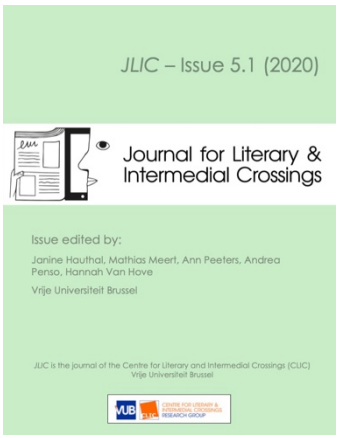

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When Big Screens Meet Small Screens:

Deferred Homecoming in Johan Grimonprez's *Shadow World*

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Johan Grimonprez's cinema is not keen on restoring what has vanished, regretting past locations or mourning the past. His overarching vision of time recalls that of heroes wandering back to their place of belonging. Before having access to their family and friends however, the detours on their roads prevent them from reaching the shores they belong to. So, most of the time, the idea of "deferred homecoming" in Grimonprez's work comes close to its literal meaning. Even today the tale of Ulysses is related to the fate of the artist as a traveller.

And yet, all myths put aside, homecoming in the 21st century slows down for reasons that Greek citizens would never have imagined: traffic jams and road works have become more important than tribal wars and seductive encounters. And when it comes to finding one's way home, the place one is craving for often seems in ruins. Or it has been "gentrified beyond recognition" (Boym 49-53). If we accept that "being home" is – for most of us – a matter of recognition and reflection, this reflection suggests "new flexibility, not the re-establishment of statis" (Boym 49). As a matter of fact, road works mediate this flexibility by means of "time" passing by (49). According to Svetlana Boym, artists and philosophers, who can also be called "reflective nostalgics," are "epicures of duration"; they take sensual delight "in the texture of time not measurable by clocks and calendars"; they cherish "fragments of memory and love distance in itself" (49). So, in a way, along with Marcel Proust, Vladimir Nabokov and Henri

Bergson, Grimonprez is concerned with fragmented memory, "historical and individual time," and with "the irrevocability of the past and human finitude" (Boym 49).

Although a number of temporal and historical issues still deserve attention, a more crucial question regarding Grimonprez's cinema concerns the notion of *nostalgia* that Boym mentions and which literally means 'the pain of coming home': how can artists like Grimonprez still be related to the notion of home? Can they find a home in a world where their birthplace seems to be nowhere and airplanes bring them everywhere? Before answering these questions, I will provide some contextual information regarding *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* (1997)*, Double Take* (2010) and *Shadow World* (2016). My inquiry will not depart from a *status quaestionis* since very few academic journals have focused on this work. Having read the comments of Bjorn Gabriels (*Filmmagie*) and Dana Linssen (*De Filmkrant*), I was rather moved by the way in which *Shadow World* relates notions as homecoming and the 8 o'clock news.

Alongside allusions to television, Grimonprez relies on diverse literary sources which generate adaptations of existing material. For *Double Take* (2009), for instance, the British novelist Tom McCarthy wrote a story which was produced on Grimonprez's request. It was originally a hard-boiled fiction about the meeting of Hitchcock with his double and only in the second place a reflection on the use of overexposed images. In addition to this set-up, the movie also relied upon a story of Jorge Luis Borges, about a man meeting his double "who turns out to be his older self" (Jacobs 173).

As for television*, Double Take* uses imagistic digital structures and news items from the fifties gathered on new media; these anachronisms, that have at first sight no explicit relation to the 21st century, underline the Cold War-events from that period. One remembers how the United States and the Soviet Union launched into a "double" power-struggle in 1961, a conflict culminating with the construction of a wall dividing East and West. When the so-called 'iron curtain' crumbled, an apparently rather peaceful time started. It is this apparent time of harmony

from 1989 till 2001, prefiguring the attacks of Al Qaida, that gives rise to the setting of *Shadow World*. Thus, *Shadow World* starts where the power-struggle of *Double Take* ends: new actors enter the scene, different geo-political rivalries pop up and the insecurity caused by wars receives a new form.

