Volker Pantenburg

I think the growing proliferation of "fake news" and the like shifts the focus from ontological questions to ethical ones. In medical research (genetics, for instance), there are many things that are possible, but we quite simply should not make use of them since we cannot responsibly estimate their consequences. Similar ethical limits should apply in realms like AI or "deep fakes." It may well be possible to create a fake moving image document showing Marilyn Monroe and JFK in an intimate moment behind the scenes, but what would it be good for? Those who are capable to fake this, should resist. Forgery and fake news have always been in the world, but the quantitative leaps and their speed of distribution raise the stakes. The question is how to regulate this. The production and dissemination of images will always be quicker than their regulation. It's like trying to push toothpaste back into the tube.

Raed Rafei

I personally think that such a moment of "ease" of constant production and circulation of images demands more space for engaged filmmakers to critically question how we consume and relate to this incessant flow of images and information. I see the filmmaker's voice as one that interrupts lazy habits of looking and understanding the world in a certain way. For me, engaged filmmaking asks viewers to constantly re-orient themselves and question their positionalities.

Catarina Mourão

Se por um lado é importante fazer documentários que não tenham a ingenuidade de acreditar que existem imagens puras e não manipuladas, e de dar pistas ao espectador para esta ideia da instabilidade do "factual" por outro lado é importante não ficarmos apenas nesta dimensão de suspeição que nos impede de emocionalmente entrar no universo do outro e na visão do realizador.

Enquanto realizadora e espectadora, o meu envolvimento com as imagens e o seu sentido estão intrinsecamente ligados à forma do documentário, pois é ela que traduz o meu olhar e a minha visão sobre o mundo, e as pistas de percepção sobre essa visão da realidade.

David LaRocca

As we enter a new phase of mimesis and the hyperfake, it may be worth asking what the technologies can do for the good. If we are to contend with the deceptions that may lead us astray, what can be said for the deceptions that can illuminate? As film artists, such as Rithy Panh, have shown us: documentaries can be made with clay and collage, with found footage and painted emulsions. As something of a challenge to the documentarians among us: what about a documentary where the profilmic event is in the past (and thus "unfilmable" according to the prevailing logic of image/sound capture)? Can we *animate* our way to a film of presumptive assertion? If, as Lev Manovich has counseled, the digital is in fact a species of painting, then we are turned back upon the history of representation in a lovely moment of reflexivity. After all, as a species we have spent more time with paintings than films, so what can we say about historical paintings-as-documents-of-events in conversation with a GAN-film of, say, the Gettysburg Address? Instead of seeing deepfakes and their kind as a virus that threatens to overtake all image-sound creations (and subsume us in inescapable skepticism), why not fathom a countervailing movement—one that offers up creative treatments of actuality by means of artificial intelligence?

Christa Blümlinger

Les débats sur la relation entre le cinéma et le réel se déplacent aujourd'hui en effet sur le terrain du *fake*, voir sur le *deepfake*, souvent loin des questions esthétiques, éthiques et anthropologiques concernant le documentaire et proposées par les cinéastes eux-mêmes. Il ne faut pas confondre les débats sur les média et leur dialectique interne avec la question de l'activité des images documentaires. On peut certes observer d'un côté, une vision apocalyptique dans la tradition de la théorie critique, fustigeant l'hégémonie des capitaux régissant les nouveaux média et de l'autre une position utopique cherchant dans les nouvelles technologies une sorte de possibilité de salut. Mais ce débat ne concerne pas ou rarement les formes singulières des documentaires. Les techniques n'existent que par la manière dont on s'en sert, dont on les rend opératoires.

Dario Cecchi

Today philosophers, especially the once called 'continental' philosophers, reflect intensively upon the fact that images and imagination may both deceive and enhance trust: I think of Paul Ricoeur for instance. With regard to cinema, Pietro Montani argues that the trust of images should be considered for the process of 'validation' ('autenticazione') of actuality, rather than for their intrinsic authenticity. I believe this issue needs to be reconsidered according to four phenomena: a) the rise of post-ideological politics, b) the increase of affective rhetoric in public speech, c) the spread of social media and the emergence of the so-called influencers, d) the revival of the epic, especially in series but also in cinema.

These four factors do not only concern 'alternative facts,' bullshit, and fake news, but also a series of other phenomena we usually refer to as sovereignism and populism. Liberal politicians have also exploited the rhetoric of affects in the last years. From this point of view the slogans, 'Yes we can,' and 'Make America great again,' highlight the same conception of 'thrilling politics.'

