POLICIES OF MEMORY RELATED TO IMAGES FROM THE FIRST WORLD WAR

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History always offers individuals in any given present the opportunity to take a time journey into the past. To understand what happened in other times we need to travel, like Orpheus, into the shadowy world of the dead and rescue the traces of memory from its dark recesses. These traces are what help us to reconstruct the past in order to better understand the present and, thus, to better direct our future. In 1969, a posthumous work by the Frankfurt School theorist Siegfried Kracauer was published. Its original title was *History: The Last Things before the Last* (1994). The book was received with a certain degree of scepticism by generalist historians, who saw it as the last eccentricity of an old philosopher educated in the Germany of the interwar years who had ended up pursuing an academic career in the United States. Yet in his book, Kracauer raises some thought-provoking questions about the problems and constraints that historians can face in the course of the Orphean journey.

Kracauer asks whether history is anything more than an "intermediate area of knowledge" that certifies a set of truths about the past which can never really acquire the condition of objective truths because all historical discourse is conditioned by the subjectivity of the historian who develops it. He also reflects on whether the past should be understood as a coherent whole or as a flow of non-homogeneous layers.

To better understand its dimension of Orphean journey, Kracauer gives a prominent position to Marcel Proust, who in his magnum opus *In Search of Lost Time* sought to define the enigma of time and the constructions of memory. The key element of the Proustian conception of time involves the denial of chronology. The view of memory arising from his literary work is not that of a linear process but of a series of kaleidoscopic mutations. Memory acts not on the basis of a particular temporal flow, but as a discontinuous and non-causal succession of situations, worlds or pe-

riods. Kracauer uses a beautiful metaphor to explain the idea of time in Proust when he compares it to the physical phenomenon of clouds that connect in the sky to create forms that subsequently dissolve.

The figure of Marcel Proust was also a useful example for Siegfried Kracauer's film theory. In the introductory chapter to his book *Theory of Film* (1960), dedicated to photography, he offers the example of a passage in *The Guermantes Way*—the third volume of *In Search of Lost Time*—in which the narrator visits his grandmother. While he contemplates the places of the past, he has the sensation of assuming the role of a photographer visiting places that he will never see again. Although for Proust the photographer is someone who acts in a contrary manner to the lover, as he attempts to turn reality into a kind of neutral mirror, it is clear that the pictures taken reflect the photographer's struggle to assimilate that reality. Years later, this discourse on history and photography would form the discursive core of Kracauer's last book, *History: The Last Things before the Last*. At different moments in the book, Kracauer posits a relationship between the role that cinema and photography play in the forms of visibility of modern society and the methods used by history to explore the past. History and photography are both concerned with concrete worlds: history with the facts of the past and photography with the flows of the present. Both propose to conduct an analysis of these worlds with the aim of offering some kind of knowledge of reality. Their objective consists in reflecting the contingent and indeterminate lines of reality in order to transcend them and turn them into instruments for better understanding the physical world. History, photography and cinema preserve things in memory, but they confront a serious problem when the limits of their abilities to reflect objectivity have to be determined.[1]

In the quest to preserve reality, the photographer preserves the phenomena of time and space.

Like history, photography and cinema, thanks to their power to record things, offer the possibility of gaining access to past lives, but they are also positioned in an intermediate area of knowledge because their approach to the world depends on the process of selection of reality carried out by the subject standing behind the camera. If the historian's subjectivity turns history into story, the photographer's or filmmaker's subjectivity transforms the world into an expressive image that moves it towards the realm of art. While the historian's challenge is to privilege the weight of his or her opinions, the photographer's challenge is to prevent the destruction of the raw material—reality—which must be given shape.