However, *Double Take* is not limited to comments and observations on the Cold War. Besides anticipating the conflicts of the 21st century and giving a clear vision on history, the anachronisms of *Double Take* joyfully create "a suspense film about suspense" as Steven Jacobs observed:

> Hitchcock himself [has] contributed to the transition from cinema to television, which can be interpreted as another instance of the process of duplication. […] From the mid-1950s Hitchcock produced his *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* series in which he ridiculed TV formats and TV commercials. The story of *Double Take*, therefore, takes place in the era of the demise of the classical Hollywood system when television had surpassed film as the most important medium for the distribution of both information and visual entertainment. (Jacobs 174; my emphasis)

Double Take deals with fiction. Hitchcock meeting his younger rival – "if you meet your double, you should kill him" – offers the fictional background for the narrative: cinema kills its younger rival, television. The presence of lookalikes and the contrast of media – television, new media versus cinema – initiate a range of mirroring effects ready to be exchanged and discussed: formal ones but also ideological ones, such as capitalism and communism, Nixon versus Khrushchev etc. On the one hand, Grimonprez's use of archival material evokes forces that seem to have equal power in a geopolitical context (the U.S. versus the Soviet Union). On the other hand, the filmmaker doesn't appear eager to demonstrate that one has to be preferred above the other, that truth can be found in the past, that the origins of political systems need to be restored or habits preserved throughout the centuries. Play and doubt, horror and pleasure produce antagonist forces that are not easy to pin down.

The artist's debut at Documenta X in Kassel – *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* (1997) – displayed mostly visual sources: news on television about hijacking and early terrorism. Undoubtedly, this movie could have been considered a refreshing way of falling back on past material. Using the past, however, was not enough to label this cinema as artistic and ideological. The newsreel footage of television had become a medium in itself which fulfilled many functions: a deconstruction of the idea of terror, a critical detachment with regard to American culture and laughter in the face of media, creating drama with fragments. Since then, Grimonprez has been loyal to his visual poetics while at the same time innovating and developing side roads. He still collects fragments of current affairs and hit parades; and he still succeeds in sharing his vision with the audience. Images, which the artist presumably has seen as a child, are neither autobiographical nor tragic. They make him and the public become acquainted again and again with a juvenile intuitive knowledge and forgotten recollections.

More recently, *Shadow World* (2016) varied the literary influences to bring in more research. A study based on Andrew Feinstein's essay, *The Shadow World: Inside the Global Arm Trade* (2011), preceded the production. After his South African career at the ANC (Afrikaans Nationaal Congres) movement, Feinstein delivered a document of seven hundred pages and 3000 footnotes on the financial issues in global arm trade. Intending to reach a broader audience, Feinstein was keen to present this complex investigation as fiction. Some efforts were made to produce it as a drama for television. The more serious attempts to transpose this writing into the genre of documentary came later, when Louverture films in New York brought Feinstein and Grimonprez together. Not only the book but also the writer's view on global politics would inspire the filmmaker to read the assembled documents, to deal with its sources and to take up the project (Gabriels 23). In the final editing, images of the past reappeared, such as Ronald Reagan holding a rifle in his airplane or Margaret Thatcher

receiving the Saudi oil barons at 10 Downing Street. These fragments recalled scenes from television, putting capitalist and communist societies on display.

1. 21st-Century Homesickness

If an 'epicurean' way of dealing with homecoming is possible for Svetlana Boym, then the journalist Daniel Schreiber insists in his recent publication, *Die Suche nach dem Ort, an dem wir leben wollen* (2017), on a much darker side of the retrospective gaze. To live in the past can bring you towards a cliff edge. With his essay on being home in the global era, the German author comments on how television, video and other media have opened up the history of politics on a global scale. Not only does television mediate history and archives in another way, it also brings us back in time, to more personal and existential issues, against the background of public achievements. In this sense, Schreiber's approach is existential. Implicitly, he makes it obvious how television and the notion of homecoming are intertwined.

Daniel Schreiber relies, in most chapters, on philosophers having handled the problem of displacement in their theories: Theodor Adorno in *Minima Moralia*, Gaston Bachelard in *Poétique de l'espace* and many others. Schreiber's way of seeing leaves little space for pleasure when dealing with homesickness. This means topics such as globalism and nomad existence – belonging everywhere on earth – fit into a genre of writing that is not exclusively academic. Schreiber's statement comes close to the literary, very readable confession of a modern commuter. As a contemporary nomad, he deals with universal history and global displacement, without self-pity and excessive complaints. At first sight he and Grimonprez share an interest in providing geopolitical references. Both artists have also missed, at specific times in their lives, local scenes to interact with and have not been tempted to anchor their labor in their place of origin.