As far as images are concerned, trust concerns more a process of working through, in the

sense of Freud's Durcharbeitung, than authenticity. Therefore, it claims for revitalizing forms of catharsis, but with an important difference with regard to Aristotle's very concept. Ancient ragedy enjoyed a preexisting heritage of myths, from which the poets borrowed the stories they put on stage. The public's attention was focused on pathos: we could also say that the real object f tragedy was a certain 'distribution of affect'. The public assimilated this distribution, and were thus 'purified' from pity and fear. Myths empowered this process, which was indeed a working through. But myths succeeded in it because they were known to all. In a sense, they provided the spectators' minds with the reproduction of a scene deeply rooted in their memory. We witness the opposite phenomenon today, the outburst of affect creates new myths. In that sense, Obama and Trump are the same, as much as Matteo Salvini ('il Capitano') and Carola Rackete ('la Capitana')-I am referring to a dispute occurred in Italy last year. On the contrary, if we care for youth's political conscience, also considering that our public sphere is essentially made of images, then we should try to imagine a new sort of Verfremdungseffekt. The image o Aylan Kurdi dead on the seashore while his family was trying to escape from civil war in Syria made him a sort of hero, and probably provoked a change in Angela Merkel's political agenda, but it did not affect the European political conscience in depth. Some days ago a video was rele ased by the Italian TV news. The video shows a woman who lost her baby while on a boat in the Mediterranean Sea, waiting to be saved. That baby will remain nameless and deedless: he was only victim, not a hero. We should make the effort of understanding that this could be anybody's tragedy, although the political debate will polarize this story, like all similar stories, in a repreentation of heroes and antiheroes, friends and enemies. Furthermore, we have a sort of natural inclination to the 'apotheosis' of victims. It is at least as old as the rise of Christianity, where nartyrs were called the 'champions of Christ' (athletae Christi). Some similar background could likely be discovered behind the spread of Islamist terrorists who believe to be martyrs. Iñárritu

probably aimed to deconstruct this logic with the installation *Carne y arena*, in which the visitor performs the experience of being the victim like everybody else in the same situation. I have just seen a video produced by the German government, in which youth are called to be 'COVID heroes'. An old man recalls Winter 2020, when he was a carefree 22-years-old student of medicine, who was suddenly obliged to become a hero of the pandemic. Interestingly, the video introduces an ironical element: staying at home is the young man's only act of heroism, watching series on the sofa, drinking beer, and waiting for the runner who brings him pizza. It is a small symptom, yet it is important that we start deconstructing this culture of heroism and hyper-affectivity. Of course, cinema could bring the elaboration of this U-turn much further.

Mohanad Yaqubi

I always keep thinking of the surveillance camera video file that is replaced every 48 hours with a new file, and the millions of hours that are being documented every day, while billions of frames are being erased at the same time. This mp4 file is only saved if there was an event: an accident, a complaint. This one lucky file suddenly becomes a reference to reality, keeping in mind that this salvation from erasure is based on suspicion, on something that has happened in a frame of that video file; an interruption in real time that required saving the file from the bottomless void. And so the file comes as an indication, a fragment of an investigation, a reference in a research, and in this case, we trust the image.

Early visual depiction of the Orient, in both painting and photography, captured ancient monuments and cultures; sketching up an imaginary full of mysticism, chaos and strangeness, with the images of Bedouins, camels, desserts, and ruins. For the mid 19th century Europe and America, these were the only references. When the worshipers, who were used to seeing Jan Van Eyck's depiction of the Orient in his Altarpiece at the St Bavo's Cathedral in Ghent, were suddenly able to witness the Orient through photographs, the role of science as the absolute seemed to be confirmed. Images were considered to be reflecting truth, a certain truth which is not that which appears in the frame itself, but a truth existing in the imagination of the photographers and their audience. Do we trust images in this case, aren't all images an illustration of the imaginary rather than a depiction of reality?

David LaRocca

In some measure, all of these prevailing—and newly arriving—factors circle us back to Grierson's "creative treatment of actuality," since we are still struggling with the antediluvian tension between the subjective and objective.

The crisis of mimesis stretches back to Plato and before him. Writing itself was thought a scandal to the power of memory. Storytelling—especially fanciful fictions—was a threat to integrity. Perhaps we should admit, then, that art and moral panic are perpetual companions.

are perpetual companions.