KRACAUER'S REFLECTIONS ON THE SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF PHOTOGRAPHY/ CINEMATOGRAPHY AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WAYS OF WRITING HISTORY ARE STILL VALID IN A WORLD IN WHICH THE PROLIFERATION OF SCREENS AND ARCHIVES HAS RESULTED IN A WIDESPREAD DESIRE TO EXPLOIT POLICIES OF MEMORY

Kracauer's reflections on the specific aspects of photography/cinematography and their relationship with the ways of writing history are still valid in a world in which the proliferation of screens and archives has resulted in a widespread desire to exploit policies of memory. Kracauer's views on history and images have a clear bearing on the processes of reflection undertaken in the different articles included in this monograph issue of *L'Atalante* titled *Memory, Archive and Imaginary in Relation to the First World War*. In the different articles included here, questions of memory transmission and the development of historical discourse are always present, if only under the surface.

The monograph takes as a starting point the commemoration of a historical moment—the First World War—but does so through the images, both documentary and fictional, that have been created over more than one hundred years of history. The starting point for the different lines of research is the idea that the cinema has created a repository of collective memory related to the events of the Great War. The cinema has shown images of the past as documents of the first filmed war, but it has also established a series of discourses—in both documentary and fiction genres—that have evolved over time. All these discourses have been transformed with the occurrence of other historical events and with the new interpretations of the past facilitated by temporal distance. Most of the images of the Great War have disseminated the facts, focusing attention on specific events and creating an optical unconscious of Europe's wartime past. The occasion of the centenary of the war is a good moment to ask ourselves: how have all the discourses established by cinema served to better understand this part of the past? What have been the limitations of its approach to that past?

The acts and commemorations of the centenary of the First World War, like all actions related to the event memory, entail an implicit reflection on acts of memory and on the models generated by discourses. This reflection changes depending on the perspective adopted. At one point in the discussion among different theorists about memory and history published in the monograph, the question arises of why the commemoration of the First World War has been given so little attention in the Spanish cultural sphere. The general conclusions on this point go further than the supposed neutrality of Spain in the conflict. In the *(Dis)agreements* section, the different participants in a debate on the relationship between history and memory ultimately conclude that the problem is related to the difficulty of integrating the different historical discourses articulated in Spain within a more general idea of Europe. In an engaging discussion, Maximiliano Fuentes, Miguel Morey, Xavier Antich, Jordi Font, Mireia Llorens, Javier Cercas and Carmen Castillo tease out the contradictions arising between the idea that the memory of the past is established in each present and the idea of history as discourse around a particular past. It is a discussion that begins with a conceptual reflection and ultimately observes how cinema has been turned into a realm of collective transmission of the different debates over history. A discussion of the role of film archives in the preservation and documentation of the past also comes up in the interview with Juan Ignacio Lahoz, chief curator at the Filmoteca Valenciana film library.

In 1995, on the occasion of the centenary of cinema, Jean Luc Godard shot a film commissioned by the British Film Institute titled *Deux fois cinquante ans du cinema français*. In a certain sense this film could be considered an extension of his reflections on cinema and history in his *Histoire(s) du cinema* (1987-1997). The most notable characteristic of this 50-minute film is the fact that its central theme is commemoration. Godard himself assumes the role of a kind of Socrates, using the maieutic method to question the official discourse of the centenary that has been articulated around the figure of the president of the commission responsible for organising the commemoration, Michel Piccoli. At one point in the conversation, Godard asks Piccoli why we always feel such a strong desire to celebrate. The filmmaker stresses that he prefers continuities over commemorative celebrations; he prefers the idea that the recollection of past events can be celebrated every day, without having to be subject to the media pretexts that surround the notion of historical event. Godard prefers the idea of the images of the Lumières being present at the heart of society as a place of reflection on their origins. Conversely, he believes that the creation of different symbolic monuments that have celebrated the memory of cinema have in fact merely consigned it to oblivion.[3]

In a foundational work on the conceptualisation of memory, Paul Ricoeur (2000) reminds us that memory is invariably an inheritance that maintains a fragile balance between the different elements forming part of it and all those elements that become a shared public heritage. Memory is not the product of a spontaneous act of remembering; nor is it the result of the marks that the passage of time has left on us. Memory is always the result of a social action. There is no memory without the existence of certain specific policies of memory. To be able to make sense of the past we need to shape it in a way that can help us explain our present and our collective future.

