

KADIR HAS UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES



VISUALIZING THE PAST IN THREE DOCUMENTARY FILMS

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VISUALIZING THE PAST IN THREE DOCUMENTARY FILMS

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“I, Nilgün Özten, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.”

NİLGÜN ÖZTEN

ABSTRACT

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The growing presence of subjects narrating their lived experiences in documentaries implies their involvement in the making of their own histories. This thesis explores this subjective dimension by examining the formal methods employed by filmmakers in documentaries in which personal stories are performed and/or narrated by subjects. To this end, I will focus on the aesthetic strategies employed in three documentary films, *Nostalgia for the Light* (2010) by Patricio Guzmán, *Diary Film: I was 12 in '56* (2006) by Boglárka Edvy (animator) and Sándor Silló (director), and *The Notebook of a Lady* (1994) by Péter Forgács, in order to elaborate how these strategies manifest the filmmakers' aesthetic and political approaches and form the basis of historical knowledge. I suggest that these filmmakers challenge conventional assumptions of historical discourse and refer to other possibilities for representing the past. Drawing on the memories and recollections of subjects as representations of the past, they invoke the relationship between history and memory.

Keywords: history, memory, aesthetic strategies

ÖZET

ÜÇ BELGESEL FİLMDE GEÇMİŞİN GÖRSELLEŞTİRİLMESİ

Nilgün Özten

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Belgesel filmlerde geçmiş deneyimlerini anlatan öznelerin varlığındaki yükseliş kendi tarihlerini oluşturma süreçlerine olan katılımlarına işaret ediyor. Tezim kapsamında, öznelerin kişisel hikayelerini sahnelediği ve/veya anlattığı belgesel filmlerde yönetmenlerin uyguladığı biçimsel yöntemleri inceleyerek bu öznel alanı araştıracağım. Patricio Guzmán'ın *Nostalgia for the Light* (2010), Boglárka Edvy (canlandırmacı) ve Sándor Silló'nun (yönetmen) *Diary Film: I was 12 in '56* (2006) ve Péter Forgács'ın *The Notebook of a Lady* (1994) adlı belgesel filmlerinde uyguladıkları estetik stratejiler üzerine odaklanarak, bu stratejilerin yönetmenlerin estetik ve politik yaklaşımlarını gösterme şekillerini ve tarihin bilgisini nasıl biçimlendirdiklerini tartışacağım. Bu yönetmenlerin, bir disiplin olarak tarihin geleneksel varsayımlarına meydan okuduğunu ve geçmişin temsiline yönelik olasılıkları işaret ettiğini öne sürüyorum. Öznelerin anı ve anımsamalarından geçmişin temsilleri olarak yararlanarak, tarih ve bellek arasındaki ilişkiye başvuruyorlar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: tarih, bellek, estetik stratejiler

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INTRODUCTION

Beatriz Sarlo, in *Time Past: The Culture of Memory and Subjective Turning*, points out an intense subjective dimension which characterizes the present. She emphasizes the increasing importance of the subject and its experience in the construction of first person narratives. The growing presence of the subjects who recount their lived experiences in documentaries supports the view Sarlo puts forth. In my thesis, I will explore this subjective dimension by examining the formal methods employed by filmmakers in documentaries in which personal stories are performed and/or narrated by individuals. To this end, I will focus on the aesthetic strategies employed in three documentary films, *Nostalgia for the Light*, *Diary Film: I was 12 in '56* and *The Notebook of a Lady*, in order to elaborate how these strategies manifest the filmmakers' aesthetic and political approaches and form the basis of historical knowledge.

Investigating the way these filmmakers visualize history necessitates an approach and argument about the nature of archival and newly re-created materials, relating it to differing visions about the past and exploring the ways documentaries construct historical knowledge. I suggest that these filmmakers challenge the conventional assumptions of historical discourse and refer to the possibilities of representing the past.

To show this, I will investigate the strategies the filmmakers employ to put their materials into a specific context and how these manifest the aesthetic and political approaches to telling and showing of history. In my study, the word *aesthetic* refers to the formal devices of the filmmakers which manifest their own forms of expressions. The word *political* refers to the approaches the filmmakers

adopt in opposition to dominant modes of explanation in constructing knowledge of the past.

The traditional view of history confines history to the study of the elite and dismisses the thoughts and deeds of the vast majority of people as irrelevant and unimportant. In *What is History?*, E. H. Carr discusses this matter and argues that “Caesar’s crossing of that petty stream, the Rubicon, is a fact of history, whereas the crossing of the Rubicon by millions of the other people before or since interests nobody at all” (1961:11). The everyday experiences of these people were not among those worth mentioning. Nearly forty years later, in *In Defense of History*, Richard J. Evans notes that “everything of meaning or importance to humanity in the present day now has a history, and that means everything of importance to all kinds of people, not just to a small elite of the educated and the powerful” (1999:142).

In his 1971 article, “Nietzsche, Genealogy and History,” Michel Foucault investigates the shift in history which takes into account the everyday and personal stories of ordinarily non-privileged people and suggests an approach to think about the ways in which these shifts operate. For him, the aim of traditional history to discover a pattern or a rational sequence of events in the past is impossible. Different areas cannot relate to one another. A new era is not born within and nurtured by its predecessor, but simply appears in a way that cannot be explained. Foucault claims that

effective history [a terms of Nietzsche’s] differs from traditional history in being without constants. [...] The traditional devices for constructing a comprehensive view of history and retracing the past as a patient and continuous development must be systematically dismantled (1992:153).

He sees history that does not display any pattern of evolution, because the past is nothing more than a series of discontinuities or unconnected developments. This

notion of history, Foucault claims, can only be accomplished by the “affirmation of knowledge as perspective” (1992:156).

Foucault argues that “historians take unusual pains to erase the elements in their work which reveal their grounding in a particular time and place, their preferences in a controversy - the unavoidable obstacles of their passion” (1992:156). He suggests that Nietzsche’s version of history “is explicit in its perspective and acknowledges its system of injustice. Its perception is slanted, being a deliberate appraisal, affirmation, or negation; it reaches the lingering and poisonous traces in order to prescribe the best antidote” (1992:157). In other words, all historians are biased in their interpretations. Everything that happened in history has to be seen from a perspective. He explains that “an event, consequently, is not a decision, a treaty, a reign, or a battle, but the reversal of a relationship of forces, the usurpation of power, the appropriation of a vocabulary turned against those who had once used it” (1992:154). So, the details of the historical events can be understood only through narrative interpretation as the primary forms of knowing and telling.

Rather than presenting comprehensive views of history, these narratives draw upon personal memories and suggest the subjective aspect of constructing the past. Sarlo speaks about an era in which the experience and representation of the subjects were criticized. She defines a crisis in the idea of subjectivity that began in the 1960s. For her, that period can be defined as “the death of the subject” for it suggests that there is no subject capable of being the subject of its first person narrative. However, in 1980s, a movement took place in the cultural and individual studies, which restored the primacy of the subject. In the approach to the problems and situations of the recent past, the experiences of the subject which were criticized before are welcomed. So, the subject has returned. (Sarlo 2007:332).

This return has affected historians as well. Historians attempted to ask different kinds of questions about the past and choose different objects of research. They began to take ordinary people's views of their own past more seriously. The movement for this change arose from a sense of inadequacy of the previous practices of history writing in the form of grand narratives. Historians now look for different sources to supplement the official documents, such as visual and oral practices.¹

As new areas of study and many new approaches for excavating and rethinking the remains of the past are opened up, new sources and subjects are involved in the practices of making histories. These expanded and diverse source materials provide filmmakers with a ground to employ their own visual strategies in their documentaries. These different uses of source materials illuminate the different areas of history that might otherwise have remained in darkness. These new histories are characterized by an intensely subjective usage of these sources. In my work, I will argue that the filmmakers of these three documentaries use sources for their own aesthetic and political purposes and their ways of using them derives principally from the concerns and questions of the present.

These filmmakers transform the personal stories of subjects into a form that constitutes a version of history that had not been given attention to by the agents of historical practices before. The priority they give to the memories and recollections of subjects as representations of the past exemplifies this subjective dimension and invokes the relationship between history and memory. The following snippets from the documentaries briefly illustrate this relationship and highlight the formal approach to speak about the ways this relationship will be investigated in the thesis.

¹ For example, see Jim Sharpe, "History from Below," in Peter Burke, *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001, and Robert F. Berkhofer, *Beyond the Great Story: History as Text and Discourse*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.

An elderly man, pointing with his forefinger, reads aloud the names of other prisoners that are written on the wall in the ruins of the Chacabuca concentration camp in the Atacama Desert, in which he was imprisoned from November 1973 until October 1974. The names have partially worn away but he remembers the traces that have been erased by time. By reading only the first letter of the name of a prisoner, he manages to remember the whole name. He also reads his own name on the wall, Luís Henríquez. The scene is from the documentary, *Nostalgia for the Light* (2010), by Patricio Guzmán. Henríquez is one of the prisoners, who bore witness to the disappearances and burials in the vast Atacama Desert under the Pinochet regime in Chile. He remembers not only the names but also the electric cables and the watchtowers. The ways the images are arranged in the narration of the events enable the filmmaker to transform the previous accounts of history.

A twelve-year-old child is writing in his diary in his room. His photograph is hanging on the wall of the room. This is a re-enactment from the documentary, *Diary Film, I was 12 in '56* (2006), by Boglárka Edvy (animator) and Sándor Silló (director), which is based on the diary of Gyula Csics, a child who lived in Budapest at the time of Hungarian uprising from 23 October to 4 November 1956. The child in the photograph is the one who actually wrote the diary in the past, but the child on the screen is an actor who plays the writer of the diary. The elder Gyula who lives in the present also remembers and recounts his memories fifty years later. The filmmakers digitally manipulate sections from his childhood diary and use them as source material to disclose their aesthetic language and political argument.

A young woman in high heels performs gymnastic feats on rings in her garden. "That's me," says an elderly voice over the black and white footage. The colored footage of this elderly woman shot in the 1990s is then introduced while she

proceeds to walk in a gingerly way around the property she had once owned, but is now uninhabited and overgrown. The scene is from the documentary, *The Notebook of a Lady* (1994), by the Hungarian filmmaker, Péter Forgács. Superimposing the past and present images of the woman together sixty years on, the filmmaker enables a dialogue between the elderly woman and her younger self.

The visual strategies which Guzmán, Forgács and Edvy and Silló employ in their documentaries call for multiple ways of reading the past and construct a dialogue between the past and present. Narrating personal histories through archival and re-created images, these filmmakers construct their arguments around the realm of personal experience and each of them present their own aesthetic language, differing in the manner they exploit their materials.

I have chosen these three documentaries for the aesthetic forms the filmmakers embrace in order to integrate not only subjects but also objects into their stories as sources of knowledge of the past. The filmmakers treat these materials in their own constructions of history, but each differs in their treatments.

Guzmán reuses the archival footage of the Pinochet regime in Chile and combines it with the testimonies of witnesses and the relatives of victims, together with experts, as source to manifest the nature of memory and relate it to different visions of the past. He does this by adopting a relational approach between things and beings which discloses itself through slow and soft transitional moments and juxtapositions of images. This relational approach enables him to combine different elements, so that he can prioritize the accounts of the subjects.

Edvy and Silló superimpose the reanimated drawings from Gyula's childhood diary written at the time of Hungarian uprising onto the archival footage of the period, together with the re-enactments, and an interview in which the elder Gyula

recounts his own memories. They shape and interpret the entries of the diary and alter the previous usages and meanings of the images by visualizing them. Their approach justifies the view that history is manufactured by the construction of narration rather than found.

Forgács reworks the home movies of an aristocratic lady and her present recollections together with the archival footage of Hungary in the 1930s and 1940s. He manipulates the home movie footage and gives it a form to construct his own way of telling history. He inserts the crucial moments of history into these personal realms by employing digital manipulations such as freezing frames, rewinding and tinting. By doing so, he also challenges the view that history is found rather than constructed.

Guzmán, Forgács and Edvy and Silló approach their materials in a subjective manner, and their imaginative practices combine with their priorities so as to involve the subjects in making their own histories. These strategies transform their subjects' narratives so that the filmmakers can construct their arguments. The visual forms of these personal histories become the basis of historical knowledge. These filmmakers stay loyal to the source materials they reused, but they also manipulate them for their own purposes in order to visualize history. They create their own methods to shape the uses of their subjects' memories.

By doing so, they all suggest different ways of thinking about history and memory rather than giving priority to one of them or establish a conflict between them. In order to understand these different ways of thinking, recent movements to problematize "history and memory" should be revisited. Therefore, I have organized my thesis in a way to expand on the literature on history and memory in each chapter.

I designed my thesis in three main chapters, each devoted to the formal analysis of one documentary. Chapters are structured in three similar subdivisions: the prologue in which the documentary films are introduced in relation with the main argument of the filmmaker, the section in which the differing aesthetic methods of the filmmakers are examined and, finally, the section in which the use of filmmakers' materials in shaping the past are elaborated as their own interventions and forms of visualizing the past.

CHAPTER 1

NOSTALGIA FOR THE LIGHT

2.1. Prologue: The Story of Stories

Wheels turn with a wiry sound. The shutters of a round metal device open creakily. Gears interlock. The triggering switch begins to spin quickly. Another device, which seems to be bigger than the previous wheels and gears, appears on the screen in part and moves towards a precise location with a slower spin. Then the mechanical teeth click. The sequences of the close up fragments of wheels and gears shown on the screen gives the impression that they are the components of that bigger device, but gives no clue to what this device might be until the last turn of the wheels. Only then, it's known that these are the wheels of a ladder, which revolve around the object to be revealed forthwith. The wheels turn once again with a wiry sound. This last turn of the wheels uncovers the object which the camera was following from the very first moment of its operation process. All the movements of the wheels and gears, which trigger one another, transmit the force and enable the object to operate. It is exactly the process of how an observatory dome opens so that outer space is observed. This unveiled object, slowly disclosed by close up fragments, is the old German telescope with which Patricio Guzmán opens his 2010 documentary, *Nostalgia for the Light*.

