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Historical insight into *The Danube Exodus* cinematic installation by Péter Forgács

Abstract

The article examines the wide-screen installation *The Danube Exodus: Rippling Currents of the River* (2002-2006) by Péter Forgács. Forgács designed it in collaboration with the Getty Team and the Labyrinth Project in heterotopic terms that revert events in time and space using various mutual juxtapositions, generated by viewers on a tactile interface. The expansion of cinema into museum spaces from the 1990s is understood as an open, work-in-progress mode of exhibition that entangles spatial arrangement. The film at the heart of the installation begins by placing two heterotopic journeys of exile in comparative context: Slovakian Jews being ferried along the Danube to Jerusalem, and the resettlement of Bessarabia Germans to Polish territory, also via the Danube. This comparative study of migratory aesthetics reflects the contemporary drive to fill the white spaces on the map of Europe. This article retraces the contexts of the immersion of this haunting journey from the past in new intersections that move from a description of the specificity of found footage to wide-screen panorama.

Keywords: found footage, heterotopia, spacing, wide-screen panorama, comparative study, exhibition

Introduction

In an article entitled *Beyond the White Cube*, Peter Weibel outlined the need for a “colonial remix” seen from the point of view of global culture, to demonstrate alternative ways of remapping visual culture¹. In discussing spatial analysis, we shall present various ways of reading *The Danube Exodus: Rippling Currents of the River* as an example of relocating the cinematic experience to an expanded environment,

¹ Peter Weibel, “Beyond the White Cube”, in: *Contemporary Art and the Museum. A Global Perspective*, ed. Peter Weibel, Andrea Budensieg, (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag) (2007), p. 143.

enriched with a haptic experience via user interface. To begin with, my interest is in conceptually nailing down the concept of heterotopia introduced by Michel Foucault, and to propose it as a new perspective of interpretation, building upon the writings of Victor Burgin and Gertrud Koch. Foucault's concept could contribute to demonstrating how film fragments are interspersed within complex installations, derived from various times, as a mirror reflection of society. Having discussed the philosophical framework of heterotopia, I would then like to focus on the historical events outlined by *The Danube Exodus: Rippling Currents of the River*, to reveal how the juxtaposition of vision inscribed in the visual horizon of the fragmentation of images can be understood in terms of cinematographic heterotopy. Analysing the philosophical premises, let us investigate how the heterotopic journey introduces the history of the Eastern European region and situates its concerns within the broader, more current European high-cultural revival of amateur chronicles.

The second part of this essay offers an insight into the parallel timelines employed in *The Danube Exodus* to examine the similarities and differences between them. Insight into the archival found footage used in the film enables us to observe several overlapping narratives, derived from various periods, to build up a powerful wide-screen vision of Eastern Europe across the centuries. The installation provides heterotopic insights into the emerging interactive display used in *The Danube Exodus* project. Using various angles, this wide-screen panorama shows the ways in which we contest the primacy of monocular vision in the era of "polycentric vision", restored by media archivists in numerous forms². This installation presents the imaginative potential of various historical pieces of evidence that open up the circulatory, fragmentary horizon of contemporary aesthetics.

The concluding section presents a brief analysis of the ways in which we could interpret the immersive mode of *The Danube Exodus's* historical storytelling, as inscribed in the manifold visual documentation. This visual journey, in situ, provides an insight into the visual testimonies of the past and lets us rethink the differences between 'exile' and 'resettlement' as two different strategies of movement, or displacement, in the era of genocide. The installation unfolds different modes of using "interactive memory strategy", composed of moving images and stable documents, to mirror the wider circulation of "diversified representation" in galleries at the beginning of the 21st century³.

A heterotopic grid

Before we discuss *The Danube Exodus*, a glimpse at cinematic transformations will provide some useful aesthetic premises for the inscription of cinema in the art gallery,

² Ella Shohat, Robert Stam, "Narrativizing Visual Culture, Towards a Polycentric Aesthetics", in: *Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff, (London & New York: Routledge) (1998), p. 46.