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When addressing an event that has marked the legacy of European history, as is the case of the First World War, we need to ask what policies have been created to articulate the memory on which this commemoration is based. We also need to know the point to which such policies may be the result of the dialectic between erasure and abuse that so often hides behind the different official policies orchestrated around the memory. In a short but illustrative essay, Tsevan Todorov (2008: 36) reminds us that the existence of certain central stories can end up drowning out the existence of others that are automatically silenced or marginalised.

The problem of the abuses of memory described by Todorov is present in the multiple discourses articulated around the image of the First World War, from the commemorative monuments to the figure of the Unknown Soldier that proliferated in France in the 1920s, and even to the pacifist narratives developed in the same decade. If we focus on the realm of cinema, we will see how from 1908 the major European studios institutionalised the newsreel as a key genre in the definition of their screening programs. The outbreak of the Great War coincided with a key moment in the history of cinema. Thanks to the work of filmmakers like D. W. Griffith or Cecil B. DeMille, fiction found its institutional modes of narrative articulation in melodrama. The theme of the Great War soon began to appear in these narratives as an epic backdrop. In a text published on the occasion of the restoration of the classic French film on the war, Raymond Bernard's *Les croix de bois* (1932), French historian Laurent Véray suggests that "the cinema, together with literature, was without doubt the mode of representation that contributed most to forging and transmitting the images of that human catastrophe, many of which have played and continue to play an essential role in our understanding [of the War]. Fiction films participated in the establishment and dissemination of the myths and legends that populate the history of the Great War."[4] In his article "Filming the Great War: Information, Propaganda and Historical Documentation", Laurent Véray views the different debates over memory in terms of the "visual culture of war" that was established during the First World War. The overview he offers in his article is representative of how that culture was institutionalised. Beginning with newsreels, he goes onto explore the issue of censorship, the portrayal of the work of women during the war, the reconstruction of historic events, political propaganda and, finally, the question of film archives. In the middle of this debate appears the Battle of the Somme, one of the biggest tragedies of the war, which Véray identifies as the first major battle to be captured by the new media.

Of the research papers published in this issue of *L'Atalante*, there are three that offer an effective investigation into the role that Hollywood played in the creation of the symbolic imaginary of the Great War. In his article "Allegory, Redemptionism and Tragic Temptation in Hollywood Films in Response to the Great War", Xavier Pérez begins with the idea that in 1914, while the world drowned in a sea of self-destruction, D. W. Griffith turned the sights of the cinematic spectacle on the epic genre. Griffith serves as a point of departure for an observation of how classical cinema was born with a mission to serve as a collective allegorical expression of the tragedy of the century. This allegorical mission, along with the tragic temptation that imbues it, was perfectly represented by Griffith himself in his film *Hearts of the World* (1918), commissioned by the British army, and was also present in other charismatic films made during the war, like Thomas H. Ince's *Civilization* (1916). With the armistice, the tragic allegory was taken to the extreme in Rex Ingram's *The Four Horseman of the Apocalypse* (1921), in which the war "is not viewed as the moral saviour, but as the tragic agent that prevents moral transgression." The answer to this romantic/allegorical model would be established in the 1930s, in the context of talking pictures, by Lewis Milestone's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930), based on the novel by Eric Maria Remarque.

Albert Elduque and Alan Salvadó also explore the modes of representation of the images of Hollywood cinema, but their exploration focuses on one of the most characteristic visual motifs of the war: the trench. In their article "Aesthetic and Narrative Uses of the Trench in Hollywood Films from 1918 to 1930", they begin with the thought-provoking idea that during the First World War the classical forms of landscape depiction were profoundly altered, replaced by a mechanised and fragmented vision. A central role in this change to landscape depiction would be played by the trench, both in the way that this space established new forms of camera mobility, and in the way it established a dialogue between the interior space (melodramatic space) and the exterior space (space of danger). The canonical films discussed by the authors in this analysis include Charlie Chaplin's *Shoulder Arms* (1918), King Vidor's *The Big Parade* (1925), and Raoul Walsh's *What Price Glory* (1926).