At first, Schreiber admits how displacement in western cities made him once outstandingly happy, especially as a youngster. The more his work and his day-to-day activity

could be performed in unknown cities, the merrier he was. Leading a double life, with two or more homes, two or more jobs and a rich variety of friends, travelling was for him the escape route from the DDR's compulsory ideology and its authoritarian regime. Undergoing severe forms of education in Mecklenburg as a child, the notion of home had never been offered to him, since he was torn between spaces in which his identity as an author, journalist and member of the LGBT-community was jeopardized (Schreiber 95).

As a matter of fact, Schreiber's and Grimonprez's works have been received among communities everywhere on earth. The title of Schreiber's essay in French translation is "*Je suis né quelque part,"* which literally means *I am born somewhere*. Although Grimonprez's movies have eloquent titles too, they rely on a basic truth that is at the opposite side of the spectrum. The effects of our global society on his artistic practice could be outlined as: *I am born nowhere and I have lived everywhere*. To put it clearly, in both cases, and despite their oppositions, global interaction with the audience triggers rather oppressive and dark realities. For Schreiber and Grimonprez, worldwide trade – whether it concerns arms or other writing – provokes scarce labor, displacement of industry and the need to migrate. Consequently, the more this need for movement increases, the more the possibility to have a home is hijacked.

Schreiber insists on the fact that labor anchors our lives in more than one city, which means that our inclusion in a given community, in a firmly rooted group of friends or even in a determined political field turns out to be out of reach. Not only have we lost the opportunity to be embedded in a confined space, we also lack the financial means to stay close to the working area we inhabit. This impeded mobility has produced, at the beginning of the 21st century, other ways of dealing with habitat and the barriers between private and public life.

Building a home or "being at home" seems out of reach for many. This notion has evaporated not only because it seems luxurious, but also because being free from worries and evaluations, "without having to prove ourselves" is a state of mind that can no longer be

achieved in the private arena (Schreiber 121). Due to issues such as mobility, work must – most of the time – be executed "at home" in a controlled and perfectly transparent place, while media link up with professional networks and open up the private scene to public transactions. In this sense being home often results in "being in front of a screen", compelled to work while dealing with distant geopolitical spheres (Schreiber 168).

The author underlines, referring to Gert Selle's *Die eigenen vier Wände* (1993), how cameras and film operate not only under the rule of information and artistic service, but also as humble servants for surveillance preventing people being lazy or operating at their own pace. Television and technical tools discipline workers and make them believe they have nothing to lose when they open up as employees writing private mails to their travel agent or banker. In a visual culture not only the news and the urban landscape lose their singular appearance. Our private, brave new worlds collide more and more with standardised spare time and normative financial and sexual expectations. Profiles serve target groups that bring in money; strategies to resist the distribution of data to global marketers and career coaches are still pending (Schneider 170-1). So we have to ask ourselves: what would happen if these kinds of insights could start a new way of dealing with screens?

The contrast between the imposed mobility of human workforce on the one hand and a global spread of finances on the other brings me back to Grimonprez. As I will show, the sources of *Shadow World* (2016) undertake an aesthetic attempt to build a global home with geopolitical images on television. But they also address an inquiry into global strategies and how these can be filmed. In order to understand the notion of "being at home in a global world" more clearly, I will firstly explore the sources in Grimonprez's early documentaries *D-I-A-L History* and *Double Take* to see how they inform us of the dangers of cocooning. Afterwards, I will explain how this process of homecoming draws on Boym's aesthetic of epicurean duration and delay.

On the whole, the epicurean duration still exists in *Shadow World*, but it covers up a darker questioning about the possibilities to come home in a global world. To realize the aesthetics of "delay" in his later work, Grimonprez combines contrasting discourses in his video such as broadcasting, talking heads, poetry; these refer to different temporal layers in the editing and underline how globalisation is never at rest: security generates insecure encounters, the narrative inevitably generates a counter narrative. These dialectics with epic battles and numerous dimensions do not stand still in a binary form. As we will show, the layers in the editing and their discourse are "continually interacting with each other in unpredictably complex and dynamic ways" (Conomos 94-5). Eventually the contrasting discourses will be transcended with the help of art, literature and poetry.