When the dome of the observatory opens, a lucent light comes in. The image of the old German telescope in the lucent light is juxtaposed with the image of outer space through a low-angle shot. The image of the old telescope fades out and the image of outer space - that is planet and its satellite - fades in. The following close up images emphasize the porous texture of the planet, which also reminds one of the texture of human bone. Long after this close up images of the planet are screened, the

link between the texture of the asteroids and the human bones (due to the fact that they are made up of identical material) is visualized, and thus its meaning within the story is revealed. The camera moves between the photographs of asteroids in space and shots of bone fragments of the victims of Pinochet's regime (Chile, 1973-1991) who remain unidentified. Up close the two are indistinguishable, underlying the notion of the cosmos as a unified whole comprising the same material. The underlying context of the close ups of the planet which appear on the screen in the opening sequences of the documentary is, then, revealed. This is one of the junctures of the documentary which serves to make sense of the story and manifests the relational approach which the filmmaker employs. Constructing a relationship among the different components of the story which the filmmaker aims to tell is the core of his strategy and gives form of his visual choices. Due to this relational approach, the editing style of Guzmán manifests itself through slow and soft transitional moments and juxtapositions of images.

In the following sequence, the image and the sound of musical tones of the fragmented planet are superimposed with the image and the sound of the rustling leaves of a tree. After the slow aural and visual superimposition, the viewer is positioned in a kitchen of a provincial home looking out from the window to a tree seen in half-light and half-shadow. Guzmán begins a voice-over narration to describe the old German telescope and introduces the viewer to the other objects of his childhood in Santiago, Chile. Each of the objects appears briefly and separately on the screen (a napkin folded on the plate, a sewing machine in front of the window, fruit and a pot on the old style stove, the planks of the floor, the shuttered window, an old radio, fabrics and lace). In this manner, the documentary suggests the degree to which the viewer is entering the personal vision of a narrator who is looking back.

By presenting the images of his childhood objects in the house and giving precedence to the telescope with which he was bonded by passion, Guzmán narrates his childhood house as his first universe and links this universe to another, which is bigger than the one he was born in. In *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard argues that “the house shelters day-dreaming, [...] protects the dreamer, [...] and] allows one to dream in peace” (1969:6). He speaks about the memories of the places in which one dwelled in his/her childhood. These memories are relived as day-dreams, so that these places of the past remain in one for all time. Guzmán recalls the objects and the time of hope which are forever engraved in his memory from the time of his childhood. He narrates his childhood house as a place detached from the rest of the world in the same way Bachelard conceptualizes the house, so that his house furnishes the framework for recollection and reveals the illusion of motionlessness and peace. In doing so, the image of the house and the objects in it provides Guzmán with a ground to recall what he thought and dreamed in peace in his childhood and illuminates the memories that are housed there.

The emphasis on the past-ness of the objects - both in the house and the ancient telescope - and the way they are arranged and narrated suggest that memory is going to be the starting point to engage the viewer with the story. While the camera shows the household objects, Guzmán gives personal accounts of his childhood experiences; how at that time Chile was a peaceful place, how he loved science fiction stories and lunar eclipses, how he watched the sun through a piece of smoked glass, and then how this peaceful life was swept away with the coup d'état.

The image of the tree, which was seen partly in the previous shot, is shown on the screen in whole, positioning the viewer outside of the house, so the viewer is not in the childhood home any more. Another superimposition from the image of the

tree to the moving images of star dust appears on the screen. Guzmán speaks about the existence of scientists from all over the planet who created the biggest telescope in the world and of the group of astronomers who have been observing the sky with this telescope in the Atacama Desert in Chile, even after the coup had banned all their studies and research. The re-enactment scene in the abandoned observatory demonstrates this devastating historical period and enhances not only the imagination of the happenings but also informs one of the formal strategies that the filmmaker employs in his documentary; that is, his way of integrating objects into the story.

The long sequence of the old German telescope in the opening of the documentary and the objects in the childhood house provide the ground upon which the filmmaker constructs his argument. Guzmán shows these objects from his childhood and engages the viewer in the prologue of his story. However, he exploits the personal accounts in his documentary not to tell a story entirely about himself, but to tell a story of the stories which overlaps with the not so distant but veiled history of Chile.

In *Context is Everything: The Nature of Memory*, Susan Engel argues that “one’s memories begin as internal experiences; an image, a fragment of recalled conversation, or a vivid scene. [...] The more one has communicated a given memory, the more it becomes a story” (1999:147-148). The filmmaker begins telling his story by using an object of his adolescent world, the old German telescope and ends the story with the marbles, which are, I presume, from his childhood, and are artfully arranged for the viewer. The likeness of the marbles and the planets in terms of their forms and numbers is used as a metaphor to suggest the presence of the Chilean in the vastness of the things in the galaxy, and to direct the viewer’s attention to the connection among the objects within his story. My aim is to explore

which aesthetic strategies have been employed to give form and meaning to the stories whilst, so to speak, the filmmaker's initial memories travel through the recent past of Chile with the multiple images and the stories and end with the marbles he's found in his pocket.

Nostalgia for the Light permits a revisitation of the nature of memory in order to relate it to different visions about the past and investigates the ways that memories form the basis of historical knowledge. I will analyze the historians' uses of memory in visual media and the way it structures the telling of history. To do this, I have organized the structure of my study to explore the sources and the approaches to the knowledge of the past and the formal strategies which manifest the filmmaker's aesthetic and political purposes.

2.2. Formal Analysis: Constructing the Past in Visual Practices

The story narrated in *Nostalgia for the Light* is layered and enriched by what the filmmaker, in an interview, called "characters." (Guest and Ledesma 2011:22) Guzmán draws upon the accounts of his characters as a source to justify the story he has scripted. Even though the story is scripted, the characters are not fabricated, nor are the stories they recount. All the characters are in a specific way related to Atacama Desert in their searches for a past, but they differ in their aims and methods. The accounts of the characters consist of the astronomers' and archeologists' thoughts, the testimonies of the prisoners who survived from the concentration camps and the testimonies of the women and children whose relatives have "been disappeared."

The astronomers examine the most distant and oldest galaxies to find the origin of space by observing the sky from the observatory domes located in the

desert. They study light from outer space, which means that what they are seeing in their telescopes is something that already happened but is only now reaching earth. Archeologists scour the earth of the desert and uncover ancient civilizations. They study the rock paintings and beautifully preserved bodies of the pre-Columbian peoples who travelled across the spare landscape. And women relentlessly dig through the bowels of the earth for twenty eight years. They wander the vast desert with tiny shovels, looking for the remains of their sons, brothers, daughters and husbands who disappeared at the time of Pinochet regime. The filmmaker takes their accounts further and provides each character a ground to communicate with the others so that their accounts can form the narrative structure of his story.

Gaspar Galaz, the astronomer, in an interview, is asked to compare the motives of the women in their search for the past with the astronomers'. The filmmaker employs the same strategy in his interviews with the archeologist, Lautaro Núñez, and the relatives of the victims, Vicky Saavedra and Violeta Berrios, asking them to compare their own motives with the others and to think on the reason of their existence in the very same place. Through incorporating the statements of each character, Guzmán clarifies that the desert reveals itself as the main site for all the characters because of its unique characteristic; the lack of humidity which enables the translucency of the sky and provides astronomers easy access to their searches, and allows the archeologist to unveil the remains of the ancient lives (showing few signs of deterioration). The region's elevation and lack of humidity create perfect conditions for preservation, which means the desiccated remains of the bodies dumped into mass graves are still out there to be found. The harsh heat of the sun keeps human remains intact: those of pre-Columbian mummies, 19th century explorers and miners, the remarkably preserved remnants of native civilizations and

the remains of the political prisoners who were assassinated during the dictatorship in the surrounding camps, before being scattered in the sand. Guzmán assembles these different elements of the desert into the story. The interviews with the characters bring out the importance of the desert, which enables them to search and deal with a past that has different meanings and different perspectives for each. He weaves these different perspectives of the past into his own narrative, and exploits the accounts of the characters in order to structure his own argument.

As the filmmaker speaks, in the voice over, about the women whose paths had never crossed with the astronomers, the inside of an observatory dome and the technical details are pictured on the screen. The superimposition of the words and the images aim to signify the relationship building between the different components of the story. This relational approach manifests itself in the formal patterns of the documentary as well. The repeated patterns in different locations such as the identical porous texture of the planet and the cracked surface of the desert, the scenes which dissolve into other scenes as if they are interlocking and the juxtapositions as in the opening sequences are arranged to emphasize the visual and aural transitions. The filmmaker associates things and beings to bring to light unimagined connections. By using metaphors and contrasts in its plot, *Nostalgia for the Light* challenges the viewer to make sense out of its disparate elements.

These elements such as mummies and telescopes, marbles and galaxies, blue sky and darkness, traces of the past and projections of the future, terrestrial pain and celestial peace are linked by exploiting the accounts of the different characters. The formal strategies employed in the documentary form the narrative structure as well. This is the case for Luís Henríquez, a prisoner who has survived one of Pinochet's

concentration camps. Henríquez owes his survival to his passion for astronomy that was instilled in him by one of the scientists in the prison.

One formal strategy that the filmmaker employs in the documentary is to return to the authentic location and interview the survivors in these locations. Henríquez reads aloud the names of other prisoners that are written on the wall in the ruins of the Chacabuca camp. By only reading the first letter of the name, he manages to recall the whole name. He also reads his own name on the wall. He is one of the prisoners who bore witness to the disappearances and burials in the vast Atacama Desert.

In his interview with the filmmaker at the site of the ruined camp, Henríquez recounts that he was a part of a group who observed the sky at the time of his imprisonment. Before the interview, the silhouette of him observing the blue sky with the naked eye appears on the screen without revealing his identity. Then archival footage and black and white photographs of a ruined camp appear on the screen. In the voice over, Guzmán tells the viewer that the ruined camp on the screen is the site of houses of 19th century miners and used by the military of the Pinochet regime as a concentration camp afterwards. The archival images of the camp and the color moving images of the camp which have recorded for the film appear on the screen in a wide-angle shot, so that it is understood that they are the same place. Then Henríquez begins to give his personal accounts. Wandering, crouching, showing, even drawing, his performance reveals that the camp seen on the screen is the one in which he was imprisoned.

The arrangement of archival footage renders visible what is essentially absent and points to the evidential status of this absence. However, in the case of *Nostalgia for the Light*, the archival footage and still photographs are not reused only to verify

and convince the viewer that the footage is what it is claimed to be. The documentary points to the role of these images as part of bearing witness in order to reinforce the testimony.

In *The Image and the Witness: Trauma, Memory and Visual Culture*, Frances Guerin and Roger Hallas argue that “within the context of bearing witness, material images do not merely depict the historical world, they participate in its transformation” (2007:4). The voice of the filmmaker over the archival footage and photographs refers to the previous usage of the camp as a 19th century mining camp. Henríquez’s testimony transforms the viewer’s perception of the archival images of the mining camp to the concentration camp in which he was imprisoned. The names that are written on the wall become visible when Henríquez reads them and then his act of bearing witness is visualized by the filmmaker. By constructing a device as he did at the time of his imprisonment in the camp to observe the sky, Henríquez performs his experiences in the camp. So, the way the images are arranged and structured in the narration transform the previous accounts of history by making visible what is absent.

In *Nostalgia for the Light*, the way the filmmaker arranges the archival images in the performed act of witnessing changes the characters of the documentary into subjects. Guzmán approaches his materials in a subjective manner, but also provides the characters with a context in which they perform their lived experiences. As Beatriz Sarlo points out in *Time Past: The Culture of Memory and Subjective Turning*, “the subject not only has experiences but can communicate them, construct their meaning, and, in doing so, affirm himself as a subject” (2007:338). By asking Henríquez to testify on camera, Guzmán imbues him with agency. His personal accounts, which are performed by him and interpreted by the filmmaker, are woven

into the narratives of others from that historical period. Guzmán shapes the uses of memory, so that the personal story of Henríquez, which he performs and narrates, becomes the source that can form the basis of historical knowledge.

Guzmán gives precedence to the recollections of subjects and provides them with a ground to perform their extreme experiences. By reusing archival and photographic images, he narrates their personal accounts and constructs his argument around the realm of their personal experiences. Thus, the strategies which Guzmán employs in his documentary call for multiple ways of narrating the past. As Engel points out, “one’s vivid personal image, scene or story illuminates [...] the larger, more impersonal story of which it is a part” (1999:149). In *Nostalgia for the Light*, the personal accounts of the characters overlap with a larger and impersonal version of the events.

The specific features and demands of that kind of knowledge of the past become salient in the public sphere. And that knowledge has the potential to challenge the conventional assumptions of writing history. The source of historical knowledge and the subject matter are challenged because of subjects’ struggles in making their own histories. Engel speaks about the ways in which those struggles shape memory. According to her view, “each memory rests in some way or another, on the internal experience of recollection” (1999:3) and it then, mostly, “makes [it’s] way from the inner reaches of [the] minds to the world of conversation, books, therapy, and history” (1999:11). The inner experience of personal recollections could, then, be received as only one aspect of the memory process. Through its representation, whether in the form of an image, or a written or verbal expression, the personal experience of the past interacts with the other uses of the past. These aspects

of the act of remembering shape the everyday uses of memory and the way to access knowledge of the past.

When Luís Henríquez put his memories into words, when he redrew the mechanism of the telescope he used at the time of his imprisonment, his performance reshapes the way of understanding the history of that period and “the context for the memory becomes historical, rather than personal” (Engel 1999:153). The published drawings of the concentration camp in which Miguel Lawner, the architect, was imprisoned also work in the same way. Lawner memorized the dimensions of the interior and exterior dimensions of the camp at the time of his imprisonment so that he could leave testimony. Since the camp has been dismantled and all the traces have been erased, his drawings represent the image of the concentration camp in which he had been imprisoned. However, the enacted images do not only correspond to the evidential status of his act of bearing witness, but point to the transformative aspect of bearing witness. The filmed pages of his published book reinforce his acting in the rooms of his own house in the present, as he performed how he measured the dimensions in the past. Lawner records a past which he has to reconstruct in the present.