While films are the essential primary sources for the analysis of the cinema of the period, for the purposes of studying the reception, impact and configuration of the imaginary of the Great War orchestrated by Hollywood there is another essential document: the film poster. Laura Gómez, Belén Puebla and Pablo R. Prieto have analysed posters preserved from the period on the basis of the idea that the "First World War represented the introduction of the poster as a means of consciousness raising", exploring motifs like the exaltation of the homeland and the combatant as hero. In their article "The Imaginary of War as Depicted in American Film Posters from 1914 to 1918", they identify three categories of analysis. The first category covers the period from 1914 to 1916, when the poster reflected a historical war film tradition. The second period covers the last years of the war (1917-1918), notable for government films. Finally, the third category of analysis, beginning in the same period, relates to commercial films, characterised by a more pacifist tone.

One of the major plot devices used in the cinema of this period to shape the imaginary of war of the viewing public was the motif of childhood. Children were the argument used to justify the mobilisation of the adults, who were fighting for their children and making sacrifices for their future. This idea was present in propaganda images, in advertising for children's toys (in which tin soldiers were especially prominent) and in some fictional narratives. Magdalena Brotons studies the question of the key role played by childhood in the unconscious of French cinema in her article, "Broken Toys: Childhood and War in French

Cinema (1908-1916)". This article turns to the pre-war years to identify a connection between two animated films by Émil Cohl made with tin soldiers: *Le petit soldat qui devient dieu* (1908) and *Les Beaux-Arts mystérieux* (1910), along with other films of the period, like Pierre Bressol's *Les petits soldats de Plomb* (1914). Through its analysis of toys, this paper demonstrates how the theme of war was present not only in history and melodrama but also in animated films.

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While all this was happening, newsreels provided the opportunity for the Great War to be used as a veritable laboratory for the creation of certain key models in the configuration of the news images. Camera operators with the different studios that produced newsreels filmed military parades, soldiers on the battlefield, prisoners of war captured by the two alliances, the long waits in the army camps before combat, and the effects of war on the bodies of the wounded. Once again, Laurent Véray, who has dedicated a significant part of his academic research to the study of images produced by the Allies, also notes that "the war that ravaged Europe from 1914 to 1918 was the first war captured by the new media. A significant proportion of the shots taken at the front were shown to the public at home in newspapers, weekly magazines and in documentaries made by the studios Pathé, Gaumont, Éclair and Elise, under the strict control of the cinematographic section of the armed forces" (1995: 15).

As Daniel Sánchez Salas notes in his article "Discipline and Punish: On Censorship of World War I Informative and Propaganda Films in Spain (1914-1918)", during the period of the Great War there was a shift from the traditional newsreel style towards the creation of the news report format. In Spain, which declared neutrality on 30 July 1914, news of the Great War reached the public from studios like Pathé, Gaumont and Eclair. However, a significant proportion of these films were subject to censorship by the civil governments of the different Spanish provinces. News on the war was filtered with the pretext of protecting children, but in reality the intention was to maintain a neutrality that was practically impossible in the face of the rising tensions between supporters of the Allies and supporters of Germany. The tensions generated by the censorship supports the author's hypothesis that although Spain did not participate militarily in the conflict, Spanish life was greatly affected by the war.

The awareness of the need to disseminate the images preserved in the newsreels made during the Great War has led to a process of digitalisation of the extant footage in some of the bigger European film archives. Although it is currently estimated that less than twenty percent of the cinematic production of this era has been preserved, the films that have survived constitute an extensive catalogue on the First World War. As much of this preserved footage has been stored in archives on photochemical film until now, it has not been widely available to the public or to generalist historians interested in the period. The need to facilitate access to these collections led to the creation of the EFG1914 project. This project was launched in February 2012 with the objective of digitalising the footage stored in different film archives to make it available for consultation. The EFG1914 project has benefited from the participation of 26 European partners, including 21 archives and film partners. In January 2014, when the first ceremonies commemorating the centenary

