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Slavophilism, nostalgia and the curse of Western ideas: Reflections on Russia's past in Alexander Proshkin's 2006 adaptation of *Doctor Zhivago*

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Abstract: *Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia experienced a decade in which their television industry produced little new programming. This trend started to reverse in the late 1990s and the early 2000s, when, partly owing to the collapse of the rouble, Russian television networks started to produce many programmes for domestic consumption again. One of the most popular genres to appear during this period was adaptations of Russian literature. These series were, in many ways, meditations on Russian history, the country's place in the world and special attention was given to dissident works from the Soviet period. This paper examines one of the most significant examples of the genre, the eleven-part 2006 adaptation of Boris Pasternak's novel Doctor Zhivago (1957) directed by Alexander Proshkin, and the way the series broadly reflects upon Russian history.*

Keywords: *Russia, television, Slavophilism, Doctor Zhivago, Vladimir Putin, media*

Introduction

Almost a year after coming to power as president of Russia in 1999 Vladimir Putin, who would become the dominant political force of early twenty-first century Russia, gave a speech in which he said:

Russia's unity is strengthened by its inherent patriotism, its cultural traditions and shared historical memory. Today an interest in Russia's history is returning to art, theatre, and cinema. This is an interest in our roots, in what we all hold dear. I am convinced that this is the start of a spiritual renaissance. (MacFadyen 2008, 13)

Following the many shocks that Russia endured in the last decade of the twentieth century, the search for a stabilising cultural force in the Russian president's estimation could be found by probing the great cultural achievements of Russian history. While Putin for some reason chose to exclude television from his list of important cultural institutions, there was at the time of his statement no cultural institution with greater reach. According to Sarah Oates and Stephen White, by 1991 about ninety-one percent of Russians owned at least one television, making it by far the most accessible medium in post-Soviet Russia (White and Oates 2003, 32). Television proved so important to Putin and his inner circle that they acted swiftly to gain leverage over the three largest networks. The two largest stations ORT (now called Channel One) and RTR (now called Rossiya One)

were renationalised, and through state pressure, the state oil and gas giant Gazprom acquired NTV (Judah 2014, 44). These actions were taken by the Putin government primarily to dominate the news media, but the effects, inevitably, trickled over into television fiction as well.

Narrative drama has been an important site of cultural and historical discourses in the Putin era. After domestic television production had declined sharply in the 1990s, the industry re-emerged in the early 2000s. Kachkaeva et al. note that in the first decade after the collapse of the Communist regime ‘of domestic products, ninety percent of air time was filled with reruns of old Soviet series, like *Seventeen Moments of Spring*’. According to their report, in 1997 one hundred and three Soviet or Russian series aired on Russian television. If ninety percent were old Soviet series that means that only ten or eleven new series were produced (Kachkaeva, Kiriya, and Libergal 2006, 89). They also note that ‘new Russian series of the mid-90s were shot on low budgets, poorly written and under-produced’ (Kachkaeva, Kiriya, and Libergal 2006, 89). The devaluation of the rouble in 1998 encouraged a resurgence in domestic television production because Russian networks were suddenly unable to afford the foreign-produced programmes and therefore had to produce their own (Prokhrova 2003). This increased production, combined with Russia’s renewed sense of confidence and importance under Putin, led to the creation of television series that focused on the Second World War, great figures from the Russian past, and numerous adaptations of Russian and Soviet novels, beginning with the 2003 adaptation of Dostoevsky’s *The Idiot* (2003). By 2006 all the major entertainment networks were producing one or more adaptations a year. One of the most significant was the 2006 adaptation of Boris Pasternak’s *Doctor Zhivago* directed by Alexander Proshkin. Despite the fact that this series drew relatively poor ratings, it remains one of the most interesting adaptations undertaken in post-Soviet Russia. It broadly reflects on the last years of the Russian Empire, the Russian Revolution, the Russian Civil War, and the early days of the Soviet Union. It also tries to address the root causes of Russia’s turbulent twentieth-century history. While, ostensibly, this version of *Doctor Zhivago* represents the events of the early twentieth century as depicted by Pasternak, the series is, in fact, an examination of Russian history since Peter the Great. The way the series answers the question ‘what went wrong?’ explains a great deal about the mindset of elite Russians towards the West in the post-Soviet period. A resurgent nationalist philosophy permeates the series, and as such, it is an important text for understanding post-Soviet Russia.

The series itself is interesting in many respects, but none more so than the fact that Proshkin and screenwriter Yuri Arabov chose to adapt Pasternak’s book much less faithfully than other adaptations from the same period. For example, the 2003 adaptation of Dostoevsky’s *The Idiot* and a 2005 version of the Soviet period’s most beloved novel, Bulgakov’s *The Master and Margarita*

(1967), both took great pains to remain faithful to their respective source material (Brassard 2012). Proshkin for his part adapts *Doctor Zhivago* very liberally, adding and deleting scenes and rewriting much of the dialogue. The most important aspect of the television version is a series of exchanges where characters discourse on Russian history, the Russian soul and philosophy. These discussions attempt not only to make sense of what is happening to the characters at that moment but also to better understand the whole of Russian history. The series is particularly interested in why the Russian people suffered so deeply in the twentieth century.

These interchanges play on common themes in recent Russian historical discourses, most notably on the resurgent nineteenth-century philosophy known as Slavophilism, which proposed that Russia was incompatible with Western philosophy and ideas and that the ultimate source of Russia's struggles comes from efforts to Westernise the country (Walicki 1988, 228). This intellectual movement popular in the nineteenth century came back into vogue following the end of Communist rule and the reemergence of Russian nationalism (Hosking 2006). In their series, Proshkin and screenwriter Yuri Arabov seem to be drawing on the neo-Slavophile tradition articulated by Soviet dissident writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn. He held the view that 'Russia should seek its own new form of government: it could not simply copy the West' and that 'a strong, authoritarian leadership would have to be retained while Russia developed new political structures and reoriented itself spiritually and culturally' (Devlin 1999, 67). According to Judith Devlin, when Solzhenitsyn returned to Russia in 1994 after twenty years of exile he 'was equally scathing about Russia's new rulers [as he had been of the Communists] and the effects of [their] reforms, referring to the post-Soviet period as the "Great Russian Catastrophe" and comparing it with the seventeenth-century Time of Troubles and 1917' (Devlin 1999, 67). She adds that, according to Solzhenitsyn 'contemporary democrats had repeated Peter the Great's mistaken attempt to impose Western political norms in Russia, without regard for her cultural identity and circumstances' (Devlin 1999, 67). As Devlin notes these views were also expressed by others, such as Victor Aksyuchits, the leader of the Russian Christian Democratic Movement, who eventually who 'espoused the idea of a national dictatorship as a [...] short-term solution to the problem of governing Russia' and eventually favoured the restoration of a monarchy' (Devlin 1999, 75). Proshkin and Arabov echo these views in the dialogues that they insert into the *Doctor Zhivago* script. Their neo-Slavophilism is evident since the dialogues they insert point to Peter the Great, the Bolsheviks and democracy as their primary objects of criticism. These sequences present an image of Russia brought to its current dismal state by the importation of Western ideas, which started under Peter the Great and proceeded through the communist period to the present day. Proshkin presents Western ideas as having brought on numerous national tragedies. The most catastrophic

these were Peter the Great's Westernising reforms and the Bolshevik importation of Marxism. Combined with a great deal of nostalgia which surrounds Russia's last Tsar, Nicholas II, the series both blames the West for Russia's trouble and subtly points to autocratic rule as the best solution to the country's ongoing problem. In so doing it implicitly supports both Putin's cultural project to restore pride in the Russian past, reclaim the country's great power status, and his autocratic style of rule.

The Novel

Before discussing the series, it is important to situate Pasternak's novel historically to establish why it is such a rich source for discussing Russian identity. Pasternak is one of only five Russian writers to have been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. He was awarded the 1958 prize, in the words of the Nobel committee 'for his important achievements both in contemporary lyrical poetry and in the field of the great Russian epic tradition' (Volkov 2008, 194). *Doctor Zhivago*, the novel that propelled Pasternak's candidacy for the prize was not, however, the pride of Soviet literature. He had submitted the novel to the prestigious Soviet literary journal *Novy Mir* in 1956. The journal's board subsequently rejected Pasternak's work. In a letter explaining their decision, they noted that 'The thing that has disturbed us about your novel is [...] The spirit of your novel [...] the general tenor of your novel is that the October Revolution, the Civil War and the social transformation involved did not give the people anything but suffering' (Finn and Couvée 2014, 99). While it faced rejection, a manuscript of the novel was taken to Italy by journalist Sergio D'Angelo and given to the Italian communist publisher Giangiacomo Feltrinelli who negotiated with Pasternak in secret for the international rights. Feltrinelli initially planned to publish the novel in Italy after its release in the USSR. When it became clear that the novel would not be published in the Soviet Union, Feltrinelli and Pasternak resisted tremendous pressure from the Communist parties of their respective countries, and eventually, the novel was published in Milan in November 1957. The Soviet state then launched a campaign against the novel, which according to Finn and Couvée helped drive its popularity beyond a small literary elite in the West (Finn and Couvée 2014). The awarding of the Nobel Prize for Literature to Pasternak in 1958 further increased the novel's appeal. At the time the Prize was a highly political issue for the Soviet Union, and the country's leaders saw Pasternak's award as 'a hostile anti-Soviet move, which one official compared to a "literary atom bomb"' (Volkov 2008, 195). The novel even became a weapon in the Cold War, when the CIA arranged to have copies of a Russian version of the novel distributed at the Vatican pavilion of the 1958 Expo in Brussels (Finn and Couvée 2014). After he had been awarded the Prize, the Soviet Writer's Union expelled Pasternak depriving him of his livelihood. He was also denounced in the main Soviet newspaper *Pravda* and other lesser

publications. Pasternak eventually refused the Nobel Prize, but his persecution continued until his death in 1960.

The novel is also famous for its overall literary value. According to Angela Livingstone ‘free and outspoken, it conveyed an authentic personal experience of the Revolution with little regard for the restraints that made most writers either “toe the party line” or “write for the desk drawer”’ (Livingstone 1989, 3). She contends that readers in the West ‘experienced it as a renewing of that youthful zest for living which the translation of nineteenth-century Russian novels at the beginning of [the twentieth] century had seemed to bring into the aging culture of Europe’ adding that, ‘it certainly stands out as a large novel about large subjects. We encounter in it a quarter century of tremendous historical changes’ (Livingstone 1989, 4). These changes are presented primarily through the eyes of the novel’s protagonist Yuri Zhivago, a doctor, and poet. The story follows his life from his childhood in the late 1800s until his death in Moscow in the 1930s.

The Series

One of the results of the Putin administration’s close ties with the television industry has been a renewed focus on bringing the canon of Russian literature to the small screen. Late in 2003 NTV announced that it would be bringing a version of *Doctor Zhivago* to the nation’s television screens in 2005. The station collaborated with the production company Central Partnership and received a large grant from Russia’s state television and film agency. Filming began for the television adaptation of *Doctor Zhivago* early in 2004. The series was originally scheduled for broadcast in December 2005 but delayed its release to avoid competing with Vladimir Bortko’s adaptation of one of the Soviet period’s most popular novels, Mikhail Bulgakov’s *The Master and Margarita* (MacFadyen 2008, 32).

Proshkin’s adaptation marks an attempt repatriate a novel best known for the iconic 1965 film adaptation by British director David Lean. To bring the series to the screen, NTV brought together a prestigious cast and crew. Oleg Menshikov, who plays Yuri Zhivago, is one of Russia’s most popular actors. He had, at the time of *Zhivago*’s filming, acted in several highly-acclaimed films including Nikita Mikhailkov’s *Burnt by the Sun* (1994), which won the Oscar for best foreign film in 1994 and Sergei Bodrov’s *Prisoner of the Mountains* (1996), which was nominated for an Academy Award in 1996. While Chulpan Khamatova, who plays Lara, was not as decorated as Menshikov but at the time the series was filmed she was one of Russia’s leading actresses. Oleg Yankovsky, who plays the diabolical Viktor Komarovsky, is widely recognised as one of the greatest screen actors of the Soviet period. Proshkin, the series’ director, is an acclaimed filmmaker, having won a Soviet film award for his directorial debut, 1988’s *Summer of ‘58*. Yuri Arabov, who wrote the screenplay, is a poet and a

favorite screenwriter of Alexander Sokurov, one of Russia's best-known auteur filmmakers. The series' musical composer, Eduard Artymyev, is renowned for his scoring of many famous Soviet films, particularly Soviet director Andrei Tarkovsky's highly acclaimed *Stalker* (1979) and *Solaris* (1972) and Nikita Mikhalkov's Oscar-winning *Burnt By the Sun* (1994).

Despite its star-studded cast, the actual cultural impact of the series is difficult to judge. The series premiered on NTV in May 2006. Before the series was broadcast a copy of all eleven episodes was stolen, and pirated copies quickly appeared for sale in the Moscow metro. By the time the series aired, it presumably had already been widely viewed. Perhaps because of this piracy, the series attracted very low ratings, of about six percent in the capital and four percent in the rest of the country. While these ratings certainly suggest that the series was not well received by the viewing public, it is hard to estimate the impact of the DVD piracy. Adding to the problems already faced by the series, NTV insisted on running a twenty-five-minute block of commercials during each of the eleven episodes. According to Proshkin, this practice led viewers to purchase the illicit DVD copies rather than endure long commercial breaks. There is evidence that supports the director's conclusions. In Belarus, which shares close cultural and linguistic ties with Russia, *Doctor Zhivago* attracted thirty percent of viewers in the capital Minsk and half of the viewers in the rest of the country. The reason for these much higher ratings seems to be that the station airing the series showed fewer commercials than NTV and that DVD copies of the series were not widely available before airing making the broadcast more appealing. Thus, while the series was considered a commercial failure, it is still possible that there was a large audience that chose to watch it on illicitly purchased DVDs.

Original dialogues

Despite its commercial failure, the themes the series presents offer an interesting insight into the cultural elite's views of Russian identity. Neo-Slavophilism looms large in Proshkin's dialogues, most notably in a dialogue between Yuri Zhivago and Lara Antipova late in the series. Zhivago has deserted the Red Army faction that earlier had drafted him into military service. He has returned to the city of Yuriatin to find that his family has returned to Moscow and that Lara and her daughter are on the verge of starving. In this scene, Zhivago and Lara are discussing what has happened to each other and are searching for a cause that explains all their sufferings.

Lara. Why do we have to go through such torture? Do we really deserve it?

Zhivago. Do you know how many generations are punished for the sins of their fathers?

Lara. Four.

Zhivago. Let's assume that each generation lives for fifty years. That makes it 200 years. What an enormous figure. Where does it all begin then? How did it all begin?

Lara. Peter the Great ruled two hundred years ago. We are the fourth generation after him.

Zhivago. This butchery of ours will bring enough suffering for 200 years to come. No hope for a bright future. We are doomed to suffer and rot. Our children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren.¹

The two points of historical reference in this dialogue reveal a vision of Russian identity that is distinctly Slavophile. The two historical moments that the dialogue comments on are the reign of Peter the Great and the Bolshevik Revolution. Each of these moments is presented as a disaster that brings two hundred years of suffering to Russia. They are also both moments in which Russia began to transform itself following European philosophies. It was Peter who initially opened Russia to the West. James Cracraft notes that the essence of Peter's reforms was 'a rapid and sweeping Europeanisation of Russian ways of making and doing things, and thinking and talking about them' (Cracraft 2006, 158). He reorganised Russian society, banned the wearing of traditional Russian garb by his noblemen and built a European-style army, navy, and bureaucracy. His rule represented a radical break from the past, making Russia more European and began a historical struggle in Russia between its traditional culture and the pressure to Westernise (Cracraft 2006, 9). According to Evgenii Anisimov, Peter's reforms were so sweeping and total that Peter remained at the center of disputes between Westernisers and Slavophiles from the post-Pushkin era until the fall of the Romanovs. He suggests that 'Slavophiles vehemently denounced Peter for introducing into Russia alien Western principles of life, institutions, and mores that were harmful for the Russian individual and the society as a whole'. For their part, 'Westernisers saw in Peter the tsar-revolutionary who with the aid of strong central authority managed to make Russia into a great power' (Anisimov 1993, 6).

Marxism, the ideology that drove the Soviet Union, was also imported from the West. The Bolshevik ideology once again revolutionised Russian life, displacing the Romanov ideal of 'Orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationalism' that had dominated for three centuries. As Bruce Lincoln notes of the Bolshevik era:

From Moscow, once again restored as Russia's capital, new rulers launched a new era that would repeat all the trials and trauma of Peter the Great's time. Peter had labored to bring Russia into the eighteenth century; Lenin, Trotskii, and Stalin struggled to bring her firmly into the twentieth. In both cases, the task was accomplished only after untold suffering, great agony, and countless deaths. (Lincoln 1983, 747)

¹ Dialogues translated from Russian to English by Jeffrey Brassard.

There is, therefore, a connection between the reforms of Peter the Great and the Bolshevik Revolution; both are inherently related to the influx of ideas into Russia from the West. The result in both cases is death and suffering.

It is easy, therefore, to see where Proshkin's dialogue evokes Slavophilism. Russian suffering is explained by this dialogue as the result of the actions of Peter the Great and the Bolsheviks. Though separated by approximately two hundred years, both were attempts to bring European concepts and ideas to bear on Russian society and culture. Whereas in the view of the Slavophiles, Russia was to purify Europe spiritually, it is the corrupting of Russia by the West that marks this sequence in Proshkin's series. Thus, this version of *Doctor Zhivago* activates a reactionary and essentialist view of Russian culture. The interpretation of Russia's fate by Zhivago and Lara, over-burdened by imperialist-influenced Slavophilism, suggests that Russia's problems then were not authoritarianism per se, but an authoritarianism that had been perverted by Western ideas. This view ultimately echoes Solzhenitsyn's belief that 'the Soviet system was terrible not because it was authoritarian but because it refused to allow moral freedom, requiring citizens to surrender to a lie' (Devlin 1999, 67).

Proshkin's series frequently repeats the Slavophile opposition of Russian and the West. Alexander Gromeko, Zhivago's father-in-law, for example, comments in two dialogues about Western ideas of governance and how they cannot possibly succeed in Russia. The doctor has just returned from military service during the First World War to find that the situation in Moscow is beginning to deteriorate. The provisional government is losing the support of the people, and poverty is widespread. The once neatly maintained Zhivago apartment deteriorates gradually as the family struggles to feed itself and heat the space. During this time, Zhivago and Gromeko, who is very drunk, discuss the Russian characteristics that will lead to the Bolshevik takeover:

Zhivago. Father, tell me what's happening, or I will go insane.

Gromeko. Nothing is happening. Only trifles: War, despair, revolution.

Zhivago. There was war before, with Japan in 1905.

Gromeko. We lost everything, Yuri. We have simply lost everything. Our country is gone [...] we placed so much hope on Kornilov's march into Petrograd hoping that he would stop the chaos [...] This son of a Cossack and a peasant woman was the perfect person to lead the country through turmoil [...] Do you know the magic word you can use to petrify any Russian?

Zhivago. I know [...] police.

Gromeko. No, you fool [...] Democracy. And here's another one: People's rule. Just mention 'people's rule' to any Russian moron, son of a Cossack and a peasant woman, and you will see his eyes go blind with ruthless desire.