³ Kristian Feigelson, "The Labyrinth. The Strategy of Sensitive Experimentation. A Filmmaker of Anonymous". in: *Kinokultura*, <http://www.kinokultura.com/specials/7/feigelson.shtml> (date accessed 20.05.2018).

because – as Raymond Bellour famously observed – “cinema can also be reinvented, an another cinema, by other means.”⁴ The principal drive of the media landscape emphasizes excessive concern on placing the viewer in new spaces that enrich the wider discourse with the conceptual collage of historical narratives. Since the 1990s, Victor Misiano has stressed the emergence of the role of the “curator-mediator”, which is marked by curatorial cooperation. This contributes to the drawing of a new face for museums, which “...opens up into its network of trustees, their affiliations with multinational corporations, and finally the global system of late capitalism proper, such that what used to be the limited and Kantian of a restricted conceptual art expands into the very ambition of its reach and is transformed into a cognitive mapping itself (with all its specific representational contradictions)”⁵. This modus operandi shifts the insistent promotion of the artist as designer, contemplation over function and the openness of the aesthetic resolution. In this respect, one could map out capitalism and adopt DJs and computer programmers as forms leading towards direct physical experience, relying upon the recombination of works with other pre-existing products that themselves rely upon re-appropriation, quotation, and parasitism. Therefore, one could argue, as Jean-Christophe Royaux did, that “...we can find cinema after cinema in most of the works of the post-minimalist generation”⁶. In developing his arguments, Royaux uses his concept of the “cinema of exhibition” to outline the ways in which one can “designate the particular forms of syntax of the exhibition”⁷. In tracing the transformations of moving images in gallery art and museums, Victor Burgin sought also to reaffirm that “the concept of heterotopia to real external places, he nevertheless arrives at his discussion of heterotopias via a reference to utopias – places with no other substance than that of representation: material signifiers, psychic reality and fantasia”⁸. Bringing forth this point of view, bear in mind that Michel Foucault laid out the premises of heterotopia in *Des espaces autres* in his lecture at the Cercle d’études architecturales, wherein he situated this perspective at the intersection of what’s real and what’s imaginary. In Foucault’s view, there are six relations between discursive, heterogenic spaces of heterotopia, with two of them being particularly worth applying as a method and form of interpretative explanation. In particular, Gertrud Koch lists the third and fourth principle of building a “heterotopic grid” that spans both painting, sculpture, architecture and photography⁹. Foucault’s concept defines the extension of the idea

⁴ Raymond Bellour, “D’un autre cinema”, in: *La Querelle des dispositifs: cinéma, installations, expositions*, (Paris: P.O.L.) (2012), p. 168.

⁵ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the cultural logic of late capitalism*, (Durnham: Duke University Press) (1991), p. 157.

⁶ Jean-Christophe Royaux, “Towards a Post-Cinematic Space-Time”, in: *Brillo Box Illuminated*, ed. Sarra Arrhenius, Magdalena Malm, Christophe Ricupero, (Stockholm: IASPIS) (2003), p. 110.

⁷ Jean-Christophe Royaux, p. 110.

⁸ Victor Burgin, *Possessive, Pensive and Possessed*, in *The Cinematic*, (London & Cambridge, Whitechapel) (2006), p. 199.

⁹ Gertrud Koch, *Die Verkehr der Illusion. Der Film und die Kunst, der Gegenwart*, (Berlin: Suhrkamp) (2016), p. 224.

of the dispersion of knowledge and implies “juxtaposition in one single, real place, several places that are themselves incompatible”¹⁰. Among notable examples of these concepts, Foucault lists theatres, cinemas and gardens. In turn, according to the fourth principle of heterotopy, there is the possibility of making temporal juxtapositions, of “layers of time” – epochs called ‘heterochrony’ by Foucault. Inspired by Friedrich Nietzsche’s concept of nihilism, Foucault pointed out the necessity of death in every culture (the end of life, decay and disappearance). These interspersed cultural lines present the ways in which “...our experience of the world is less that of the long life developing through time than that of the network that connects points and intersects with its own skin”¹¹. In this sense, this heterotopic grid can be conceived as a spatiotemporal framework to demonstrate the evolutionary course of historical events, and the need for thinking in terms of a ‘set of relations’ that ‘delineate sites’ and co-create our presence as a ‘configuration’. Oscillating primarily between utopian and dystopian qualities, heterotopia aims at “indefinitely accumulating time” in museums and galleries¹². These spaces build “...the counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality”¹³. In this respect, social reality reflects an inverted society. Although it never becomes a real space, it does, however, have its roots in real spaces. This dimension of signifiers embodies ‘distorting mirrors’, and discovers the space of the ‘other’ as a space illusion that encapsulates “the dreams and desires of society”¹⁴. Inspired by Friedrich Nietzsche’s idea of perspectivism and parallel interpretations of history, Foucault argued that heterotopia entails “...in this way a sort of perpetual and indefinite accumulation in an immobile place, this whole idea belongs to our modernity. The museum and the library are heterotopias that are proper to western culture of the nineteenth century”¹⁵. Heterotopia considered as an atlas of singularities is an archive that, as a mobile ship, has all of these traits. Georges Didi-Huberman suggested that it can be adopted in various contexts on the epistemological, aesthetic and political levels.