Nostalgia for the Light employs not only archival footage and published drawings of the dismantled camps but also a wide range of still photographs of the workers in the mines expunged from the history of Chile, the photographs of victims arranged in a memorial, the family photographs of the victims and the photographs of the women who search for the remains of the disappeared. The images function less as the evidence of what is being narrated than they perform as an impulse to interpret. As the story of the documentary is scripted, the witnesses perform their own memories. This strategy suggests the view that the images cannot act as

witnesses in their own right without the intervention of the words. These interventions come from somewhere other than the image itself. What make the images seem to have that kind of status are their relations with the performing subject. In *Nostalgia for the Light*, the source of the interventions comes from the filmmaker whose priority is to weave the performed accounts of the victims into the story. Knitting his argument around these personal stories, Guzmán reveals his high opinion of the subject and the role ascribed to it in the public sphere. His prioritizing of the subjective dimension signifies the growing presence of subject making their own histories.

This subjective dimension takes place extensively in cinematic and visual arts. In the approach to the problems and situations of the recent past, the experiences of the subject which were criticized before are welcomed today. In *Nostalgia for the Light*, the testimonies of the women who search for the remains of the disappeared in the desert or the narratives of the personal experience of the victims do not weaken the argument deployed in the documentary. Rather, the primacy of the subject in the construction of the narratives is restored. Sarlo argues that these changes in perspectives arise from the changes in the resources of historiography. The impulses which drive these changes are significant in highlighting the relationship between matter and manner in *Nostalgia for the Light*. The matter is how the documentary uses history's formal tools and aims in order to form the source of historical knowledge, and the manner is how the filmmaker uses memory in visual practices to justify this claim. These impulses are worthy to be considered.

2.3. Interventions: Approaches to the Knowledge of the Past

The historians of the 19th century were dreaming of a unified vision of the past that would incorporate all its fragments. So they arranged these fragments around a “legitimate” principle that presumed to resolve all discontinuities and contradictions in order to construct their knowledge of the past. This was the methodology of historiography that was used to write history’s grand narratives. However, because of its own formal and institutional limitations, this vision of history has changed. Some of the historians and critics of the second half of the 20th century turned toward a more expansive conception of their practice and included oral histories and testimonies and other nontraditional discourses in their studies. These works incorporated practices of everyday life in the study of the past. They wrote a form of history that not only included the disruptive and glorious moments of the past, but one that included other experiences and places, previously invisible ones such as marginal subjects, and other discourses such as testimonies, home movies, diaries, letters, journals etc. ²

In the sequence of the sound of the spoons caused by the wind of the desert in *Nostalgia for the Light*, the scene shows the shoes, skulls and tools of the nomadic families whose tradition is not to be buried into the ground but lie on the ground with their all belongings. Núñez, the archeologist, points out that Chile represses not only its recent past but also distant past, never acknowledging that the Indians had been marginalized and this marginalization has been kept as a state secret. For him, nothing has been done to understand why in the 19th century saltpeter became an important part of economy, yet today there’s nothing left. A series of still photographs of the workers who worked in the salt mines are superimposed with the

² See *The Practice of Everyday Life* by Michel de Certeau, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* by Michel Foucault .

voice-over of the archeologist who speaks about this repressed past of Chile. Their remnants in the desert which are shown in a wide-angle shot emphasize their smallness in the vast desert but also suggest the image of a trace of their presence raising the question of their previous exclusion and invisibility.

Beatriz Sarlo argues that “the principles which constitute the methodology of historiography as a discipline determine the modes of reconstruction of the knowledge of the past” (2005:12). To construct a past through empirical evidence might be one mode and to construct it through first-person narratives might be another. These modes always form the understanding of what the future will know about the past, who will have a continuing voice and who will be expunged. *Nostalgia for the Light* speaks about the more recent past of Chile which is repressed. The prisoners of the Pinochet regime, Lawner and Henríquez, recall their memories of the cells at the abandoned 19th century saltpeter mining town of Chacabuco. So, too, do the women who search the desert for their loved ones’ remains. Within the expansion of the practice of historians and critics, these expunged and nonvisible subjects which Núñez speaks about become one of the subject matters of the recent past of Chile and have a continuing voice.

New perspectives, as Sarlo argues, arise from the changes in the sources of knowledge used in the discipline of historiography. The construction of accounts of experience in the first person narrative as one source is not a mistrustful act that weakens the accounts in the narrative as it was thought before. On the contrary, these first person accounts transform previous methods of writing history. The testimonies of Vicky Saavedra and Violeta Berrios, for that reason, cannot be criticized for their lack of authority, the authority that was the historian’s in the past. Neither can the filmmaker be criticized for his first person narrative which structures his story or for

giving priority to first person testimonies. The grand narratives which aim to narrate the events of the past in a homogenous way have no adequate explanation of the events of the past that they have chosen not to record.

The loss of confidence in grand narratives made historians and critics look to other sources like testimonies and the subjective discourses of memory. If for a long time historians distrusted the first person in constructing the past, now a moment has arrived in which the first person is confirmed as being very important and privileged in the reconstruction of history. The first person narrative became the central point for explaining the past, especially in the countries that exercised extreme repression and violence. The role of testimony has been important for knowing and condemning the atrocious acts committed in several dictatorships, especially when “official” voices are being used to justify oppression. It is also true, at the same time, that in many places testimony became the most important and valid discourse to speak about the past. It constituted the legitimate narrative of the past, leaving all other approaches in secondary places and challenging the older concepts of the past. The accounts of the witnesses are now being considered within this expansion of the concept of the past.

The broadening of the subject matter of writing history at the same time points to another expansion of what is considered primary sources (defined as an original document or an artifact that was there at the time of subject of study). This is what Sarlo mentions when she explains the changes in modes of history as being the consequence of changes in the sources to be inferred and interpreted. In *Nostalgia for the Light*, the empirical evidence of the astronomers and the testimonies of the witnesses do not supplement each other but stand adjacent. *Nostalgia for the Light* takes up two concepts of the past. One is constructed by the astronomers through the

world's largest optical telescope in pursuit of scientific knowledge and evidence to support their theories. The other, ongoing since 1990, is undertaken by the relatives of the victims of Pinochet dictatorship. Both searches, as the documentary points out, involve bodies that are material and celestial.

The concept of the past for the astronomers, Galaz describes, is determined by the aim of the astronomer as to understand the origin of the cosmos. The telescope is considered to be the scientific instrument to get knowledge of the distant past of the cosmos. This reflects the conventional methods of the historian who construct knowledge of the past. Galaz defines how time is perceived, pointing out the impossibility of the present. For him, everything perceived is in the past, "even it is a matter of a millionth of a second." The light reflected by a camera lens or an eye can only be perceived later, as it takes a moment to reach him. The present is always in the past and does not exist, so the past is ever present. The events of the present have already become the past by the time the senses register them. This is the idea pursued by astronomers who look for the light that has travelled millions of years to reach their telescopes. This is also similar with the story of Miguel Lawner who memorized the dimensions of the entire concentration camp in which he was imprisoned. Lawner could redraw the layout of the camp from memory upon his release. The events of his past have formed his present. Not at the time he memorized the dimensions in the past, but at the time when he begins to remember them. Miguel who already recorded a past is in the present like the astronomers who record a past which they have to reconstruct in the present.

Looking at the stars, for astronomers, means observing the lights of stars, which have ceased to exist. They look at the past, because they aim to see the traces of light, the traces of the events which are longer there. Malin Wahlberg, in her

article “The Trace: Framing the Presence of the Past in *Free Fall*,” argues that “‘the trace’ relates both to the materiality of an imprint and to the experience of an irrevocable past. It is conceived of as an indexical sign, an existential operator interrelating image, history, and memory” (2011:119). The aesthetic relation between the concept of the past for astronomers and for the women’s search for the traces of the past in the vastness (defined as an endless process), is one of Guzmán’s constructions. The filmmaker, in his interview with Núñez, shows the remnants of ancient civilizations in the desert. The dryness and the salt preserve matter, Núñez says, so the past is more accessible than anywhere else. The drawings on the rocks from ancient civilizations, the mummies which lie in the open air, as well as the buried bones of victims are shown as traces of the past, which the desert facilitates access to. These concepts of the past are constructed in relation to traces of the past and how they form evidence toward the knowledge of history in the documentary.

The filmmaker presents evidence to support his thoughts. But at the same time by giving voice to the subjects, he questions the very source of the evidence (in the sense that they can deliver the facts). In *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History*, Robert Rosenstone argues that documentaries which provide “a distinctly new relationship to and a new way of making meaning of the traces of the past” raise “questions about the very evidence on which [the] knowledge of the past depends” (1995:12, 199). Guzmán is loyal to evidence, not excluding the conventional uses of visual evidence; however he raises questions about evidence by giving priority to the accounts of victims. When Núñez speaks about the hidden past of Chile and the miners of the 19th century, the archival photographs are shown as the evidence of that hidden past. But in his interviews with the women who dig the desert for a particular purpose, the photographs of their

search in the desert are not presented as the evidence of their accounts. The accounts of Vicky Saavedra about her feelings when some parts of her brother's skull is found are juxtaposed with her brother's photograph which is placed in a special context on the surface of the desert. The use of the photograph in a special context is the intervention by the filmmaker not a component of her performance. Again, when Núñez speaks about the unknown burials, the archival footage of a mass grave (Pisagua Mass Grave, uncovered June 1990), serves less as evidence than to reinforce his accounts.

The historian weighs evidence, makes sense out of it, explains the inexplicable and constructs a meaningful past. In *Nostalgia for the Light* what is seen on the screen are selected images of events carefully arranged into sequences to tell a particular story and make an argument. This is much like the formal strategy of the historian who pursues the meaningful past and constructs it rather than invents it. Guzmán constructs the meaning of the material being conveyed with his interventions, and also shapes them into a narrative.

Rosenstone argues that “the documentary ‘constitutes’ facts by selecting traces of the past and enfolding them into a narrative like the work of a written history” (2006:70). The filmmaker in *Nostalgia for the Light* constitutes his facts by picking out the traces of the past from interviews of testimony and highlighting them as important and worthy of inclusion in a narrative, instead of indulging in inventing facts. In his interview with Guest and Ledesma, he confesses that if had not been able to find the characters and their stories in the actual life of Chile, his scripted story would be a fictional tale, a fiction film that makes up traces of the past. (2011:20)

In the way they use and transform the evidence, documentaries may challenge the conventional assumptions of historical discourse, which sees history as a

particular kind of practice, one that insists on a certain kind of historical truths and exclude others. Traditional historians are taught how to find the facts of the past, then exploit them to construct narratives about that past. Hayden White points to the limitations of this traditional history and suggests possibilities for representing the past in different ways.

White, in *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, treats historical work “as a verbal structure in the form of narrative prose discourse” (1975:ix). For him, written history is a mode of thought, a process, a particular way of using the traces of the past to make the past meaningful in the present. The literary form of these stories constructs this meaningful past. Written history is one way of approaching the actualities of the past, and the screen could be another form of approaching it. When the personal stories and testimonies are represented through audio visual means as another form of dealing with the past, memory struggles for a place within a cultural tradition from which it has long been excised.

In *Nostalgia for the Light*, the way the visual materials are arranged gives the impression that the whole film is fashioned similar to the way that the fragmented image of the planet and the porous texture of the human skull undergird the story. Later on, the astronomer, George Preston, in his interview with the filmmaker, reveals that the calcium in the stars is the very same that human beings have in their bones. This supports the filmmaker’s theory and enables him to come to a conclusion that all beings are made from the same material. Guzmán treats Preston and all other characters as the active agents of historical writing. In that respect, he shares the same approach with the historian, who treats the process as an “active engagement of

transforming” visual footage and materials, rather than delivery of facts and evidence (Zimmermann 2008b:16).

The aesthetic strategy of the filmmaker supports and enhances each story and theory with the visual materials and reveals his allegiance to the traces of lived experiences. Guzmán is loyal to the evidential aspect of any argument and he exploits these materials in the service of them. However, he employs this strategy by acknowledging the agency of the subjects and constructs a context for each to have a voice. In the voice over, Guzmán comments that for 17 years the Pinochet regime assassinated and buried the bodies of thousands of political prisoners. They then dug them up and disposed of the remains elsewhere or threw them into the sea, so that the bodies could never be found. Guzmán emphasizes that what the women of Calama provide the archeologists with, while searching in the desert, are indeed human bones, not skeletons but the fragments of skulls, of feet, shards of long bones. By employing these strategies in *Nostalgia for the Light*, Guzmán shows how these women’s searches intertwine with that of the astronomers who seek celestial bodies.

Towards the end of the documentary, the museum to which his mother took Guzmán to see the huge skeleton of a whale when he was a child appears on the screen. He tells how he, in his childhood, imagined that it was “the roof of a house where other whales could live.” By integrating the skeleton of the whale in the museum into his narrative, Guzmán evokes the view that the cosmos is the roof of all kind of bodies. In doing so, he emphasizes his political approach and raises the question whether the skeletons of the bodies, which are the remains of the disappeared by the Pinochet dictatorship that have not been identified, will someday earn museum space like the whale or given a burial they deserve, instead of being preserved in boxes on shelves.

By putting together sequences from the past in *Nostalgia for the Light*, the filmmaker not only retrieves, preserves and disseminates the past, but also constructs it with visual and aural materials to evoke certain insights. By associating the stars with the unidentified fragments of the human skulls, Guzmán shows his own aesthetic notions about how to construct the historical work through practices of memory.

CHAPTER 3

DIARY FILM: I WAS 12 IN '56

3.1. Prologue: The Story of a Child

The black and white moving images of the violin are grainy. The sound of the metronome is superimposed with the close up images of the violin. A child plays a violin on the screen in the next shot. The images are colored, but they are still grainy. The child refers to a precise past time in the voice over. The radio announces this time as a moment of uprising. The black and white images illustrate what the radio says. An image of a group of people demonstrating with flags along the boulevard appears on the screen. The moving images of the child's reflection in a pool of water in which he throws a stone are superimposed with the images of people demonstrating on the boulevard, which had been announced on the radio in the previous shot. The child who throws the stone and the people demonstrating seem to exist at the same time and place. As the stone makes circular waves in the pool of water, the child recounts that he went to his violin class. An animated drawing of the buildings on this boulevard is superimposed on the images of people who march along the boulevard. Then the still photograph of Gyula Csics, pictured with his violin and bow, is superimposed on the previous sequence. These are the images with which Boglárka Edvy (animator) and Sándor Silló (director) open their 2006 documentary, *Diary Film: I was 12 in '56*, which is based on the 1956 diary of Gyula Csics, a child who lived in Budapest at the time of the Hungarian uprising. The child holding the violin in the opening sequence is Horváth Attila, a performer who plays Gyula in all the enacted scenes in the documentary. However, the violin is not played by the child in these scenes, but by another performer, Bujtor Balázs. Another child

actor, Bárány Bence, reads some fragments from the diary of Gyula in the voice over.