of the First World War began, some 661 hours of films and around 5600 pictures, censors' documents, posters and texts had been posted online. All of these can be consulted at the websites: www.europeanfilmgateway.eu and www.europeana.eu. The digitised films in the EFG1914 project cover a range of genres and subgenres related to the war, such as newsreels, documentaries, fictional narratives, propaganda films and anti-war films. Life in the trenches, in the rearguard, in the colonies occupied by the powers engaged in the war, and the description of everyday life in wartime in general are some of the most common themes dealt with in the films that have been preserved. As a complement to the work of preserving the archives on the European Film Gateway and Europeana websites, a virtual exhibition has been coordinated with the purpose of bringing to light a selection of exceptional documents related to the events of the First World War, but also to the film industry and its audience. This project has been carried out in coordination between the Deutsche Film Institut and the Association de Cinémathèques Européenes The content and function of this important archive that makes the First World War available online is the focus of attention in Mónica Barrientos' paper "The First World War in Digital Archives: An Overview of the Films of the EFG1914 Project".

This archive work represents an important step in the conservation and recovery of the images disseminated from the film footage taken during the First World War. However, the use of archives can entail certain conceptual and practical problems if we fail to reflect on what the archive is today and on how the notion of the archive has been transformed in an era of social networks. First of all, we need to be mindful of the fact that since Michel Foucault's analysis in his book *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, the concept of the archive has become rather complex. The archive is no longer merely the certification of the "totality of texts that have been preserved by a civilization,

or the set of traces that could be salvaged from its downfall, but the series of rules which determine in a culture the appearance and disappearance of statements, their retention and destruction, their paradoxical existence as *events* and *things*." (1998: 309). The reflection noted by Foucault in his *Archaeology* took the problem of the establishment of statements as a key element and a point of departure. What is important is not the document, nor what is said, but the simple fact that it is being said, i.e., "statements as events" (1969: 69).

If we transfer the debate proposed by Michel Foucault to the question of visual archives, it becomes clear that it is no longer enough to think of archives as a mere repository of images. We need to consider archives in terms of the distance generated from the present. We need to establish new perspectives and points of view. In the case of the newsreels filmed during the First World War, we need always to bear in mind that the impression left by the statements is related to the modes of filming. Any filmed archive is an archive of different gazes on the world, on human beings and on conflict understood as an event. Any archive image, including the images from the early days of cinema like those filmed during the war, is above all an archive of modes of filming.

In most historical series and in the different compilations that have appeared in relation to the First World War, one of the key issues involves the analysis of how the ways of filming—the statements—are erased and diluted in the editing process in order to create new statements which, in some cases, may end up distorting the visual flows. In her studies of images from the Second World War, historian Silvie Lindeperg has identified a set of formulae that reflect the increasing standardisation of the writing of history. These formulae, which may be applied to the study of the way in which images from the First World War are being used today, are, according to Lindeperg, characterised by "an aesthetic of excessively full things, by a hypervisibility, by enjambment

and hybridisation between the eras and different realms of the visible, by an immersion in the image and the sound that can lead to the creation of a new approach to the concepts of truth and reality, by a pulverisation of the original durations to create a formatting of temporalities" (2013: 18). Many of these issues identified by Silvie Lindeperg are present in most of the educational television documentaries on the First World War. These productions exploring history through a montage of pre-existing archive images range from the BBC production *World War One Centenary* to the polemical French series *Appocalipse Première Guerre Mondiale*, where the original black and white images from the newsreels are reassembled and colourised. All these educational documentary series merely create standardising discourses, with no respect for the statements present in the many newsreels, and ultimately generate a didactic discourse in which information is transmitted through a dubious blend of knowledge, reason, didactics and the communication of information on the one hand, and spectacle, distraction and pseudo-artistic expression on the other.

In view of the economy of the historical memory of the visible that most television institutions have articulated, we need to return to a discussion of certain key questions, such as: what does it mean today to be spectators viewing images of the past, such as images of the First World War? How do we go about establishing a complex relationship between distance and proximity with respect to historical documents? How do we take stock of the different ways of filming and of the statements concealed within the heart of the images?