Proshkin has Gromeko repeat a common platitude about Russia and democracy. Russians, according to this view, need a strong leader or autocratic governance rather than a democratically elected government. As Shevtsova reports ‘Seventy-nine percent of [Russian] citizens had decided by 2001 that “Russians can’t manage without a strong hand” and as such democracy must be sublimated in the name of strong, effective rule’ (Shevtsova 2005, 171). Instead of speaking about the crimes of either the Tsarist regime or the Bolsheviks, Proshkin’s Gromeko attacks democracy. Its importation into Russia cannot possibly succeed because it stands in stark opposition to the Russian character. The feeling that Russia is different from other nations connects back to the ideas of Slavophilism and gives Russians few options for governing their country. By implying that democracy is incompatible with Russianness, the series’ philosophy limits the choices of governance to forms of autocratic rule.

The series goes on to further discredit ideas of governance that come from the West by attacking Bolshevism. When Gromeko discusses the Bolsheviks, he suggests that they too will fail to impose order because of the nature of the Russian people. In this scene, Zhivago has just returned from the Ural city Yuriatin to the family’s refuge at their old estate at Varykino. He tells his father-in-law that the Bolsheviks have executed the Tsar and his family. Gromeko responds with a tirade about the Bolsheviks:

Gromeko. I guess I was wrong about my people. We took their dumbness begotten by servitude and vodka for meekness. And we took their pride and whimsical fantasy for spirituality. We forgot the complete inability of the Russian people to organise as a society. The Communists want to put on them a metal leash of governance, but when the metal rusts chaos, anarchy and debauchery will ensue as it did during the last year of the war with Germany.

Again, Gromeko is offering a summary judgment about the fundamental disjunction between the manner by which the Bolsheviks wish to rule and the nature of the Russian people. The dialogue is not speaking of Marxism in general as an untenable ideology but addresses only the Russian case. Because of a fundamental incompatibility, the Bolsheviks with their Western-influenced ideology are doomed to fail. It is clear once again that Proshkin, taking the Slavophiles’ view, excuses Russia’s political leaders for repeatedly failing to create a humane state and chooses instead to appeal to the uniqueness of the Russian people as the reason outside forms of governance cannot work.

The screenwriters do not limit their critique to general ideas of governance. The director also points to a specific institution that is incompatible with the goals of the Russian people, namely the bureaucracy. This excoriation is fitting since, as Tomas Masaryk suggests, ‘the bureaucracy was Westernist in so far as since the days of Peter the administration had sought its models in Europe’ (Masaryk 1968, 344). A vast and corrupt bureaucracy also dominated the Soviet

State. Again, according to Slavophilism, this is a European social invention foisted upon the Russian people. The Slavophiles saw the bureaucracy as an unnecessary imposition on the Russian people, particularly on the villages (Christoff 1961, 327). The bureaucracy would continue, and grow its importance under the Bolsheviks. A dialogue between Yuri Zhivago and Victor Komarovsky, a bureaucrat, points to the inherently corrupt and parasitic nature of the bureaucracy in Russia. Zhivago has just taken Komarovsky for medical attention after he was struck unconscious in the street and robbed. While he is bandaging his wound, they discuss the causes of the revolution:

Zhivago. Finish with your achievements and revolutions or next time you will end up with a crushed skull.

Komarovsky. Why do you think all this happened?

Zhivago. Because of the war.

Komarovsky. Your view is naïve. The war only triggered the whole thing. The real reason, young man, was property. Remember that! It happened so that people like you and me could do what we wanted with this property without asking the police, the church or the Tsar for a blessing. Everything else is fog, a smokescreen. Freedom, equality, brotherhood: that is for the lower-class scum. They will cut each other's throats by the time they figure out what freedom means. We are going to own it all, and we will be free.

Zhivago. I think you have made a mistake. The genie you have released from the bottle will be impossible to put back in.

Komarovsky. We do not need to put him back into the bottle. We must be standing next to him.

Komarovsky's explanation of the reasons for the revolution tells the viewer a great deal about Proshkin's view of the Russian bureaucracy. The bureaucrat changes affiliation constantly, showing deference only to whoever is in power, to enhance his position in Russian society. His speech also sets him apart from the Russian people. He is not one of them but instead is merely there to siphon off as much wealth and power as possible. This view is consistent with Solzhenitsyn's understanding of Russia's governing elites. He suggested that one of the most serious problems facing Russia was that the Westernised governing elites in Moscow and the rest of the country exist in fundamentally different spheres (Devlin 1999, 66). Arabov echoes this view in an interview with Tatyana Rasskazova about the series. He stated that '[Russia] is broken [...] The rural population of Central Russia, which once supported the state, now lives in the most miserable conditions [...] We have many political scientists, but the people have been lost. The last century obliterated them' (Arabov 2005).² Arabov's statement points to the same divide between the elites in Moscow and

² Translation from Russian to English by Jeffrey Brassard.

the average people in the rest of the country suggested by Solzhenitsyn. The Westernised bureaucracy, imported from abroad, therefore shows itself to be fundamentally hostile to the Russian people.

Some of the ideas that the director introduces in the series are surprising given that authenticity was one of the stated goals of the production. Proshkin insisted that he wanted to reclaim Pasternak's legacy and create a more authentic version of the story than British director David Lean's 1965 film or the 2002 BBC adaptation that starred Kiera Knightley (Myers 2006). However, the director's relentless critiques of Bolshevism are not evident in the original novel. Describing the initial stages of the Bolshevik revolution, Pasternak's *Zhivago* takes a very nuanced approach to the Revolution saying:

What splendid surgery! You take a knife, and with one masterful stroke you cut out all the old stinking ulcers [...] Quite simply, without nonsense, you take the old monster of injustice which has been accustomed for centuries to being bowed and scraped and curtsied to, and you sentence it to death. (Pasternak 1997, 195)

Some even accused the novel at the time of its publication of being pro-Bolshevik. This position was championed by Russian émigré writer Vladimir Nabokov (Livingstone 1989, 10). Nabokov reportedly hated the novel because 'the Bolshevik revolution and its leader, Lenin, were depicted as a legitimate phenomenon: a position unacceptable for Nabokov' (Volkov 2008, 200). Frank O'Hara claimed that 'If Pasternak is saying that the 1917 revolution failed, he must have felt that the West never even made an attempt. Far from being a traitorous work [*Zhivago*] is a poem on the nobility of the Soviet failure to reconstruct society in human terms' (Livingstone 1989, 11). Certainly, Pasternak's novel is, in the end, opposed to the result of the Bolshevik revolution, but not unambiguously. There is a certain admiration for the idea of remaking society along more equitable lines, even if the Soviets ultimately failed to do so. Thus, the passages in the series that blame all of Russia's tribulations on the corrupting influence of Western ideas are inserted by Proshkin and Arabov and an attempt to graft their neo-Slavophilism onto the meaning of *Doctor Zhivago*.

Nostalgia

The second element that Proshkin uses to reflect on what went wrong in Russia's twentieth-century history comes in the form of imperial nostalgia. The historical longing expressed in the series manifests in two ways: the portrayal of Tsar Nicholas II and the main musical theme. Regarding the first, once the First World War begins, the director attempts to rehabilitate the image of Tsar Nicholas II by minimising the impacts of the First World War. The mise-en-scène chosen for the army unit to which Zhivago belongs, reveals Proshkin's nostalgic bias. While Pasternak gives almost no description of Zhivago's posting, short of saying that it is in a miraculously preserved town, Proshkin chooses a staging

reminiscent of the American television series *M*A*S*H* (1972–83). Zhivago is living in an encampment, performing surgery in a large central tent and living in a smaller tent on the edge of the camp. While there are certainly wounded soldiers with missing legs and arms or bandaged heads strewn across the camp, Proshkin falls short of depicting the misery of trench warfare. No mention is ever made of any supply shortages and, aside from the occasional sound of German artillery, little is said about the war at all. This depiction makes the Eastern front seem tolerable and therefore exonerates the Tsar from his decision to involve Russia in a war for which it was disastrously unprepared.

Even when directly addressing the role of the Tsar in the events that led to the Russian Revolution, Proshkin chooses to portray the monarch sympathetically. When Misha Gordon, Zhivago's childhood friend, visits the doctor's unit as the official photographer for a Russian newspaper, they discuss the Tsar and the reasons why he is ultimately doomed.

Zhivago. How is his majesty?

Gordon. I could not see him well through the viewfinder.

Zhivago. I think he has lost his stature. Another would have yelled to the soldiers, "Forward! Hurry!" or said that his sword and his people were one. Something along those lines. He should have mentioned the people; that's a must. But he was so tragically above banality. A true Russian. In Russia we do not care for staged performances, don't you think? [...] He has lost his stature because he is doomed.

These words are taken virtually verbatim from the novel. However, original text prefaces this dialogue with Zhivago's impressions of the Tsar as a weak man constantly looking to his brother for support and guidance (Pasternak 1997, 120). Proshkin's series, on the other hand, frames Nicholas II as a tragic figure betrayed by history rather than as the incompetent autocrat who led his country into the disastrous Russo-Japanese War and First World War, despite being badly outmatched in both. Proshkin would have his audience believe that Nicholas was merely a microcosm of Imperial Russia already doomed by forces beyond its control. The series chooses to forget the tremendous inequalities that existed in Tsarist society and the virtual famine that the First World War imposed on the Russian Empire. None of these reasons, in Proshkin's presentation, have anything to do with the reason the Tsar and his empire are doomed.

Proshkin's presentation in this instance is consistent with those that dominated the popular imagination of the Tsar, as emphasised by the Russian Orthodox Church, in the post-Soviet period. According to Kathy Rousselet in post-Soviet Russia, the Tsar is portrayed as being compassionate to his subjects, upholding the Orthodox faith and opposing Western liberalism. According to her, contemporary accounts recast 'his meekness, the goodness of his heart, his modesty and simplicity' as Christian virtues, rather than weaknesses (Rousselet

2013, 154). She also notes that the Russian Orthodox Church consistently perpetuated an apolitical view of the last Tsar in years leading up to the canonisation of the imperial family. She remarks that ‘The Canonisation Committee did not formulate any political judgment of Nicholas II’s reign’, adding that ‘referring to “Bloody Sunday” [...] when striking workers and their families [...] marching to deliver a petition to the Tsar were shot down by the Imperial Guard the commission specified that [...] no document could prove that he gave the order to shoot’ (Rousselet 2013, 154). As a result, the Tsar was portrayed by the Orthodox Church as not being culpable for the massacre. Rather than a brutal tyrant, the Tsar and his family are presented as tragic figures who come to represent the destruction of authentic, Orthodox Russia, by the Communists. Wendy Slater asserts that hagiographies of the lives of the Imperial family as saints flourished in the first decade after the collapse of communism. The popularity of these accounts was partly responsible for the Church’s eventual decision to declare the entire family saints. Slater notes that in these accounts ‘The Tsar becomes a deeply tragic figure, modeled upon Job “the Much Suffering,” on whose saint’s day Nicholas was born [...] The hagiographies disregard Nicholas’ political role, except to credit him with Russia’s rapid economic development’ (Slater 2005, 64).

Thus, Proshkin’s representation of the Tsar fits well with the post-Soviet cultural projects that have used him as a link to the Russian past. As such, Proshkin’s depiction is a form of restorative nostalgia (Hosking 2006, 401). Svetlana Boym suggests that this type of nostalgia ‘proposes to rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps’ adding that ‘restorative nostalgia is not the sentiment of distance and longing but rather the anxiety about those who draw attention to historical incongruities between past and present and thus question the wholeness and continuity of the restored tradition’ (Boym 2002, 45). This definition by Boym fits in well with Fred Davis’ notion that nostalgia is ‘one of the means – or better, one of the more readily accessible psychological lenses – we employ in the never-ending work of constructing, maintaining, and reconstructing our identities’ (Davis 1979, 31). He adds that ‘in the clash of continuities and discontinuities with which life confronts us, nostalgia clearly attends more to the pleas for continuity, to the comforts of sameness and to the consolation of piety’ (Davis 1979, 33). Memories of the past, therefore, are reshaped to allow the mind to create continuity. This need for continuity is particularly important to a society that has experienced a historical shock. The use of restorative nostalgia in Proshkin’s television series essentially effaces the worst aspects of Nicholas so that he might be a usable building block in connecting post-Soviet Russia to its Imperial predecessor. He becomes, like Russia itself, a tragic figure brought low by the communist period, and as such he acts as a link to the past. Russians can, consequently, link their true cultural identity with Nicholas II, allowing them, in a sense to see themselves as heirs to the glory of Imperial Russia, rather than the inheritors of the largest portion of the failed

Soviet empire. Among other things, this has allowed modern Russia to import the Romanov tricolour flag and Romanov double eagle crest as national symbols (Hosking 2006, 401). Linking pre and post-Soviet Russia also implies that the error of the past lay in abandoning Russian values, embodied by Nicholas, and adopting communism in 1917 and liberalism in the 1990s. Thus, Proshkin is building on and adding to a well-established trend in Russian society of looking back nostalgically at the Russian Empire and then using a cleansed image of its past to construct current national identity. This practice ignores the problematic nature of the Tsar's rule and thus, is ultimately revanchist.

The type of restorative nostalgia discussed above is not the only type on display in the series. The series' musical score articulates the sense of longing and loss that Boym referred to as reflective nostalgia. She describes reflective nostalgia as a type of remembrance that 'dwells in the *algia*, in longing and loss, the imperfect process of remembrance' (Boym 2002, 41). The musical score enables a type of remembrance that blurs the troubling aspects of pre-Soviet history in the series. Non-diegetic music is an often-overlooked aspect of film and television but one that is essential in establishing the affective qualities of a series. In Proshkin's adaptation, the haunting 'main theme', written by famed composer Edward Artemyev, appears during the opening credits for each episode. While the theme music plays the camera pans over letters and old photographs of scenes that occur during the series. These pictures are mostly in sepia tones and depict the last years of Tsarist rule exclusively. The pictures show happier moments, such as weddings and family portraits. The music and pictures suggest that the period these pictures portray was one in which people were happy, and families were united. This melancholic reflection is not, however, the restorative nostalgia seen elsewhere in the series. Rather, it dwells on the images of things lost during the Revolution and Russian Civil War. Other instances where the same music appears in the series correspond to this nostalgic longing and loss. This melancholic nostalgia is particularly notable when compared to the music from the 1964 David Lean film adaptation of the novel.

For his adaptation, Proshkin chose a musical composition that was pointedly different from the now-classic romantic melody 'Lara's Theme' composed by Maurice Jarre. One of the most prominent features of that piece was the inclusion of the balalaika, a Russian folk instrument. In an interview with the New York Times, Proshkin asserts that 'From the point of view of the class that is shown in the movie, the balalaika has about as much to do with them as the saxophone' (Myers, 2005). His rather dismissive comment suggests that his adaptation had a larger ideological purpose. *Doctor Zhivago* was now ready to be brought home and made according to distinctly Russian, not Western, sensibilities. Thus, Artemyev chose to compose a score that was reliant primarily on traditional symphonic instruments rather than Russian folk instruments. String instruments and the piano dominate the series' 'main theme', disengaging it from the Western orientalism and romanticism that dominates Jarre's score. The

melody is slow and mournful. It rises slowly and maintains the higher notes before descending again. Artymyev's music imprints feelings of nostalgic sadness and loss on the minds of the audience from the moment the opening credits of the series play.

Proshkin inserts a variation on Artymyev's main theme throughout the series to highlight feelings of loss and highlight the director's ideological message. Over the course of the series, the tone of the music gradually shifts, and the melody plays much more slowly, growing more mournful. This slow transformation of the main theme corresponds with the progression of the revolution and the fracturing of the characters' lives. One of the most notable instances of this increasingly mournful music is heard just after the beginning of the Revolution. Zhivago is on the front and watches while military discipline breaks down and the nation plunges into chaos. The doctor is sitting with a group of dejected-looking officers, drinking what appears to be pure alcohol. They learn through a messenger that both the Tsar and his brother have abdicated the throne, leading one officer to note that 'Russia now has no dynasty and no Tsar'. As a variation of the 'main theme' plays, Zhivago burns a bowl full of alcohol. A lone oboe dominates this arrangement of the music. It plays slowly, giving the theme a lonely mournful sound. The combination of this visual metaphor with the music implies regret for the loss of the Russian empire.

The sense of reflective nostalgia, of loss and longing, continues to build throughout the series and becomes particularly acute in the final episodes. These feelings are particularly evident when Zhivago returns from his division of the Red Army to Lara's home in Yuriatin. At this point in the series he is clearly a broken man. His clothes are tattered, he has a long unkempt beard, and he is catatonic. As the theme music plays, Lara is preparing to cut Zhivago's hair and tells her daughter 'with these magic scissors we will take the spell off him and turn him back into our Zhivago'. What Lara is proposing is, of course, impossible. The doctor is no longer the Tsarist-era poet that he was when Lara first met him. The years of revolution and war have left deep psychological scars. It is a mournful look back at what was, and a failure to recognise the impossibility of returning to the past.

The expression of nostalgic longing reaches its climax late in the series when a new arrangement of the 'main theme' accompanies the suicide of Pavel Antipov, who for much of the story appears under his revolutionary pseudonym Strelnikov. His character represents revolutionary idealism, and the series presents him as a single-minded idealist committed to the principles of the Revolution. He has served for several years in the Red Army as a commander, fighting against the remnants of the Imperial Army. With the war nearing its conclusion, he has served his purpose and is about to be executed by the Bolsheviks. Antipov, as romantic as Zhivago in his own way, has no place in the

post-Revolutionary world. Instead of being executed he chooses to commit suicide, shooting himself with a pistol while standing alone in a snow-covered field. Moments after his death the 'main theme' plays, but with an arrangement that is unique in the series. Instead of instruments, a Russian Orthodox choir sings the theme. This arrangement is dominated primarily by male bass and female alto voices singing in Russian. The effect is a powerful feeling of loss and spiritual emptiness that evokes the mysticism of Russian Orthodoxy. Antipov, who represented the revolutionary ideal, has died realising that the Revolution has been thoroughly corrupted. The music reclaims his idealism, dissociating it from the Bolshevik ideology and connecting it with the Orthodox Church and Tsarist Russia. Just as there is no place for Antipov in the post-Revolutionary world, there is little room for idealism because the Bolshevik ideology has betrayed Russia. Thus, Antipov's death points back to Imperial Russia as the only authentic path for Russians to follow.

In its feelings of longing and loss, the series points back to the late days of the Russian Empire as a time that lacked the problems of the Soviet Union. In so doing, it sublimates the social conditions that led to the unrest, which originally led to the Bolshevik revolution. One of the effects of this sublimation is to make the style of governance that was practiced by the Tsars appear to be a viable way forward. Ultimately, these representations allow Putin's gradual retrenchment of autocracy to appear tolerable. Since according to Proshkin's representation, Russia's golden age occurred under autocracy, there would be little reason to seek a different style of governance. Thus, the series links the autocratic Putin government to the golden age of the Tsars, circumventing the problematic Soviet period altogether.

Conclusion

Proshkin's series downplays the role of the Imperial regime in instigating the wars and revolutions that ultimately led to Sovietism. Certainly, the Russian director has provided a Russocentric adaptation of Pasternak's novel. He has not, however, provided a version that accurately represents Pasternak's view of the Soviet experiment or an accurate vision of Russian history. Instead, he chooses to portray events in line with current political orthodoxies or popular thinking about Russian identity, making the series fit into the broader context of Vladimir Putin's post-Soviet nation-building project. Ultimately, this series places the blame for Russia's woes on the corrupting influence of the West. The series frequently plays on feelings of national pride and popular, somewhat xenophobic, clichés of Russian identity. It also strongly supports the notion that a Tsarist-style autocracy represents the best hope for stability and prosperity in Russia. Ultimately, this amounts to a tacit endorsement of Vladimir Putin and his regime. Putin and his style of government loom as central figures even in

this adaptation of the prestigious Soviet novel and supporting the current government becomes part of its *raison d'être*.