When the child playing Gyula comes home after one of his usual violin classes, he learns from one of his neighbors that people are demonstrating in the streets. He instantly looks through the door of the building. Wide-angle archival footage of the people protesting is superimposed on black and white still close-ups of people demonstrating on the boulevard. By sequencing the images of the performer playing the child and the archival images of the people, the filmmakers construct the continuity of time, so that the scene gives the impression that the character Gyula actually sees people demonstrating. The child reads one of the leaflets, which was distributed in the demonstration and brought home by one of his relatives and then goes out to learn more about the happenings on the boulevard and to see them with his own eyes. In the voice over, he recounts what he sees on the street: three big trucks carrying university students and a boy who was standing on top of the vehicle and along with the others shouting out slogans demanding the withdrawal of the Russian presence in Hungary and a change of government. The black and white images on the screen show exactly what the child says.

The blurry images of Gyula who sharpens his pencil while he is sitting at the table in his own room are shown next. His voice, saying what his mother told him about the diary which his best friend, Jansci Kovacs, has started writing, is over the close up images of his fingers, the sharpener and the pencil. The child who plays Gyula in this reenactment scene arranges his possessions on the table and opens a notebook to prepare to write. In the voice over, the child states that he decided to write a diary like his best friend. Animated pieces of the images of the words burst

out of his notebook and merge on the screen and then compose the first page of Gyula's actual diary he had written when he was twelve years old.

As the image of the fragmented page of his diary is superimposed on top of the image of the child in his room, the voice of an elderly person is heard. He gives his account about his childhood home in Budapest. He is Gyula who bore witness to the events of the past time, which is referred to in the opening sequences. Gyula remembers the number of the building he lived in and the name of the street. In his article "Notes to My Childhood Diary," Gyula Csics speaks of his childhood house as a "typical [...] tenement building, with the characteristic open corridors around the inner courtyard and stairways at the front and back. The back stairways led up to the attic and down to the cellars" (2006a:64). Moving images of children playing in a courtyard and the image of the door of the house are superimposed with the voice-over of elder Gyula, saying that the house he was born in is the place where he and Jansci grew up and played together. They were thick as thieves when the events broke out. Two formal portraits of the actual children are superimposed with the digitally deteriorated color close ups of the wall of the courtyard. Then, silhouettes of the two children who wander around together are superimposed with this wall, implying the border which separates them from the rest of the world.

Gaston Bachelard, in *The Poetics of Space*, offers a vertical image of the house which is created by the "polarity of the attic and cellar" (1994:17-18). The reason for going up to the attic is not only for it shelters one from the weather but it also makes apparent the whole structure of the house. The attic, for Bachelard, refers to clarity and light. The cellar, on the contrary, signifies the darker aspect of the house. The elder Gyula recalls the attic and the cellars of the house he lived in and the reasons they were used by him and the other tenants. The attic of the building

consists of the drying rooms which are divided up with wooden planking and the cellars were being used both as an air-raid shelter and a place for the tenants to store or hide their possessions. Not only does this vertical construction of the house permit the elder Gyula to recall his childhood memories, it also enables the filmmakers to imagine and visualize the house as the space of his childhood memories.

By giving voice to Gyula, who lives in the present, to speak of his past, the filmmakers do not aim to make him describe his childhood house. Rather, by visualizing the inner courtyard of the house from an unusual angle and superimpose it with the voice-over as he recalls his places of memory, they ask the viewer to grasp the qualities of space and the intimacy of the house. The overhead image of the inner courtyard visualizes the whole structure of the house. The images of the upper floors and the inner courtyard, the wall and the door which separate the house from the outside are superimposed with the sound of the laughter and the chants of a child playing happily in the courtyard. The cellar shelters the child when the city is shelled. He learns news from his neighbors who come from the outside. The house gives the child Gyula the protection to learn and understand what happens around him without suffering. The cellar gives the child a refuge to pursue his cheerfulness even though it is the darker aspect of the house. The child stays in the safety of his house when the outside world is torn apart. These overhead images of the house are organized in a way to show that the child Gyula has the protection and the bliss that his house grants.

The elder Gyula recounts that he hid his diary in the cellar of his house after he gave up writing. Not only the story of the diary, but also the process of making the documentary, in which he was involved as the writer of the diary and the one who bore witness to the events, is expressed in the voice over. The filmmakers provide

him with a ground to explain the kinds of material they employed in their documentary; these are the archival materials of the period preserved in official archives, “the pseudo-archive materials” which are staged for the documentary and the animation scenes constructed by animating the child’s drawings from his diary. The images of the fragments of the diary which was written in the past, the images of the re-creations of the two children playing together and the images of the animated child-like drawings of Gyula from the diary are superimposed with his voice-over. The visual superimposition of the animated drawings of a boy who waves the national flag within a group of people demonstrating with the actual archive images of the moment suggest one of the visual methods the filmmakers employ in *Diary Film*.

The staged close up images of the face of the child who is lying and sleeping in his bed appear on the screen. In the voice over, the child recounts that he could still hear the people shouting outside. At the same time, archival footage of the people demonstrating and attacking the statue of Stalin in the dark is screened. The statue, toppled by digital manipulation, is shown after. An image of the young performer appears for a brief moment as if he is looking upward to see the huge statue of Stalin which is being toppled. The images of these events occurring in the night are then intercut with the images of the child playing Gyula sleeping in his bed, as if the child can see the happenings that night in his dream. As if he imagines all these scenes in the safety of his home.

Edvy and Silló end the entries of the first day of the uprising written in the diary with these constant visual and aural superimpositions. The grainy presence of the images points to their past-ness and gives a hint of their possible sources. These images are derived from their preserved places and torn out from their own contexts.

The black and white moving images of the violin, the images of the people demonstrating on the boulevard, the image of the three big trucks carrying university students, the image of the boy who was standing on top of the vehicle and along with the others shouting out slogans seem to be derived from an archive. These images are reused in *Diary Film* to represent the accounts the child written in his diary. The still photograph of the child might be taken out from his personal album and reused to disclose the child as the narrator of the events, emphasizing the subjective dimension. To construct the story, Edvy and Silló give new meanings to these materials by avoiding the previous meanings and purposes which their original owners once had.

Not all the images that refer to a definite past time suggest their archival sources and previous usages. The grainy presence of the colored moving images of the child and the violin in the opening scene, the images of the reflection of the child in the pool and the image of the child who sharpens his pencil, who writes his diary and is asleep in his bed, emphasize their past-ness. However, these images are staged scenes. They are reconstructed by the filmmakers to represent the lived but absent moments of the personal story of the child. Edvy and Silló trace these absent presences in the childhood diary of Gyula and imagine and form them, so that they make them visible in the narration of the events they constructed. By sequencing the images of the child who throws a stone into the pool and the images of the Gyula who gazes through the door of the building with the people demonstrating on the boulevard, the filmmakers manipulate time to give the impression that the child who plays Gyula sees the events of the day which already had happened. Edvy and Silló do not aim to persuade the viewer that these moving images are recorded at the time of the uprising in Hungary when Gyula had written his diary. Nor do they conceal

the reenactments which they employ. The imaginary scenes never short-circuit the flow and disturb the authenticity of the events. They evoke the role of imagination in the image making process.

By animating the drawings that are drawn by Gyula in his childhood diary, Edvy and Silló disclose how they value imagination in their usage of images. These drawings represent the moments that Gyula has experienced, what he heard from the third persons with whom he lived in the same tenement and what he heard from the radio. In one scene, the animated drawing of a Russian tank with a red star is superimposed with the actual archival image of the boulevard. The animated tank seems to be passing along the boulevard. In the voice over, the child says that he could see the tanks from the gateway of his house. When the radio in the voice over says that the trams are knocked down in the city center, actual archive images of the trams are superimposed with the animated drawings of the knocked down trams drawn in the diary. The child draws the things in the diary he saw around but also draws the things he heard about, imagining how they would be. The filmmakers not only animate the drawings but also superimpose them on the actual and “pseudo” images as well as with the voice-over of Gyula who lives in the present and voice-over of the child who enacts his childhood in order to construct their own version of history of the past time which overlaps with the child’s.

The opening sequences of the documentary imply a personal history of the child. They also introduce the formal strategies which the filmmakers employ: their diverse use of archival images and the intertwining of them both re-created images and new sounds. Edvy and Silló reuse archival footage, stage reenacted scenes and animate the drawings of the child. By superimposing them upon one another, they compose images of multiple layers. The superimposition of the image of the people

marching on the boulevard with the image of the reflection of the child in the pool, of the animated images from the diary with the staged images of the child writing his diary in his own room and the voice of the child and the elder Gyula over the images exemplify this particular approach.

The personal entries of the diary become the source for the filmmakers in the construction of their version of history. The ways they reuse the images shape their vision of history. The filmmakers select the moments from the diary and edit out the happenings that do not contribute to the flow of their own narrative. They visualize these moments and enable the elder Gyula, who bore witness to the past events in his diary, to recall them. They stay strictly loyal to the events of the moments they selected from the diary, but they overtly manipulate the images. They frame the events of the Hungarian uprising from the child's point of view, but by employing their own visual strategies, the filmmakers emphasize how their representation of that past intertwines with that of the child's.

Diary Film provides a framework to argue the nature of both archival still photographs and moving image footage, and to relate them to different visions about the past and investigate the ways they form the basis of historical knowledge. Edvy and Silló superimpose the reanimated drawings of Gyula's childhood diary written at the time of the Hungarian uprising with the archival footage of the period, the reenactments, and the interview in which he recounts his own memories. My aim is to explore the visual strategies which Edvy and Silló have employed in their documentary. To this end, I will analyze the use of archival material and the way it structures the telling of history and expresses the film makers' aesthetic and political purposes.

3.2. Formal Analysis: Re-crafting the Past in Visual Practices

The child simply records everything he could manage to glean “around him” in the diary. Here the words “around him” refer to the boundary of his interior world and literally means

the six-story tenement building in which he lived [...] just a block away from one of the locations of the fighting on the very first day, the editorial office of the Communist Party’s daily newspaper, and the only few blocks from Hungarian Radio, or from Corvin Close, which was to become famous as one of the toughest pockets of resistance in the uprising (Muranyi 2006: 29).

He was close to the main squares where the most violent street fights between the university students and the troops occurred. Although the diary consists of the plainly ordinary stories of a twelve-year-old boy, including his violin lessons, gathered from a limited area, he chronicles the events of the uprising in great detail and chronologically while recounting everyday life. The importance of his accounts of everyday life arises from being written in a particular period in the history of Hungary. Also it arises from being an important source of history writing.

The everyday has been a category frequently invoked by historians as a way of questioning the traditional assumptions of the discipline of history. History was understood as an account of the doings of the great in times of old. Traditionally, historians were the ones who placed the deeds of the great into a “coherent” story following the necessary imaginative steps it required. They were at the center of the practice of writing history. That was *the* way of doing history, rather than being perceived as one among various approaches to the past. But later, so many assumptions on which the theory of history was grounded have been questioned. Not only the historians but the ordinary people have been given attention as agents of historical practice and the writing of history.

The everyday as a concept refers to an extremely wide range of mundane activities undertaken by ordinary people. Michel de Certeau deals with these activities of subjects. He focuses on everyday life and examines the process of history writing in relation to the subjects who have not been allowed to be involved in the process of writing history and have opposed this lack of involvement. The writing strategies of historians are shaped to meet the rising demands of the subjects. Certeau defines history as a “practice” (1988:69) and the historian is the one who traces the “practices of everyday life” and allows them to appear within the space of memory.

In *Diary Film*, Gyula, fifty years later, in an interview which appears towards the end of the film, recounts that he had hidden his diary when he realized that what he had written is totally different from what had been constructed as the history of the uprising. The sequencing of the archive images of the people fighting in the streets and the image of the child who looks to a precise location in a staged scene suggests that the child saw people fighting with his own eyes. The voice of the radio reporting that the people fighting in the streets is over staged images of the child listening to the radio. Then the enacted voice-over of the child narrates that the radio “told lies” about the events, which he saw and heard. The elder Gyula recounts how he felt after he had grown up and saw what had happened and how “they” had written the story of the events of the Hungarian uprising (because he knew that it hadn’t happened the way it was told), and he recalls how he was afraid that the diary might be destroyed or found, not the harm that might come to him. Instead he thought that he should pass it on to his own children. The entries in the diary and the accounts Gyula gives in the interview are used by the filmmakers in the documentary

as source material for the voices of the subjects whose version of history had been excluded.

The radio announces that the students fighting with the troops are “counter revolutionaries,” not “patriots”; they are the “enemies” of the “working class.” The word choice suggests how a particular history from one perspective acknowledges some as “the freedom fighters” or “patriots” and declares the others, “opponents” or “enemies.” In *Society Must be Defended*, Michel Foucault argues that “the history of someone is not the history of others” (Foucault 2003:69). Counter-histories are possible because there are people who remember against the grain and whose memories do not fit the grand historical narratives that have been constructed by turning a blind eye to the diversity of voices. The filmmakers use the childhood diary as a source of “counter-history” in the sense that Michel Foucault uses this term. In a similar way, Hayden White examines history as a “literary artifact” which is formed by choices with distinct ideological and political implications. Historians construct narratives on the basis of available traces and also give form to these traces with the help of imagination. Like historians, Edvy and Silló shape their documentary by visualizing and interpreting the entries of the diary, a mere *chronicle* of the events. By using the content of the diary as a source material, they shape the form of the documentary and construct their own narrative structure.