To answer these questions, in which the relationships between what is said and what is unsaid will be essential for the articulation of discourses, we may find interesting examples in the work created by Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi using archive images, and especially their films on the First World War. The films of these filmmakers are positioned at the half-way point between archaeological work (in the sense defined by Foucault, consisting in searching for, recovering and classifying images to determine their meaning) and the work of artists who believe in the dialectic image arising from found footage as a way of exploring and teasing out the statements in the images and bringing their discourses into the present.[4]

Paula Arantzazu Ruiz's article "Operating on the Frame: Appearances of Novecento and the First World War in the Medical Film Genre in *Oh! Uomo* by Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci-Lucchi" focuses on one of the three films that make up their so-called war trilogy to address the question of the devastating effects of the Great War on the social, scientific and technological ideologies that underpinned it. The article begins with a study of scientific footage and the way in which the filmmakers dissect the archive image with their analytic camera. This reflection on *Oh! Uomo* closes an interrelated series of studies that demonstrate that the history of modernity and its notions of the body cannot be separated from the hegemonic conceptions related to Western colonialism; a reflection that uses archive footage to question it and interrogate it, ultimately interrogating the official discourses that have been articulated around the First World War.■

NOTES

*   This article forms part of the research project of the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness, *La construcción del imaginario bélico en las actualidades de la Primera Guerra Mundial* (HAR2012-34854).

1   A key critical study of Kracauer's last book can be found in Barnow, Dagmar (1994). *Critical Realism: History, Photography and the Work of Siegfried Kracauer.* Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

2   Véray, Laurent (2014). Filmer la Grande Guerre à hauteur d'homme. In *Les croix des bois*. Complementary booklet to the restored DVD edition. Paris: Pathé.

3   *Deux fois cinquante ans du cinema français* (1995) by Jean Luc Godard was included in the package: Jean

Luc Godard, *Histoire(s) du cinema*. Gaumont/Intermedio, 2006.

4   Christa Blümlinger, *Cinema de seconde main. Estétique du remploi dans l'art du film et des nouveux médias*. Paris: Klincksieck, 2013. pp. 20-21

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POLICIES OF MEMORY RELATED TO IMAGES FROM THE FIRST WORLD WAR

POLÍTICAS DE MEMORIA EN TORNO A LAS IMÁGENES DE LA PRIMERA GUERRA MUNDIAL

Abstract

This article examines the political uses of memory aimed at preserving the memory of past events and rescuing them from oblivion. Based on the reflections of Siegfried Kracauer on the points of contact between history and photography as tools for preserving an event, the article asks what role cinema plays as a tool for transmitting historical memory. An answer to this question is sought in the specific case of the First World War, interrogating the role of the film archive, the function served by newsreels and the place that fiction films have occupied in the commemoration of a key moment in European history. This examination is framed by a reflection on the nature of commemoration on the occasion of the centenary of the war and a reflection on the main articles included in the monograph issue of the *L'Atalante* journal.

Key words

Memory; Archive; Cinema; Commemoration; Newsreels; First World War.

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Resumen

El articulo parte de las llamadas políticas de memoria orientadas a conservar la memoria de los hechos del pasado y rescatarlos del olvido. A partir de las reflexiones de Siegfried Kracauer en torno a los puntos de contacto entre la historia y la fotografía como instrumentos para conservar lo acontecido, el artículo se pregunta cuál es el papel del cine como instrumento transmisor de memoria histórica. Para encontrar una respuesta, el artículo parte del caso específico de la Primera Guerra Mundial y se interroga sobre el papel del archivo cinematográfico, la función que desarrollaron las actualidades o el lugar que el cine de ficción ha ejercido para conmemorar un pasado clave para la historia europea. El texto se enmarca en la reflexión en torno al factor conmemorativo derivado del centenario de la contienda y en la reflexión en torno a los principales artículos que componen el número monográfico de la revista *L'Atalante*.

Palabras clave

Memoria; archivo; cine; conmemoración; actualidades; Primera Guerra Mundial.

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