Inspired by Foucauldian thinking, Victor Burgin argued that this concept could be extended in many ways to a nascent “cinematographic heterotopia” as a utopian society – “out of time”. In Burgin’s discussion, this concept is extended by reference to Félix Guattari’s post-media aesthetics to describe “media-based imagery”, which relies upon the ‘ecology of mind’ (*écologie de l’esprit*) and infiltration of subjectivity by

¹⁰ Michel Foucault, *Of other spaces*, trans. Jan Miskovicc, “Diacritics” 16:11 (1986), p. 24.

¹¹ Michel Foucault, p. 22.

¹² Michel Foucault, p. 13.

¹³ Michel Foucault, p. 14.

¹⁴ Paolo Magagnoli, *Documents of Utopia. The Politics of experimental documentary*, (New York: Wallflower Press) (2015), p. 28.

¹⁵ Michel Foucault, p. 13.

the media. This immersion in manifold representations explains the ‘recycling’ desire for exploration and the re-use of existing aesthetic forms. Specifically, these works can be used as a figure of parataxis derived from rhetoric to describe situations “...in which the relations are not given, but deduced”¹⁶.

Expanded space

Further insight can be gained by examining the tactile interface used in the installation that allows viewers to navigate the found footage journeys of the refugees escaping the heterotopic ship. In *The Danube Exodus*, two timelines can be found, as well as additional historical context that acts as an information carrier under the influence of contact with the body’s surface. When viewing the installation, audiences can choose between three main narrative threads: the boat captain, the Jewish exodus, and the German exodus. In this circular environment, touch determines the selection of images on the screens. Through this tactile mapping of the stories, we can select particular variants of the stories that demonstrate the experience of spatiality, and the flows of moments and memories presented in the context of new configurations. Visitors can select one of eighteen three or five-minute sequences from different ethnic areas, enriched with interviews. The four-and-a-half hour film-strip, composed of five ninety-minute films, that is used in *The Danube Exodus* is understood as a metaphor of relativism seen in five split-screens, which emphasizes the incongruence of two reconstructions. This impression of an ‘enlarged’ installation relies upon entering into the dialogue between the recipient and the represented subject, which represents the three main threads (the captain, the Jewish exodus, and the German exodus). The use of an immersive interactive menu system draws attention to the travel experience, directed and dictated by touch displays. These histories, displayed on a five-screen panoramic display, reflect the specific configuration of the mobile camera and present the way that cinema inherits the concept of the mobile eye (*l’œil mobile*) from modern painting. “Polyvision” exceeds the frontality of one of several different screen, while continuing to bring dramas and scripted places into play”¹⁷. Putting in motion specific segments allows the viewers to immerse themselves between two realms of overlapping historical narratives in a heterotopic fashion: the journey between Slovakia and Haifa, and in parallel, the journey of the deported Germans to Poland.

These two journeys provide an interesting account of two possible ways of thinking about migration and re-settlement in historical narratives with multiple points of view. The two main historical narratives receive additional context sourced from the special collection of the Luigi Ferdinando Marsili Research Library – an early

¹⁶ Victor Burgin, “Interactive Cinema and Uncinematic”, in *Screen Dynamics. Mapping the borders of the cinema*, ed. Gertrud Koch, Volker Pantenburg, Simon Rothohler, (Vienna: Österreichisches Filmmuseum) (2012), p. 102.

¹⁷ Raymond Bellour, “D’un autre cinema”, in: *La Querelle des dispositifs: cinéma, installations, expositions*, (Paris: P.O.L.) (2012). p. 166.

eighteenth century six-volume encyclopaedia about the Danube. In explaining the origins of the encyclopaedia, Zaia Alexander and Marsha Kinder stated that it was executed “On the commission of Holy Roman (Hapsburg) Emperor Leopold I, an Italian military engineer prepared a map of the country recaptured from the Turks – Hungary. In addition, there were three huge leather-bound albums in each volume concerning different aspects of the region, especially the richness of the flora and fauna of the Danube river and the breadth of Marsili’s interests”¹⁸. This web-like narrative encompasses not only a hyphological narrative, but also two forms of scores interpreted in terms of the span of the river itself, and some if it is included as complementary audio-visual material for the two main journeys.