Hayden White, in *The Content of the Form*, treats the chronicle as a different kind of representation of the past. Even if the text of the chronicle has a specific subject, a reference to a place and a beginning in time, for White, it fails as a history. That is because, for him, a chronicle “presents events in the order of their occurrence and cannot, therefore, offer the kind of meaning that a narratologically governed account can be said to provide” and also “the account does not so much conclude as

simply terminate” (1990:17). The diary of the child with its regular dates suggests a chronicle in White’s sense. But by interpreting the entries of the diary, animating the drawings, employing the archival and staged materials, the filmmakers imbue meaning to the events chronicled in the diary.

The important aspect of these events, for White, is not that they occurred in a specific time and place, but that they were remembered and have been given a place in the chronological sequence of the story. The events are not considered as a historical account when they are recorded in their original sequence. The diary of the child definitely refers to a beginning with a precise time; however, it fails to offer a narrative closure. The diary of the child ends with these words: “On the way home I bought two books, *The Big Game* and *The Resurrection of Hannibal*” (Csics 2006b:61). The diary does not suggest any conclusion. All the events of his everyday life seem to burst out of nowhere. Things happen without explanation. However *Diary Film* ends with the moving images of Gyula who goes out through the door of his house carrying his violin. This reenactment scene appears repeatedly on the screen as a juncture in the narration and shows the boundary of his house and the outside world. This recycling of the black and white images emphasizes the moments when he would go out to attend school, violin class, to visit his relatives in the neighborhood or go for a walk. Laden with these details, the door is not only a door anymore, but an object which contributes to engrave the plot of the documentary. By doing so, the filmmakers put the daily experiences of the child into an explicitly narrative form. In that sense the story narrated in *Diary Film* is the construction of the filmmakers, in which the entries of the diary are used as source material.

Annette Kuhn, in *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination* points out that “such narratives are shaped as much as by what is left out - whether forgotten or

repressed - of the account as by what is actually told” (2002:2). When the moving images of the courtyard of the house appear on the screen, the child says in the voice over that it began to snow. His voice-over is superimposed with the sound of the children who cheerfully play in the courtyard. Then, a staged scene of a snowball fight is shown. These images are superimposed with the animated drawings, which illustrate the snowball fight in the diary. In the voice over, the child actor says the strikers were demonstrating in the streets at the time they had a snowball fight. The street clock emphasizes the time of the strike. Then, the elder Gyula as a witness gives his accounts about what he recalls of this past event. He tells that at the time of the strike there wasn't a soul in the street, people sang the national anthem in their houses and it echoed in the completely empty streets. However, after years, when he brought his diary out from its hiding place after years, he realized that these scenes are missing. He expresses his disappointment for not mentioning them in the diary. The snowball fight is what the child gives precedence to, but for elder Gyula, it is the silence in the streets which he recalls.

By interviewing the elder Gyula, imbuing him with agency to reveal his remembered moments and sequencing the re-created images in relation with his accounts, the filmmakers show the way they use the diary (the child's own selections) as a source for their own selections. These memory fragments of the elder and the child Gyula provide the part of the material for the filmmakers' own interpretation.

3.3. Interventions: Theories of Archive and Archival Strategies

Michel de Certeau, in *The Writing of History* contends that “in history everything begins with the gesture of setting aside, of putting together, or

transforming certain classified objects into documents [...] the material is created through the concerted actions which delimit it by carving it out from the sphere of use, [...] and which aim at giving it a coherent new use” (1988:72-73). Thus for de Certeau, the historian does not assimilate the traces of evidence, but on the contrary, “operates” on them by selecting, coordinating, ordering and emphasizing so as to bring out new interpretations. In order to grasp various aspects of the way which the filmmakers interpret the materials accordingly to construct their argument in *Diary Film*, theories of the archive are worth examining.

In his article, “Reading an Archive,” Allan Sekula speaks about the nature of the archive and argues that “not only are the pictures in the archives often *literally* for sale, but their meanings are up for grabs. New owners are invited, new interpretations are promised” (2003:444). Sekula speaks of still photographs, rather than moving images, but the same principle applies to archival footage. In the reenactment scene in which Gyula returns home from his grandmother’s house in the rickety sidecar of a motorbike with his uncle, the crowd who stands at the roadside appears to cheer them when they pass along the street. By sequencing the images of the re-enacted scene and the archive images of the crowd, the filmmakers construct a continuity of time. By doing so, they avoid and alter the previous usages and meanings of the images of the crowd cheering at the roadside. They reuse archival images in a different context, thus the new meaning replaces the old one.

In a similar vein, Martha Rosler, in *Decoys and Disruptions*, conceptualizes the nature of photographs and asserts that “the simplest misrepresentation of a photograph is its use out of context” (2004:276). The manipulation in the uses of images shows something different than their original makers intended to do. Rosler speaks of the manipulation as an “integral” aspect of the photographs and asserts that

they are “subject to change, distortion and misuse” (2004:262-276). The national flag of Hungary without the crest in the middle which is hung from the buildings and the houses exemplifies the manipulation employed by the filmmakers in the way Rosler defines. Students demand the banning of the constitutional crest and removal of the stars from the national flag. The archival images on the screen show the moments when the crest is torn out from the flag. But the hole in the flag is constructed with digital manipulation and the red, white and green Hungarian banner is digitally colored. The image of the colored national flag with a hole in the middle emphasizes the manipulation the filmmakers employed.

Not only does plucking images out of their context and recycling them for any reason give filmmakers the authority to avoid and alter the previous uses of the archival images, and also “the very removal of the photographs from their initial context” as Sekula asserts, “invites aestheticism” (Sekula 2003:448). The sequencing of the moving images of the child in the rickety sidecar of a motorbike and of the archival footage of the crowd who cheers at the roadside “invite aestheticism” in Sekula’s sense. Rather than being interpreted as historical documents, these images are reused for aesthetic aims.

In *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Film*, William C. Wees discusses the ways in which archival footage is employed in documentaries. He emphasizes that not every found footage film, but only the ones which exploit techniques of “collage” attempt to question representation. Wees argues that with

footage that has been scratched, scraped, perforated, painted, dyed, bleached, chemically altered, or subjected to various techniques of optical printing that radically change its appearances...[the] content of the original footage may continue to be recognizable, but its impact depends principally on its new visual aspect” (1993:26).

Images coming from archival sources are frequently used in various contexts. Some of the images that are reused in *Diary Film* are digitally manipulated similar to the way which Wees describes. Edvy and Silló use some visual effects to give the images a rough appearance in the reenactment scenes. By reworking the images, they make them imitate the visual appearance of archival footage. The grainy and rough visual appearances of the staged scenes exemplify this. These visual effects challenge and subvert the previous conventional representations of the events and emphasize the constructed aspect of any historical events.

Wees argues that different methods of using archival footage relate to different paradigms of artistic practice. Everything depends on the methodology and the context governing the work's reception. He argues that this kind of footage "is always already political, and its politics may be apparent when it has been subjected to the strategies of interruption and quotation practiced by the filmmaker" (2002:90). The animated images of the burning books are superimposed with the archival footage which shows the actual moments of the happenings on the boulevard. An animated page of a half burned book which depicts the leaders of the revolution in the Soviet Union appears on the screen and is superimposed with the archival image of the smoke of the fire. The voice-over tells the viewer that he went out with his mother to see the happenings and became so sorry for the books that were being burned.

Edvy and Silló frame Gyula as a child who loves to read books. In the scenes which are staged in his house, he reads books by Jules Verne and Mark Twain lying in his bed. By giving precedence to the child's relationship with books, the filmmakers raise their own political views. By superimposing the animated drawing of the books that are burning with the archival footage and the voice-over of the

child, the filmmakers use the child's feelings for books, and relate it to the book-burning event. By doing so, they emphasize their own view on the act of book burning, regardless of the content of the books. The visual materials which are drawn from the archival sources and manipulated in these particular ways provide the filmmakers with a ground to convey their political views about past events. Edvy and Silló directly alter the visual materials and their approach justifies the view that history is not inherently inscribed in the image, but rather it is manufactured in the construction of narrative.

In *The Arcade Project*, Walter Benjamin uses a methodology similar to the one used in the recycling of the archival images in *Diary Film*. *The Arcade Project* is mainly arranged as a series of fragments from diverse sources. Benjamin speaks about the methodology of his work in the work itself and defines it as “the art of citing without quotation marks. Its theory is intimately related to that of montage” (458: n1.10). In *Diary Film*, the filmmakers employ a “montage” strategy to construct their own version of history. For Benjamin “to write history” means “to cite history.” The historical object, however, “in each case is torn from its context” (476: n11.3). When archival footage is ripped out of its context from the archives where it is preserved and is reused, the same footage can say something quite different from the original use. In his article “Rhetoric of the Image,” Roland Barthes questions how “meanings get into the images” and what makes them prone to multiple interpretations. For Barthes, “all images are polysemous” and meaning is constructed through the ways the images are used (1978:39). The re-presentation of the images allows the viewer to conceive the possible meanings. The words and the images work together to disclose these intended meanings. So, the polysemic sources

are found in the archives, but their new meanings are constructed by the user's conscious intentions.

The use of archival footage in *Diary Film* offers itself as an imaginative reconstruction of a personal history. The images which are reused come from different sources and are superimposed in different montage constructions. Edvy and Silló compose these disparate shots into a kind of pseudo continuity and transform the footage. The uses of the images in *Diary Film* represent both the imagination of the child who lived in the past and the imagination of the filmmakers in the production of memories. One aspect of the imagination of the child is the city maps he has drawn in his diary. Gyula conceives a scaled map of the city from his imagination and names the street after the heroes of the "revolution." He goes on immense planned walks in the company of his best friend, Jansci and he plans them ahead on paper. The reenacted images of Gyula and Jansci who draw the city from their imagination are superimposed with the animated images of their drawings in the diary. The elder Gyula says in the voice over that he used an encyclopedia to draw the map of the city and he marked the places he already knew and was familiar with.

The moving images of the two children who go through the door of their house are superimposed with the close up images of the city map which they drew. In the voice over, Gyula recounts that they began to take walks during the revolution to look around and see what happened in the city. The images of the two children who wander in the streets are superimposed with the imaginary map of the city. These images seemed to be "painted, dyed and chemically altered" in the way Wees describes. These alterations were done by hand at the time. Although digitally colored in *Diary Film*, the idea of manipulation remains the same. In the voice over, elder Gyula recalls that they went through the door of the house to the immediate

neighborhood and each time they went a little further and whenever they heard that dreadful things happened and houses had fallen or been shelled, they walk over to those places to see everything with their own eyes and mark the site on their maps. They collect leaflets that were stuck on walls. The manipulation methods in the scenes both display how the child imagined the city and drew it in his diary, and how the filmmakers imagine it in a different context.

The staged materials, which are superimposed with the animated drawings of the child, have significance in the way that they are used to convey the dreadful happenings of the uprising. The objects of his childhood that are animated in the documentary are used to evoke the blow of painful scenes in a stark contrast to the reenacted images of two children playing together, which also appear on the screen. They made a windmill, a plane and a tram out of metal pieces whose components could be joined with a screwdriver. Animated images show the plane fly over the ruins of the city. A soccer ball with unusual speed circulates above the ruins. The images show the city broken down in the background. The images of the objects in the foreground and the images of the ruins in the background contrast strongly. So, the objects of Gyula's childhood, the plane and the ball, are used by the filmmakers to evoke the dreadful situation of the city by displaying them as images of bliss.

The main object of his childhood, the violin, is used in the same way in the documentary. The black and white and grainy moving images of the violin and images of the atrocities of the uprising are alternately shown together on the screen. In the voice over, the elder Gyula recounts that his father took him to the places where the most dreadful events occurred. An archival image of a man holding a child's hand appears on the screen. The sound of hammering on a sculpture is superimposed over the images of the ruins of buildings. Still photographic images of

people trying to destroy the sculpture of Stalin and beating him repeatedly are shown on the screen. The arms of the people are animated. Since these images are photographic representation of the events, the digital manipulation of the still photographs sets the images in motion. People beat the sculpture endlessly and in vain. The child in the voice over says there were lots of dead secret policemen in the streets of the city and elder Gyula who lives in the present completes his sentence. The sequencing of the voice-over of Gyula in the present and of Gyula in the past provides a link between the representation of the past and the imagined past.

There appears a dreamlike scene in this imagined past. The images of trees covered by snow are superimposed with the close up images of the diary that shows the precise date of the day. The child first goes to his violin class as usual, then comes back home and writes in his diary. In the voice over, the child says the snow started coming down in big flakes. The archival images of a woman who holds the hand of a child in the street refer to the visit Gyula had paid to his grandmother with his mother. The moving images of an elderly woman in the street which refers to his grandmother are superimposed with the animated and colored big flakes of snow. The child then goes sledding. Archival footage of children sledding is superimposed with the staged images of Gyula in the snow. The dreamlike scene of the trees covered by snow softens the conflicts of the outside world. The objects of Gyula's childhood evoke these conflicts, just as the snow softens them. Perhaps it would not be possible for the child to hear an anthem echoing in the streets with the inviting aspect of the snow.

Beside the reenacted scenes in the snow, the filmmakers superimpose the reenactments with archival images in many shots. The one which is the most powerful and aesthetically constructed is the frame in which the child Gyula is

writing in his diary in his room. The actual still photograph of Gyula pictured with his violin and the bow hangs on the wall of the room. This is the portrait of the child who actually wrote the diary in the past, not the child writing the diary on the screen who is performed by another child. Annette Kuhn argues that the past is “a scene of a crime” (2002:4). Traces point to a past presence, to what has happened in this place, a construction of the event that can be pieced together. Edvy and Silló present the still photograph of the child as evidence of a presence about his past in the sense Kuhn conceptualizes the past. The filmmakers use staged images to seemingly return to the location of an actual event and make a claim for the authenticity of the childhood of Gyula at the time of the Hungarian uprising. However, they do this by questioning the view that the events can be pieced together rather than imagined and constructed. In this manner, by reusing the still portrait in the reenacted scene, the filmmakers transform the evidence from the past into an artifact which contributes to the *mise-en-scène* of the documentary.

