documentary and experimental formats (historical frescoes, transgenerational or intimate personal narratives, flashback, real-time documentary investigation, physically (re-)entering the places of memory, etc.).[20] Jeles eschews the pitfalls of grand narratives or direct *mise en scène* by focusing on episodes of the life of a Hungarian Jewish family prior to deportation as documented in the fictional diary of a thirteen-year old girl.

Whereas Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985) focuses on the *Endlösung*, Jeles turns the attention towards the antecedents. The film represents the process of disintegration of family and personality, of family members becoming foreigners in their home. It follows how hysteria and compulsive neurosis creep up on the family, in genre episodes presented through the focalization of the fallible perspective of the child, through the perception of the diary which documents two year's events, from 1942 to 1944. The film faces the crisis of representation by an awareness of unrepresentability: the voice over is that of the adolescent girl, Éva Münzer, who is also the protagonist of the story, a possible Hungarian Anne Frank, but who conveys a deep sense of disintegration, that what is going on around her is beyond comprehension. From this perspective, it is the personal episodes and objects, the birthday party, the deportation of the family of Éva's cousin, the red bicycle and its absent owner, the fate of Uncle Münzer's last coat, that get to the fore. The last

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[20] Cf. PORTUGES, Catherine. "Jewish Identities and Generational Perspectives". In: IMRE, Anikó (ed.). *A Companion to Eastern European Cinemas*, Malden, MA/Oxford/Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012, p. 101-124.

episode of the film is Éva's being raped by a gendarme; then the diary stops, the story does not continue.

"I don't understand," the restrained voice over of the child repeats again and again. In contrast, the camera does: the intruding, lurking, ubiquitous camera performs the gaze of the power. Voice and image act as dissonant agents, playing off one against the other. While Éva's diary documents the endangered intimacy of existence, the voyeur camera, lurking from beyond doors and curtains, infecting the private sphere and the interpersonal relations, records the gradual degradation and implosion of the family, reinforcing the feeling that there is nowhere to escape. The tension between the limited knowledge conveyed by the voice-over and the omniscience of the camera dramatizes the unresolvable dissonance between childhood intimacy and the irreversibility of destruction.

Jeles's film creates a penetrating intermedial playground, folding the layers of literature, music and painting upon one another within the cinematic medium, allowing for the mediation of liminal experience through intermedial figurations. Besides, the film also contains archival footage, interweaving the narrative thread with documentary images. Jeles lifts into the narrative particular segments of the Nazi propaganda film on the emptying of the Warsaw ghetto in 1943 in which many children can be seen among those embarked onto trucks to be deported.

Jeles manipulates the archival material, letting the images flow under the scrutiny of a magnifying lens, turning the faceless mass into individual faces, thus turning history into a dossier that needs to be reconsidered and the effacing mechanism of historical memory into personal involvement.

Archival footage under the magnifying lens in the closure of *Parallel Lives* (*Senkiföldje*, András Jeles, 1993)

The most emblematic moment of this documentary material is the dancing of a small crippled boy in front of the soldiers. The haunting indexical presence of children reconnects to the narrative thread of the film and also establishes an intertextual connection with those films that also draw upon the very same Nazi propaganda film, namely Alain Resnais's *Night and Fog* (*Nuit et brouillard*, 1956), which presents for the first time the image of the small boy raising his hands at gunpoint, as well as Ingmar Bergman's *Persona* (1966), which takes over this photographic image and inserts it into its highly unsettling intermedial texture.

As Vicky Lebeau comments, "Captured again by *Persona*, the photograph becomes a means to represent the precedence, or imposition of memory over lived time: the (still) life that rushes back in to interrupt our moments of being, registering the irruption of personal as well as historical memory".[21]

As a memento, archival footage condenses the future of the narrated time, which is the past evoked on the film reel. The uncanny of this "future-in-the-past" turned into presence, the slow, iterative motion of people on the documentary recordings evoked in the closure of the film, bitterly counterpointed by the grandeur of the accompanying music, Pamina and Papageno's duet from the first act of Mozart's *Zauberflöte*, whose story portrays the education of mankind, progressing from chaos through religion and reason, ultimately to make "the Earth a heavenly kingdom, and mortals like gods", provide a cathartic closure that reveals a total disillusionment with the metaphysical and enlightened values and "anthropology of hope"[22] of Western civilization. The closure of *Parallel Lives* universalizes deportation into a parable of human existence.

Conclusions

Gábor Bódy's *American Torso* has become the legendary non-perfect film of Hungarian cinema history. Interestingly, the experimentation with the cinematic imaginary, the exploration of the non-existent archives of Hungarian historical consciousness, manifests as the confrontation of the medium with its subconscious, while a decade later, overseas experimentations with actual found footage, as present in Ken Jacobs' experimental

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[21] LEBEAU, Vicky. *Childhood and Cinema*. London: Reaktion Books, 2008, p. 139.
[22] BALASSA, Péter. "Szépen, nyugodtan, egyszerűen", in *Filmvilág*, v. 36, n. 11, 1993, p. 45-47.

filmmaking practice, will be labelled as downright the *Perfect Film*, suggesting a distinct approach to the role found footage may fulfil in cinematic experience.[23] Jeles's *Parallel Lives* is a cinematic attempt at medially performing the unspeakable. The film figures the "infigurable" through confronting private memory and history, archival footage and classical cultural references, which point at the impotence of art and aesthetics in the face of inhumanity. Through the use of archival footage and fake found footage, Gábor Bódy's and András Jeles's films challenge (film-)historical consciousness, point at the unreflected ways in which mainstream historical films create – under the slogan of authentic representations of reality/history – inauthentic fictitious narratives and reveal a more intimate relationship with the historical past and the history of the cinematic medium.

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[23] See Ken Jacobs's *Perfect Film* (1985), a film actually composed of found film reels, about which Tom Gunning (2009) says: "In uncovering meanings that were never intended to be revealed, Jacobs enters an uncanny dimension of the cinema akin to psychoanalysis."

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