2. Grimonprez's Documentaries and their Sources

Source 1: Commercials Trading Comfort

D-I-A-L History and *Double Take* fall back on digital imaging techniques assembling television clips. Folgers' coffee commercials for instance, in *Double Take*, depict a realm of private comfort. One discovers kitchen areas where couples take their breakfast, spaces with cooking tools and robots ready to make juices for the children. Examples of a safe zone installed by means of consumption underline how consumerism creates a happy hypnosis for the baby boom generation, even if this comfort is a false one. Looking beyond the cosy frameworks of American households brings us face to face with anxiety. Possessions in this movie generate the fear of losing conveniences. The only truth commercials underline in the early documentaries is the need for non-possession. Even if the desired objects are bought, no intimacy will be obtained, certainly not at home, the place most familiar to us. "With Hitchcock", Grimonprez says, anxiety entered the family "where it always belonged". He also

clarifies how Hitchcock's real obsession lay with commercials that had infected the format of storytelling:

> After all "the story may be unhip, but those crazy commercials are pure poetry", he [Hitchcock] joked, adding that they "keep you from getting too engrossed in the story". Much to the horror of his sponsors, Hitchcock loftily denounced the accursed ads, and with sardonic mischief urged the early TV viewer to zap away from "these deadly boring commercials: I don't mind you leaving the room during the commercial, but I expect you to be in your seats for my parts of the program!" ([Grams and Wikstrom qtd. in] Grimonprez, "'Maybe the Sky'" 40)

Source 2: Old News

In *D-I-A-L History*, media inform us about the outside, unknown world but they also give the feeling of being at home while watching footage of distant landscapes. News reports of North America show people on the run, picking up their lives after terrorist attacks, often with a television set in a temporary shelter (such as schools and camps). When Van McCay's "Do the hustle" confronts clips of the hit parade with news of the oil crisis or conflicts in the Middle East, the pleasure of the disco beat vanishes and the happy hypnosis of television appears to be ephemeral. These collisions between sound design and news realize a heightened contrast in the video between the domestic sphere and the dramatic episodes of our time. After the early terrorism of the seventies, the contrast is so ambivalent it generates a form of restlessness that cannot be avoided: "No longer happy innocent consumers of a bygone TV era, we (are) now both avid consumers of fear and the protagonists of an increasing ubiquity of systems of surveillance" (Grimonprez, "'Maybe the Sky'" 56). In this perspective of fear, it seems crucial to distinguish what one tends to call "film" from "video". Video keeps fear at a distance. It flows through all other media (music-clips, commercials, news format) and "given its Fluxus background, it is no surpise that video connects new hybrid relationships between media and genres redefining the boundaries of artistic expression" (Conomos 92).

Source 3: For in Literature We Believe

At the same time, commercials and spoken news are combined with voice-over. Often these voice-overs melodiously interrogate the inner life of popular culture. In *D-I-A-L History,* it is a sentence of Don DeLillo's *Mao II* that makes it possible to understand what this inner life is: "What terrorists gain, novelists loose. Years ago, I used to think it was possible for a novelist to alter the inner life of a culture. Now bomb-makers and gunmen have taken that territory. They make raids on human consciousness, what writers used to do before we were all incorporated" (comment of voice-over qtd. in Wood 259). Nevertheless, Grimonprez would not continue making art if he wasn't convinced the terrorist "raids" he refers to can still be achieved. In order to resist small screens such as televisions and videos on YouTube, distance from current affairs is needed. Being 'windows' on possible lives everywhere on earth, small screens can be integrated in a broader narrative which knows how to offer a personal vision.

In general, literature provides a recurrent feature in Grimonprez's work and helps to construct a steady poetics. But literary quotes also melodiously feed the voice-over's appearance. To clarify how Grimonprez makes use of genre, the early movies require further investigation. This would help to see how the artist plays throughout his career with genre-notions of the novel, story, essay and poetry. Whether literature submits to the constructivist practice or the voice-over, the latter's sound and melody are utterly important because they question the ephemeral duration of desire: how long can images in movies survive before they get old? How many weeks do objects in commercials and window frames present themselves as attractive and new? And when do they become collector's items or nostalgic tools? Can the outlook of a kitchen robot and the desire it arouses resist the passage of time? When we resist the ephemeral, we defer and transcend melancholy; suddenly we enter a place where desire is no longer pulling us apart. This place is homebound, peaceful and protective. It is independent from events passing by and comes close to art.