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Making the fiction visible: Even the Rain and cinematic and historiographical discourses about history

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Abstract: *While historians, literary theorists and philosophers now have been engaged in debates about the narrativity of historiography during the past few decades, there is limited awareness among the broader public of those discussions. In contrast, in those historical films that have a popular appeal the viewers regularly encounter a closed narrative combined with the immersive power of audio-visual imagery, which does not encourage a critical perspective. The 2010 Mexican-Spanish-French co-production Even the Rain, directed by Icíar Bollain from a screenplay by Paul Laverty, makes an exception by popularizing these debates. The film follows a fictional crew making a historical production critical of Columbus and the Spanish conquest of the Americas, this fictional production being set during the backdrop of the 2000 Water War in Cochabamba, Bolivia. Even The Rain juxtaposes epic scenes from the film within the film with the stages of its production. Thus, Even the Rain has an unusual plot structure that unites features of the conventional historical drama with those of the experimental film. It achieves a self-critical stance on the audio-visual representation of the past while at the same time being easily accessible and attracting many viewers.*

This article analyses how in Even the Rain the construction of the historical film's narrative is made transparent for the viewer. It discusses the additional discursive layer that engages with the employment of source material and the ideological implications of the film project, and concludes with the ability of Even the Rain to communicate discussions on narrativity and historiophoty of the academic field to a broader audience and, thus, raise critical awareness among the viewers.

Keywords: Even the Rain, historical film, historiophoty, authenticity

A glade opens to the gaze of the film viewer. Luscious green vegetation surrounds the armed Spanish conquistadors who hold captured people from the Taíno tribe, and others who stand on the sidelines. The indignant monk Bartolomé de Las Casas sees the selection of thirteen captives, one of them the tribal leader, the cacique Hatuey, to be burnt at the stake. Cut: the tribespeople stand on the firewood, tied to crosses. The priest Antonio de Montesinos baptises them and pronounces that their chance to enter paradise still exists. He moves to stand in front of Hatuey and performs the ritual. The face of the cacique with his feathered headdress is viewed close-up while the priest's words are translated

for him. The sizzling noises and the glow of the fire are already noticeable. ‘Do Christians enter heaven?’, he asks the priest. Hearing the confirmation he replies with a vigorous and distorted facial expression: ‘Then I want to go to hell.’ At the same time he kicks the cross out of Montesinos’ hand; all this witnessed with pain by Las Casas.

The Spanish commander orders the stakes to be ignited. While the smoke intensifies Hatuey and the other prisoners chant their contempt for the Spaniards. The surrounding Taíno begin to shout Hatuey’s name, whereupon Las Casas tells the commander that he has created a martyr. Views of the burning stakes, the shocked crowd and the nervous conquistadors alternate. The face of Hatuey is distorted with pain and rage. Behind the smoke his expressions of suffering, crying out in pain for the last time, can be seen. In a long shot the smoke covers the glade. Cut: suddenly an overwhelmed man announces through a megaphone: “Okay, cut! Cut!” The crew applauds. A further cut shows that the tribespeople aren’t standing on the stakes, but that this is an illusion created by the use of perspective. (*Even the Rain* 2012, 1:04:30-1:09:00)

This scene of around five minutes shows the quality that characterizes the 2010 Mexican-Spanish-French coproduction *Even the Rain*, directed by Icíar Bollaín. Scenes that raise the mood of epic historical films alternate with those that reveal the cinematic construction of history. A film about Christopher Columbus and the Spanish conquest of the Americas is set within a contemporary plot about the fight against water privatisation in Bolivia. *Even the Rain* is a self-reflexive, in certain moments even parodic, film about cinematic representation, in this case of history, a common trait of post-modern cinema (Degli-Esposti 1998, 9-10). Furthermore it combines two of the three categories of historical films outlined by the historian Robert A. Rosenstone: *history as drama* and *history as experiment* (Rosenstone 2001, 52-54). This combination of categories results in *Even the Rain* being an interesting case for studying how the status of historical narrative can be communicated to a broader film audience.

Since 1990 the number of historians who engage with historical film – in relation to their representation of the past or as expressions of the times in which they were produced – has grown strongly. Nevertheless, most historians still treat historical film sceptically. They regard writing history as the more desirable way to engage with the historical record, ultimately leading to a more authentic representation of the past. From this perspective, a film – especially in its conventional, dramatic form – creates a representation of historical events whose ultimate goal is to trigger the emotional engagement of the audience and thus results in popular appeal. In order to achieve this, historical facts may be omitted or altered to turn history into an easily consumable commodity (Weiser 2015, 272-273; Rosenstone 2001, 50, 53). This opposition between historiography and historical film ignores a shared basic trait: they rely on a created narrative. History never unfolds itself, it always depends on someone telling it.

Criticism of the historical film seems to rely on a persistent belief in the authentic quality of historiography, while most historians – even if they don't necessarily agree with it – nowadays are aware of the critical perspective on the narrativity of history. Thinkers like White and Foucault have unsettled beliefs in historical referentiality and the historian's ability to assess the historical fact in their works (Goertz 2001, 8-9). From this perspective historiography is a poetic act, depending on the historian to forge a narrative to explain the course of history from their perspective (White 1973, x, 4), or the formation of discourses. Outside the scientific community awareness of these discussions is low and a strong belief in and desire for authenticity prevail (Pirker & Rüdiger 2010, 19-21; Munslow 2007, 12).

In this article I aim to explore the question of how the state of critique on narrativity in historiography can be communicated to a broader public in order to raise awareness of the problems of authentic representation of the past. I will use *Even the Rain* as example of a successful way to make the processes of the creation of cinematic and historiographical discourses of history visible to the audience. The academic reception of this film has been focused on the role of its fictional director. Frans Weiser and Stephanie Dennison analyse his failure as cinematic historian and the film crew's missing awareness of the reproduction of neo-colonial patterns while aiming for a critical film about colonialism (Weiser 2015, 272; Dennison 2013, 191-192). The conceptualisation of the director as cinematic historian who adds to the historical debate – for example, Oliver Stone with his historical films – limits the perspective on a central figure with professional and ethical choices. However, *Even the Rain* shows the director as more than a historian, and does more than open up a (self)-critical perspective on the making of a historical film. It puts the construction of the historical narrative and the forces which shape it into focus. Thus I argue that *Even the Rain* is valuable for its quality to expose to a certain extent the discursive practices of those representations of the past to a broad audience, and therefore bridges the gap in understanding between the academic field and the broader public. Therefore, the popular appeal of this film offers the possibility for a wider audience to develop a cautious and critical perspective on the narratives of the past.

Exposing the construction of the historical film's narrative

Even the Rain displays two aims. On the one hand it functions as a conventional drama in order to attract a large audience, while on the other it exposes the construction of cinematic representations of history. It combines three storylines. First, there is a Spanish film crew working for Costa, the producer, and Sebastian, the Mexican director, shooting a critical film about Columbus and the Spanish conquest of America in Cochabamba, Bolivia. Second, sequences from this historical film appear in *Even The Rain*. And third, the shooting takes place

against the background of the Cochabamba Water War between December 1999 and April 2000. Sequences from the three storylines alternate, with in the beginning the first dominating while over the course of the film the third becomes the focus. Accordingly the tone of *Even the Rain* changes: scenes that show the cast and crew at different stages of the production employ at times parody and humour, while showing a critical perspective on the production process. In these Sebastian and Costa are established as opposing characters, the former being the idealistic director while the latter is a cynical producer who cares most about the financial side of filmmaking. Between those positions the indigenous actor Daniel operates. He is cast to play Hatuey, and is an active agent in the political fight while working on the film. He connects the historical narrative with the contemporary since he leads the protests against the water privatization in Cochabamba. This conflict turns violent and, thus, makes the completion of the fictional film impossible. While Sebastian's only priority seems to lie with film, Costa develops a moral consciousness and rescues Daniel's daughter who had been injured in a clash between protestors and the armed forces. In the end, the protestors succeed in their fight against the privatisation.

While the contemporary background story provides the incentive for changes among the main characters, the frame for critical evaluation of their motivation and the climax of the plot, the other two storylines engage with the making of a historical film. Thus *Even the Rain* makes the production of a visual historical narrative visible to the audience: the casting, the script rehearsal, the creation of the set, communication with the financiers, and the shooting process itself are presented to the viewer. Instead of being confronted with the immersive quality of the conventional historical film, the audience is enabled to assess the agendas, decisions and negotiations that shape a film narrative.

One of the most striking scenes in this respect is the script rehearsal in a hotel garden. Instead of simply reading the text, Antón, the actor playing Columbus, stands up and uses the hotel's sun umbrella to play out taking possession of the land by ramming it into the soil as the royal standard on Columbus' arrival (*Even the Rain* 2012, 8:44-12:13). On a very abstract level this scene relates to familiar images of the arrival of Columbus in the Americas that shape the collective memory of this event. The act of setting the Spanish flag into the soil features prominently in Columbus' own account, in prints and paintings depicting this event and in the 1949 and 1992 films directed by David MacDonald and Ridley Scott respectively. It was prominent enough to be employed in advertisements (Menninger 2010, 88; Sale 1990, 347). To present this event in the rehearsal situation rather than in a sequence of the epic historical film, strips it of qualities that normally guarantee the feeling of historical authenticity by employing the *mise-en-scène*. This way of presentation stresses the abstract narrative framework which lies at the heart of the historical representation. However, this scene does more than contrast with sequences of the historical film that follow the conventions of historical drama. Its function to underline that the

mode which the audience perceives as authentic cinematic representation of the past is a construction based on a text, supported by other scenes that highlight the transition from this early production stage to the final product. Most notably this occurs when Sebastian rehearses with Juan, who plays the friar Antonio de Montesinos (*Even the Rain* 2012, 15:43-16:51). Juan preaches a sermon critical of the conquistadores' attitude towards the indigenous population, in a half-finished church set while the set construction workers listen. The set is incomplete and the actor is not wearing his costume, but this scene is already a lot closer to its final version in the historical film. Thus, this scene makes the viewer conscious of the influence of the *mise-en-scène*.

The same effect is used with regard to the actors as well. In the opening sequence the audience is introduced to Daniel, the main indigenous actor who plays Hatuey, when he protests against the early end of the casting for extras. Later the viewer follows him through the casting and filming process: first we watch Daniel's screen test together with Sebastian, Costa, María who shoots a making-of documentary and a casting agent, then in make-up in front of a mirror (*Even the Rain* 2012, 12:14-13:33) and finally during the shooting and in scenes from the historical film. Thus, the viewer is clearly presented with the two modes of gaze in relation to the actor in a historical film. At the same time two bodies are visible on the screen: the actor and the character he plays. While this is an implicit observation for the mode of 'embodied impersonation' which means that the actor is mostly absorbed in his character and is the dominant mode in historical films, in *Even the Rain* the transformation of the former into the latter is highlighted (Bingham 2013, 240).

Furthermore, the negotiation process behind the film is visible. There isn't an evolving plot that the camera records, and even the selections made in the script are not definite. When the indigenous women are supposed to walk with their children into a river, then exchange the child actors for puppets and pretend to drown them, they refuse to do so. Even after Sebastian's encouragement and Daniel's attempt to explain the situation, the women refuse to comply with the script, ultimately leading to this scene not being shot (*Even the Rain* 2012, 42:37-45:38). This scene underlines that the shooting of a film is a dynamic process, pointing to the variability of the plot (Garrett et al 1989, pp. 34-35).

Consequently, the two main methods for creating authenticity for the cinematic historical narrative – *mise-en-scène* and actor – are exposed and contrasted with their full potential of enabling immersion within the historical film. This perhaps is the most powerful tool used in *Even The Rain*. When the viewer is absorbed into the historical epic and out of nowhere hears someone yell 'cut!', the camera angle changes and the stakes that seem to burn are seen to be some distance from the actors, this is a most potent contradiction of the qualities of the historical drama with its attached visual discourses of authenticity (*Even the Rain* 2012, 1:04:30-1:10:48).

This is especially important since cinematic images have the power to shape the historical memory of their viewers. Film and television are the most important media through which individuals engage with the past, though the research of their reception remains fragmented, not comprehensive, and it is not possible to measure the impact of historical films on the historical consciousness (Meers & Biltereyst 2012, 131-132; Bisson 2014, 136, 144). Current research generally accepts the viewer as an active agent who produces meaning and is not merely a passive consumer of the film text (Meers & Biltereyst 2012, 126-128), though Marnie Hughes-Warrington concludes that so far no studies can establish the dominance of either the viewer's agency or their subordination to the text (2009, 236-237; cited in Bisson 2014, 137). Even if we accept the existence of an active viewer as given, the power of audio-visual representations shouldn't be underestimated. For example, it has been shown that study participants, who watched a historical film, began to refer to its images and cite them as references in later interviews and group discussions about the topic. That is also the case for popular understanding of historical figures, based on actors' portrayals even if contemporary images were known, as well as for the historical narrative itself (Sommer 2013, 434-440). While an audience certainly exists with a high critical awareness for such issues through their engagement in discourses about cinema or consumption of experimental films, other audiences watch films predominantly for entertainment and show less caution (Bisson 2014, 142, 147). The immersive quality of the historical drama film and the function of its images in our memory make audio-visual narratives an important force in shaping historical consciousness. The juxtaposition of the production of such images and their effect in *Even the Rain* offers the possibility to assess this consequence from a certain reflexive distance, even for a part of the audience unfamiliar with critical discourses and watching the film simply as a consumer. Thus, more viewers are enabled to evaluate the cinematic representation of history.

The historical narrative under discussion

Though, *Even the Rain* with its juxtaposition of the making of the historical film with some sequences of its footage does not just make the production of a historical visual narrative visible, it also shows related discussions between the crew members and opens a further discursive layer to the viewer. This takes place on two levels: Sebastian is working with historical sources as a historian would and interprets them in a new way through his approach to directing his film. Second, the historiographical discourse itself becomes visible.

All through the filming process Sebastian acts as a cinematic historian, actively engaged in the construction of history. He bases his narration on the sources that he incorporates in the script of his film and strives to achieve an authentic representation of the past (Weiser 2015, 280). As has been shown,

Paul Laverty, the screenwriter of *Even the Rain*, altered the original sources for the film. When Antón rehearses the text of Columbus' letter to the Spanish crown, it is not clear to the viewer that this is not a coherent quote but is from different parts of the letter and even from Columbus' log book, amalgamated to stress the intended message critical of profit seeking (*Even the Rain* 2012, 28:49-32:21). The same is true of the sermon by Montesinos which is rehearsed in the church set while still under construction. In this the friar criticizes the conquistadores for exploiting the indigenous population, though the text of the sermon recorded by Las Casas was adapted by Laverty who added some information and omitted a comparison of the colonists to Turks and Moors who would not qualify for salvation (Graf, 2010, 448-450).

Those alterations won't be noticed by most audiences, and thus they enforce the message that the screenwriter and director wanted to communicate to their audience. Nevertheless the use of source material in *Even the Rain* helps the audiences reach a critical perspective: the viewer can observe that the source texts don't stand for themselves, but are invoked and incorporated into a historical narrative. The sources are employed to back the narrative that Sebastian wants to tell in the historical film, and he makes clear that he wants to distance himself from the traditional, more positive image of Columbus as discoverer of the New World. He does so by using familiar material, now rearranged to fit his purposes.

Furthermore, the source texts are used as testifying arguments by the actors for certain perceptions about their roles. In a scene from the fictive making-of documentary María interviews Juan and Alberto, who play the friars Las Casas and Montesinos. Juan describes the historical figure he impersonates empathically and praises him as a father of international law. To back up his argument he refers to a statement that, according to him, the friar made on his deathbed (*Even the Rain* 2012, 15:43-16:51). By presenting this statement as a quotation, the actor gives credibility to his description of Las Casas. Juan's use of source material as the basis for his argument is similar to the historian's practice, with the difference that his assessment of the source material will not be presented in a written account but generates together with the film script the basis of his audio-visual representation of the historical figure.

While the use of source material is not challenged in this scene, it is shortly afterwards. In a dinner scene members of the cast engage in a heated debate about the historical facts and how to interpret them. The trigger for this discussion are Alberto and María who express interest in the Quechua waiters by asking them for translations of words like 'water'. Antón criticises this as hypocritical and follows up with a critique of omissions in the historical film.

Antón: 'Nothing like getting into character. God bless you, Father. Why don't you fill a plastic bag with the leftovers from this meal, which costs more than what they earn in a month, and give it to them, so their

scrawny children can gobble it up like starving rodents! Then you'll feel like a real missionary.'

María: 'Antón, relax. It's Saturday night.'

Antón: 'How long will you remember that "water" is yaku?'

Alberto gives him the finger.

Antón: 'That's not very pious, Father, but the director will cut it out, along with other important details. For example, the fact that Las Casas wanted black slaves from Africa to replace the Indians. Why not put that in the film?'

Costa: 'Don't let him needle you.'

Sebastian: 'No, no, no, but – but, no, it's true, it's true. He did think that when he was young, but for a very short time. He always regretted it.'

Antón: 'And his deal with the slave traders?'

Juan: 'A mistake, a disaster that ashamed him.'

Antón: 'Don't lose your marbles, Father.'

Juan: 'I'm not, I'm just informing you. Until his dying breath, Las Casas condemned corrupt bishops, merchants, royal officials ... The whole State hated him.'

Antón: 'They hated him?'

Juan: 'Yes. Listen to me. He said the Indians had been sacrificed, and I quote, "for private appetites and profits". 500 years ago. Then cynics like you try to reduce his life to one mistake.'

Antón: 'Like in football, history is always cruel to the losers.'

Alberto: 'Just cut them out and make the film about me [Montesinos]! [Pointing to Antón] I'm better-looking, right? More handsome than him.'

Antón: 'He never – Beto. He never questioned Spanish authority over the New World or royal authority. In other words, he was a conservative.'

Juan: 'He was a radical! A radical! He demanded that Indians be treated equally as Spaniards!'

Antón: 'Under the Crown!'

Juan: 'But with the Indians' consent. He was ahead of his time.'

[...]

Antón: 'You have an agenda. You sanctify this pair of bastards and string me [Columbus] up! This isn't art. It's pure propaganda.'