That said, the one difference is the asymptotic acceleration of technological change. If we have had a couple millennia to get our minds around the potential (and perils) of the written word (along with the effects of the printing press), the scale of development for digital media is on another scale altogether. From Woody Allen's playful photo compositing in Zelig (1983) to the synthetic audiovisual creations of today fewer than forty years have elapsed. Yet, a quick dip into the dirty pool of California politics of the 1930s will show that moviemakers—way back when—were trading on their power to fabricate fictions from facts, as with the Hollywood-backed propaganda that successfully sunk the gubernatorial hopes of novelist Upton Sinclair. As Sinclair stirred the state to imagine an end to poverty, his talented filmmaking adversaries (including Irving Thalberg) unleashed a heap of fake newsreels to scare the public from his morally sound mission. Nearly a century later, as the internet spawns untold thousands of such fakes per second, we are still very far from any such thing as reliable content moderation. Indeed, U.S. Code Title 47, section 230, protects platforms from being held liable for hosting dubious, dangerous, or otherwise damaging content.

Ilana Feldman

Culprits, outlaws and stolen goods are a necessity in vicarious living. As Michel Serres put it, victims are a substitute for a non-original. I adventure to the edges of my sensibility, in which I taste only uncertainty and ambiguity. In the infinite mix of the unknowable, however, I am rewarded. The screen always replaces the indescribable with an 'eminent' equivalence for it, according to Jean-Charles Masséta. In discord, dissonance and compelling lost voices migrate in absentia, like a scream of souls heard only through the ages. Tune into the plurality of their truths and customs. A failed audition speaks only once it is properly forgotten, having evolved into a space of absence (which might then be reignited elsewhere); or as in-existent, incorporeal anatomy, which can then be touched (or not touched), or felt. Any or all of us sense slow conditions, as per that of background intelligence and things, in which the absent question posed by the nature documentary format is disputed in answer: "please speak to me, you who once upon a time influenced me to speak."

Christa Blümlinger

Phillip Warnell

Le documentaire peut inventer des formes de subversion et il peut manifester une activité ou agentivité dans le domaine de l'art de l'image, tout en s'intéressant par exemple à la fonction de l'image comme preuve ou comme trace mémorielle. Aujourd'hui, c'est dans le contexte des projets collaboratifs et transdisciplinaires qu'il trouve une nouvelle place, ce qui ne veut pas dire que le cinéma cesse par ailleurs de fournir une expérience singulière et irremplaçable. Mais parfois, on y confère à un film ou à une vidéo une vocation purement opératoire, comme dans le cadre de projets pluri-disciplinaires de recherche-action animée par le groupe Forensic Architecture, avec ses frises temporelles et ses tableaux infographiques, qui expose également ses recherches et traçages de faits par des vidéos : dans le cas des installations d'Eyal Weizman, je ne parlerais pas de forme ou de film documentaire, mais de support documentaire. Intégrant une articulation artistique multiforme, ce type d'image fonctionnelle peut en revanche faire partie d'une œuvre. Parfois, on recherche dans un tel cadre de recherche-action des formes poétiques, plus proches des traditions du cinéma, comme on peut le voir dans les projets engagés de la plate-forme européenne Future Architecture (le film récent An English Garden de Will Jennings en est un bon exemple : il fait preuve d'une autonomie esthétique tout en faisant partie d'un dialogue urbanistique plus large).

Raed Rafei

I think that the present moment requires us to rethink the boundaries of what a documentary is. Any person has the ability with a mobile phone and an internet to capture and stream potentially to millions of viewers images of a certain event or moment. They can further comment on this reality they capture and frame it in a certain way. They can also easily link it with other images and other realities. How do such actions compare to a documentary film? Where do we draw boundaries?