3. The Talk of Shadows

The following section of this article aims to analyze globalization and homecoming as they have been addressed by Boym and Schreiber (set out above) in Grimonprez's *Shadow World*. The movie *Shadow World* was released for the Arthouse cinema circuit in the United States, Belgium and Denmark in 2016. For the first time in the artist's career, the editing exhibits footage of the eight o'clock news with documented interviews undertaken by Grimonprez a few months before release. The conversations on the global arms' trade with prominent public figures – Chris Hedges, Franklin Spinney etc., the so-called talking heads – alternate with the digital open source clips on YouTube. The movie highlights the codes of documentary and television news as we know them. The displayed discourse is short, fragmented, mostly visual and official.

Data and Discourse

At first, when compared to the interviews, the events broadcast in the movie bring political figures from the eighties to life with a swinging allure. Despite this, the viewer will have little space for laughter considering where this is leading. The tragic dimension emerges when the news flashes of the eighties clash with the interviews of the 21st century. Temporal contrasts appear gradually and they suffice to see the roots of a dystopia unfolding. With its emphasis on YouTube, this documentary is more than a cynical joke on the wheeling and dealing of weapons. Quotes from recent interviews add perspectives to the flashbacks on the news. And these flashbacks are no happy encounter with the past. *Shadow World* comprises three discourses and layers: one can distinguish the discourse of the epic framework, the one that the talking heads use and, finally, the poetic interventions of the voice-over.

The *first* layer travels back in time reusing *news from public broadcasting and social media*. It repeats historic discourses of Thatcher, Reagan and Blair before or after their dealings

with the Middle East or more recent speeches of Obama (2009). Official declarations are performed. We also see decision makers "re-play" a discourse anticipated backstage. This "replay" of what has been prepared makes the vain and comical performance of the ceremonies obvious. Body language underlines how the political speech can no longer be believed. Words in public only slightly transform the more content-related ideas of the political agenda. However, due to gestures, mimicry and various rehearsals, historic discourse empties the message from its initial beliefs. I will call this layer in the editing, which goes back furthest in time, the *epic framework*.

Talking Heads

Besides public broadcasting, the *second* framework of moving images is more recent and of a less affective and more analytical nature. It presents a montage of *interviews*, *talking heads* taking the floor, among which philosophers like Michael Hardt or businessmen selling equipment. These interviews reconstruct what has been kept secret during the deals and they make discourse on television more readable and transparent. The retrospective character of the interview adds information that was not available when public discourse was in the news for the first time (Linssen, Gabriels). It also functions as a severe criticism of the news. The first layer, i.e. the epic framework, and the second one, with the interviewees, form a striking contrast. Both discourses clash as belligerent forces. Specifically in *Shadow World*, the discourse of news anchors on the one hand and that of the interviewees on the other reveal how man has lost the once known unity between himself and his world.

The discourse of the talking heads relies on three templates adapted from Feinstein. These three templates combine a reflection on word and image with ideological comments; they are content-related and come close to what experts call "reasoning devices" (Vanoverschelde 20). These templates explain why a certain frame in the past is meaningful, what happened backstage at that time and why the actors performed and spoke as they did. The first template,

which can also be labeled as a reasoning device, that can be identified in several interviews is that of the "double dealer" which has a long history. During the First World War, weapons were sold to several buyers. For most traders, no distinctions were made between friend or enemy. Greed and free trade were chosen above democracy, solidarity and fraternity.

The second reasoning device the interviewees insist upon can be labeled as "the revolving doors"; Chris Hedges, former war correspondent at *New York Times,* speaks in his interview of a "corporate coup d'état in slow motion" (minute 30). Reading this in Feinstein's investigations, Grimonprez was struck by the fact that it is not the industry itself which sells its products (Linsen 2016). Politicians are the biggest dealers, especially those who work for companies. The most famous example is Dick Cheney, CEO of the oil company Halliburton and former US-Minister of Defense. Before the deals with Iraq, he was president of a commission in search of a convincing broker. After negotiating, Cheney and his commission elected Cheney himself to soften the lobbying at the boards that were most convenient. The "feedback principle" is the third reasoning device Grimonprez refers to. Some interviews describe how corruption operates. Not only weapons are sold. Lobbyists in several political settings offer bribes to make their deals attractive (Linssen).