[The argument ends with some casual remarks] (*Even the Rain* 2012, 18:39-21:56)

In this scene the audience can observe that the ideological judgement of whether the historical figure Las Casas was conservative or progressive is a matter of perspective, a historical perspective rooted in the contemporary that shapes any historical text (White 1973, 22), no matter if written or visual. In the end, Antón exposes Sebastian's attempt to counteract the dominant heroic narrative by emphasising Las Casas and Montesinos as positive historical figures in opposition to Columbus as villain. This sort of discussion underlines that history isn't fixed. There is no authentic representation of the past, but a narrative about it that is ultimately the result of various discourses in play. In this scene, *Even the Rain* most notably refers to the historiographical context in which the film about Columbus and the colonisation of the Americas is located, and to its own production context. It also exposes a flaw of the historical film that would omit the ambivalence of the figure highlighted in this discussion. In the context of *Even the Rain* it is the effect of the collaboration between screenwriter and historian that enables the plot composition which allows the additional discursive layer to become visible in this scene. The idea for the film originated in the contact between Paul Laverty and Howard Zinn who asked the screenwriter to transform the first chapter of his book *A People's History of the United States* into a script. In this chapter Zinn aimed to write the conquest of the 'New World' from the perspective of the conquered people. He outlines his position as follows:

My point is not that we must, in telling history, accuse, judge, condemn Columbus *in absentia*. It is too late for that; it would be a useless scholarly exercise in morality. [...] The treatment of heroes (Columbus) and their victims (the Arawak) – the quite acceptance of conquest and murder in the name of progress – is only one aspect of a certain approach to history, in which the past is told from the point of view of governments, conquerors, diplomats, leaders. [...] Thus, in that inevitable taking of sides which comes from selection and emphasis in history, I prefer to try to tell the story of the discovery of America from the viewpoint of the Arawaks, of the Constitution from the standpoint of the slaves, of Andrew Jackson as seen by the Cherokees, of the Civil War as seen by the New York Irish, of the Mexican war as seen by the deserting soldiers of Scott's army, of the rise of industrialism as seen by the young women in the Lowell textile mills, of the Spanish-American war as seen by the Cubans, the conquest of the Philippines as seen by the black soldiers on Luzon, the Gilded Age as seen by southern farmers, the First World War as seen by socialists, the Second World War as seen by pacifists, the New Deal as seen by the blacks in Harlem, the postwar American empire as seen by peons in Latin America. (Zinn 1999, 9-10)

While this film project never left the stage of the script, the ultimate idea of a film critical of Columbus and the Spanish conquest survived the many reworks of the script until finally arriving as the historical film that *Even the Rain* presents to its audience (Laverty 2011, 9-11; Graf 2013; 446). Sebastian's statements about the aim of his film project definitely echo Zinn's motivation behind

his historiographical monograph. And in reverse, his failure to live up to the high moral aims of his film project cautions against the extent to which such a moral and ideological standpoint can be met. Since Sebastian acts as cinematic historian he opens both roles – the director and the historian – up for critical evaluation by the viewer. It becomes transparent to the audience to which extent the ideological position shapes the pursued narrative, while sources are repeatedly employed to lend credibility to it. Thus, the connection between the level of historical fact or referent and the level of interpretation becomes visible (Goertz 2001, 39-40).

Beside this general relationship between the perspectives of Zinn and Sebastian and the implications that follow from this, there is a connection on the level of the assessment of single historical facts. The characterisation of Las Casas also follows the emphasis set in *A People's History of the United States* (Zinn 1999, 6). This assessment of the Dominican friar is shared by other monographs as well. Even if the film is the result of many alterations to the initial project, the connection of *Even the Rain* to Zinn, who died before it was finished, is underscored by the dedication to him in the opening credits.

To be clear, this discussion of the historical narrative of the film within the film that takes place in the scene described above remains at a modest level. *Even the Rain* addresses the matter of narrative on a lower level: the evaluation of Las Casas and Montesinos is under discussion at the film crew's table. The 'facts' are clear, the documents exist and aren't disputed by anyone. Though there still seems to remain much to discuss, which relates to the question of which story to tell about Las Casas. Condemnation of his position on slavery from a modern ethical perspective is as possible a narrative as it is to stress his later change of position. Thus, in the context of the first storyline of the film the ideological background of the narrative decisions becomes visible to the audience. The decision to present Las Casas as moral champion in contrast to Columbus who represents all the atrocities of colonialism is a direct effect of Sebastian's criticism of colonialism and neo-colonialism. The strength of *Even the Rain* is that it doesn't stick to a dramatization of the well-known proverb 'History is written by the victors' with post-colonial agents ultimately winning in the struggle over the narrative of the European colonisation of America. The discussion about Las Casas contains more complexity, in a film clearly conceptualised as entertainment. *Even the Rain*, therefore, makes it possible for the viewer to assess the decisions and positions that shape a narrative and can use this knowledge to evaluate further narratives, no matter if presented in conventional historical films or in a history book. This is especially important since a critical position to historical films already exists in large parts of the audience, but relates more to the financial context of production and fosters an awareness that historical 'facts' could be altered in favour of the entertainment purposes of the film (Bisson 2014, 145-146). Thus, *Even the Rain* can enhance the viewer's perspective on historical representation.

Communicating narrativity and historiophoty to a broader audience

This modest approach to present the underlying discourses that shape every historical narrative is central to achieving the goal of introducing a broader audience to this discussion and raising a critical awareness about historical narratives.

This quality becomes even clearer in comparison to experimental films. A good example is the 2013 Mexican-Danish co-production *Killing Strangers*. This film about the representation of the Mexican revolution blurs the border between fictional and documentary. It contrasts a casting situation with sequences of three Mexican revolutionaries passing through the countryside. In the casting process the amateur actors receive directions through an earpiece and have to act them out. For example, one is ordered to play a dying revolutionary and throws his upper body backwards, imitating the character of Neo in *The Matrix* in 'bullet time' (*Killing Strangers* 2013, 39:48-40:04; *The Matrix* 2005, 1:42:06-1:42:38). This stance also resembles the famous photograph 'The falling soldier' (also entitled 'Loyalist militiaman at the moment of death, Cerro Muriano, September 5, 1936') by Robert Capa, taken during the Spanish Civil War. These shared visual images illustrate convincingly that if there is no authentic image of the death of a fighter in the Mexican revolution, an iconic scene from *The Matrix* with no connection to any historic situation and an iconic photograph from an entirely different context can determine the imaginary construction of one. Additionally, the sequences of the three revolutionaries passing through the countryside break with popular expectations of historical representation: No battles or revolutionary turmoil are depicted but a time in which not much is happening, especially nothing that would be emblematic for this revolution. In the Question & Answer session after the screening at the Berlinale 2013 the directors Nicolás Pereda and Jacob Secher Schulsinger stated that this breaking with conventional ideas about the Mexican revolution was intended to pose a counter-narrative to the official celebratory narratives by the Mexican government during the celebration of its 100th anniversary in 2010. The many questions by the audience indicated that there was a need for further engagement and clarification caused by the experimental character of the film that complicated its consumption and understanding. While *Killing Strangers* makes the reshaping of historical events by popular motives and ideas visible and counteracts the idealization of the revolutionary events, it lacks popular appeal. Outside film festivals not many people will have seen it, thus it will not have much impact on raising awareness of those matters of historical narrative.

In contrast, *Even the Rain* aims for popularity by fulfilling the conventional expectations of a historical drama film. The contemporary history storyline offers a moment of catharsis for the characters. The climax of the plot culminates around the Cochabamba Water War in which the indigenous main actor is involved as a leader of the protest. The civil unrest exposes the true characters of

the two main members of the film team. While Sebastian gives up his social engagement for the indigenous cause and puts his film first, the producer Costa who, up to that point, had appeared as a cynical, profit-orientated person decides to rescue Daniel's daughter from the conflict zone. In the final scene Daniel meets Costa in the storage hall of the film production and he gives him a bottle of water.

This ending follows more conventional ideas of the drama film and was criticized for its 'Hollywood' likeness (Hornaday 2011). However, this shouldn't obscure the fact that the film does not fit the category of the conventional historical drama despite playing very well with viewers. If judged on the basis of Rosenstone's three categories for historical films – 'history as drama, history as document, and history as experiment' (Rosenstone 2001, 52) – *Even the Rain* unites the first and third category. Bollaín and Laverty try to balance the popular appeal of the historical drama, the most common cinematic assessment of history, with the critical evaluation of cinematic representational strategies and opposition to mainstream Hollywood films that experimental cinematic approaches encompass. In doing so the message of the film can be more easily decoded than those of postmodern classics frequently referenced in academic publications on historical film, for example the 1987 production *Walker* (Rosenstone 2001, 53). This tells the story of William Walker who intervened with a troop of US mercenaries in the Nicaraguan civil war of 1856 and 1857 and became one of the presidents of the country. In the film Walker flees with his troops into a church. When they leave it, a modern American military helicopter is landing on the square in front of the church and US marines come to rescue American citizens (*Walker* 2003, 1:21:37-1:23:46). This move thus clearly establishes a parallel between Walker's illegitimate intervention in the mid of the nineteenth century and the politics of Ronald Reagan who supported the war against the Contras in Nicaragua in the 1980s. While at the time of its production the interwoven historical layers were relatively accessible because they referred to contemporary politics, it now might be much harder for a viewer to understand the intended meaning of the anachronistic helicopter landing in a historical film about the nineteenth century. Since no empirical research exists on this film, we should assume that a viewer without specific knowledge of the film's historical context could consider *Walker* as a very broad critique on interventionism or be completely puzzled by its final anachronism in a conventional historical narrative. In contrast, *Even the Rain* is more obvious about its intended meaning and spells it out to the viewer, therefore it is more likely that its message will be received. It does this without making the film a shallow propagation tool.

The combination of modes in *Even the Rain* leads to the juxtaposition of sequences from the historical film that convey an epic quality with sequences that show their production. This ambivalence makes it possible for the viewer

to reflect on the media representation of history: while historiography – no matter how colourfully the historian describes the past – relies entirely on the writing, film possesses an additional layer that encompasses objects, spaces, and people. In this sense *Even the Rain* is a fictional film that resembles the reflexive mode of documentary (Ward 2005, 19), because its subject is less the past but the representation of the past. In this respect, the film addresses the critique that historiophoty – ‘the representation of history and our thought about it in visual images and filmic discourse’ (White 1988, 1193) – lacks the ability to represent the debates of the historical discipline. The different plot lines allow such debate to take place, as the dinner discussion illustrates, leading to an internal layer of analyses. *Even the Rain* has the capacity to show how to raise awareness about those historiographical and audio-visual discourses that shape historical narratives among viewers who normally don’t engage on a deeper level with the films they consume. This knowledge can then be applied to other films. The use of the script and film for teaching, even if other topics addressed in *Even the Rain* might be the main focus, ensure that this film can shape a critical understanding of those representations (Mai 2015).

Critical attention about historiophoty is also raised in relation to the images themselves. While it certainly is true that film has the capacity to represent certain phenomena like emotions, scene, landscape or complex events like battles better than a written account, especially in regard to historical phenomena, it easily can be misleading (White 1988, 1193). In *Even the Rain* this issue is exposed in the context of the making-of documentary shot by María. While Costa drives her and Sebastian to a location in the Bolivian mountains, she points her camera at the director and asks why they shot the Columbus film there and not in the Caribbean. The following discussion reveals that financial interests and not the most authentic location determined where the film would be shot. It is pointed out that the indigenous actors cast for Sebastian’s film speak Quechua and not the language of the Taíno, whom Columbus actually encountered. Thus, it becomes obvious that the authentic feeling in the sequences of the historical film is misleading. Their landscape isn’t that of the island on which Columbus arrived, and the viewer can’t assess how close the Bolivian mountains relate to it. With regard to the indigenous cast, while on the Greater Antilles distant descendants of the Taíno whom Columbus encountered still exist, the Quechua of Bolivia have no actual relation to the place and events depicted in the historical film. It could be argued that they were as affected by the Spanish conquest and European colonisation of the Americas as were all indigenous populations, but with regard to Sebastian’s ambition to shoot an authentic film and the potential of historiophoty to enable a representation superior to historiography this transposal of peoples appear as an avoidable flaw caused by the economic logic of film production. All this is presented to the viewer in an easily consumable way. Pirker and Rüdiger argue that authenticity itself is a fiction which is necessary for the historical consciousness and the authentic experience can be created in

forms of re-enactments which encompass films as well (Pirker & Rüdiger 2010, 13-17). I believe that *Even the Rain* can help to establish a critical awareness of the problems that arise in this context for people whom the historiographical and philosophical discourses on this issue do not reach. Ideally such viewings would lead to a critical engagement with authenticity discourses.

Conclusion

As has been shown, *Even the Rain* operates on two levels that problematise historical narrative for the film audience. First, the film addresses the production of a visual historical narrative and the problems of historiophoty. From the script to scenes that invoke the epic quality of the film in film, the different stages of the creation of a (historical) film become visible. Since *Even the Rain* as a whole is about the making of a historical film that additionally encompasses a making-of documentary that follows the work of the actors playing cast and crew, the production process is revealed to viewers who are normally not confronted with this in such a direct manner. In *Even the Rain* the audience is presented with a juxtaposition of film sequences that normally would satisfy expectations of an authentic historical film, and their critical evaluation is invited, thus aiding a critical reception.

This already points to the critical assessment of historiophoty. While this term does not belong to common knowledge, the viewers of historical films certainly know about its effects. Mise-en-scène and actors create a historical representation that gives the impression of authenticity. The sequences of the historical film definitely fulfil the expectation in this respect. However, how authentic can be the depiction be of the arrival of Columbus and the conquest of the Caribbean in the Bolivian mountains? And how authentic is it really to let the indigenous actors speak in their own language of Quechua, and not Taíno, the language of the people whom Columbus actually met? Those points become flaws in the film project, the subject of *Even the Rain*, because Sebastian the director often refers to authenticity as the goal of his work. On a more general level the confrontation of the viewers with the problematic nature of the authentic representation of historical events in film offers the possibility that they will respond to other (visual) narratives with more caution. The use of *Even the Rain* in educational contexts can strengthen this effect.

Second, the plot structure of *Even the Rain* exposes a further discursive layer that functions as an internal commentary on the narrative. In the discussed dinner scene the argument points to a broader issue of historiography. While historians work with the same body of historical facts and sources, increased by new findings, those referents can be employed in very different narratives, and depend on the moral and ideological position of the historian which guides the focus of their account. Since Sebastian acts as cinematic historian he communicates issues from the historical field to the audience that normally would remain

more or less exclusive to the scientific community. At the same time these scenes function in the unusual plot structure as a self-critical device.

In closing, *Even the Rain* addresses in a conventional film drama the production of historical narrative and the problematic quest for the authentic, central points of discussion in the fields of history, literary sciences, and philosophy. To do so, it reduces the complexity of discussion while it employs a complex plot structure in relation to the experimental film. Thus, it adds a discursive layer to the film that allows for a critical assessment of its subject: the production of historical fiction. By doing so, the fiction is made visible to viewers who normally are subject to the absorbing quality of historical films and don't experience analytical distance. For this reason *Even the Rain* is an outstanding example of how to communicate the central role of narration for discourses about history – both historiographical and cinematic – to a broader audience.

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The efoto-project: Narrative construction of the past and semi-automated data curation

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Abstract: *The efoto project is a cooperation between the Cultural Ministry of Hamburg, the University of Hamburg and numerous archives, museums and libraries of the city. Its overall aim is to create a large image database of the city and make it accessible to the public. Access is provided via a mobile application which has been developed as part of the project. In the content narratives are seen as the central link between image data and users, and the images in the database can be enriched with narrative elements at different levels. Partner institutions can create city walks with them and users can comment on them or record audio notes with their personal narratives in addition to the images.*

In this article we want to show how scientific insights and workflows are used to create or initiate narratives that supplement the historical photographs. In the first place images and metadata are provided digitally. Narratives in the form of comments and audio notices will be added by users once the application goes public. During the efoto-project it became apparent that in our partner institutions, there are no ready-made city walks already available for mobile application. As city walks are time-consuming to create or to convert into the right format for a mobile application, we developed the model of semi-automated digital data curation presented in this article.

In our attempt to develop the model we used strategies from narrative and cultural theory, digital humanities and historiography. This article outlines the process of semi-automated data curation through a case study about the German pirate Claus Störtebeker.

Keywords: *Digital Humanities, Data Curation, Cultural Heritage, Narrative Theory, Störtebeker, Text Mining*

1. Conceptual foundation of efoto-Hamburg

In efoto at least three different interests coincide. On the one side there is a political perspective from which it is most important to realize certain strategies and guidelines. The most important political signposts are the 'eCulture Agenda 2020' (Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg) and the European inspire guideline (European Union 1995-2017). Transparency and accessibility of electronically stored data are two of the ideals which efoto wants to meet. On the other side there is a scientific interest in analyzing how users react to and interact with the provided data. A third field of interest is a pragmatic approach to cultural heritage. Institutions like museums and archives want to follow their educational mandate by bringing culturally relevant data to users, who are not usually their

typical target audience. From all three perspectives there is an additional interest in digital data.

Taking this network of interests as our starting point, we needed to develop a pragmatic conceptional foundation. This would help us to develop technical features for our mobile application and provide us with a methodology for analyzing and processing data, to increase the probability of user interaction.

The three most important factors inside the application are the representation of Hamburg as a city on a map, the image data and the users. We have gathered about 45,000 images from five partner institutions, and located more than 6,000 images on a map. We assume that people will first look for images showing places where they are or have already been. But we do not want to stop here. In order to avoid creating a one-way communication system through which cultural institutions, museums and archives feed their audience, we seek a dynamic process in which users decide in social interaction whether a picture is of cultural value or not.

Culture

Our understanding of culture has to include at least the three main factors that determine the efoto application. The basic assumption is that “culture” is a counterpart to the term “nature”, which includes everything human-made and the process of making (Müller-Funk 2006: 8; Eagleton 2001: 7f; Ahrendt 2010: 16): this is part of the foundation of our conceptional framework. This broad perspective on culture is very object-bound (although it accepts that the making of something is also a cultural act, yet there nevertheless has to be some kind of outcome), and can be closely connected to the image data, which is the starting point of efoto. But only using this conception of culture would not bring us any further, because it does not give us enough details on the role of people. In the first place, people have to cultivate nature for their living (Ahrendt 2010: 16), thus forming “civilization” (Eagleton 2001: 19ff). At the same time there seems to be the necessity to cultivate the self (Eagleton 2001: 13). Finally, culture also means regulation in social interaction or, as humans always live in a political plurality (Ahrendt 2010: 17), there seems to be an urge for cultivation in groups or even in whole societies. Culture can also be understood as a system of socially approved behaviour, of practices and rituals (Müller-Funk 2006: 8) and that whole nations, countries or governments can also be instances of cultivation (Eagleton 2001: 14). These three basic functionalities of culture coincide with our set of variables within efoto; the city of Hamburg as the cultivation of a living environment; the self, which is cultivated inside this environment; and the group which forms itself on the mobile application platform, where a process of cultivation will be initiated.

There are many other notions of culture. Some of these are discussed here to explain why they are less important for efoto and thus not included in our conceptional framework. The term culture can refer to an elitist system of art (Müller-Funk 2006: 8; Eagleton 2001: 33). Some of the pictures in efoto might meet this claim, but most of them were not initially intended to be artistic. They were made for various purposes, from documenting urban development to illustrating political statements. As we argue that they can all be culturally relevant today, it is clear that the efoto project is not confined to an elitist idea of culture.

We stated above that we see one functionality of culture as the cultivation of the self. However this does not mean that we understand culture as a means to distinguish between those who are “cultivated” (groups, classes or whole societies) and those who are not (Eagleton mentions this understanding of culture e.g. in 2001: 39).

Neither do we focus on cultural phenomena, which could be examined too widely at macro level, nor do we use theories, which privilege the cultural sentiments of individuals too much. This means that we set aside the fundamental idea of cultural pessimism, in which cultures follow a certain scheme of rise and fall (Müller-Funk 2006: 77; Müller-Funk 2006: 87).

We also exclude the psychoanalytical aspects of culture (Müller-Funk 2006: 22ff) from this study, because we do not focus on the problems that the urge for cultivation we named above may cause for individuals. In addition to that we exclude economic aspects of culture as elaborated by representatives of critical theory (Adorno, Horkheimer 2003; Benjamin 1963).

Our basic understanding of culture in the sense of cultivation of the environment, self and other people in a group mostly answers the questions of why there is culture and how culture creates itself in the first place. In addition to that, we need to know more about cultural heritage.