Em um momento em que, mais do que nunca, a exigência da performance converte-se em um imperativo imanente ao corpo social (contexto no qual, diria o crítico francês Jean-Louis Comolli, a mise en scène se torna um fato social, "talvez o fato social principal") e o valor de verdade da imagem torna-se o grande território de disputa contemporânea (haja visto a negação de verdades científicas e históricas, a proliferação de *fake news*, vídeos *deep fakes*, fatos

alternativos e a manipulação política das imagens), a forma-documentário nos leva a pensar: o que vemos nas telas? Verdade, manipulação, realidade, ficção ou tudo ao mesmo tempo? Questões que, de acordo com Comolli, pertenciam apenas ao cinema, mas, no contexto do regime do espetáculo generalizado em que vivemos (em que as relações sociais são mediadas por imagens), se transformaram em questões que dizem respeito a todos nós. Sendo assim, diante da onipresença da imagem, alcançar ou se aproximar da verdade dá imenso trabalho e requer disposição: é preciso investigá-la, suportá-la e sustentá-la por meio de um estilo, de uma forma que cada cineasta precisa construir para si, bem como de um trabalho de desmontagem, remontagem e avaliação crítica da natureza da própria imagem – como dedicou-se a fazer, de maneira tão precisa quanto obstinada, o cineasta-ensaísta alemão Harum Farocki. De todo modo, a questão seria saber: por que ainda hoje associamos a imagem à verdade? Por que ainda hoje acreditamos no que vemos? Já não chegou a hora de nos darmos conta de que a máxima de São Tomé, "ver para crer", atualmente, nesse cenário de "pós-verdades", transformou-se em "crer para ver"?

Fernão Pessoa Ramos

Acreditar numa imagem significa acreditar que ela encontra algo, significa acreditar na interpretação. Mas, como sabemos, há uma hermenêutica que desconfia da interpretação. É aquela que descreve modalidades de um encontro que se afirma na negação da interpretação. Neste caso, a verdade estaria no encontro e não na exegese, compondo no mesmo fôlego, como essência, a pergunta e a compreensão que a dirige. Traçar um panorama aqui pode nos ajudar. Fica mais fácil apreender o que é acreditar numa, ainda que não seja seu pensamento definitivo que se busca. Temos o documentário clássico, aquele que Grierson teorizou tão bem, que acredita saber as imagens; o moderno que se dedica à ação ou a nega pelo recuo no mundo; e o pós-moderno que se debate em torno dos dilemas que a desconstrução do sujeito provoca. Assim abre-se uma porta, um portal, no qual se vislumbra uma tradição fílmica, audiovisual: a tradição documentária. A mentira seria, então, uma das modalidades da crença na ação. Acreditar em nós, ou em nossa visão da crença, inaugura necessariamente uma intervenção, uma afirmação. Crença seria o que encontramos no espaço da afirmação e do poder, constructo que cobre sua genealogia.

Trusting images Crença nas imagens

Mohanad Yaqubi

When revisiting the discussions held during the 1920's around sound and film, it is astonishing to see the extent of awareness about the distance between the image and reality - I specifically think of here Sergei Eisenstein's manifesto on film sound which he wrote with Vsevolod Pudovkin and Grigori Aleksandrov in 1928. [vi] In their manifesto, the three argue that making sound coincide with the images threatens the process of "neutralizing" the image. It restores the power and autonomy to the photographed object, and limits the ability of an editor to deal with the image as a block, which would create a meaning with other blocks of images (in other words, a film). It is striking to think of images as such disconnected elements employed to form a discourse, a discourse which is not related to the content of the image, but to the death of the image, which only then can be used in a film.

This trust in the image can also be traced back to the memorial portraiture of family members that have passed away. The dead would be dressed in their best clothing and positioned in a frame for a final photograph that will hang for a longtime in their family's home, as an evidence of death, and as a proof of the past. In a way, this is a testament to the mechanical abilities of the 19th century man to capture the truth; a sign of trust in this medium as a source of facticity.

[vi] "Sound and Image", Classic sound theory, translated by Vera Traill, Film Sound: Theory and Practice, Weis, Elisabeth: 1985

Volker Pantenburg

In *Milestones* (1975, dir: Robert Kramer and John Douglas), we get to spent 200 minutes with people from the leftist movement a few years after 1968. They are dispersed over the country, a bit lost, and try to make sense of their lives, coming up with livable models of existence. One of them is Helen, an activist filmmaker finishing a film on the Vietnam war. We meet her in the editing room, looking at her footage on the Steenbeck table. However, the footage looks strangely familiar: it is material from *Peoples' War* (1969) that Douglas, Kramer and Norm Fruchter shot in North Vietnam in 1969 for the Newsreel collective. How should we make sense of this? Did Kramer and Douglas fool us? I guess so. We might feel all the more betraved because "Helen" is not Helen, but played by Grace Paley (just like the others are "playing roles," even if they sometimes keep their names). Has the material suddenly become "fictional" because it is attributed to a person that it does not belong to? I don't think so. Kramer and Douglas (who is the cameraman and also plays a blind ceramicist) have worked with reality. They have teased something out of it by travelling, speaking with people, accumulating experience to then condense into stories. They have used what they saw and heard, and since their own past (including Peoples' War) essentially belongs to this history, it has become one element in it. This stretches our understanding of documentary; it is quite far from the notion of "direct cinema." And yet it also feels "right" to me, like an adequate and "just" rendering of these people in the early 1970s. And at the same time, I cannot reproach anyone from feeling fooled.