The cinematographic interview creates a more serious note, alienating the news images that once were familiar. Grimonprez's interviewees outline the importance of avoiding redundancy and unemployment in specific areas of industry, how western countries need to be at war to defend their own interests and how weapons are sold as tools assuring security, profit and employment. Philosophers, military staff and journalists express how we venture in a permanent state of war and how we have accepted "a political regime that is sustained by fear". Eventually Michael Hardt quotes the very known passage of Machiavelli to explain how one can rule through fear: "Machiavelli asked in *The Prince*: 'Is it better for the prince to be feared or to be loved? And his conclusion is, because the locus of fear resides in him (in the prince), it

can be constant for his rule. Whereas the locus of love resides in the people, it is in their power and so for them it can be constant and long lasting'" (minute 37-38).

Military staff members underline the economic interests at stake. According to Lawrence Wilkerson, former colonel of the US Army, governors do not have to justify the costs of the national security state. Nevertheless, "one just has to keep people fearful enough" to support the expenses (minute 38). Ruling through fear can be effective, not only for those in power. Hedges puts the same idea in this way: "You can serve two sets of principles: privilege and power or justice and truth. The more you compromise with those who serve privilege and power, the more you diminish the capacity for justice and truth. I think that the rebel seeks to keep those in power fearful" (minute 51).

Having fear is the result of something. When television audiences experience fear in their homes, watching television, this is the result of an anxiety generated to rule and to sell. Many discourses insist on seeing politicians as actors and liars defending the interests of the local economy: "I don't mind paying bribes to politicians" says Privitera (minute 13). "It is part of the deal. The thing is with politicians that they are very much like prostitutes, but only more expensive. At the end of the day, they do what they are told". To do as you are told and therefore "adapt" what has been told, is the main task of the political voices.

So the critical discourse on the big screen takes the lead when it comes to analysing the databases that were once suitable for installing a homebound atmosphere. A few seconds after Privitera's declaration, we see a flashback of Rumsfeld implicitly admitting in the House of Representatives, in front of Cynthia McKinny, how agreements were made. Lobbyists, according to Privatera, are like "Gucci shoe guys"; they desire to organize the self-promoting budget machine of weapon industry. They systematically "create new weapons, […] overestimate their performance and underestimate their costs" (minute 32).

Poetry

A clear break with these two frameworks – the epic one of (old) public broadcasting grasped on YouTube and the one displaying the talking heads – arises when a voice-over falls back on poetic material. I will call this *third* discourse the *poetic framework*. In these frames we see footage of roller-skating couples, heavenly bodies in space or soldiers leaving the trenches with Christmas during the Russian-German fraternization (1917). These visuals act like a frame within the movie. The more recent commercial deals of western companies are kept at a distance in contrast to the timeless landscapes of the moon or the comments of the Spanish author, Eduardo Galeano, who has written some stories to prepare the screenplay. The voice of Galeano reads poems and falls back on fewer images. We see no one talking or speaking while he reads. Mysteriously his voice covers up the frame and no face appears. We hear a voice-over read the following text while a tree slightly moves:

> Torture seemed useless for obtaining information. But it was very useful for sowing fear. And fear obliged Uruguayans to live by silence or lies. While in exile I received many unsigned letters from my country. One letter said: lying sucks; and getting used to lying sucks; but worse than lying is teaching how to lie. (*Shadow World* minute 21-22)

This anxiety is not one directed towards the "historical incongruities between past and present" (Boym 45). Grimonprez indeed refers to universal and international recollections to reconstruct a common social context or a "cultural intimacy" which has no relation whatsoever with national or ethnic homogeneity. The poetic sound design exhibits, in spite of the dramatic background, delight and melancholy in assembling the fragments of a geopolitical memory, mainly in English.