An archival journey

Briefly introducing the aesthetic context in which *The Danube Exodus* project emerged, let’s note that Forgács primarily initiated his research by collecting and reconstructing private, archival and visual diaries derived from various sources. Forgács mainly collected this footage by publishing an announcement in certain journals, and on the basis of the responses, assembled “...pre-existing images, regrouped and overworked by artists engaging the viewer in reflection [...] on the history and film of occidental clichés”¹⁹. Some of these conceptual solutions for restoring sound and images date back to the late 1970s, drawing inspiration from the film *Private History* by Gabor Bódy and Peter Tímár.

Forgács began his work in the neo-avant-garde environment, where he experimented with multifarious audio-visual forms with sound effects, commentaries and montage. Later, he was invited to edit the fourth themed issue of the *Infermental* international video journal. From the late 1970s onwards, Forgács also worked with Group 180 as a recitativo, in which he created commentaries on juxtaposing sound and image. Inspired by Sándor Kardos’s *Horus archive*, in 1983 Forgács then began – with the help of the Budapest Photo & Film Archives Foundation – collecting found footage from the 20th century. After gathering materials and interviewing the families of the survivors, Forgács juxtaposed a variety of visual documents, such as family photos and official diaries. In 1998 he built a story shedding new light on the paths of resettlement caused by the Holocaust. *The Danube Exodus* presents two separate spaces in its story, located in two crucial sequences in the various configurations of its 40 hours of material controllable through the tactile interface. The film gives interesting insight into the 60-minutes of 8 mm film made by the boat’s captain, Nandor Andrásovits. The film was lent to Forgács by the captain’s widow, who documented his travels around Europe. Forgács and the Labyrinth Project used the film as “found footage for a newly-edited narrative that incorporates resonances and

¹⁸ Zara Alexander, Marsha Kinder, *The Danube Exodus: The Rippling currents of the River*, (Budapest: Ludwig Museum) (2006), p. 13.

¹⁹ Sébastien Denis, “Esthétique de l’archive”, in: *Arts plastique et Cinéma, CinémAction*, 122 (2007), p. 266.

ironies within these historic encounters”, collected together at the Cultural Research Institute in Budapest. This narrative was navigated by the touch-screen interface to revive them during art exhibitions. This work includes forty-nine minutes of outtakes from the Jewish voyage that Forgács received from historian-archivist Janos Varga, who originally inherited the material from Andrásovits’ close friend Zelan Pathanazy²⁰. In brief, Forgács presented a vision of a Jewish-German exodus based on two separate stories, both, however, being connected.

The escape project for fear of anti-Semitism was implemented by the president of the orthodox community in Bratislava Aron Grünhut on two borrowed ships to Palestine. The first of the two journeys shown in the film presents the vicissitudes of 608 Slovak Orthodox Jews escaping from Bratislava in 1939, on an extraordinary, epic journey along the Danube to the Black Sea towards Palestine. This amateur documentary provides insight into the on-board life of refugees on their two-month journey, and it could be interpreted as the embodiment of a heterotopia set on a spaceship. The focus is primarily on *Noemi Julia*, a steamship previously used by holidaymakers cruising the Danube. The journey of the Slovak and Hungarian Jews from Bratislava through Central Europe along the Danube River, via Romania and Bulgaria to Palestine, included several hundred people from a large community which had been assigned to extermination by the Nazis. This migration presents the spatial displacements aboard the *Queen Elizabeth* as it travelled along the river Danube from Slovakia to the Black Sea, with the ultimate goal of Haifa in Palestine. The total length of its journey was 1446 km. Given the British restrictions on Jewish emigration and entry to Palestine, each of the refugees was restricted to taking a fifty-kilometer bag for the Danube cruise of 1446 kilometers. In the beginning, their route led on the Danube waters crossed the territory of Bulgaria. Despite the British protests, a group of refugees managed to enter the vessel *Noemi Julia* in the port of Sulima on the Black Sea and sail to Haifa after eighty-three days. Most of the presented scenes abound with a positive resolution. We observe scenes showing the wedding on the ship and, to a large extent, the rather joyful atmosphere of everyday customs and prayers. However, some scenes are accompanied by moments of fear when drinking water is lacking. Each passenger was assigned two glasses of water daily, and all passengers suffered from sea sickness during a storm. The documentary of Nándor Andrásovits presents in an intimate light the journey by ship across the Black Sea and then towards Palestine. In the final part, we can observe how the Jewish group, when finally arriving in Haifa on the ship *Noemi Julia*, is arrested by the British government in order to clarify the matter. Fortunately, after a month they are released and can enjoy freedom in Palestine. Thus they became a part of 500,000 Jewish settlers living under the British Mandate. Based on the reconstruction of archival materials, Forgács asks in this documentary work about the fate of a select group of history of the Chosen People returning to their spiritual capital. . In Forgács’s vision, this collision of narratives demonstrates a microhistory of fleeing Jews reminiscent

²⁰ Zara Alexander, Marsha Kinder, p. 13.

of the history of repatriation of the Chosen People to the Promised Land. It is worth noting that, in general, during World War II, seventy-seven thousand people escaped from the Third Reich through the Danube. . This exilic movement reflects the Jewish return to the promised land as a fortunate escape from the phantom of genocide that was spreading across Europe.