The filmmakers use three different representations of the writer of the diary: the child who is imagined and shown in the reenactments by the filmmakers, the child who is the actual person lived in the past and shown in the photograph on the wall, and the elder Gyula who lives in the present. By using these three different representations and intertwining them, the filmmakers disclose their aesthetic language and political argument. The reenactment shots reveal that the editing strategies within the frame attempt to challenge the representation of the past and the present imagination of the past. The actual photograph is the trace of the events but the existence of it on the wall in the design of the reenactment scene is the intervention by the filmmakers.

Diary Film operates as a source of memory giving a sense of how something has happened in a particular time and space. The filmmakers enable the elder Gyula to reveal a remembered life by mediating his childhood diary. By reworking the written form of his lived life, they provide him with a ground to share his memories. However, what marks the *Diary Film* is the way in which the remembering self, the elder Gyula, and the remembered self, the child Gyula, are encountered through the visual manipulations. For this reason, *Diary Film* appears as a performance of memory and it involves the staging of history.

The understanding of memory for Kuhn is ‘an active practice of remembering which takes an inquiring attitude towards the past and the activity of its reconstructions through memory work’ (2002:157). The everyday stories of the child in *Diary Film* are transformed into a form which constitutes the version of history which has been excluded. The diary is the core material of this form. The uses of the re-created images and the archival images in this representation of the past pave the way for the filmmakers to construct a visual history in their own aesthetic way. By selecting and manipulating the entries and images from the diary that seem important and useful and relevant to their own version of history, as well as other archival sources, the filmmakers re-craft the past of the child through their own choices of sounds and images.

CHAPTER 4

THE NOTEBOOK OF A LADY

4.1. Prologue: The Story of a Lady

Two young women in high heels walk cautiously and cheerfully on a snowy road. They trace the visible paths left by vehicles. The moving images are shaky and grainy. Piles of snow have accumulated in high hills on both sides of the road. The huge pine trees along the road are covered in snow. A range of the snowcapped mountains is barely seen on the far horizon in a wide-angle shot. The superimposed title is unlikely to identify this picturesque landscape on the screen. It is unclear whether it is in Switzerland or in the Carpathians. However, the image of a hand holding a card in the beginning of these sequences refers to a precise past time: 1933. One of the women advances towards the camera with her arms akimbo and poses like a fashion model. She waves her hand and blows a kiss to the camera. She makes gestures with her arms as if she is presenting the mountainous landscape in which they are spending a joyful time. The other woman takes off her sunglasses and flips her hair. They both seem to speak to the person behind the camera, but only the fuzzy sound of old film stock and the musical scores over the footage are heard. The images of the women in the snow fade into the images of the two men walking on a snowy road. It seems to be the same location which was shown in the previous scenes. This time, a solitary peaked house is seen in the distance among the trees in a wide-angle shot, not the snowcapped mountains. The two men both wear knee high socks and knickers. They smile and walk towards the camera. The moving images of the two men are rewound for a brief moment. The frame is frozen when one of the men with a hat raises his arms and poses for the camera. These are the shaky and

grainy images with which the Hungarian filmmaker, Péter Forgács opens his 1994 documentary, *The Notebook of a Lady*.

The next sequence shows the young women again, frolicking in the snow. Holding each other's hands, they begin whirling together. The whirling continues until one of them stops and tosses some snow; the other does the same. One of the women looks directly at the camera while she plays in the snow. The images of the women fade into the title of the documentary. The images of the title then fades into the images of a car travelling away from the camera down the snowy road, with a woman in the back seat looking behind at the camera. The overexposed and random images of people who seem to be camping on the mountain appear on the screen in contrast with the previous playacted sequences. The moving images show a couple who lie on lounge chairs in the highland. They laugh at some amusing photographs together with their friends, but again the footage has no diegetic sound. The superimposed title: "Lily and Co. were there!" identifies the couple. The precise past time written on the card in the beginning of the documentary and the reference to a past time in this superimposed title disclose that one of the women shown in the opening sequences witnessed these past moments. The superimposed titles on the screen are from the accounts the woman gave nearly sixty years after she had lived these moments.

The image of a couple lying on lounge chairs is digitally wiped away and replaced by a naked child running down the outdoor stairs of a house looking towards the camera. The scene then returns to the image which shows him running into the garden. A woman with a white uniform follows the child. She plays catch with him among the bushes in the garden. The superimposed title: "my son Tony, with the German nurse" identifies the child and the woman on the screen. Not the

playground rhymes, laughter or chants of the child, but the fuzzy sound and the musical scores are on the sound track. The images of one of the young women who frolicked in the snow in the opening scenes are shown from her waist up on the screen next. She wears her swimming suit and poses for the camera among the flowers at the front garden of her house. The voice of an elderly woman over this black and white footage says “that’s me.” The elderly woman recalls the address of the house which is shown in images of her younger self. A superimposed title shows the address of the house which was confiscated without revealing by whom. The arrangements of images and sounds disclose that the young woman who is shown in her swimming suit in high heels on the screen is the owner of the footage, the shaky, scratchy, grainy and faulty images. The frame is frozen when the woman crosses her arms and looks down to the flowers nearest to her without any trace of cheer.

These opening sequences are laden with unanswered questions, ambiguities, planned and unplanned moments, and the shifts in time which mark the homelike quality of the moving images. Home movies are recorded for the rituals of the family who watch them together from time to time to give themselves a sense of history and a way to position themselves in the past. That’s why the commentaries which are provided by the family while viewing their silent fragments of lived moments are under permanent construction and reconstructions, constantly adding to the meaning of the events which are projected onto a screen.

In *Home Movies and Other Necessary Fictions*, Michelle Citron argues that “the meaning of home movies is in constant flux. This is due, in part, to the fact that [the viewer] provides a second track, either stories or memories, at the moment of viewing” (1999:23). Sixty years on, the elderly woman in *The Notebook of a Lady* provides this second track for the moving images of her younger self. As the subject

(the participant) and the viewer of the home movie, the elderly woman identifies the house she had lived in, the places she had visited and the names of the persons she had known, as she recalls them. The home movie footage would have been inaccessible by Forgács's viewer without the accounts the elderly woman has given. However, in *The Notebook of a Lady*, the footage is no longer silent, the score by the composer, Szemző Tibor, creates a haunting mood. This mood is the Szemző's contribution "to change the meaning of the [home movie] images" (Korányi 2011:228) and adds to the context Forgács has created.

In the home movie footage, not only the textual source but also the way the images of the individuals and their gestures are framed, frozen and rewound enable Forgács to reanimate the past moments of this woman. These personal images which are reworked by the filmmaker are derived from the personal archive of the elderly woman who was an aristocratic lady in Hungary in the 1930s and early 1940s. The images were recorded simply to capture her lived moments with her family: things and subjects which are important, beautiful, interesting, funny and worth filming. However, Forgács reworks these personal images and transforms the lady's footage into another form beyond a personal family artifact. By manipulating the images of the lady and her family in *The Notebook of a Lady*, the filmmaker reveals an enchanting world, which collapsed when the lands of the lady's family were ruined in the war and then confiscated.

Patricia R. Zimmermann speaks about the home movie as "an open text" which has a dialectic relationship with its historical context, and can only be completed by "historical contextualization" (2008a:276). Similarly, Forgács in *The Notebook of a Lady* combines the disparate fragments of the home movie footage with historical contextualization and offers a multilayered analysis of the footage

made by people who did not realize that they were recording so many ordinary things that would be important today. The home movie footage shows moments of a precise past from the viewpoint of the lady who lived them without realizing their historical importance.

The process of historical contextualization in *The Notebook of a Lady* begins with the dates and names given through the reminiscences of the elderly woman. In a 1937 Berlin trip, the lady poses for the camera in front of the German house of parliament, the Reichstag. She stands for a second in front of the building, smiles and then waves to the camera. Then the archival images show a line of massive army trucks and the public vehicles which pass under the Brandenburg Gate and drive along Unter den Linden. The traffic and the daily life in one of the boulevards of Berlin evoke the presence of a war at the time. The image of the swastika on a public monument which is the main symbol of Nazism discloses that it is the time when the Third Reich was in power in Germany. The moving images of the lady were definitely shot for the screening rituals of the family without estimating the importance of the images in the days to come. However, by alternating her home movie footage with archival images of public life, Forgács evokes the historical period. In this way, he reconstructs and visualizes a personal world by giving the home movie footage of the lady a historical context.

The visual strategies Forgács employs in *The Notebook of a Lady* such as freezing the frames or slowing down and rewinding the images suggest his own way of visualizing history different than the conventional uses of the images. Forgács not only reworks the home movie footage, but also reworks the archival footage of the period in his documentary. The way he recycles the footage suggests the manipulation of the images which are similar to what the historian does by turning

the events into a story. By superimposing the past images with the present images of the woman nearly sixty years on, Forgács enables a dialogue between the elderly woman and her younger self. I argue that the ways which visual strategies are employed in the documentary challenge the traditional practices of the writing of history. To show this, I will examine the nature of home movies as a source and the strategies which the filmmaker employed in reworking them.

4.2. Formal Analysis: The Nature of Sources as a Trace of a Past

The experiences and the thoughts of the people throughout their life result in a series of artifacts which have survived into the present. But all the things around that survive from the past do not equally interest the historian. Persistence over time alone does not make them significant. Their importance depends on whether they fit into the context employed by historians. In *Fashioning History*, Robert F. Berkhofer argues that “historians searched for new sources and or exploited existing ones with new as well as old methods and, more importantly, questions” (2008:5). Everyday artifacts suggest these new kinds of materials which are more recently being investigated. As historians broadened what they covered in their histories, they expanded what was or should be saved for new histories of previously unacknowledged groups, individuals or realms of life. Archives have expanded their collections and new archives were founded to include these new artifacts. Historians reuse the old sources in new forms or search for new sources.

Forgács’s reuse and reworking of the home movie footage of the lady arises from his interest in the everyday lives of the people in the past, which have the potential to show many aspects of history, but they have given little attention by the authorities of historical writing. *The Notebook of a Lady* is the eighth of the Private

Hungary Series in which “Forgács has been dedicated to retrieval of home movies and amateur films [...] from the 1930s to the 1950s and to recycling these films into memorable excursions into places and moments not available in official histories of this momentous era” (Macdonald 2011:3).

Berkhofer argues that “the conversion of survivals into sources depends upon a set of assumptions governing their relationship between their present day existence and the role they presumably played in the lives and institutions of past peoples” (2008:11). The reason for Forgács to choose the home movie footage of the lady as a source, upon which he constructs his own argument, stems from its qualities and the potential which enables him to approach the past in a subjective and personal manner. Conventionally, sources provide the evidence for the historians’ own representations of the past. From such evidence historians derive their facts which support their arguments about the past. However, Forgács manipulates the home movie footage and gives it a form to construct a different way of telling and visualizing the history staying clear of the conventions which impose the view that sources are found rather than constructed.

A survival from the past is a “trace” for interpretation rather than evidence of what actually happened. The home movie footage which is reworked in *The Notebook of a Lady* is a trace of the personal history of the lady and a trace of a particular time in which she lived. The testimony of the elderly woman who identifies the people, the landscapes and the events which are anonymous to the viewer evokes the traces of her past. By providing the elderly woman with a ground to perform in the ruins of the landscape she had once owned, Forgács follows the traces of her personal experiences and intervenes in her footage to construct his own context. Malin Wahlberg argues that “the staging of the trace may also lead beyond

the meaning of the imprint, vestige, or record as an enigmatic presence of the past” and thus, “a compiled image trace may point to the practice of preservation and classification in contemporary visual culture” (2011:122). So, the nature of the sources is worth examining in relation to the practices of archiving in order to understand the extent to which the home movie footage in *The Notebook of a Lady* is reworked.

The need to preserve and classify the survivals of the past and other artifacts is the most important function of archives. Archives, officially, are places designed for receiving records and other artifacts, organizing and cataloging them and storing them safely and systematically for their retrieval and viewing. Unofficially, various documents and artifacts are not cataloged, their retrieval is not as certain as hoped, and many artifacts remain in private hands outside these institutions. Forgács collects these uncataloged artifacts which remain in private hands. The artifacts he reuses in his own documentaries are preserved in the archive he has founded. The content of the material he chooses to preserve hint at what was missing from the past and what he prioritizes.

The footage in *The Notebook of a Lady* is archived in the Private Photo and Film Archive in Budapest which Forgács founded in 1983. He collects old home movies which were originally recorded by families to remember the things which they used to have, the people which they used to be and the lived moments which they witnessed. Forgács had placed an advertisement in newspapers asking people to bring in their home movies. He would then transfer and make two video copies of the movies, and gives the families one for free and keep the other for his own archive. This allowed him to rework the material directly and employ his own aesthetic strategies. (Macdonald 2011:12)

Forgács explains his aim as “to collect the vanishing fragments of the Hungarian past” (2008:47). These vanishing fragments are the lived experiences of subjects who had been given little attention in the practices of history writing. Forgács interviews the owners or the inheritors of the collected movies and gathers the textual information which is deployed in his documentaries. He points out that his reason for working directly with the footage is “to see the unseen, to de- and reconstruct the human past through the ephemeral private movies” (2008:47). By reworking the home movie footage and thus interpreting the personal moments, Forgács reanimates the ordinary moments of the subjects and turns them into extraordinary times in the history of Hungary.

The recognition of the past-ness and its usefulness for any given historical research involves a point of view. Berkhofer argues that “[archives] serve as the chief intermediaries between the residue of the past and the present day historian’s use of it through what and how they identify, preserve, store, organize, catalog, and grant access to these potential sources in their collections” (2008:101). Forgács’s archives intervene between the past artifacts and their present use in this manner. The archival practices which are performed by the filmmaker are significant for understanding the interventions he employed both in the archiving process and in his own documentaries. Forgács grants access to the sources in his archival collection and seems to fulfill all the duties of an archivist. However, the ways he employs archival sources in his documentaries distinguishes him from a conventional archivist.