The term cultural heritage is closely bound to UNESCO and their aim to preserve structures and practices of cultural value (Vecco 2010, Dormaels 2013). Beginning with a very normative understanding of cultural heritage (Vecco 2010: 322), it becomes clear that cultural heritage objects can be made valuable through social interaction (Vecco 2010: 323). The interpretation of cultural heritage followed a similar development. From monological traditions it changed to a more discursive process in which personal, collective, regional and national identities play an important role (Silbermann: 2017). Objects can be included in a process of ‘heritization’ and thus become a source of cultural knowledge (Dormaels 2013, 108). The distinctions between tangible and intangible cultural heritage were founded on ideas of a dynamic process of cultural value development (Vecco 2010: 323). So from a very object-bound view of cultural heritage objects became considered as triggers for cultural actions, and

cultural heritage itself became accepted as existing without materiality. Nevertheless the separation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage in a strict either/or distinction can exclude some of the insights on the dynamics of culture outlined above. The cultivation of environment, the self and social surroundings is not fully captured, for example. Additionally, including aspects of time using this either/or distinction seems to be problematic. From our point of view the linguistic paradox of ‚Heritization‘, which Dormaels describes (Dormaels 2013: 112), is exactly what cultural heritage is about: something from the past is included in an actual current and potentially ongoing cultural process. This “something” may be material as well as immaterial or a combination of both. In any case cultural relevance is not seen as a finite intrinsic quality.

The assumption that culture is something ongoing which does not and cannot have an ending, any kind of fulfilment or constant value meets Luhmann’s ideas on culture. A cultural artefact is constructed as such by two levels of reflection. A reflection on an object ascribes a certain value to it, but only if there is reflection on a second level is a cultural process initiated, and the object becomes a cultural artefact (Luhmann 1995 and 1997). In this understanding culture is radically bound to a semantic element (reflection) and a specific moment in time. Only objects which are part of the second level of reflection are of cultural value (at the moment of reflection) which means that all other objects may be forgotten (at least until somebody starts reflecting on it again).

Other theorists see the power of culture in its discursive quality. This might become a negative connotation as in Foucault’s approach to culture as a discursive system of inclusion and exclusion (Seitter 2004: 166; Müller-Funk 2006: 184ff). A more neutral understanding of cultural dynamics between the actions of subjects and the interpretation of those acts as cultural is provided by Geertz with his understanding of *thick description*. As an anthropologist Geertz has described how thick description is used in everyday life to grasp cultural meaning in human interaction and how it is central for the interpretation of culture, as in ethnological work (Geertz, 1973). Geertz even goes as far as seeing every element of culture as a potential text which can or even must be interpreted in order to understand it (Geertz, 1973: 448).

A recent line of research in the theorization of culture highlights narration as absolutely central to culture (Fisher 1984; Müller-Funk 2008; Nünning 2014). This tradition specifies Geertz’s extended concept of text and states that culture is constructed narratively (Müller-Funk 2008). This does not mean that the importance of objects is denied. As Nünning points out, the underlying semiotic term of culture has three dimensions: material, mental and social (Nünning 2014: 28). All three dimensions can have different forms. The material dimension can include texts (Nünning 2014: 28), it can also mean artefacts or art objects (Müller-Funk 2008: 9) or the body of an acting and narrating subject (Müller-Funk 2008: 13). The mental dimension is a complex system of narrative

codes and structures which is created collectively and handed on from generation to generation (Müller-Funk 2008: 13). These narratives are of central importance for individual identity construction (Ricoeur 1991; Georgakopoulou 2007; Müller-Funk 2008: 13) as well as for collective identification (Bracker 2013). They are used for positioning the individual as well as for the creation of coherent meaning from surrounding elements and events (Bracker 2013). Narrative codes and structures are manifested in the social interaction of telling. In this understanding cultures are held together by the act of telling and are thus understood as narrative communities (Müller-Funk 2008: 14).

The images in efoto can be seen as part of the material dimension of culture. They are embedded in cultural codes which are expressed visually by the pictures they show or in textual form in detailed metadata. As Georgakopoulou (2007) has pointed out, individuals constantly work on their narrative identity by telling small stories. This is why we assume that users will also look for the possibility of constructing narrative identity while using the application. This kind of identity work can be done by aligning oneself towards specific images as well as to other users.

Collective identities can be created in small groups for example by narrating alternative stories (Bracker 2013: 5). The narrative can be seen as a dynamic link of significance between nodes (Bracker 2013: 6), in our case users and image data. Users who share certain narratives thus build a (narrative) community. On the macro-level sharing a whole reservoir of narratives is what forms a society (Müller-Funk 2008: 14).

While analysing the different understandings on culture outlined above, we noticed that they include three-dimensional models, which can all be refined to a common denominator. We started with the need for the cultivation of surroundings, for the self and for others, and went on to Luhman's ideas of a cultural system formed by objects, first-level reflections and second-level reflections. Lastly, we turned to the material, mental and social dimensions of individual and collective identity creation. So in our theoretical basis for the efoto project we also consider culture to be a process which happens on three levels. The first is the object level (which can also be seen as the cultivation of a living environment or the material dimension of culture), the second is the individual level (also the first level of reflection or the mental dimension of culture), and the third is the collective level (also the second level of reflection or the social dimension of culture):

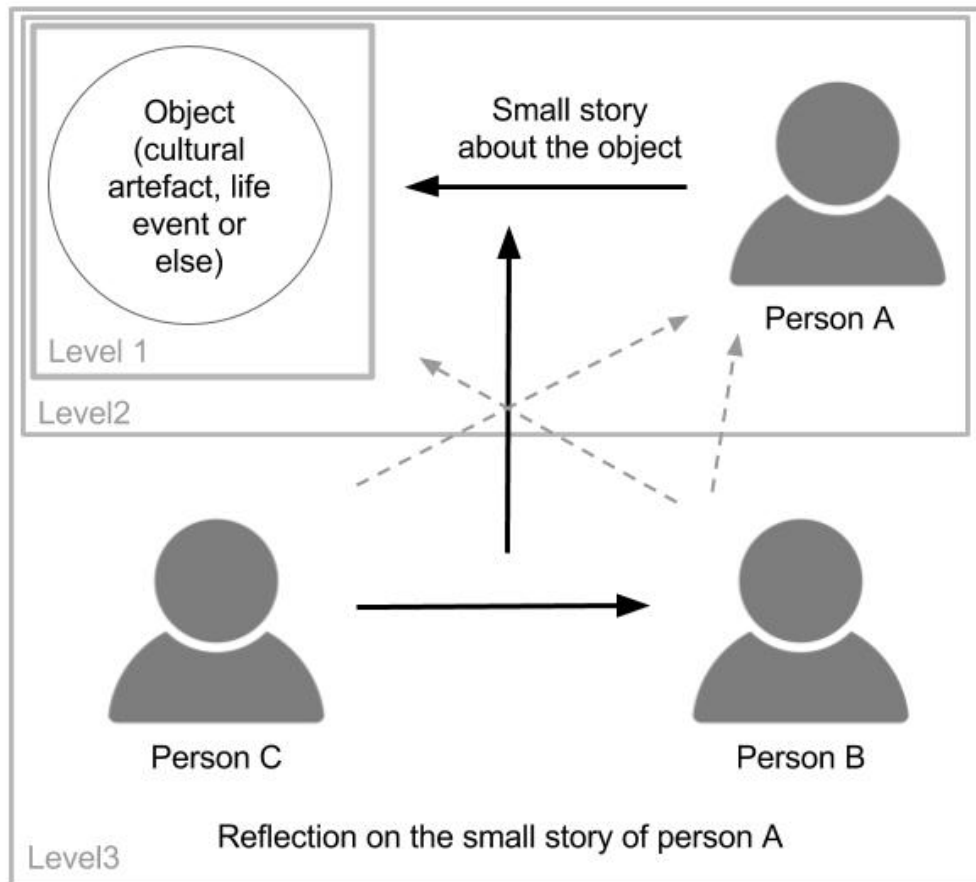


Figure 1: Model of three-levelled cultural heritage process.

As explained above, all links between levels have narrative qualities and levels can be crossed. Culture is formed when all three levels are combined. This means that objects that are not narratively bound to at least two individuals who communicate about them in a reflective, discursive or interpretive way may be discarded, because they are not bound to all three levels of the cultural heritage process. Objects which are connected to personal and interpersonal usage are automatically preserved for future generations.

2. City walks as triggers for cultural interaction

City walks are constructed by connecting different objects at the first level—images, audio files and locations—and then adding narratives at the second level. Photographs of the city are enriched with historical data and stories of historical personalities. In interviews with contemporary witnesses tonality, emotionality and linguistic aspects emerge. Using this variety of formats we try to give a starting point for the collective identification at the third level of the cultural process, thus encouraging the preservation of the data as part of the cultural heritage of Hamburg. Assuming that it is more likely that someone will

reflect at the third level if the object in question has already been reflected upon at the second level by many people, we have developed a method to integrate text mining tools in the construction of a historic city walk.

2.1 Case Study

We chose the legend of Stoertebeker as a case study, because it is an important part of the cultural narrative identity of Hamburg. However, there are no original images of the pirate and his life is still considered to be controversial in historiography (Rohmann 2007; 2012). Taking Stoertebeker's story as an exemplary case study is an attempt to supplement the images in efoto with a subject which cannot be presented in purely visual representations. In addition to narrativity this specific case implies fictional elements as well as factual incidents, and is connected to earlier history as well as to the contemporary period. Thus Stoertebeker's story includes a multiplicity of factors which increases the probability of it being reflected upon by users in a cultural heritage process.

2.1.1 Claus Stoertebeker

Claus Stoertebeker is said to have been a German pirate and freebooter in the late medieval period. As Puhle (2012) points out, there is no consensus about whether "Stoertebeker" really refers to a historical personality or rather stands for a certain type. Together with other individuals who were formerly of the same or even higher importance (Bracker 2005: 47) but today are less remembered, he was known as one of the 'victual brothers' (Puhle, 2012). This loosely bound brotherhood of privateers made their living in the Baltic Sea, fighting in wars on the side of the Hanseatic League (Rohmann 2011: 257f). Later on they were classified as pirates, be it because of political strategies or because of legal changes concerning privateering in general (Rohmann 2007: 96ff). Stoertebeker is said to have lived in the second half of the fifteenth century, and could have died on 21 October 1401 in Hamburg (Puhle 2012: 150). Several invoices in the city records, including the bill for the burial of 73 victual brothers in 1401, were analysed to find the exact date of Stoertebeker's execution (Koppmann 1877: 45). The one undeniable fact about Stoertebeker is that he is part of numerous narratives transmitted orally or in textual, audiovisual or musical adaptations and he is the object of historiographic research as well as the subject of museum exhibitions (Rohmann 2011). One of the regions he is associated with is the city of Hamburg, which makes him interesting for the efoto project.

In our case study, we want to find out which events from Klaus Stoertebeker's life are most often retold in literary adaptations and to which places they are connected. We want to investigate which events from his life are reported in journalistic texts, whether they can be located in the city of Hamburg, and if they can be linked to images in the efoto database. Finally we look at how people connect to Stoertebeker and the legends told about him.

2.1.2 Setting

To answer these questions we set up three corpora. The first corpus contains literary texts about Stoertebeker. Using this corpus we try to identify places and cultural artefacts (e.g. buildings) associated with the pirate in Hamburg. The life events that emerge from this corpus are most probably (in some cases certainly) fictional. The information found from this corpus is used in three ways: 1. the places are identified on the map of Hamburg using the efoto application, 2. names of objects and their locations are used to search the efoto database for matching images, 3. the images found in the efoto database are connected to the passages of the narrative source.

The second corpus includes journalistic texts that discuss Stoertebeker. This corpus is of a different quality than the first one, because the starting point for these texts is always factual events in the present. Nevertheless there will be fictional events mentioned in these texts as well. We analyse this corpus using the same techniques as for the first corpus, namely the extraction of places named in the texts and their connection to events.

In the third corpus we assemble texts written by authors of literary fiction that contain some autobiographical aspects or are fully autobiographical. It is a rather small corpus but of some interest to our research focus, because this genre of texts is key for exploring why and how people associate their own life stories with that of Stoertebeker.

Corpora one and three were set up using the Textgrid Repository, the German Text Archive (DTA) and the archive of project Gutenberg. In these free online textual archives literary sources from the public domain are stored in TEI, txt or html format. Using these sources meant that we had access to digital text copies of high quality, but we had to limit our study to texts from the public domain, which means that the publication date of the literary texts in our corpora stop around 1940 due to EU copyright law. To compensate for this, the second corpus was established to populate the available texts with journalistic articles from online periodicals, but excluded articles dealing with events and tourism that used Stoertebeker's story. Instead we concentrated on articles about recent studies on Stoertebeker and on a spectacular crime from 2011 when the alleged skull of Stoertebeker was stolen from the Hamburg Museum. The articles were published from 2010 to 2016.

2.1.3 Semi-automated data curation of a legend based city walk

Our model of semi-automated data curation exploits a workflow in which three Digital Humanities Tools are used to process textual data. As we do not always use the tools in the designated way and combine them rather unconventionally, we had to do some preliminary work on our data in order to optimize the results to adjust the performance of the tools on all three different corpora.

Step 1: Setting up the corpora

We used a very simple method to set up our three corpora. We searched the archives named above for Claus Stoertebeker (for all variant spellings of his name) via full text search. We excluded fictional texts that merely referred to Stoertebeker in only a few passages. The first corpus contains ten texts, the third corpus merely four. The second corpus contains twelve texts.

Step 2: Training the Named Entity Recognition Tool

The Stanford Named Entity Recognition Tool (NER) uses machine learning techniques to automatically tag entities (persons, locations, organizations) in texts. Working with NER threw up one problem concerning the setting of our case study. The classifiers provided by the Stanford University are trained on journalistic texts only and use a linguistic concept of place. Thus they arrive at a high level of correct identification of places in German (factual) texts, which lies at around 70%. While this fits our second corpus quite well, it turned out to perform very poorly on the fictional and autobiographical texts. The main reason for this seems to be that the seemingly simple category of place is used so differently in fictional texts that we needed another model in order to achieve a similarly reliable outcome. We constructed a corpus of training data which included extracts from one hundred fictional texts from the same temporal range as those in corpora one and three (dating from around 1850 to around 1950), randomly chosen from the TextGrid Repository. From each text in the training corpus, we extracted a randomly chosen passage of exactly the same length. We manually tagged all identifiable locations using the narratological model of place provided by Dennerlein and Hühn (2009). In the end we came up with an F-Score of 66-76%.¹

Step 3: Analysing the NER results in CATMA (Computer Aided Textual Markup and Analysis)

We completed the tagged texts to xml files and uploaded them into the textual markup and analysis tool CATMA in order to analyse the corpora. We ran a colocation query on the first corpus thus searching for places in proximity to the name of Stoertebeker (and its spelling variations). Afterwards we were able to look at the frequencies of place names and the context in which they were named. We extracted all place names referring to places in Hamburg. We repeated the analysis on the second and third corpora and in the end compared what kind of outcome could be made out for the different corpora.

¹ Around 97% precision and 50-60% recall.

Step 4: Mapping life events in Carto.com

The last step in our workflow brings the findings of the data mining analysis explained above into a form which can easily be transferred into the efoto application. All place names identified in step 3 were located on a map using the georeferencing tool carto.com. The efoto database was searched for images matching the place names to illustrate the locations in the city walk. Both geo-locations and images are connected in the efoto application to form a "station". Life events or contemporary events connected to the places are used as subjects of these stations in the city walk.

Our model of semi-automated data curation can be visualized as follows:

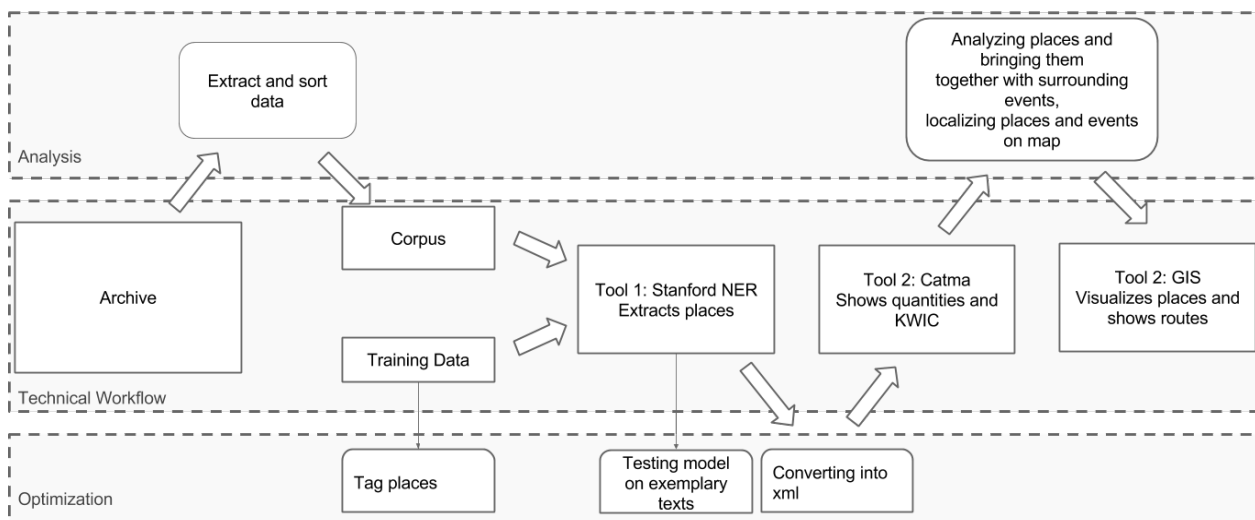


Figure 2: Model of semi-automated data curation.

The digital humanities tools we used were supplemented with analytical methods which cannot be performed automatically. The process of data extraction is in itself an interpretive act, because the decision as to which texts are included in a corpus and which are excluded is made here. Additionally, the findings have to be interpreted before they can be implemented in a city walk. Identifying events in a text is not (yet) a task that a tool can undertake because the category of “event” in a narratological sense is too complex (Dunn/Schumacher, 2016). Some of the tasks mentioned are merely necessary because tools are not yet compatible. In the end this model of semi-automated data curation should be seen as a first proposition for using different Digital Humanities tools in data curation workflows, but it is of course possible that some steps will become obsolete with the further development of tools and methods.

2.2 Findings

2.2.1 Creation of a Stoertebeker city walk

We found nine possible stations for a Stoertebeker city walk. Four of them are situated right in the city centre, one in the direction of St. Pauli, and the others towards the Elbe riverside and even further down in direction of the North Sea. The data mining revealed that one source we included in the first corpus was actually not about Stoertebeker himself but about a man whose nickname was Stoertebeker but who lived some hundred years later (Fock 1913). Thus we excluded this source and the possible city walk station it included retrospectively.

The most interesting outcome for the creation of a Hamburg city walk following events in Stoertebeker's life was that stories about his death were most commonly connected to places in Hamburg. In addition to that, his death story is also narrated in detail in most of the sources. This is not really a surprising outcome as the narrative of Stoertebeker's beheading is spectacular. The legend tells that before he was executed, he asked the city representatives for a favour. After his beheading, he wanted to try to walk along the line of his comrades. Those of whom he passed without his head, should be released. The legend tells that he did walk past a couple of his fellow pirates, before somebody tripped him. These are the common elements of Stoertebeker's death story told in all of the sources we included in the first corpus. There are variable elements, as to how many pirates were sentenced with him, how many of them were passed by the headless Stoertebeker, who made him fall and whether or not those he passed were indeed freed. In most sources the officials of the city broke their word and beheaded all of the pirates regardless.