David LaRocca

It is not hyperbole to say that at present, and therefore especially in the near-and-far-term, we should be prepared to doubt the validity of any image or sound we encounter. We are facing what may become a pandemic of "deep skepticism" to match the hyper-charged unreliability of the audiovisual environment. While we have been coming in and out of the uncanny valley for a couple decades, our emergence on the other side appears, if not already accomplished, then certainly imminent. Generative adversarial networks will create a sea of sounds and images—especially of humans—that will easily trick the human mind and lead it down pathways of trust and therefore folly. If the rise of the Internet has gone hand-in-hand with the rise of digital tricksterism and fraud, then a new universe of such deceptions looms. We may, in fact, be fooled by images of "ourselves"—was I there? Is that really me?

Mohanad Yaqubi

Images are not evidence of reality, they are symptoms of the imaginary of this reality. Trusting images is just a mechanism of reclaiming the reality they produce. An image of an empty landscape of the holy land made it reclaimable by the Zionist movement. Images and films about vast wilderness, wildlife, islands, made them evidence of a possible territory to be exploited. This is what happens when the image becomes scientific (especially aerial photography), used for marking territories, opening roads, installing signs with new names replacing the indigenous ones, creating an illusion of a reality for the sake of colonial claim over the land. Film, furthermore, provide these ambitions with the ability to capture time as well, to construct a narrative, claimed as the only evidence of history.

To have trust in images is to have trust in their ability to expose the mental and ideological motives behind it. If the image is a tool for the colonial project, it is also a tool for the decolonial project, using the same images, re-labeling them, creating new inventories for them, attaching them to other histories, stories, and people. Take for example *The Seekers*[vii], a boring and over the top racist film. When this romantic musical set in a newly discovered land with a tribal background was restored and made available in the New Zealand film archive,[viii] it suddenly became a very popular movie among the indigenous communities: the Maoris found an archive of their own culture in the film. They recognized an aunt, a father, a location, and spent time laughing, talking, and drinking while watching the film, without paying attention to the film plot itself. These blocks, as Eisenstein describes, neutral and objective, are what the Maoris are seeing: not the colonial mental image, not the montage, but what is actually in the image.

[viii] *The Seekers*, 1954, directed by Ken Annakin.
[viii] For more, read *Ch5, Making Settler Cinemas Film* - Peter Limbrick- 2010,
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN°

Filipe Martins

O propósito original da demonstração técnica do cinematógrafo foi a pura impressão, ainda sem pretensões narrativas ou poéticas (e mesmo a temática visual era secundária, meramente exemplificativa das potencialidades do dispositivo técnico). Amostra pura do real, portanto. No entanto, mesmo neste lance originário, nesta transferência direta dos padrões de luz para a película, o cinema já não poderia ser total. A simples decisão sobre o enquadramento ou colocação da câmara foi quanto bastou para trair o real. Acrescenta Burch: "Mas é também já neste filme [L'Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat (1895)], um dos primeiros a serem feitos, que Lumière inaugura a luta contra o acaso que iria caraterizar quase todo o cinema nos sessenta anos seguintes. (...) É o caso de L'Arroseur Arrosé e dos filmes deste estilo, enorme passo em frente na recusa do acaso". [viii] No contexto da arte, esta domesticação do acaso, implicada na própria noção de *poiesis* (por mais caótica que seja a pretensão do artista), está condenada a seguir um caminho duplo e, de certo modo, paradoxal: por um lado domestica-se o real através do trabalho de organização poética que contraria o acaso; por outro lado disfarça-se o próprio trabalho poético de modo que a manipulação não seja desmascara-

[viii] Noël Burch, *Praxis do Cinema* (Lisboa: Editorial Estampa, 1969/1973), 131.