The home movies Forgács collects consist of overtly “ephemeral” and faulty images recorded by ordinary individuals. His appraisal of the home movies, from his viewpoint, determines what is worth preserving. As the first act of an archivist, the

appraisal defines the decision about which events are to be represented in archives and which records are excluded from the archives, thus being removed utterly from public memory. Thus, the material to be included and excluded in an archive entirely depends on the subjective judgments being practiced by the one who select the records. So, the archives can be seen as the sites of memories.

Zimmermann argues that “as they move from attics to archives, from private use to public, home movies transform into public memory” (2008b:16-17) and “constitute an imaginary archive that is never completed, always fragmentary, vast and infinite” (2008b:18). Unlike the view that the archives often are framed as the depositories of old and dead cultural artifacts, she probes the idea that archives are always in the process of the addition of new and unknown subjects and objects. In this manner, the archive is not simply a depository, but is “a retrieval machine defined by its revision, expansion, addition, and change” (2008b:19).

In a similar vein, in *Archive Fever*, Jacques Derrida speaks about the archivist who always “produces more archive, and that is why the archive is never closed” (1998:68). The archival function of appraisal also appears to be an ongoing and never ending process. So, the archivist is an active agent shaping the archive as a mediator and interpreter of the meaning. The approaches in archival strategies interact with the strategies in the construction of history. In this realm, home movies appear as survivals which are activated through differing archival and historiographic strategies employed.

Memories are a special kind of survivals in this ongoing and never ending process. They are mediated forms which present knowledge of the past. Being forced to flee due to the confiscation of her properties by the new regime after the war, the lady lost all her privileges she once enjoyed as a member of the aristocracy. The

visual memories and the reminiscences of the elderly woman provide Forgács with a ground upon which he narrates the neglected past, private moments of a lady in a different regime. By both reworking the home movie footage and the newsreel footage but prioritizing the former, Forgács suggests a glimpse of a past otherwise undocumented.

Forgács's personal approach to the material, as Malin Wahlberg argues "results in a project where the archive is manifested in both a material and metaphorical sense" (2011:122). Forgács collects visual fragments in the form of home movies and reworks these fragments in a way which presents the images as a trace of a past. The visual fragments in the home movie footage serve as the traces of the personal past of the lady and her family, but in *The Notebook of a Lady* as "the trace of another trace" (Wahlberg 2011:122). Forgács presents the viewer with the broader implications for the practice of archival and historical representation and tells history unconventionally. The home movie sequences which are reused and reworked in different contexts, and the ambivalent relationship between the image and the meaning, stress the process through which the images turn into memory. In this context, the trace not only exists as a visual imprint of something which does not exist anymore but also as an imaginary realm where historical time is evoked as experience.

4.3. Interventions

4.3.1. Historical Contextualization

Ernst Van Alphen, in his article "Towards a New Historiography," argues that Forgács "transforms the principles of historiography" (2011:73). He establishes a different relationship between the represented subject and the viewer. In *The*

Notebook of a Lady, the lived moments of an aristocratic lady become familiar to the viewer although it happened in a distant past. Forgács gives the personal experiences of the lady a historical significance and narrates the events without distancing the viewer by using his own aesthetic strategies by challenging the principals of traditional historiography. By doing so, a personal story about an aristocratic lady affects the viewer politically and emotionally in their present moment.

The home movie footage which is the main source in *The Notebook of a Lady* show the visit of the lady to Berlin at the time when the Nationalist Socialists were in power in Germany. The filmmaker reuses the archival footage of a visit of General Mackensen of the German Cavalry at Bábolna meeting the German troops as well. The way the filmmaker arranges the newsreel images and the home movie footage evokes the sense of a war and makes the viewer grasp its presence out of the frame. Alphen states that “the historical time is never part of the personal time of the home footage, but always superposed, imposed on it” (2011:60). In *The Notebook of a Lady*, by superimposing the historical time of the archival footage on the personal time of the home movie footage, Forgács inserts the crucial moments of history into these personal realms. The manipulations he uses such as freezing frames, digitally performed wipes, rewinding and tinting create a rhythm to emphasize the emotional aspects of personal realms. The reminiscences of the elderly woman, which are superimposed onto the reworked home movie footage, add to these visual strategies which disclose the political view of the filmmaker.

The elderly woman recounts the balls organized for the members of aristocracy in the voice over. The images show women dancing in white dresses, flying skirts and couples dancing with masks. The woman speaks about Vilma Gegerly, the Jewish Förstner dressmaker, which was the only one that the wife of

Miklós Horthy, who was the regent of Hungary between the world wars, went to. The elderly woman recalls the color his wife wore and how elegant and beautiful she was. She recalls the Brach shoe store to which she used to go and how its Jewish maker Mr. Brach, was so patient and polite to her, now “he was done [for]” too. By enabling the elderly woman to reminisce about her personal experiences, the filmmaker inserts a crucial historical moment into her personal story.

Patricia R. Zimmermann, in *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories*, speaks about the home movie as “a subset of the amateur film movement located within individual and/or familial practices of visual recording of intimate events and rituals and intended for private usage and exhibition” (2008b:8). Zimmermann argues that amateur film itself constitutes an access point for history writing by moving away from traditional approaches to diverse and multiple ones. In this manner, the practices of amateur film pave the way toward a different formation of history. Home movies are among these practices. The interest in home movies as an important body of knowledge which can be reworked within this new historiographic paradigms emerged within the context of searching for a form of history that was diverse.

Zimmermann speaks about the practice of home movies as an “active historical process [that] transforms history into histories” (2008a:275). She also implies that “the dominant media formations marginalized and stabilized the potential, but latent, political disruptions of amateur film, [...] thereby amputate[d] its more resistant economic and political potential for critique” (1995:x). Everyday events which are shown in home movies give the footage a very specific personal history and enable Forgács to approach history from a personal point of view. This aspect of history, which were given no value by the authorities of history writing at

the time when they were writing “grand” and “homogenous” narratives, show many unseen and unsaid things about history. In *The Notebook of a Lady*, I argue that Forgács regains the “resistant” aspect of home movies by reworking personal images of the lady.

The home movie footage shows row boats which are lined up near the lakeshore. The lady jumps on the rocks, reaches the furthest outcrop and then poses for the camera. The intertitle refers to the name of the lakeside, Titisee, in Germany. The personal images show Tony dressed in a clown costume descending the stairs of the house which lead him to the garden, playing with his dog in the garden. The images show the child walking behind an elderly man, the second husband of the lady who was twenty years older than the lady. Such playacted moments suggest the conventional behavior of people in the practices of home movie making. However, Forgács reworks these family moments, which are identified with personal sentiment, in order to narrate and visualize his own political view in the documentary.

The images in *The Notebook of a Lady* show the invitees ascending the stairs of St. Stephen Basilica to attend for the wedding of a count and a countess. Their personal images recorded in a mountainous landscape are superimposed with the images of the people at the wedding. The way the images are superimposed allows the viewer to see the images partially. The images of the couple dissolve into the images of the car which is parked in the front stairs of the basilica. The superimposed title refers to the name of the count and the countess without revealing their full names.

The moving images are divided into a split frame; one part shows the members of the aristocracy invited to the wedding and the other shows the

“mundane” images of the bride in a snowy landscape and the bridegroom swimming in the sea. The invitees climb up the stairs of St. Stephen Basilica while the people crowded around. The bridegroom comes first and ascends the stairs of the basilica. The sequence ends with a freeze frame of the bridegroom who looks directly to the camera and smiles. The bride gets out of the wedding car in the next sequence. Her images ascending the stairs are superimposed with the images showing her roasting a hunted animal on a spit over a fire. As the bride ascends the stairs, she gets closer to the camera and her wedding veil covers the whole screen in a freeze frame.

The images of the bride groom who ascends the stairs of the St. Stephen Basilica and swims in the river and the images of the bride at the hunt with her community and with her huge veil blowing in the wind are superimposed to demonstrate various aspects of their lives. The images are not the personal images of the lady, but they refer to her wedding and vacations in the past. By manipulating the images in these sequences, the filmmaker evokes the emotional aspect of a personalized history. The nature of the home movies and the specific qualities of the objects he collects in his archive enable him to employ his visual strategies. These visual strategies, such as freezing frames, rewinding, tinting, adding titles to identify time and places and the voice-over narration performed by the elderly woman disclose a particular view loaded with emotional engagement and allow Forgács to manifest his political approach.

The images show the lady and her husband, the baron, following the Knotek harvesting machine, which is identified in the superimposed title, working in the field. The piles of the harvested crops appear on the screen. The sound of the machine is superimposed with the voice of the elderly woman who recounts that her husband went to the farm at three every morning and emphasizes the role of the farm

in their lives. The home movie images show the servants and the workers in the farmland, the process after the harvest and Tony wandering among the workers. The images are tinted sepia. The workers carry the harvested crops in sacks and are aware of being recorded in their mundane activities by the camera. The sepia images show a happy moment for the family. The child, the baron and the lady together with their friends slide down the huge mounds of harvested crops which they climb with a ladder. The home movie footage of the lady shows the servants' and workers' life on the family's estate. The family images of the lady and their friends who spent a pleasant time playing on the crops are cut to the images of the servants who carry the crops. The elderly woman recounts that "800 acre estate is a vast one. It all belonged to us, all that you see here" over the footage of the servant and the workers in the farmland.

The images then show two workers who reap the crops and a woman who rakes over the crops. Images of a woman using the sewing machine, a young man who feeds a horse with his hand and washes his face outside, an elderly man who chops wood with an axe, a little child who tries to guard the gaggle of geese and a woman who feeds a pig in its pen aim to show the workers in their ordinary moments. The scene freezes with the image of the young man who tries to persuade a woman to pose for the camera. The arrangement of the images allows the viewer to grasp the approach the filmmaker employs which is to personalize the images of the workers and the servants rather than objectify and categorize them. Forgács transforms these memory fragments into a form that constructs his own representation of the past respecting their personal realms. Forgács arranges these images in a contrasting manner, not to suggest a ground for the viewer to judge the lives of the people but to visualize them in his own political and historical context.

4.3.2. The Imaginative Aspect of History

Home movies can acquire a place in the historical record depending on the history being told and the methods employed by the filmmaker. In *Home Movies and Other Necessary Fictions*, Michelle Citron characterizes home movies as ambivalent and argues that “they stand in for what is there and what is not there. [...] they both confess and hide” (1999:19). Home movies are highly selective in what they show. The rewind images in the documentary exemplify this approach. The home movie images show Tony throwing his fluffy toy towards the camera. The superimposed title which refers to the “Hussars” in an accusing manner over the rewind images of the child suggests that rewinding images extends the perception of the viewer in order to understand the events in the context of the filmmaker’s narration. The meaning of the word “Hussars” is emphasized through the use of large letters, but remains unexplained and thus asks the viewer to solve it in the context of the story being told.

The scenes in the home movies are full of gaps, ambiguities and discontinuities, but the arrangement of the images by the filmmaker permits the viewer to comprehend the narrative which is reconstructed from the disparate sequences. The source material consists of the planned and the unplanned family moments which the lady thought were worthy to be recorded. Divorce or death, grief and sadness are not featured in the home movies but happy, funny and important moments of life are shown. However, the interventions of the filmmaker into the personal images of the lady transform these qualities of the home movies and enable the viewer to sense a lack of cheerfulness towards the end of the documentary.

In *The Notebook of a Lady*, what is not included in a text or in a frame is affected by choices and selections employed by the filmmaker. Thus, the elements

which have been left out are “structuring absences” which dominate the overall meaning and reveal themselves in the hidden symptoms throughout the documentary. As the documentary progresses, the structuring absence of communism becomes increasingly clear, a powerful presence. These absences create ambiguities and allow the filmmaker to disclose his own political view without imposing it. In the sequence of the lady who combs her hair looking directly at the camera and wearing her fur coat, the child brings a bouquet of flower to his mother. The woman kneels down, takes the flowers from his hand and kisses him again and again. Although what is seen in the home movie footage is only a happy family, the arrangements of the moving images of the lady and the child in these sequences, and the superimposed title over these images as “all those Hussars” evokes the traces of the dramatic history of the time.

Images show the baron in a close shot having breakfast with a group of people on the porch of his house. The subtitle introduces the valet of the house, Ferko, who serves them. The images show a child who is the nephew of Pal Teleki, the prime minister of Hungary at the time, sitting with Tony at a separate table for children. The subtitle refers to the name of the nephew who turns his head, looks directly at the camera and smiles. Ferko then passes by the camera. The subtitle and the wide-angle images of the invitees having breakfast hint at the identity of the people who sit around the table. The presence of the unidentified invitees displays a powerful absence in the narration of the events in history. Hayden White, in *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* explains that “nineteenth century historian’s aim was to expunge every hint of the fictive, or merely imaginable, from his discourse, to eschew the techniques of the poet” (1985:123). The visual and the

narrative strategies Forgács employs regain this imaginative aspect of history by referring to these structuring absences throughout the documentary.

Hayden White argues that “the past is a place of fantasy. It does not exist anymore. One can only study it by way of things that have been left. The events of history by definition are not replicable” (Dománska 1998:16). The way Forgács relates to the past illuminates this approach. The reworked home movies provide a ground upon which Forgács frames these absences to visualize a history.

In *The Notebook of a Lady*, Forgács enables the elderly woman to perform her memories connecting her past self to her present self. Susan Engel in *Context is Everything: The Nature of Memory*, argues that “the way in which past and present selves are connected is shaped by the context of remembering” (1999:17). The visual form of the memories of the elderly woman is shaped by the context, the events she narrates and the reason for narrating them. The setting she was in and the reason she was talking about her past have an enormous effect on what she says. By arranging the context and the ground upon which the elderly woman recounts, the filmmaker gives form to her personal accounts and visual material to employ his imaginative interventions.

The images show the elderly woman who ascends the front stairs of the house she had once owned. She recalls the place where the tower once stood, before it collapsed. She walks with her walking stick and her shawl on her shoulders. When she approaches the front door of the house, the scene dissolves into the home movie images of the baron who gets into the carriage with the lady and the unidentified man at the front door of the same house. Ferko gives them a blanket to lay over their knees and they drive away from the front door of the house. The images invoke the situations in which they had to flee. These images dissolve into the images of the

baron playing with the dogs. The elderly woman in the voice over says that “these dogs, my god we took them with us when we had to flee.” Engel argues that “the artifact is often only a cue, which can only trigger a fuller image if the person has imagination, information and an eagerness to revisit the past” (1999:150-151).