The German resettlement

The second of the two journeys of inquiry presented by Forgács was filmed by captain Andrásovitz the following year, in 1940. The narrative illustrates the voyage of natives of the Bessarabia Germans who tried to escape their resettlement by the Red Army to Third Reich. Accepting the proposition to be resettled in occupied Poland in accordance with the agreement between Hitler and Stalin, the refugees decided to abandon their homeland themselves. Andrásovitz's ship was then chartered to resettle the Bessarabia Germans displaced from Romania at the turn of October and November 1940 resulting in the Soviet Annexation of Bessarabia. As a part of the wider narrative of the Holocaust, this footage is a record of the seven-week repatriation of 93,000 German farmers (*Volksdeutsche*), escaping along the Danube by boat. The Soviets paid the Third Reich in wheat and coal, and promised to pay compensation to the displaced upon arrival. Initially, the Germans were transported by carts to the river jetties, where the Erzsébet Királyne ship, led by Commander Nandor Andrásovits, and one of the twenty seven transport vessels waited for them. Erzsébet Királyne took 600 passengers during each trip. . The cruise began at Reni and led to Semlin, where the Germans were examined. Then they were transported to Galati and then to Russe. From there, they were transported by train to Prague and to camps in the Third Reich. The action ended on November 16, 1940. Some of the Bessarabian Germans were later settled in the lands of Poles expropriated by the Nazis. In the final part of the history, Forgács introduces a micro-narrative about one anonymous relocated family in 1942 to Kościan, near Poznań. At some point, Polish owners appear there, asking for the return of the precious violin, probably the Stradivarius brand, left there because of a rush when leaving the house. However, they leave without the violin. The Bessarabian Germans in 1945 left the territory of Greater Poland and went to the West towards Frankfurt.

The difference between these two journeys lies in the emotional approach that Forgács takes, given that the deportation of the Jews and Germans are separate, albeit related stories. In the first story, the Jews enjoyed the journey, dancing, and singing, as they had saved their lives from the threat of extermination. In contrast, the Germans Exodus is shown in a nostalgic light, with the farmers mourning the loss of their homes and estates in exchange for unsure promises of abandoned territory. In contrast to the Jewish happiness, the Bessarabia Germans regretted leaving their homes and estates. These remote stories can be seen in terms of “intensities”, according to which “stupefaction, terror, anger, hatred, pleasure and all the intense emotions are always displacements within a place”, and present “the term emotion into motion that leads to its own exhaustion, an immobilizing motion, an

immobilized mobilization”²¹. According to Forgács, this story builds an intimate insight into their lives and differences in their motives not only at the historical level, but also in the assigned fate of exile to which they were condemned and had to conform.

The dual nature of the installation

Let us return to the question of how *The Danube Exodus* can attempt to answer questions about the nature of cinematographic heterotopia, showing the dual nature of the installation between the real and imaginary spaces, which create a space for “openness inaugurating dialogue”²². Let us also note that heterotopia can be used as a starting point for thinking about this complex installation, which spans film, interactivity and use of a website designed by the Getty’s Design Team and the Labyrinth Group. The installation can be perceived in terms of “constellation” as the “horizontal textual organization of objects which brings into play a different definition of cinema, one that is minimal but sufficient, as a set of ways of passing from one (any) element to another”²³. It should be emphasized that along with the emergence of the forms of “expanded cinema”, this extended narrative (traceable from the 1960s) characterises both “emancipation or extension within the field of exhibition, and they also reflect a collective need to imagine other kinds of relationship with the spectator (a tunnel, a ‘touch screen’)”²⁴. Moreover, interactivity has enriched mental activity with, in this case, the ability to touch and play with the film, making it possible to shape the images projected in the installation. In a similar manner, this form of “haptic perception is usually defined by psychologists as the combination of tactical, kinaesthetic and proprioceptive functions, the way we experience touch both on the surface of an inside our bodies”²⁵. Some insight into the theoretical articulation of touch aesthetics is given in Walter Benjamin’s writings, in which he stresses the relationship between optics and tactility assigned to the realm of copies (*Abbild*), which thereby demand contemplation, absorbed attention and a fixed gaze that sees into the distance and demands to be looked at. The installation’s value is brought about through the dominance of the copy, which brings the masses closer to the reality in exchange for losing the aura, the cult value associated with the original, optical image (*Bild*). This double recounting and documenting of reality engages in an interplay between the context of art and the language of science, as well as demonstrating how “techniques and practices come and go from the

²¹ Jean-François Lyotard, “L’acinéma”, in: *Cinéma: théorie, lectures*, ed. Dominique Noguez (Klincksieck: Paris) (1973), p. 365.