Stoertebeker's death is always bound to an area of Hamburg called "großer Grasbrook", a peninsula where, today, a quarter called "HafenCity" is built as an urban regeneration project. It is likely that this has been retold uncontroversially, because this area was the common place for execution in Hamburg in the medieval period. We chose the monument of Störtebeker on the "Grasbrook" peninsula to illustrate the story of his beheading. There also is only one version of what happened to the other pirates' heads after their executions. They were hung up as deterrents along the riverside of the Elbe, so this is another place included in the citywalk. The riverside of the Elbe and its beach are a common place for picnicing and sunbathing today and have been a leisure area for some time. As such it is represented in various images in the efoto database, including historical postcards. For the city walk we chose a picture from 1925 showing a group of people in their bathing suits, as a contrast to the site's former usage.

Agreement over other legends about Stoertebeker are less consistent in the sources of the first corpus. There are three different versions of where and how he was imprisoned before his death. The most probable one tells that he was held in a cell in the medieval city hall of Hamburg (Grässe 1854; Rölleke 2001).

This brief legend recounts that the cell became known as “Stoertebeker’s hole” (a literal translation) and that Stoertebeker bargained about his impending execution. The story tells that he tried to free himself by offering a chain of gold long enough to surround the whole city of Hamburg. Another story tells that Stoertebeker spent his last night on earth in a cage in front of the St. Nikolai church (Klabund 1926). In this version he was exposed to very bad weather conditions that made him lose all his clothes. Although a beautiful young lady comes to his rescue he does not take the chance to escape but faces his fate heroically. In a third version (Engel 1920) the pirate awaits his death underneath the altar of St. Catherine’s church. This legend says that he got drunk with his teacher who was imprisoned with him. While drinking they talk about their approaching death. In the efoto database there is one image of the former townhall in which “Stoertebeker’s hole” must have been. There also are some pictures of the “Hopfenmarkt”, a market, which was situated in front of the St. Nikolai church, where the literary source positions Stoertebeker’s cage. Unfortunately there are no fotos of the altar of St. Catherine’s but there is a historic image of the church from the outside.

Two versions about what happened to Stoertebeker’s treasure were found in the sources. In both versions people made a crown from the pirate’s gold. This crown was so huge that it could fit around a church’s tower. In one version it was the tower of St. Nikolai (Herzog 1928). It is said in this legend that this church fell in love with the nearby St. Catherine’s church and passed the crown to her. In the other version it was St. Catherine who got the crown right away (Storm 1877). Then there is again disagreement as to what became of the crown. One source said it can still be seen at St. Catherine’s today, the other one states that it was lost to the French (Müllenhoff 1845). Another legend states that the treasure was so huge that the crown was only built after those citizens who had been robbed by the pirate were compensated (Rölleke 2001). There are images in efoto showing both St. Catherine’s and St. Nikolai’s church. For the first one we chose a contemporary photo of its tower, still showing a golden “crown”. As the St. Nikolai church has a special history of its own (being destroyed in the Second World War, its ruin is a memorial today), we chose a picture which shows the whole church in a total view, a perspective that cannot be recreated today.

Whereas Stoertebeker’s death in either version is narrated in most sources, far fewer texts tell how he became imprisoned. Two sources reveal that a fisherman from Blankenese discovered the pirate’s ship and played him a trick (Bechstein 1930; Jensen 1924). He went on board unseen at night and put lead into the oar sockets. He went to the Hanseatic League and when they came to capture the pirates in the morning, Stoertebeker and his men found themselves unable to flee. Another source text states that the fisherman was sent out by the Hanseatic League first of all (Grässe 1854). However, because the geoposition

for the ship's berth is not reachable by foot or public transport, we did not include this narrative into our city walk. In addition, there are no images which explicitly show the Elbe in front of Neuwerk Island in the efoto database.

Most stories in our source documents concentrate on Stoertebeker, but in a few stories there is an anecdote about another figure. Although the exact numbers vary, there seem to have been around seventy pirates executed on the day of Stoertebeker's death. The legends say that they were all executed by one man. As the executions were carried out by sword this must have been an exhausting task, so stories say that the hangman was asked afterwards if he felt weary. He answered that he was not and joked that indeed he could go on and kill all the present officials of Hamburg, too. This was too much humour for them and they sentenced him to death as well (Grässe 1854; Rölleke 2001). This anecdote is added to the geoposition of Stoertebeker's beheading on the "Grasbrook" peninsula. We chose an image of the "HafenCity" to go with it, as this contrasts very well with the historical story from former times, because during the construction of this quarter people were playing many jokes on some officials of the city.

As intended, the second corpus shows some connecting elements between Stoertebeker's life and contemporary events. It also reveals an interesting archaeological finding from the nineteenth century.

Stoertebeker's death was the frequently retold life event of the pirate in the second corpus as well, compared to his last hours on earth, which played a minor role. The crown that was allegedly made of his gold to decorate either St. Nikolai's or St. Catherine's tower played no role at all in this corpus. However, Stoertebeker's treasure was mentioned in one source as hypothetically being buried on the islands of Rügen or Heligoland (SVZ.DE 2016).

There are more politically significant events connected to Hamburg in this corpus. Some sources explain that Stoertebeker was one of the 'virtual brothers' before becoming a pirate (Leipold 2011; Frey 2014; SVZ.DE 2015; Schellen 2010; SVZ.DE 2016; Mittelacher 2015; Welle 2016). Some texts say he robbed only rich merchants and spared the poorer ones thus being some kind of "German Robin Hood" (Welle 2016; Schellen 2010; Mittelacher 2015; SVZ.DE 2015; Frey 2014). One source implies that the city of Hamburg tolerated Stoertebeker's raids even after his time as a freebooter, because his prizes were important for the economy of the city. However, the day came when they could not close their eyes any more (Leipold 2015). None of these findings are especially interesting for the creation of a city walk, because they are not connected to specific places or took place in places too far away from the city to include them in a walk. Nevertheless they are informative about why Stoertebeker is still part of the cultural heritage of Hamburg. He seems to be an ambivalent character, oscillating between a fighter against the rich and an infamous pirate, who turned his back on his former employer. He is compared to Robin Hood,

and to the Taliban. This continual ambiguity makes it impossible to bring the Stoertebeker case to an end. Even if a well respected historiographer states that there was no pirate called Stoertebeker at all, there will always be some kind of doubt about this. One reason for this doubt are the traces and cultural artefacts connected to the medieval pirate. The second corpus shows us how this comes about.

The journalistic texts in the second corpus reveal an interesting fact about the place where pirates were executed in Hamburg. In the 1880s the area had become the historical “Speicherstadt” (literally translated: storage city), still in existence today. During the construction works two reasonably well-preserved skulls were found in the ground (Welle 2016). Both had a huge iron nail in them which led to the conclusion that they had been the heads of pirates executed here (Mittelacher 2015). After their beheading, the heads of pirates were usually nailed to pillars at the river Elbe close to the port, so that everybody entering the city from the sea would see them. We connected the narrative about how the skull, which could have been Stoertebeker’s, was found to the place where the Stoertebeker monument stands today. In our database we found an image showing the construction of the Speicherstadt from above, which we linked to this narrative.

The two most important narratives about the skull found in the second corpus are how a forensic scientist gave it a modern autopsy to find out whether it really could have belonged to Stoertebeker (Mittelacher 2015), and how the skull was stolen from the Hamburg Museum (Schellen 2010; Frey 2014; Focus 2012; Herder 2012; Focus 2012). In the first story, found in one of the source texts, the coroner tells that two facts led to the deduction that this could have been Stoertebeker’s skull. First, and most importantly, is that it was so well preserved, in comparison to the second skull which had been found with it. The large nail was inserted very carefully. It seems that the head of this pirate was to have been recognizable on the pillar for as long as possible (Schellen 2010; Mittelacher 2015). Second, radiocarbon dating has shown that the skull once belonged to a man in his forties, which matches the stories about Stoertebeker’s age when he was executed (Mittelacher 2015). However the genetic material they extracted was too old to be compared with probable descendants of Stoertebeker. So again this narrative does not solve the most important ambiguity about Stoertebeker which is whether he existed or not.

The second narrative found in this corpus, the theft of the skull from the museum and how it was returned, has another interesting function. Not only is there a farcical, even fantastical aspect about stealing the skull of a pirate from a museum, there is also the question of the value of this cultural object. Because the thieves believed the skull to be Stoertebeker’s and because the police and the court invested effort in solving the case, the object as such became more valuable. If it had been just any skull without a chance of being Stoertebeker’s,

neither the press nor the citizens of Hamburg would have been so interested. Belief that this skull was indeed Stoertebeker's increased through this story. As the events in these narratives happened quite recently there were no pictures of them in the efoto database, which holds mostly historic image data.

As the texts of this corpus are factual rather than fictional representations there were not as many variations of the stories as there were in the first corpus, at least not when it came to events connected to the city of Hamburg. There were some reflections on whether Stoertebeker was no pirate but a merchant in Danzig (Frey 2014) and a hypothesis about him being the invention of monks in Lübeck (SHZ.DE 2015), but as these narratives are connected to different places, they are not the focus of our case study.

In the end we identified nine events, which we connected to five places in our city walk. In order to create an attractive route we visualized all ten places we found in the sources in the online geoinformation system carto.db:

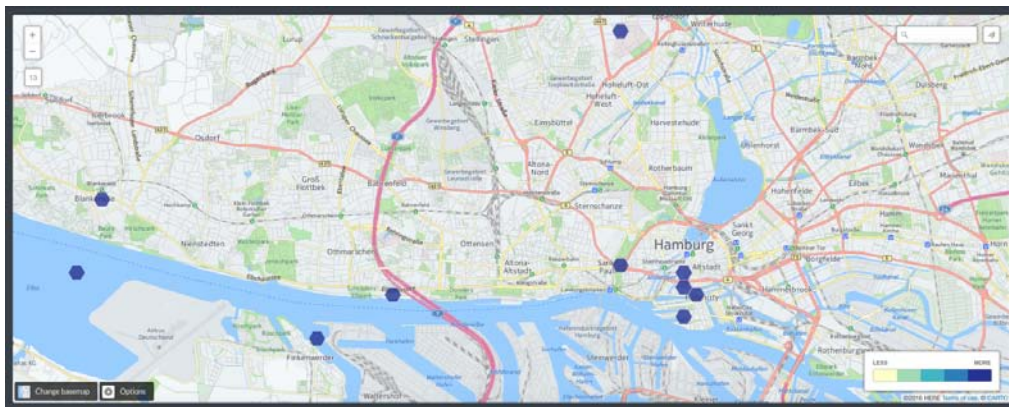









Figure 3: Visualization of Places in Hamburg, which are connected to Stoertebeker.

The table below shows that some places are connected to more than one event and some events to more than one place. Some of the events are told in various narratives. The structure of the city walk, which includes stations with subordinated chapters, offers the option of keeping all the variations of the legends found in the first corpus, thus underlining the multiplicity of Stoertebeker's myth.

Events	Place(s) and images	Variation
<p>Impri- son- ment</p>	<p>historic town hall</p>  <p>St. Nikolai</p>  <p>St. Catherine's</p> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cell of the town hall, bargaining for his life 2. Cage in front of St. Nikolai's defying weather and faith 3. Cell underneath the altar drinking and talking with his teacher
<p>Execu- tion</p>	<p>Peninsula Großer Grasbrook</p> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Walking alongside his comrades without his head thus rescuing at least a few of them 2. Walking alongside his comrades without his head until being stopped, comrades are executed anyway

<p>Hanging up the heads</p>	<p>Riverside of the Elbe ("Elbstrand")</p> 	<p>Heads were hung up along the riverside</p>
<p>Using the treasure</p>	<p>St. Nikolai</p>  <p>St. Catherine's</p> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Crown for St. Nikolai who passed it on to St. Catherine's 2. Crown for St. Catherine's, lost to the French in war 3. Compensation for the people of Hamburg, then crown for St. Catherine's
<p>Finding the treasure</p>	<p>St. Catherine's</p>	<p>Carpenter found the pirate's gold inside the mast of his ship.</p>



Joke by the hangman	Peninsula Großer Grasbrook 	Hangman was asked whether he was exhausted after beheading around 70 pirates. He denied, stating that he could still go on and kill all the officials of the city, too.
Finding the skull	Großer Grasbrook 	During the construction work of the “Speicherstadt” two probable pirate skulls were found
Deducing that one of the skulls was Stoer-te-beker's	Universitätsklinikum Eppendorf	A forensic autopsy was made
Theft of the skull	Hamburg Museum	Skull was stolen and brought back to the museum

Table 1: Events, places and variations of narratives found in corpus 1 and 2.

Due to the fact that we wanted to create a city walk that could be done by foot and public transport in about two hours, we decided to exclude places from the city walk that could not be easily reached (such as the location on the Elbe near Neuwerk Island), were too far away from the centre of the walk (Blankenese, Eppendorf), or were inside a building (Hamburg Museum). In the end the city walk was implemented in the mobile app as follows:

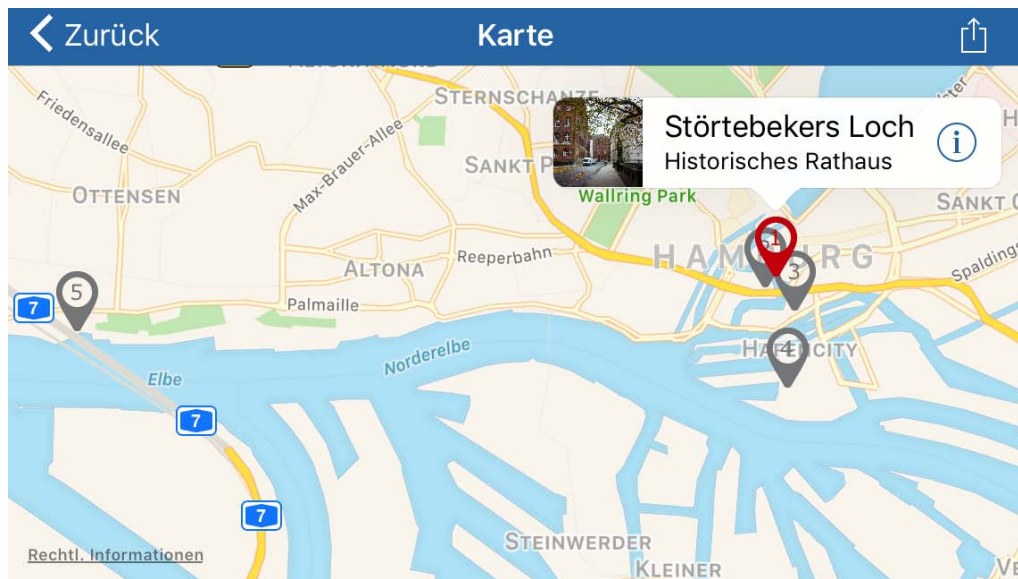


Figure 4: Screenshot of the Stoertebeker citywalk in the mobile app efoto.

2.2.2 Identification with Stoertebeker

Our third corpus revealed how people might connect to Stoertebeker and use narratives about him to create new stories or develop a narrative identity. In Gorch Fock's anthology "Nach dem Sturm" (literally: after the storm) Stoertebeker is used prototypically and allegorically. One sequence shows the protagonist on a ship and wanting to write something. But then he gets haunted by a ghostly vision of Stoertebeker. In this vision the pirate talks to his comrade Godeke Michels who gives him the advise to stay ashore and settle down to an honest family life. But Stoertebeker, and most probably the protagonist as well, is addicted to the sea. He says, he loves it more than he could ever love a woman.

Another passage contains a comparison between the protagonist's ship and the one Stoertebeker used to have, stating that not even the pirate's ship could have been faster (Fock 1941: position 265.315). Using Stoertebeker as comparison here shows that he is some kind of prototype for a man of the sea who is known to have the best and fastest ships. There is a third passage in this source where Stoertebeker's name is used allegorically. It is about a ship which might have been white in the times in which Stoertebeker lived but now looks grey (Fock 1941: position 43.080). Stoertebeker's time is used thus synonymously for a very long time ago.

In two of the other source texts the protagonists are nicknamed Stoertebeker. In one case the nickname is used to mock the first-person narrator, alluding to the fact that he does not seem to distinguish between what is his and what actually belongs to someone else very well (Ringelnatz 1931: position 238.720). In the other case the mistress of the protagonist ironically calls him Stoertebeker

when they are just about to eat during a sea voyage. While the woman does not mind the state of the sea at all, the protagonist is not able to look at food without feeling sick (Tucholsky 1956: position 21.968). Once again the nickname Stoertebeker is used with a mocking tone or at least makes the addressed person feel ashamed. In this case the shame rather seems to be caused by a feeling of not living up to a certain role model. But how did a medieval pirate and freebooter become a role model in the first place? The fourth text in the third corpus sheds some light on that.

In Theodor Fontane (1959) the author narrates an episode from his childhood. He used to play with his friends in a place called “Stoertebeker’s well” (author’s translation). That was a place in the dunes on the Baltic coast, where the protagonist used to go camping. There is a legend saying that Stoertebeker used this place to hide with his comrades when not at sea. Being there, camping with his friends just like the pirate probably did hundreds of years ago, causes a real sense of delight in the young boy. Doing the same thing as the pirate makes him feel very strong and brave. But then the feeling changes as he reminds himself that Stoertebeker was executed in Hamburg. This thought is rather unpleasant to him and he has to remind himself that it is not very likely that he would be pursued and caught by the court of Hamburg. So we end up with an ambiguity with which the legendary person of Stoertebeker is regarded. There is admiration for his bravery and strength, but in the very next moment thoughts about his violent death, which was caused by the fact that he was a pirate and no honourable man. This results in an unsettled feeling. The autobiographical narrator in this source uses a vivid term, literally translated as “sweet shudders”, to describe how he feels comparing himself to Stoertebeker.

To sum up this corpus shows different aspects of identification with Stoertebeker. He seems to incorporate a certain role model of a sailor who is especially brave and fearless. Nevertheless it seems to be hard to come to a judgement about him. On the one side his courage is underlined by his defiance of all authority and not even being intimidated by a sentence of death. On the other hand he was undeniably dishonest, which is not an admirable trait. Nevertheless Stoertebeker seems to stand for a prototype of masculinity, which little boys as well as grown men would like to match. The name Stoertebeker is used allegorically or as a projection surface. The ambiguity of his person strengthens the legend about him and makes people connect to him in different ways.

3. Conclusions

Starting from very high-level and merely abstract models of culture and narrative identification, we developed a practical model of semi-automated data curation. We tested this model on the case of Stoertebeker and his legends showing that the results could be implemented into a mobile application as well as led back to further investigations on the relevance of Stoertebeker’s myth today.

In our practical attempt we showed that interdisciplinary scientific workflows, methods and techniques of data mining can be used for digital content curation. We showed that investigations on two aspects of data curation could be pursued. Digital Humanities tools and methods can be used to create a city walk, and to decide which places and events should be included in a narrative representation of certain aspects of cultural heritage. Multiplicity, as one probable result of the mostly oral tradition of legends, turned out to be an especially enriching feature in our case study. Further some facets of the ongoing fascination with a mythical personality as Stoertebeker's were revealed.

Our model of semi-automated data curation is a first attempt to try out a workflow of Digital Humanities tools and methods in a process of data curation. This article is not a contribution to the discussion of big data analysing techniques, but it shows that a set of corpora, exceeding in size what one person could read closely in a time span appropriate for data curation, could be used to create a narrative representation of a historical topic. We do not try to exclude the expertise of cultural heritage curators, but instead want to highlight the importance of interpretation in data mining.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to prove whether the resulting city walk really functions as a trigger for the emergence and identification of cultural heritage. This will show when the implementation of the mobile application is completed and users test the Stoertebeker city walk. The model of semi-automated data curation should be tried out on other subjects in order to show whether it is fully or merely partly transferable. We hope that our model of semi-automated data curation can function as a starting-point for further investigations on data mining processes in cultural heritage.