Forgács uses the ruins of the house as an artifact in the staged scenes to enable the elderly woman to recall her past. The house triggers memories of both what it once had been and then the fact that it was confiscated by the new regime. The personal recollection and the performance of the woman in the ruins of the house provide a ground upon which impersonal and conceptual histories are built by the filmmaker.

Blue tinted images of the lady in a wide-angle shot show her walking towards the camera in the garden. She seems to speak to the person behind the camera. She looks left and the home movie images are digitally wiped away by newly staged images of the elderly woman sitting in her chair and reading a book in one room of her present house, entering from the left side of the frame. The arrangement of the home movie footage and staged scene gives the impression that the way the lady looks at the time of the visual transition initiates the change of time and space. The staged scene shows the elderly woman with her present belongings for the first time. Then the blue tinted images show the lady again. By framing the women in their own settings, by showing her both in her past and in her present life, the filmmaker emphasizes how the change of the political regime affected the lady.

In a similar way, the home movie images show the lady posing for the camera in the garden of her house wearing her stylish outfit and pearl necklace and earrings. The scene is divided into a split frame. One part shows the blue tinted images of the lady, other part shows the colored staged images of the elderly woman wearing a shawl and a cross necklace walking around the property, which is now uninhabited.

The younger lady smiles to the camera but the elderly woman does not. Forgács reworks the past images of the lady in a way to show how alive her personal past was and the present images of the elderly woman to show how her life had been when she lost all her properties, enabling a dialog between the past and the present.

The elderly woman recounts that “it was shameful to have a husband who couldn’t keep his wife” over the home movie footage of her younger self with her fur coat combing her hair while looking directly at the camera. For the lady, it was a “genteel” world in which she performs gymnastic feats on rings with her swimming suit in high heels in her garden. It was this world that she had lost. She had not only lost her Persian coat, Fölstner dresses, Brach shoes and the English thoroughbred, but also lost her aristocratic neighbors with whom she was sitting in the porch of the house while being served by the servants, and a world in which she was seated next to Gyula Károly at the dinners organized by the governor

The staged images of the elderly woman who walks towards the entrance door of the house she had once owned are digitally superimposed onto the home movie images of the entrance door of the same house. The superimposition appears as if a gap opens in the middle of the frame. The superimposition of the images gives a sense that they complete each other, with the elderly woman looking for traces of her personal past. The enacted images dissolve into the home movie images of the people dining on the porch of the house and then dissolve back to the images of the elderly woman at the front door of the uninhabited house. She attempts to open the door and looks into one of the nearby windows. The superimposed images on the screen are shown as if they are the shadows or the ghostly appearances of the people they had once been. The screen then fades into a black-out as if a gap is closing. The superimposition of the images of the past with the images of the present enables the

viewer to conceive the presence of the events in the space of memory. The house serves as a cue to a rich array of imagined scenes gleaned from the home movie images and reminiscences. Otherwise, it would be a dull and lifeless building instead of an entry into a collection of memories.

The approach of the filmmaker towards home movie footage resonates closely with the concept of “memory work” which Annette Kuhn argues in *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination*. Kuhn defines memory work as

unearthing and making public untold stories, stories of lives lived out on the borderlands [...] These are the lives of those whose ways of knowing and ways of seeing the world are rarely acknowledged, let alone celebrated, in the expressions of a hegemonic culture (2002:9).

The personal history of the lady had been given little value when all her possessions were confiscated due to the nationalization. Only after the change of the communist regime in Hungary is Forgács able to unearth the visual stories of the lady which had been previously unacknowledged and uncelebrated. So, the recollections of the lady overlap with a version of the past events which are constructed by the filmmaker.

By reworking the home movie footage, Forgács treats memory as a material for interpretation and offers an important source for an alternative historiography. His approach discloses the subjective aspect of history writing. These specific qualities relate home movies to memory and dreams and let Forgács speak about his works as “dream works” (Macdonald 2011:22). Gaston Bachelard’s conceptualization of “daydream” is a useful approach for understanding the nature of the home movies reworked in *The Notebook of a Lady*. For Bachelard, daydreams consist of pleasant thoughts, remembrances of past experiences and vivid images which always remain “fixed in the memories” (Bachelard 1969: x). An image always sparks the imaginary and these images create the thoughts and the notions of things

which are buried in the depths of the mind. Home movies offer a fiction through which the family wants to remember their past experiences, and the thoughts and the dreams they had once. The making public of home movies discloses home as a space of remembering in this manner.

In *Poetics of Space*, Bachelard not only speaks of daydreaming invoked by the house, but the actions which resurrect the past and connect it with the present. He argues that “in the theatre of the past that is constituted by memory, the stage setting maintains the characters in their dominant roles” (1969: 8). What Bachelard means is that memories of the house and its various parts are not something remembered in the past but rather something which is entwined with the present, a part of our ongoing current experience. The re-enactment scene at the front door of the ruined house exemplifies this conceptualization. The home movie images show the elderly woman wandering around the property she had once owned and searching for the traces of her past experiences. The elderly woman says “this whole estate is no longer landscape for me. All is gone. Well, what to it. It’s gone” over the footage of the lady who wanders around the farm in her Förstner dress carrying her handbag. The superimposed titled over the footage of Tony riding the horse in the farmland says: “this whole estate does not hurt anymore.”

The home movie footage always shows the exterior and frontal space of the estate and the house. The restrictions of home movie making in the interior spaces provide the filmmaker with a ground to rework the footage of the house in order to construct his own interpretations of the space. The porch of the house in the documentary is positioned where the domestic character of the home is confronted by the social. So, it appears as the basis for an examination of the relationships held within this space. The blue tinted home movie images show a group of visitors sitting

at the porch. Tony, who stands up, gives a Nazi salute looking directly at the camera. The close up shot of the baron who seems to ask the person behind the camera, possibly the lady for his absence on the screen, to finish recording points to the lack of eagerness and cheerfulness.

The home movie images show the baron riding his horse in the front area of the house and then stroking the mane of his horse. The close shot of him is frozen, when he looks at the camera and smiles, and then dissolves into the images of him riding the horse on a wide path with both sides covered with huge trees. The voice of the elderly woman over the home movie footage recalls the English thoroughbred which her husband rides. The images show him on the horse coming closer to the camera and smiling when he passes by. The elderly woman recounts that this horse was caught twice by the Russians and it returned on his own, but then it never came home. Thus, the home movie images of the lady are transformed into a form which visualizes one aspect of the loss the family had in this historical period.

Alphen argues that the footage Forgács reworks in his documentaries “keeps insisting on the private and affective dimensions of images” (2011:61). The direct looks which people give the camera exemplify this approach. People do not pose for the camera but for the person who holds the camera. There is no distinction between the camera and the person behind it. People let themselves be filmed, not be objectified into a beautiful or interesting image, but out of love for the person who films. The direct look at the camera functions within an affective relationship between two human beings. However, in *The Notebook of a Lady* the person on the screen looks directly at the viewer. For Wees that look “implicates and implicitly challenges [viewers] to reflect upon where [they] stand in relation to what’s happening on screen” (2010:3). This approach positions the viewer to interpret the

past moments in the present. The direct looks add rhythm to the movement of the moving images that infuses the home movies with reflexivity and enable the filmmaker to rework them to construct the dialogue across time and space.

In a similar vein, Citron argues that “in home movies the gaze of the subject meets the gaze of the spectator” (1999:22). Not only does the gaze of the younger self meet with the gaze of the elder self of the woman across the gap of decades, but also the gaze of the elder self in the present meets with the gaze of the baron in the past. By using such formal strategies, the filmmaker challenges the viewer to grasp who is in dialogue with whom. The moving images of the baron who speaks to someone outside the frame dissolve into the color footage of the elderly woman who walks around the property she had once owned. The images give the impression that the elderly woman and the baron are in a textual and visual dialogue. The filmmaker slows down the images of the elderly woman. She seems to speak to someone but there is no voice over the footage. The images of the elderly woman dissolve back into the images of the baron who seems to speak with the lady who is behind the camera. The way the filmmaker reworks and manipulates the images enables a dialogue between the baron in the past and the elderly woman in the present.

The reworked home movie images show the baron having a relaxing time with the dogs on the porch of his house. The angle of the sunlight makes it difficult for him to look directly at the camera. For that reason, he narrows his eyes and holds his hand above his eyes. The scene ends with a freeze frame of the baron who seems to look afar. The frozen image dissolves into the color images shot in the ruins of the house where she recalls her memories of the elderly woman with the same gesture of the baron. The scene ends with a freeze frame of the elderly woman looking directly at the camera. William C. Wees argues that the formal strategies of Forgács “embody

a moral imperative that is given its most powerful visual representation in his frequent practice of ending a shot with a freeze frame of someone looking directly at the camera” (2010:3). These direct looks in the freeze frames seem to call for a response from the viewers about the personal events of the past in their own present. The way Forgács reworks the home movie footage invokes the significance of the images not only concerning that which chooses to frame but also what he crops out or what is unavailable in the home movies. So, the viewer is being invited to consider what might be going on beyond the frame. The events which are being played out on the larger political stage would be likely to have a shaping impact on the lives of those on whom attention is focused.

Towards the end of the documentary, the title, “everything we had was confiscated” is superimposed over the blue tinted images of the unidentified man, the baron and Tony in a wide-angle shot at the front facade of the house. The porch of the house is not crowded with neighbors as it had been before. Then the images show the lady in her Förstner dress dancing with an unidentified man shown earlier in the documentary. The elderly woman introduces the man, Count Istvan Serédy, in the voice over, and reveals that he asked her to go and live in Vienna with him. Their blue tinted images are slowed down and fade to black while the elderly woman confesses that she had refused to go with him and preferred to live in her own country, for she had accepted life as it was. In this closing fadeout scene of the documentary, Forgács employs one of his visual strategies. By superimposing the voice-over narration of the elderly lady on a blackout image, he challenges the viewer to conceive beyond the image by showing his own authority to crop out and exclude the things from the frame. His approach suggests that home movies as means of remembrance can become an issue of transforming aesthetics and in their journeys

from the private family artifacts into the public world, the reworked home movies become tales that can transform the ordinary into extraordinary.

CONCLUSION

Charles S. Maier in *The Unmasterable Past* argues that “ideological preferences will shape what questions are posed, what evidence sifted and with what formulations are likely to be offered” (1998:13). Historians differ on what is important and that is always a question of what is important to whom. By ignoring its common qualities with history, historians have attacked “the surfeit of memory,” putting forward how memory is just as malleable, arbitrary and forgetful as history (Maier 1993:140). Thirty-two years before this attack, historian E.H. Carr already had written that

the modern historian [...] has the dual task of discovering the few significant facts and turning them into facts of history, and of discarding the many insignificant facts as unhistorical” and “from the infinite ocean of facts the historians select those which are significant for their purpose (1990:14-15-105).

Using the metaphor of fishing, Carr argues that “what the historian catches will depend, partly on chance, but mainly on what part of the ocean he chooses to fish in and what tackle he chooses to use” (1990:23). The selection and the arrangement of the material are predetermined by the purpose, institutional constraints, ideological and political assumptions and priorities of the historian. These materials are not available to the historian “like fish on the fishmonger’s slab” (1990:23). This position, the selection and arrangement of the materials by the historian, refers to the nonsingular and incomplete characteristic of history. Therefore the unreliability of memory and the incomplete setting of history paves the way for the adoption of different approaches which give history priority over memory or vice versa.

Instead of adopting an approach which acknowledges the dominance of flawed memory over history, or an approach giving history priority over memory,

Jacques Le Goff proposes a relationship of mutual interdependence in which “memory is the raw material of history.” He argues that the historian renders these memories “to transform them into something that can be conceived, to make them knowable” (1992: xii).

Kerwin Lee Klein suggests that “where history is concerned, memory increasingly functions as antonym rather than synonym, as contrary rather than complement, as replacement rather than supplement” (2011: 115). History, like every word, finds its meaning in large part through its antonyms and synonyms.

Another approach suggests a dialectical conflict between memory and history. According to Randolph Starn and Natalie Zemon Davis, “memory and history may play shifting, alternately more or less contentious roles in setting the record straight” (1989:5). According to their approach, the conflict between memory and history seems both necessary and productive.

Different approaches have been developed in order to explain the sources of this apparent tension between memory and history. These approaches contribute to the scholarly realms of history and memory, but what suffuses contemporary culture today is not the tension between history and memory but different ways of thinking about them. My study has searched these different ways Guzmán, Forgács, and Edvy and Silló employed in their documentaries. I have argued that these filmmakers, by recycling archival footage and re-creating new footage, manifest their own political and aesthetic purposes, and construct visual histories through memory practices.

There may be various readings for the reason for the increasing use of memory and for the reason for the increasing joining of the word ‘memory’ with history in a single phrase. Kerwin Lee Klein reminds us that “the politics of a word choice can tell a good deal about other sorts of politics” (2011:19). In a similar way

Charles S. Maier argues that the “memories are a larger and larger components of politics” (2000: 147). What may be significant to ask, then, is what are the stakes involved in the joining of memory and history?

The understanding of time and space and the perspectives from which they are viewed embody and convey these filmmakers’ political viewpoints. They conceive of and contextualize past voices depending upon their own politics of filmmaking as much as upon the nature of the visual materials reused. Richard J. Evans conceptualizes historical research as

a jigsaw puzzle where the pieces are not at all present in one box but are scattered over the house in several boxes and where, once it is put together, a significant number of the pieces are still missing. The nature of the resulting picture will depend partly on how many boxes you find, and this of course depends partly on having some idea of where to look, but the picture’s contours can also be filled in, even when not all the pieces have been located (1999:77).

I would not agree with Evans’ treatment of historical research as an entity “to be filled up.” Nor do I think the filmmakers whose documentaries I have analyzed would concur. Instead, they would look for the pieces that had not been included in the box of the jigsaw puzzle from the very beginning and make another picture from the pieces they re-created.

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