²² Robert Simanowski, *Digital art and meaning. Reading Kinetic Poetry, Text Machines, Mapping Art, and Interactive Installations*, (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press) (2011), p. 128.

²³ Jean-Christophe Royaux, p. 110.

²⁴ Stephanie Moisdon Trembley, “Time as Activity”, in: *Brillo Box Illuminated*, ed. Sarra Arrhenius, Magdalena Malm, Christophe Ricupero, (Stockholm: IASPIS) (2003), p. 84.

²⁵ Laura U Marks, *The Skin of the Film. Intercultural cinema, embodiment and the senses*, (Durnham/London: Duke University Press) (2000), p. 162.

laboratory to the atelier and vice-versa”²⁶. In other words, the interface designed by the Getty Team and the Labyrinth Group presents a transmedia journey that covers five screens (each of which is two meters high and three meters wide), creating a fifteen-meter-wide panorama. Perceptually immersed in this panoramic view, “the audience is immediately surrounded on all sides by a three-dimensional interior, the faux terrain, which is imperceptibly connected to the two-dimensional visual action and often makes the visual frontier untraceable”²⁷. Interestingly, panorama considered as a form of “popular entertainment lost their importance after 1900, however, their principles have survived the cinematic camera’s pan and static shot movements”²⁸. *The Danube Exodus*’s expanded view demonstrates that “an entire world is in the flux as if one is inside a train, where the fragments of the outside view are “seen through the window”²⁹. More specifically, the Getty Team and the Labyrinth Project have designed a wide-screen panorama that covers both a “circular” environment and “panoramic” cinema.

This polycentric vision of narrative visual culture permits entry into dialogue and stimulates the movement of circular panoramas, hovering on the edge of the many visual shreds of evidence. Note that the multi-layered, non-linear storyline designed by Labyrinth for the interface could be compared to a hyper-textual rhizome, vaguely inspired by Jorge Luis Borges’ *The Garden of Forking Paths*. In particular, the Jewish Exodus of refugees can be used as an illustration of the return home of the ‘chosen ones’, while the journey of the Bessarabia Germans presents a vision of homesickness and a feeling of permanent loss. This spatial decoupage of two different historical stories shows the mutual similarities and differences between them. In this installation’s circulation, the images in-between the screens could be compared to Bruno Latour’s concept of “circulative reference”, as a method of “drawing things together”. Building on the principle of sustainability and formal changeability, the kinaesthetic nature of the work makes an impact on the status of stable artefacts in the dynamic and liquid architecture of work-events. Through selection of maps and variants of the presented history, viewers can manoeuvre between the paths of history, primarily between movement and Taoist no-movement. This interplay between photography and cinematic movement enables us to juxtapose images in different spaces and times, interpreted as a potential process under construction, an ‘any space’, fundamental to Deleuzian time-images. One can see in this interactive installation how “the digital and visual interface is at the same time divided between aesthetics and operability”³⁰. More specifically, Laura Mulvey

²⁶ Bruno Latour, “L’art. de faire science”, *Movements* 62 (2012), p. 92.

²⁷ Oliver Grau, “Into the Belly of an Image. Historical aspects of Virtual Reality”, *Leonardo* 32:5 (1999), p. 167.

²⁸ Victor Burgin, “The Time of Panorama”, in: *Situational Aesthetics. Selected Writings by Victor Burgin*, ed. Alexander Streitberger, (Leuven, Leuven University Press) (2009), p. 295.

²⁹ Victor Burgin, p. 295.