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Fractured places and subjective spaces – Historical objectivity and individual agency in Robert Altman's *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*

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Scholarly analysis of director Robert Altman's *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* (1971) often centralises the film's disruptive contrast between a passive male figure and a more assertive female. This dialectic jeopardises both the individual male dominance in the American Western historical mythos and the narrative of individual agency so central to popular cinematic conceptions of history. Yet fewer scholars have moved beyond narrative and dissected the formal cinematic mechanics of the film. Through its cluttered *mise-en-scène*, discontinuous editing and prowling, ever-moving camera that favours contradictory viewpoints over any one perspective, *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* moves far beyond simply trading in one objective historical hero, John McCabe, for two, or replacing a male hero for a masculinised female hero (according to hegemonic notions of virile agency) who is thereby merely assimilated into the project of preserving traditional masculine historical narratives. Instead, *McCabe's* filmic mechanics suggest a world devoid of not only individual heroic narratives but a history resistant to unqualified, complete and arguably objective narrative characterisation. In this sense, the film ultimately *does* dismantle McCabe's agency as a narrative-ordering agent who wraps the past around his fingers, serving as history's *de facto* locus of change and transition in the world. But the film attends to this process through a complicated technical and imaginative arsenal that does not merely render McCabe incompetent but deconstructs the very visual bedrock from which Hollywood cinema presumes easy access to the past and erects a coherent visual history that can be ordered by a character in the first place. In other words, rather than simply critiquing masculine protagonist characterisations, *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* challenges masculine viewing practices of period-piece cinema that are rooted in filtering narrative histories through a series of clearly understood, easily visible set-up to pay-off progressions complicit in the ideological project of America's national, capitalist and masculine Western mythology.

While Robert Self argues that *McCabe's* chief innovation – narratively – is understanding Golden Age Hollywood Westerns not as history but as 'historiography', or as biased, partially fictive attempts to navigate history, I argue that *McCabe* is also aware of its own position within this historiography. In utilising cinematic mechanics that not only preclude McCabe from exercising agency in the narrative but preclude the audience from fully understanding the film environment, the film replaces an awareness of historical objectivity with an audi-

ence's engagement with how film, including *McCabe* itself, constructs subjective images that exist to be interrogated rather than assumed as masterful and complete, objective reclamations of a forgotten past. However, rather than a nihilistic descent into historical nothingness and endless reflexivity precluding any possibility of imaginative connection to the past, the film suggests in its very alterity the importance of depictions of the past that are incomplete and uncertain in meaning and thus still alive today for discussion and reinterpretation. As opposed to a historical counter-narrative – an alternative set of crystalised facts – *McCabe* encourages a contrary method of narrativising. It is a discourse with rather than a depiction of history.

An Imperfect Vision, or Beyond Objectivity

On analysing the sequence where nominal protagonist John McCabe enters the saloon in the snow-covered Pacific-Northwest town of Presbyterian Church for the first time – right after arriving in town – we see how the film jeopardises traditional notions of dominant individual protagonists and cinematic visual clarity. McCabe nominally enters the town as a cowboy who initially seems to embody the Great Man Western archetype by individualistically materialising out of nowhere as a corporeal answer to the problems of the Western community. He seems primed to fulfill America's infatuation with the virility of the Liberal individual agent at the expense of a more fragmented vision of historical conflict and collectivised vision of historical solution. Yet instead of focusing on McCabe as he walks around the saloon, proposing what Kolker refers to as a 'positive sense of space transgressed' (Kolker 1988, 319), the camera produces disarray by rejecting a clear-eyed understanding of the saloon's geometric interior or McCabe's place in it.

Soon after McCabe enters the bar, a roughly twenty-second sequence begins with McCabe striding to the left and a person immediately passing in front of him, intruding on McCabe in the frame. The camera moves around McCabe so that he is now walking away from the camera toward the back of the frame, stopping to talk to another man while the camera frames them in a two-shot. While the conventional two-shot (both characters next to one another in the same frame) suggests togetherness and ease of view, Altman's two-shot here implies disharmony and confusion. McCabe's rear is on the right, while the man to the left of McCabe is facing forward towards the camera (they are facing in opposite directions so that we can only see the other man's face, while McCabe remains an enigma). Disregarding continuity editing, the camera then flips over 180 degrees to the opposite perspective: now, it depicts McCabe from the front at the left side of the screen while the other man, his back now to us, stands on the right, both shrouded in darkness. The dusky cinematography depicts the space as though through a fog – human faces are almost invisible – and the 180-

degree flip disrupts spatial continuity for the characters. McCabe, within seconds, has already been visually surpassed by another man, suffused in a darkness that infringes on his corporeal presence and flipped around within the space in a gesture of visual chaos and confusion. Kolker argues that McCabe's agency in the narrative is 'tenuous at best, fraudulent at worst' (Kolker 1988, 342), but his agency in controlling the film screen and thus the audience's perception is even more circumspect.

After he finishes speaking with the other man, McCabe walks off the screen to the left, while we track slightly right with the other man, following very briefly to the left as another man, the saloon keeper, moves left in the frame. Another cut shows McCabe similarly walking left out a door (to the outside world), followed by a separate shot of the saloon keeper following him to the left. The film then follows this with yet a third separate shot of a third man walking left in the frame. The camera thus tracks left through each of their movements without including any two of the men in one single shot to clarify their spatial relationships. Altman's tracking here establishes little legibility, coherence, or connection. Rather, it is an expression of disorder, cutting between characters with little sense of how they occupy space relative to one another. (The third man, neither McCabe nor the saloon keeper, is introduced spontaneously and without connection to the other two). Because the initial leftward track emerges from the remnants of an aborted rightward track, the camera is seemingly confused about which direction to explore rather than assertively stringing audiences along a pre-assumed cause-to-effect narrative to teleological completion. Because it moves around them disjointedly, the camera movement in *McCabe* abrogates rather than furnishes the individualistic drive to follow a virile character across space or to understand the links between the characters' causal agencies and their effects on the world.

The disharmony and confusion inherent to this shot structure stands in stark refutation of conventional Hollywood principle. Tracking motions traditionally serve to define contiguous space, to entrench continuity between characters by moving between them. They erect a comprehensible world necessary for the illusory reality that classical Hollywood cinema, particularly period-piece cinema, strives for. Within this contiguous space, Yvonne Tasker writes, many American action narratives employ long takes designed to display 'decisive action on the part of the (protagonists)' (Tasker 2016, 308) who inspect, intercept and overcome conflicts with dominance, diffusing chaos and reestablishing order in the space through physical action and movement. Coupling these displays of contiguous space with cause-effect editing that emphasises characters' actions and their consequences in that space, the result would be 'a unified plot ... in which characters' actions are clearly motivated and the causal chain of scenes made legible' (Grundmann et al 2016, 8), visually and stylistically preserving

‘the individualist logic of (Liberal) law (that) stipulates that individuals are practical actors, who effectively act on the world as producers of causes and consequences’ (Norrie 2014, 140).

Compared to that display of directorial virility to create a cohesive view of the past, *McCabe*’s ‘camera’, as Keyssar writes, ‘works from inside ... the saloon, (but) seems as unable as we are to find a focus for attention’ (Keyssar 1991, 179). Yet Keyssar, although noticing this formal reality, does not discern its implications. The refusal of the camera to stick with one character reflects not only McCabe’s submission to the chaos of the saloon. It also visualises the camera’s inability to reveal any complete ‘truths’ about the saloon as a space or to cohere around any narrative vision of this quasi-historical location. The chaos destabilises the supposed safety of McCabe’s entrance into the interior realm – the safety ostensibly defined by people’s development of domestic spaces. But, as I will explore, the disarray of the imagery similarly jeopardises the development of period-piece cinema to reclaim the past from the recesses of time. The motile, uncertain positioning of the camera disturbs McCabe’s physical movement across the screen and the movement of his identity from passive to active, narrative-binding figure, and dismantles the audience’s ideological movement into this space and the film’s movement into a definite, settled and inarguable past. In turn, it asks us to consider the past as an active, mutable reality rather than one sedimented, totalisable one.

In turn, Altman corroborates both the character’s tentative control of the frame and the audience’s tentative understanding of this historical narrative through the visible foregrounding of visual elements that block McCabe and other characters from view, sequestering people into the background of images. The aforementioned sequence of leftward tracking shots is disruptive in its edits, but the film compounds the disarray through the sheer anonymity of the characters behind an opaque rush of barely-recognisable objects that pass along the front of the screen. Beyond that, because the foregrounded objects are not on screen long enough to register as tangible constructions, they float by as enigmas rather than creations to focus on and diagnose. This disarray mirrors McCabe’s outsider status, but it is also reflective of an experiential chaos found in viewing a film that is a mediated representation of history. Right from the beginning, *McCabe* positions itself not as an indexical representation of the past that the camera easily accesses but as a fragmented, circumspect vision, an assumption to interrogate rather than an objective guarantee. McCabe’s own lack of actualisation, his failure to control the narrative and command the film space, can function as a mimetic response for both the film’s and the audience’s inability to entirely master or order history as well, to move from disorganised fragments of space and time to one linear fabric.

Furthermore, Altman marries his visual chaos to an aurally muddled, disjunctive sound mix that seems to overcome McCabe's voice in the frame, establishing a dense, overpowering morass of noises and voices that defy the singularity of McCabe's voice and the audience's ability to divine conversations within the frame. As McCabe walks toward the back of the saloon upon entering it, he runs into another person (this is when the camera flips 180 degrees) and mumbles 'Say, that's the backdoor ain't it' in a raspy tone almost indecipherable amidst the rampant clanking of glass and the hiss of lowly humming human voices dotting the aural landscape as well. The sheer dissonance of McCabe's near-silent muttering aurally diminishes his value in the film, depicting him as only tenuously capable of even communicating with another person. His individuality, rather than a symbol of power to assert dominance, alienates him, as though he is only speaking to himself.

The audio of the film also 'arouse(s) our distrust of the stability or possibility of relationships that we might otherwise assume to be natural or easily fabricated' (Keyssar 1991, 189), creating a collective world where the characters nonetheless defy genuine connection. In this case, however, while Keyssar writes on dubious relationships *between characters*, the audio and imagery also arouse distrust of the relationship between the film space and the camera, as well as between the camera and the audience. The camera seems not to be ordering a sensory experience toward finality but stumbling to cement any relationship to this sound-space. It suggests many conversations vying for attention rather than one conversation that controls the frame and confines it to a narrative focused on one individual. The audio thus reminds us that any singular focus on one accomplishing, frame-ordering character requires the elision of many other perspectives that constitute the polyphonic reality of history.

One can contrast *McCabe's* treatment of history and individualism, then, with a more classical treatment found, for instance, in John Ford's prototypical Western *Stagecoach* (1939): the camera vibrantly introduces protagonist John Wayne in a shock-cut that zooms directly in on his face backed by, and overtaking, an imposing Monument Valley monolith, a giant plateau as a totem to nature's might. However, because Wayne's body centers the frame and eventually blocks nature from view, the zoom erects Wayne and the individualist Western hero as the true imposing monolith. The film relegates nature, even nature as voluminous as Monument Valley, to subservient background status behind Wayne's titanic individualism. Furthermore, the zoom suggests clarity of historical vision, a temporal process from wide-shot to close-up that foregrounds the process of focusing in on a directed focal point. The sense is that the camera knows which version of history it is telling, that the film is closing in on what it knows to be important with unwavering assurance that leaves no room for digression on the camera's part.

Contrarily, *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* actively retorts by zooming in on objects outside of McCabe's presence during moments of ostensible action on his part. Later in the film, during a sexual tryst between McCabe and Mrs. Miller, the camera denies McCabe's sexual potency; the film zooms not on him but on a close-up of money that McCabe had left on a bedpost. Not only does this relegate the idea of 'character' to secondary status, in diametric opposition to *Stagecoach*, but it rejects the individualist moorings of those norms. (The money is a harbinger of McCabe's bullish capitalistic individualism and disconnect from larger society that will ultimately fell him). Even this close-up is a relative exception though. Typically, the film rejects close-ups altogether, preferring wide shots where the camera scours the landscape without clear focus, refusing to direct our attention toward 'important'/'central' images. (In contrast, when the film does rely on close-ups on people, it often jumps to them without any establishing shots to situate the characters within the film's geographical (dis)continuity). The film does not merely invert its gender dynamics by denouncing McCabe's sexual conquest. Rather, it engages in a much more radical upending of the perceptual mechanisms by which cinema foregrounds the individual agency of the classical hero and the certainty of this individualist perspective as valid. But Altman's film, stylistically, is not exclusively a critique of the valiant individual Great Man historical narrative. It is a critique of the film and film director that proposes to resurrect history for audiences to see in all its objective glory, films which propose themselves and their directors, like their protagonists, as great narrative organisers, dominators of narrative. Historiography, here, is not an all-access pass to the past but an active process of discovery and provisional assumption, an attempt to construct a narrative out of fragments that do not inherently cohere into a homogenous solution. In contrast to many period-piece films which propose almost omniscient access to their narrative world, *McCabe's* venture into the past is an imperfect journey.

An Uncertain Aesthetic, An Aesthetic of Uncertainty

However, Altman's film does not simply dissociate from traditional notions of visual and aural clarity to reject McCabe's supremacy and tackle individualistic historical storytelling with it. Indeed, the film's most subversive moments find Altman nominally conforming to more traditional Western individualist iconography and stabilising his world in a simulacrum of objectivity, such as when the film's opening saloon scene eventually finds balance and harmony around McCabe as he indulges in a poker game. However, while the film does coalesce around McCabe, it also self-consciously constructs his virile identity as a dubious construct. After the parade of leftward tracking shots and discontinuous editing arrangements that open the saloon sequence, we finally settle on the saloon keeper watching McCabe through a door (McCabe has walked outside the saloon temporarily), after which we cut to three men discussing McCabe. Following this, we see another shot of McCabe outside of the saloon from the saloon

keeper's perspective, with McCabe glimpsed through a frame-like window (in the door) and thus self-consciously rendered as an 'image' – much like an artificial filmic character glimpsed on a film screen – rather than a person. McCabe is treated as an object of other characters' gazes/discussions, pronouncing them as the subjects rather than McCabe himself, who is partially abstracted through the flesh-warping texture of the translucent door. As Self notes, the film 'displays a variety of contradictory subject positions', which allows the film to problematise clarity of historical vision (Self 2007, 140). But beyond what Self notes, the film's framing of subjective perspectives allows the film to explore McCabe as others hazard guesses about him. He becomes an archetype the film reflexively investigates, a subjective construct defined not by his own actions but by others' perceptions, a constructed figure whose objectivity is dubious.

When McCabe reenters the saloon, the camera zooms out from him (and the door) to the opposite end of the main room behind a table while McCabe walks to this opposite end, traversing the frame toward the camera. In doing so, he transgresses the visual discontinuity as he arrives all the way at the table and thus asserts a certain dominance over the space. For the first time, someone has capably overcome the chaotic saloon, revealing McCabe as a figure of jurisdiction over the space. McCabe sits at a table to initiate a poker game, the camera lingering as the other humans in the saloon flock to observe him, surrounding him. Ostensibly, this is a gesture of power on McCabe's part as he literally coalesces the wandering chaos of the saloon into a loosely organised circle. Yet when the others arrive at McCabe's location, they jeopardise his supremacy, engulfing him, with one man taking McCabe's presumed spot in the centre of the frame as McCabe disappears amidst the commotion. The lone Great Man wanderer who breathes order into a chaotic world and magnetises people to his presence is dwarfed by the sudden awareness of the masses around him.

Visually, the film follows up on this strain of denying McCabe the satisfaction of his supposed hero-dom by refusing to expose the poker game. Although the game continues for several minutes, the camera quickly returns to its prior activity of prowling around the saloon, following other characters as they discuss McCabe's image without ever visually showcasing McCabe's gambling prowess. In fact, the one shot of McCabe handling cards on the card table we are given is almost entirely blocked by McCabe's coated arm in the frame, a tacit suggestion that McCabe's oafish reality obstructs us from viewing his possibly fraudulent skill as a card player, that his skill may be a fictional construct that the film cannot truly visualise. The film will continue to otherwise demonstrate McCabe's inability to practice business: he cannot even count money, and the real mastermind of the business he develops will be Mrs Miller. Yet this early scene already jeopardises the Liberal individual merit ideal of the American success story that heroes achieve space-ordering, narrative-controlling status by their own skill.

Altman here feints toward the classical Hollywood style of narrative order only to question it, visualising the film's themes of the slippery fragility of easily-accessible historical narrative and individual agency stylistically. Indeed, that we can only understand the film through its visual style is a reflection of the importance of looking at historical images and artefacts to understand them before one layers a narrative above them. Reducing the poker scene summary description to 'McCabe leads the saloon in poker' favours conforming to assumptions of individual agency over actually reading the image-to-image flow we are given, a flow that does not corroborate the assumption that the saloon is finally coherent or even limited to McCabe's actions. If the film's style floats uneasily around the loose threads of narrative rather than tightly stitching the film together, this digression is itself cotangent to the film's atmosphere of history that cannot be handed over to us by one individualised protagonist.

Expressing the saloon less as a 'real' space and more as a dreamlike haze, the reddened/amber hues of the lighting during the game also speak to cinematographer Vilmos Zsigmond's contribution to the mythic nature of the scene and the film's interrogation of its own objectivity. When the bartender eventually lights the lantern above the gambling table, the men, huddled together, are cast in an ochre glow that will, as the film continues, permeate the inside regions of Presbyterian Church. Although the warm hues are more pronounced later on, the warmth suggested by the lighting from the beginning 'proves to be false, fooling the viewer as it has the characters of the fiction' (Kolker 1991, 327). Kolker's argument is narrative-based, namely that the warmth never helps the characters but instead only fools them into believing they have truly escaped the difficulties of the outside world. (The red lighting is almost exclusively connected to the rampant opium use in the saloon, and thus the opiated American Dreams of success that the characters imagine but cannot achieve). But the lighting's fragility is visually inscribed for the audience as well. Constantly undercut by harsh cuts to cold blue exteriors threatening to disrupt the warmth, the warm hue exists as a frail counterpoint to an outside world it cannot visually defeat. Altman undermines the colour as a specious, fictional sense of warmth designed to paint an image of technologically-produced safety, an image that nonetheless cannot overcome the bitter reality of the outside world or the chaos of the saloon that seems no less difficult to settle into. In this sense, Altman's *mise-en-scène* dismantles traditional binaries between nature and civilisation and, more importantly, American accomplishment and bitter failure.

Furthermore, the soft, diffuse lighting that cushions the characters' faces, casting them in a glow that renders the borders of their faces difficult to discern, partially threatens the characters' tactility as people. The detail on their faces partially evaporates specifically because the supposedly comforting lighting almost diffuses their facial features, giving them a translucent, ghostly quality of impermanence, as though the film's grasp on them might fade into non-existence. Reading their emotions from their often non-discernible facial features,

deducing the internal psychologies of characters from scraps of external information, becomes an arduous project. Many historically-set films from Hollywood use a pristine visual stock and high-key lighting (which artificially overlights the set) to enforce the tactile presence of historical reality before us, and to allow us to easily treat characters as fully available objective presences. In this sense, if the warmth of the saloon reflects any characters' mental fictions or dreams of opportunity, the lighting also plays into an audience's dream of illuminating the past to reclaim history, and typically individual-centric history, for the present.