Shadow World reveals how the people in the quest against the arms' trade – the talking heads but also the voice-over, the filmmaker etc. – are immersed in a community. In this

community, there is no longer a search for a local home but an inquiry for "being at home in the world" in the sense of Georg Lukacs:

> Happy are those ages when the starry sky is the map of all possible paths – ages whose paths are illuminated by the light of the stars. Everything in such ages is new and yet familiar, full of adventure and yet their own. The world is wide and yet it is like home, for the fire that burns in the soul is of the same essential nature as the stars. (Lukacs qtd. in Boym 24-5)

The shadows on television and the stars that reach us in the initial episodes of the movie will never receive a material shape. Others will never reach the world's centre of gravity. Shots of moonscapes and tools floating in space highlight how the earth receives only a glimpse of the lights and devices far away. At this point, the audience, in front of a screen, recalls another audience in front of a cave-wall, that is, the one Plato adressed when he introduced the reader to his '*Shadow World'*. In the best of worlds, shadows on screens raise questions about their meaning. How did television come so far that shadows and forms had to be created? That they had to be beautiful and so on?

Writing on the "starry sky" and "all possible paths" (24-5), Svetlana Boym also mentions Lukacs, while Schreiber for his part comments in his essay on the so-called "ontological security" of Anthony Giddens. For Giddens, each being has to fall back on a minimal amount of mental stability in order to be happy with his/her existence. This stability implies no flexibility, some continuity and the ability to give sense to daily activities (Schreiber 140). What has been lost – and what archives on YouTube uncover – is how the totality of existence becomes "hopelessly fragmented in the modern age" (Boym 25).

Conclusion

So, in the end, something new strikes the audience in *Shadow World.* The delays in communication caused by damaged wiring, noise and advertising, which seemed essential to the early movies, are remodeled in the later work. In addition, the tension between narrative

and counter-narrative does not express national specificities or locally bound cultural sensibilities (Bignell 223-228). For issues such as arms' trade, the reconstruction of a national past, by means of a genre such as the historical drama, is no longer relevant. Due to the global economy and the geopolitical sphere, the conventions of the documentary genre are continuously reinvented, because having a shared historical ancestry has become impossible.

Looking back at history, Grimonprez produces a new awareness of deferred homecoming. The aesthetic of delay comes to fruition in *Shadow World* with less careless pleasure compared to the early work. In times of globalization, news serve habits that create a home, but it also triggers the surveillance of crowds and it disciplines behavior. Up-to-the minute videos with fragmented television images create strategic and fearful interpretations of reality, even when the viewer feels secure and homebound and even when he knows what is actually happening on television is plainly "an accident, or a mistake, or a misunderstanding, or a deception, or a theatrical performance and so on" (Goffman 10). So the audience needs the distance of literature, poetry and art to understand the world as a place where emotions (such as joy and fear) alternate. This understanding needs delay and can only survive when delayed action is possible.

As for the tension between the narrative and the counter-narrative, playfulness still plays its role. But the dialectical tension between the moment of broadcasting on television – the events on the news with their costumes and gestures (the red evening-gown of Thatcher!) – and the analysis of the interviewees (when broadcasting is over) produce a vision of history that is very idiosyncratic. *Shadow World* does not cope with fiction in the same way the early movies did – integrating quotes of thrillers, novels and so on – but neither does it believe in an objective, historical truth.

Underneath Grimonprez's swings and smiles, the audience discovers a new play with documentary, one that I would call for the time being "global drama" since it makes belligerent

forces appear, epics alternate with harmony, and interests of politicians become obvious and explicit. Only cinema and big screens make sense of official declarations that seem unclear when transactions occur. Only cinema, looking back on facts, brings us closer to a worldwide home and a reality we can count on even if it is made of digital archives, new media and clips.

Erving Goffman based his analysis of everyday life situations on practical observation. If his research were to take place nowadays, he would analyse politics as a way to deal with everyday life situations. In this sense, he would question what makes the perception of the news feel like an encounter with reality. And, especially, what makes the perception of the news, in this global world, feel like an encounter with homebound facts. Why do we perceive situations on the 8 o'clock news as something that is real instead of perceiving them as plays, daydreams or performances? The investigation of this question would probably lead Goffmann, as well as Grimonprez, to unravel how frames on television adapt the ideas of beauty, truth and good behavior to events that happen backstage. Even if political shadows can be unveiled and even if the digital image brings us closer to a historical perspective, this effort towards history cannot improve the world or make the truth transparent and convenient to all. Making movies becomes a singular way of seeing and observing how utilitarian behavior needs to be impeded once in a while. Dick Cheney, Prince Bandar and Donald Rumsfeld will never be poets.

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