³⁰ Jean-Pierre Fourmentaux, “Introduction”, in: *Images interactives. Art Contemporain. Recherche et création numérique*, (Paris: La Lettre Volée) (2016), p. 6.

suggested that the audio-visual universe could now be “halted or slowed down or fragmented”³¹. Therefore, Raymond Bellour probably argued that these kinds of installations “may seem to be the effect of so-called ‘crisis’ within cinema and the difficulties of contemporary art of which installations are probably the most vivid manifestation”³². From this angle, the juxtaposition of images can be perceived as “one of the effects of the games of visible figures. The efficiency of the cinema out of is that “the works make speak, and make speeches about them”³³. In other words, this sensual formation arises from the fact of the interlacing fragments of micro-narrative inscribed in the context of dialogical inter-spaces of the refugees’ flight, which allows for a meandering within the audio-visual journey. The soundtrack to *The Danube Exodus* can be described as heterotopic, as it combines different musical traditions that owe much of their power to the hypnotic, mesmerizing score by Tibor Szemző, which draw on the composition of the rhythm of the narrative and solemn music, “in harmonic tones”, with bells, the rhythm of marching soldiers, “occasional voices and the sound of water”³⁴. These musical noises are combined with natural ambient river and waterfront sounds by McKee of Earwan Productions, the mechanical rhythms of the ship’s engines, regional music, the songs and prayers of the refugees, and the voices of the Captain and his crew. The virtual space of the interface entangled in the visual dimension of the film’s projection contributes to the production of an environment in which we can encounter displaced pieces of film (the internet, the media and so on), but also the psychical space of a spectating subject that Baudelaire first identified as “a kaleidoscope equipped with a consciousness”³⁵. Significantly, kaleidoscopic circulation of images “hinges on fragmentary, circular and repetitive short sequences in response to which the viewing subject as a subject of signifier may come into being on Mobius band of impressions and imaginations”³⁶. This perspective particularly represents the specific orientation towards a post-medium condition resulting in the emergence of “expanded space beyond the confines of the movie theatre” within the gallery and museum. To explain this drive to recycling games with representations, Victor Burgin argued that being immersed in a spatial environment, “visitors of art galleries have encountered a wide range of works that make more or less direct reference to the cinema – from works by artists that manipulate existing footage from mainstream films in order to isolate

³¹ Laura Mulvey, “The Pensive Spectator”, in: *The Death in 24th Second. Stillness and the Moving Image*, (London: Reaktion Books) (2006), p. 181

³² Raymond Bellour, *D’un autre cinéma*, op. cit., p. 41.

³³ Jean-François Lyotard, “Petites ruminations sur le commentaire d’art”, *Opus International*, 70/71 (1979), p. 17.

³⁴ Leah Ollmann, *The Danube Exodus: The Rippling Currents of the River*, (Budapest: Ludwig Museum) (2002), p. 20.

³⁵ Victor Burgin, “Possessive, Pensive and Possessed”, in: *The Cinematic* (London & Cambridge, Whitechapel) (2006), p. 220.

³⁶ Gertrud Koch, “Introduction”, in: *Screen Dynamics. Mapping the borders of the cinema*, ed. Gertrud Koch, Volker Pantenburg, (Vienna: Österreichisches Filmmuseum) (2012), p. 104.

and explore cinematographic conventions”³⁷. *The Danube Exodus* interactive project creates a situation in which “moving image work relies on loop and reprise, on paratactical elements rather than on continuous temporal progress”³⁸. This specific narrative proceeds in a different order, in accordance with the touch-screen images immersed in the “spaces and moments of the story” to present a wandering “new spatiotemporal structure of difference constructed by new telecommunication techniques”³⁹. Visitors can easily decide which parts of the story will be seen and in what order, as we become not only visitor and witness, but also creator. This dialogue, even if highly illusive and insufficient, seems to provide an insight in to the archival footage used, that could be used as a function of experimental, laboratory study in order to revive fragments of moving pictures reconstructed in the more accessible way for a contemporary perceptual needs of the viewer. In Robert Simanowski’s view, “the mapping is a perfect symbolic form of our time, not primarily for its realization to the database paradigm of the endless and unstructured collection of data records, but for its modus to turn the data to us to explore”⁴⁰. Thus, in *The Danube Exodus* one can enter into a dialogue with works based on navigation, dictated by an interactive menu created by the viewer via the touchscreen interface. More specifically, the sequencing and composition of the narrative permit forward movement without the possibility of returning to the previous sequence. This passing between the spaces of history enables viewers to enter into narrative passages and navigate between them in a one-way direction. And according to Heraclitus, this “irreversibility of history” shows that no one can enter the same river twice...