Meeting *McCabe*, Meeting *McCabe*

An analysis of the 'saloon sequence' is even more meaningful in light of the previous sequence, in which McCabe rides into town on his horse before walking into the saloon. Nominally, the saloon is designed to provide respite from the cold. Yet many of the techniques used to construct the space within the saloon are similar to Altman's vision of the outside world. This connects the two spaces rather than fully contrasting them (which the aforementioned colours do), adding further credence to the argument that the saloon is not a space for the characters or the audience to settle into a mode of easy, unobstructed existence or viewership. Even before McCabe hastily stumbles into the heart of Presbyterian Church, then, Altman's confrontational film has already seeded both of the strains discussed in this essay: a sabotage of McCabe as a representation of the virile male archetype and an expression of the film's reflexivity as something related to but not one with history and which ripostes the assumption that completing or progressing through a narrative is the only or ideal way to confront history in cinema. *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* begins with a shadowy, fur-covered McCabe arriving in the town, his rightward trek in during the opening credits ostensibly invoking, as many Westerns have, his superiority over nature. A closer look however reveals the subversive way that the camera focuses not on him but on the trees in the foreground, blocking our view of the man as nature overtakes him in the image (as non-natural elements do in the saloon). More trenchantly, when the title of the film itself appears on the screen, it too arrives as a wind-carried weapon crawling left to pass through McCabe himself, drawing overt attention to itself by puncturing the main character. Even before the opening credits have ended, then, the film entangles its own reality in the non-diegetic or the openly fictive elements of the film such as the credits. By mixing the two or addressing the reliance of the world on these more openly fictive elements, the opening of Altman's film undercuts not only McCabe but the film's own reality. It remarks on the film's own existence within the very fictional Western cinematic imagination the film also critiques.

The sequence where McCabe rides into town before entering the saloon is shot through with similar subversive gestures that complicate ideas of objectivity and subjectivity as well as McCabe's control of the film frame. Yet in lieu of a full walk-through, an emphasis on one shot is most telling for how it problematises our ability to differentiate objective and subjective viewpoints and thus safely determine that any moment is meant as an objective, omniscient and thus completely truthful vision of the past. At one point, while McCabe is riding in town on his way to the saloon, the film cuts to a leftward track, the camera in front of and moving with a woman who is also walking to the left and foregrounded in the frame (the camera is moving as she moves, following her to the left). She then looks off to the left in the distance (where McCabe is) as the camera continues to track left past her (she is no longer in the frame) into a viewpoint of McCabe in town. The viewpoint is roughly approximate to her perspective (the camera looks where she was looking) but not fully complicit with it (the camera moves leftward beyond where she was physically positioned in the film). The film seems to bleed her subjective perspective into what is typically assumed to be the omniscient perspective of a film camera, wherein the camera has easy access to all information in the film and can suture scenes to give the audience information as it chooses. In other words, in many films where the camera hides information from the audience, it is only to generate suspense for the eventual reveal, preserving the assumption that the camera can access the entire world. However, the shot of the woman/camera looking at McCabe calls the camera's objectivity into question in a more fundamental way without allowing us to completely mitigate the subversive gesture by writing it off as emblematic of merely this one woman's perspective.

In many films, the moments of explicit camera subjectivity (often shaken camera movements as if made by a character) are meant to contrast with the objective viewpoint of the rest of the film. They express what certain characters in their limited or fractured subjectivity do not know, or what they distort in their minds. In turn, this allows the film to preserve the assumption that the rest of the film is omniscient, revealing the 'true' (in this case, 'historical') version of events through the stylistic contrast between the subjective and objective moments. (It also suggests that the film can safely invade the characters' minds, as though it has complete access to visualising the way they see and think). But because the camera moves away from the woman in *McCabe*, as well as how it moves around the space of the film elsewhere without any grounding in a character's field of view, the perspective distinctly suggests something intrinsically subjective about the *camera's* perspective, its *de facto* mode of viewing. It is not 'withholding' historical truth to surprise us, dealing in absence only to reaffirm a heroic ability of the film to return us to concrete knowledge and historical guarantees. Instead, *McCabe's* viewpoint is fundamentally debatable.

In addition, it is also important that *McCabe's* disruption of classical individualist narrative tropes and objective historical style are not merely present at

the micro intra-scene level but across the wider fabric of the narrative itself. McCabe ultimately actualises his fictive heroic image in an exclusively accidental and disinterested manner, leading to his death in the snow while the town, pointedly, is putting out a fire that his conflict has accidentally caused. A loose conflict with Big Business capitalism structures the story; McCabe wants to control his saloon for himself, while a larger mining company wants to purchase it from him. But the film largely digresses from that narrative, expending its energy depicting an exhausted, quotidian locale that is too complicated to be confined to a build-up of one narrative conflict. After the film rushes to a final shootout between McCabe and three mercenaries, one of McCabe's antagonists shoots a lantern in the (hollow) church that gives the town its name, setting it on fire. McCabe's 'gunfighter' status never actualises in a way he can benefit from. When he truly becomes a gunfighter, shots of him in action (wide-shots, nearly-silent in nature, doused in cold blues and white snow suggesting an engulfing white limbo devouring him) are cut against the townspeople, in harmony for the first time, putting out the fire, undercutting his importance and virility. As McCabe's actions happened to set off the fire, thus prompting the town's actions, McCabe fulfills an almost accidental heroic role tangentially related to his nonexistent desire to 'save the town'. (His shootout is a personal conflict for his business, and any desire on his part to help the town is tertiary). The cacophonous sound and motion for the shots of the town acting to put out the fire invoke agency in community and collectivity as opposed to individualism.

More importantly, *McCabe* dissents from the way that the classical Liberal hero's journey structures social conflict and physical space as a theatrical backdrop for individual 'personal growth ... (and) new phases in life that draw blueprints of identity and test them in the field of action' (Wulff 2016, 238). In *McCabe*'s conclusion, Altman does not treat space and other characters as spectators or props for a theatre of individual action. McCabe and the three men do not square off in the classical fashion in a duel linearised in the middle of a carefully symmetrical, ordered main street designed for the protagonist to bind the town's people through spectating McCabe's agency. The town does not 'watch' McCabe assert himself over these three enforcers as the center of the narrative. Contrarily, his shootout plays out on the outskirts of town with no audience while the town itself is set in motion to collectivise and put out the fire, among the only moments of decisive action on anyone's part in the film. While the typical Western hero narrative suggests throngs of onlookers for the hero's ultimate triumph, *McCabe* frustrates heroic readings by unfurling this narrative out on the sidelines.

Counter-Narratives, or Counter-Narrativising?

Often, films which subvert expectations about protagonists do so exclusively by either narratively characterising the supposed protagonist as immoral, as in *The*

Wild Bunch, or incompetent, faltering against the weight of the world (the latter would be the common, but more superficial, reading of *McCabe*). Merely doing so challenges or disrupts the assumption that individuals are, respectively, moral people or physical agents. But it fails to dissect the Enlightenment-inflected notion that the individual is the *de facto* locus through which people ought to view the world or the past in the first place. The film world remains meaningful only insofar as it can hurt our presumed protagonist. The camera is still ‘focused’ on an individual, albeit an incompetent or immoral one. In the case of a passive individual, period piece cinema often still defines itself – defines value – in relation to a trajectory from passivity to agency; it simply happens to be a trajectory this particular protagonist has failed to actualise. This paints individuals as failures within a rhetoric of goal-oriented agency rather than problematising that rhetoric altogether. This may be a different narrative, but not a different mode of constructing narrative overall, not a shift away from cause-and-effect logic. However, as *McCabe*’s narrative progresses, it will remain resistant to the audience’s attempts to scour the bowels of history and limit the past to any individual. McCabe’s presence in the film not only challenges his diegetic agency but his ability to control the world, even passively, simply via his status as individual. Just as it is not complicit in the classical Western narrative of vertically following one character’s phallic trajectory from conflict to resolution, set-up to pay-off, *McCabe* does not merely invert this dynamic by watching the character fail. Instead, the film partially unsettles itself from the individualistic dynamic altogether, excavating other corners of the *mise-en-scène*.

The other films that only emasculate their protagonists are limited in that they fail to unshackle themselves from a historical form that Landy – advancing Nietzsche – refers to as ‘melodramatic’: ‘the melodramatic, indeed operatic, qualities of monumental history and its reliance on metalepsis, that is, the explanation of causes by their effects’ (Landy 1996, 18). Explaining ‘causes by their effects’ refers to the deep-dive historical impulse to resurrect the past melodramatically, building up a heightened and direct chain of emotions and events, tracing the present backward through a singular causal chain, erecting one vertical ‘monument’ of history to completion. That we can trace this chain feeds into its melodramatic quality, preying primarily on an emotional nostalgia that treats the past as ‘worthy of imitation, as imitable and possible for a second time’ (Nietzsche 1874, 70), or rather, as a reclaimable object we can relive by understanding it in total. The agency of the protagonist to create history and the agency of the film to relive it for us, to recreate it by depicting it with uncritical pseudo-objectivity, become fundamentally entangled. This ‘melodramatic’ history favours emotional ‘monumentalism’ – to cite Landy – and stylistic ‘monumentalism’, or a stylistic coherence that emphasises the past as a hyper-present monument in front of us, grandly restaged by the film. These films engorge the past with actions and reactions that coalesce into a singular, tendentious whole,

a piston of a film that both shoots its narrative forward and the audience backward into the past, and thus the past into the present. It treats cinema as a necromancer, summoning a past kicking and thrumming with the lifeblood of activity that shuttles us into the throngs of living and emotionally exciting history that we feel as an active, monumental presence.

In contrast, *McCabe* operates horizontally rather than vertically, spilling out into the periphery as the camera dawdles, looking at other people and seeming minutiae, sights and sounds that do not conform to the melodramatic impulse to constantly build up one linear, monumental trajectory either in the historical sense or in the narrative sense. This horizontality does not galvanise itself in the aesthetic certainty of cause-effect editing that ensures every corner of the film links to one another or builds up to anything. If many period piece films treat the past as one totalisable presence – a concrete slab of easily coherent, and thus more easily transgressable and masterable, history we can snatch up and use – *McCabe* understands the past as a sketchy, hazy hash-work that scurries away from us and demands polyvalent interpretation. What might be distractions from a protagonist in another film become, instead, ways of emancipating historical cinema from the limits of that very individualistic perspective.

Yet the film exceeds merely trading in this collective heroism for McCabe's individual heroism. It is important to remind how tentative even the town's final actions are. The fire comes and goes within minutes, only for the film to return to a lonely crawl of a zoom toward a now-dead McCabe in the snow, cut against a zoom inward to Mrs Miller inside, opiated, staring at a tiny vase as she lies in semi-cadaverous inactivity. Typically, films put a period on themselves, emphasising resolution, with their final shot, in this case a close-up from Mrs Miller's perspective of the vase itself. Yet the close-up abstracts the vase as she turns it in her hand and it mutates into a collage of color untraceable as a tangible object. The film concludes not with a feint toward solution but a gesture of openness. It marshals the temporal reconfiguration of editing not to clarify the narrative through cause-effect but to throw the audience into perceptual attentiveness by redrawing the meaning of images. Taking us back to Landy and Nietzsche, another form of 'monumental' history they signal is 'antiquarian history', which is monumental in that it establishes such an adoration of, even fetish for, the past that 'it knows only how to preserve life, not how to engender it' (Nietzsche 1874, 75). This static past is monumentally moored in immutable interpretations, a style of monolithic viewership – imposing one unalterable perspective onto the past – that *McCabe*'s final image ripostes.

As such, the final image is also a mimetic for the entire project of the film: rather than reflecting history, *McCabe* refracts it. Rather than producing a historical counter-narrative, it engages in a wholly different process of narrativisation. As opposed to judging the merit of a historical film by its ability to replace

historical absence with historical presence and certainty, *McCabe* presents history's impermanence, its semi-presence in the present. But *McCabe* uses this understanding not only to demarcate the boundaries of its relationship to the past but to see how viewers and films dialectically refresh the past by reinterpreting it. Rather than a negative statement about the failure of film to represent the past adequately, it questions what 'adequate' representation is, inviting a positive statement to the value of uncertainty, skepticism and productive confusion that allows for multiple interpretative discourses, a statement about what film can achieve when narrative is slackened, when the sanctity of the stable trajectory is erased. In this sense, re-entrenching communal action over individual agency *is* one such corrective action against the classical Liberal individualist historical narrative. But even concluding the film as a statement to communal over individual heroism would unduly force an arc of narrative agency (and a logic of 'heroism' still rooted in characters who order their narratives and master their film spaces) onto a filmic world that resists such definition. Altman's film defies not only the completion narrative of America but the agency-thrust of the scholar who would attempt to solve the film.

The value of irresolution is often overlooked, which might lead to reading *McCabe* not only as a narrative about McCabe's failure but as a failed narrative, a failure to narrativise the past cohesively. If the film simply noted that its grasp on its narrative had faltered – that it had failed to achieve an understanding of this past, just as McCabe had faltered in relating to his world – this would only suggest that the characters' and viewers' narrativising goals had not been achieved, not that value could potentially be defined in other terms. But *McCabe* asks the audience to explore other means of understanding a film or viewing the past beyond successfully 'completing' the narrative trajectory with their minds. The failure of the narrative to actualise can reconfigure the receptive viewer not to think of images exclusively in narrative terms, as a futures market where the audience speculates not on the visual in the present but on what it might be worth in the narrative future. Rather than thinking of *McCabe* as a failure to narrativise – as a film shot-through with aporia, as a requiem for historical ease-of-access – we might ask what we can reclaim from an indeterminate filmic view of the past rather than one which matches its own virility to enact the past with its characters' ability to initiate it. One might say that the death of a coherent lexicon for perceiving a narrative is constituent to reconsidering the relationship of the viewer to the past not as an attempt to construct one objective master-narrative ordered completely but to consider possibilities, potentialities and their own provisional relationship to the past. The final shot of the vase may not be nihilistically empty so much as unfinished, opening up the film to be read outside of the limited images it can show us.

Adorno, Horkheimer and the Problem of Assimilation in Period Piece Cinema

Implications for further research are numerous, many of them comparative. Most obviously, *McCabe* begs further comparison to traditional revisionist history or progressive-minded 'social issue' films that do not challenge regulations of editing, framing and perspective like *McCabe* and thus may actually inscribe the very hegemonic order they purport to defy. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer are useful figures in this context. Although they do not refer explicitly to revisionist or progressively-minded 'history' films, their writing implicitly suggests the paradox of the critical social history film, or any progressively-minded social film: namely that it is often only understood by subsisting underneath the conservative formal rhetoric of mainstream cinema. A film like *Mr Smith Goes to Washington*, for example, fights inequality through an individualistic protagonist framed in center-frame (and often in lionising low-angles) and, more importantly, edited so that his causal agency structures the film narratively and visually. Such gestures at the narrative and formal level paradoxically assert an inequality of their own variety, that of Mr Smith's virility to rise above the populist rhetoric he represents. The film foregrounds his agency to individually control a film where others cannot. My analysis, however, extends beyond merely applying a critical theory reading of individualism to film narrative. Instead, I explore the extent to which Hollywood cinema intrinsically reifies individualistic social ideologies through its very formal mechanisms. In many films that adopt the classical Hollywood style, entrepreneurial individualism through individual agency is not only the center of the story but the visual film world. Or, as Horkheimer and Adorno note, 'biographies and other fables stitch together the scraps of nonsense ('nonsense' defined as rebellious, anti-rationalist cinematic anarchy) into a feeble-minded plot' or a simulacrum of sense and complete understanding (Horkheimer and Adorno 1944, 114). Although perhaps blunt in their phrasing, the emphasis on *stitch* implicitly emphasises the continuity editing designed to bind the world along a linear path. 'Biography', meanwhile, implies that the stitching is rooted around a vision of history as a theater of the individual.

Mr Smith is a non-elite Everyman incorporated into the rhetoric of individual success, possibly to the effect of keeping that individualistic rhetoric alive and only slightly mediated by the need to incorporate less dominant voices to preserve individualism as something which can, in hegemonically useful cases, apply rhetorically to people of all backgrounds. For Horkheimer and Adorno, the purpose of culture and popular art here is 'to open that industry to clever (individual) people (in an) otherwise regulated market' (ibid 104), pacifying rebellion in both the world and in cinema by channeling it toward relatively stable pathways for action against inequality. This is also the pathway of the Western film or the history film that *merely* provides a black hero (2012's *Django Unchained*) or a female hero (2016's *Jane Got a Gun*) or even a veritable Rainbow

Coalition (2016's *The Magnificent Seven*). These films assimilate new voices into the governing individualistic logic of historical cinema and Western society to paradoxically galvanise that logic in a rhetoric of pseudo-diversity. The skin colour or gender of the individual may have shifted, but this can be assimilatory more than artistically emancipatory. It does not reject the stylistic logic of cause-effect editing and other mechanisms which underscore the central logic of the valorised individual agent, a logic that has devalued men who are not white, and women, throughout history. Providing the contained diversity central to the Liberal market construction of democracy, the protagonists of these films fight against the classical Western archetypes only by becoming them, paradoxically engaging in mortal combat with themselves. Altman may be suggesting this very fact by dressing McCabe in suits, beacons of his desire for cultural capital, primarily worn by his Big Business opponents elsewhere in the film. If McCabe has any desire to position himself as a champion of the common man and opponent of Big Business, his attire suggests instead his desire to become his enemies.

Horkheimer and Adorno also write that 'the great artists were never those who adopted style in its least fractured, most perfect form' (ibid, 103) but those who splintered, punctured, even ruptured their style so that the perceived style of the art was never treated as natural or innate. If incorporating new voices into the same cause-effect, trajectory-and-goal-oriented style preserves the style as democratic and natural, then, contrarily, formal and stylistic breakage can be useful to reveal the style as a construct that can be falsified. In contrast to most progressive films, *McCabe* charts the latter path. If 'the culture industry has ... impos(ed) its own perfection' (ibid 1944, 108) according to rules of precise cause-effect filmmaking that underwrite rationalist narratives and trace a stylistically harmonious narrative visualising a perfectly-rendered history, *McCabe* is distinctly imperfect according to these standards. The film does not simply incorporate a female agent (Mrs Miller) into the same clean structures of individualist hero-dom. Because it deconstructs hegemonic and normative film styles, and thus acknowledges that they are constructed in the first place, *McCabe* partially defies the hegemonic absorption referred to by Todd Gitlin (advancing Horkheimer and Adorno). For Gitlin, 'consent is managed by absorption as well as by exclusion. The hegemonic ideology changes in order to remain hegemonic' (Gitlin 1979, 263).

But *McCabe* is less easily absorbable into the mainstream as a cinema with any kind of individual hero (of any race or gender) or as any objective vision of history at all. Whereas a film like *Django Unchained* absorbs a black cowboy and slavery into the dominant individual cowboy myth with relative ease, *McCabe*'s dissent is inextricably intertwined with the ability to parse its world at all. It dissents from the perceptual rules by which Hollywood cinema structures filmic individualist history narratives, and thus it boasts implications for

questions of dissent outside of cinema. If indeed Westerns are ‘national narratives (which) rehearse the major desires and traumas, anxieties and ideals of cultural identity’ (Self 2007, 6), then merely disabling the dominant individualist narratives of the American West is not enough for Altman. In this spirit, *McCabe* does not trumpet its own foreknowledge as a shepherd driving the audience toward a new historical counter-narrative. Rather, it explores the temporal process of constituting a historical whole in the first place. Not merely a critique of cinematic objective access, though, Altman’s film is also a statement to what cinema may achieve in lieu of objectivity. It replaces a fixed vision of history not with an alternative, equally fixed vision of history but an understanding that every popular work of history is part of an active discourse with the past rather than a portal to it.

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