Conclusion

Let me note very briefly that the importance of *The Danube Exodus* lies rather in the questions and difficulties that emerge from spatial, non-linear, deconstructed stories in the light kinaesthetic juxtapositions aboard the ship. Observing the vicissitudes of the refugees seen in the film footage lets us reiterate Hannah Arendt’s long-lasting diagnosis “that the symbol of the twentieth century of the people deprived of their rights and refugees deprived of the homeland, confirms it with amazing accuracy”⁴¹. If we accept this remark, we can open up a renewed dialogue with representations of migratory aesthetics derived from the past, and point out the role of the relocation processes in order to rethink art cinema. This perspective seeks application of Foucault’s claims, conceived in terms of the heterotopic grid, as a way of perceiving a manifold visual interpretation of the archives as a fruitful tool for historical

³⁷ Gertrud Koch, p. 102.

³⁸ Gertrud Koch, p. 107.

³⁹ Jacques Derrida, Christine Malabou, *Counter-Path. Travelling with Jacques Derrida*, trans. David Wills, (Stanford: Stanford University Press) (2004), p. 18.

⁴⁰ Robert Simanowski, p. 181.

⁴¹ Jürgen Habermas, *Staatsbürgerschaft und nationale Identität: Überlegungen zur europäischen Zukunft*, (St. Gallen: Erker) (1991), p. 25.

research. *The Danube Exodus* project provides an interesting account of the perspectives of interpretation of “Holocaust-effects” as ways of seeing an experience by means of “repetition and obscuration”⁴². An audience immersed in this installation can embark on a metaphorical journey within the imaginary geography of historical Eastern Europe, as seen through the prism of “immersive strategies of panoramic installation”⁴³. Through this “fusion of horizons”, one can see a curatorial drive to recombining and reading interdiscursive areas because, as Gregor Stemmerich puts it, “the basic idea of a work of art should be an integrated part of a situation, place or location – not in order to harmonize the relationship between the artwork and its surroundings and evoke complex issues, possibly interconnecting various discourses related to it that would normally be barred from consciousness”⁴⁴. The importance of found footage archives lies in the how the combination of signifiers of Western and Eastern cultures produces a vision of found footage heterotopia. This provides insight into the way we think about the juxtaposition of story immersed within a wide-screen narrative, rediscovered post-mortem. In particular, this mapping of specific elements of spatial graphics allows us to immerse ourselves in an unexplored atmosphere of forgotten history, viewed through the prism of “integrated humanities”. The use of amateur chronicles is a particular method by which we can understand found-footage heterotopia, comprehending it as a place in which the history of Eastern and Western technology, amateur filmmaking and the professional model of curatorship intermingle, not being ideologically invisible. However, found footage re-entangled in an art installation partially loosens the narrative, to rediscover overlapping ontologies and the way in a “material form in which they are presented as archives in the form of installation”⁴⁵. The question is, however, whether this project preserves the principle of aesthetic historicity, which relies upon the premise of correspondence and metamorphosis defined by Jacques Rancière as having three features. Primarily, the sentence, the episode, the image is isolated to express its nature and the tonality of the collection. Furthermore, it provides the possibility of correspondence, through which all manner of signs of nature come into resonance or dissonance. This “combination of characters coincides vaguely with the object or develops in the form of significant living”⁴⁶. If we accept these premises, the migration of peoples looking for recognition by inscription in their situation are placed in a context “making it possible to transform the artificial into something living, and the repetitive into something

⁴² Ernst Van Alphen, *Caught by History: Holocaust Effects in Contemporary Art, Literature, and Theory*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press) (1997), p. 106.

⁴³ Ernst Van Alphen, p. 203.

⁴⁴ Gregor Stemmerich, “White Cubes, Black Box and Grey Areas: venues and values”, in: *Art and the Moving Image*, ed. Tanya Leighton, (London: Tate Publishing) (2005), p. 64.

⁴⁵ Christa Blümlinger, Culture de remploi- questions du cinéma, *Trafic*, 50 (2004), p. 350.

⁴⁶ Jacques Rancière, “L’historicité de cinema”, in: *De l’histoire au cinéma*, ed. Antoine de Baecque, Christian Delage, (Bruxelles & Éditions Complexe) (1998), p. 49.

unique”⁴⁷. The installation’s multi-screen projection, connected with the interface of this heterotopic installation, reflects *The Danube Exodus*’s formal complexity and mobilizes the imagination. More specifically, circulation of images increases the role of amateur, private archives in reviving the collective memory. *The Danube Exodus* panoramic installation can be read plurally, comparatively challenging us to play, however vertiginously, within the screens. Art cinema considered as “ghost visions” could provide a direction toward thinking about alternative ways of returning to the historical event by filling the ‘white space’ in the history of refugees’ journeys across the map of Europe.

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⁴⁷ Boris Groys, “Art in the Age of Biopolitics. From Artwork to Art documentation”, in: *Art Power*, (Cambridge & London: MIT Press) (2008), p. 64.

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