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The (In)visibilities of Torture

Political torture and visual evidence
in

by
Berenike Christiane Jung

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Film and Television Studies

University of Warwick, Department of Film and Television Studies
March 2016
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To Ulli, who is always with me. I think she would have liked seeing me in England.
Declaration

This thesis contains no material derived from prior work, nor for another degree. It has not previously been submitted for examination at another institution. The thesis is the candidate’s own work.

An earlier version of some of the issues and films discussed in Chapter 5 were published as a chapter “The Politics Of Corporeality in Pablo Larraín’s Dictatorship Trilogy” in Film, History and Public Memory, ed. by Jennie Carlsten and Fearghal McGarry (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

Parts of Chapter 5 will be published by Cinergie Libri in an anthology “Surface Meanings: A Media Archaeological Analysis of NO (Pablo Larrain, 2012).”
Abstract

This thesis explores how selected contemporary U.S. and Chilean films and television shows depict political torture, in relation to visual documentation of factual cases. The films explore the uneasy complicity in seeing or watching torture, which concerns both the spectacle of cinema, the nature of torture as well as the position of the audience or witness. Casting a wider net on the definition of torture, I suggest that these media products can help broaden our comprehension of the event torture, in its collective and emotional dimension, its long-term social effects as well as its links to other cultural concepts. Moving beyond dominant and limiting frameworks based on representation and identification, this thesis integrates affect, film and media theory with textual analysis. Some of these films and television shows offer a public and emotional space to explore subject positions crucial to acknowledge a sense of social pain, often missing in official accounts. These films’ heterogeneous aesthetic responses speak to a similar set of epistemological and ontological queries, which are fundamentally related to the truth claims of images. In its inherent need for an ethical stand and trust in documented truth, torture offers a research axis to discuss current anxieties regarding the reliability of visual evidence, coinciding with a historical moment that interrogates (moving) images’ powers and reliability to document the real. Ethical questions regarding documentation are reconfigured in epistemological terms. If vision is problematic as means of verification, how do the films pursue authenticity, and what kind of truth do they offer? Responding to current interventions regarding the nature of the cinematic medium, the films propose a new poetics of the real that does not rely primarily on visual evidence. I argue that in a situation of contested, censored or plainly missing documentation, these films produce a “cine-poetic archive,” images that highlight both their constructedness and their roots in the historical real. In this way, the films help understand something fundamental about how we relate to our current reality through our images.
“What we’ve got here is a failure to communicate.”
Captain, Road Prison 36 in Cool Hand Luke

“Don’t be too certain of learning the past from the lips of the present,” our narrator warns us. “Remember that what you are told is really threefold: shaped by the teller, reshaped by the listener, concealed from both by the dead man of the tale.”

Vladimir Nabokov

Introduction
During the U.S. primary season of 2016, several presidential candidates suggested re-introducing “enhanced interrogation;” in August 2015, a former torture ship set out on a promotional tour; in March 2016, Chile’s National Institute for Human Rights (INDH) accused the police of using torture against indigenous people. Today, it seems, torture is both disavowed and socially acceptable. Clearly, neither the seemingly constant presence of some images of torture nor the marginalized absence of other images can fully account for the complexity of this situation, or explain the failure to create a fundamental shift in our understanding of and attitude towards torture after the revelations of either country’s Truth Commissions.

4 ‘Pinochet’s torture ship now flies the flag for Chile around the world’, The Guardian Online (29 August 2015); ‘INDH presenta querella por torturas en Talca y tribunal la declara admisible’, INDH (22 March 2016).
In this thesis, I discuss the relation between factual torture cases, their documentation, and their rendering in contemporary U.S. and Chilean film. My initial question, how the presence and absence of documentary evidence would influence the representation in narrative cinema, expanded during the research towards the complexity of seeing torture. I argue that the films examined here explore visibilities and invisibilities inherent in this subject matter, in particular epistemological questions related to vision.

The starting point for this thesis was what struck me as a startling contrast between the momentary ubiquity of the images from the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, and the much less publicly visible documentation of the systematic and extensive system of torture in Chile during the Pinochet dictatorship. However, these fields of (in)visibilities are more dynamic than a simple model of presence and absence of documentary evidence would suggest. In a comparison explicitly drawn between Chilean amnesia and the omnipresence of the Abu Ghraib photographs, Macarena Gómez-Barris has argued that hypervisibility may be “an alibi for invisibility,” a manifestation of the same phenomenon.5 Despite the exponential increase in visually available information and what is sometimes characterized as a media landscape flooded with images, public memory often

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5 Macarena Gómez-Barris, Where Memory Dwells: Culture and State Violence in Chile (University of California Press, 2008), p. 100. Gómez-Barris also points to the complex relation between visual documentation and public accountability. “Although I do not assume a transparent relationship between evidence and accountability, part of the invisibility of Latin American authoritarian violence ... stems from the lack of photographic documentation of atrocity,” p. 100.
organizes around a few iconic exemplars as sole “survivors.” The dominance of just a few images may therefore reflect the paucity of documentary evidence but also an excess and overabundance of images.

These dynamics of hyper- versus in-visibility invite the exploration of the limits and potential of the image. Given the concrete ethical urgency inherent in the topic of political torture, the powers of the image to corroborate and provide evidence are a central concern. The ethical questions surrounding this subject matter, the need to prove the truth of atrocity, coincide with a historical moment in cinema and in cinema theory that interrogates (moving) images’ powers of documentation, the reliability of its link to the real and thus its capacity to speak such a truth. In other words, the topic of factual political torture demands an ethical stand and trust in historically documented truth, needs which are challenged by absent, precarious, or contested documentation, “publicly forgotten” or censored images. As Vivian Sobchack pointed out, the dissolution of “our inherited faith in the indexical relationship between the photograph and its object are of obvious importance to the epistemology and politics of an image-saturated culture.” If the digital turn renewed scrutiny directed towards all (moving) images’ relation to the real, challenging the theoretical fundament of linking cinema, or mechanical recording, to reality, how are the films to establish authenticity? Of which order is the truth they represent? Thus, the ethical

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question is reframed as a question of how to create, find, and believe in the truth of a representation – whether documentary or fiction – in light of often unreliable, biased, or contested documentation.

**Why Torture?**

Torture is often discursively framed as an isolated, narrowly defined event, a set of practices, alien to “Western” or “civilized” values, or as exceptional measure under situations of extreme distress. The result is a hypocritical amnesia, the continuation and invisibility of torture sponsorship. Torture is not generated ex nihilo, and it is not sufficiently defined as a set of specific acts.

Moreover, the physically gruesome acts we think of as torture are only one part of it. Some acts that we do not customarily think of as torture – disappearances, mental torture, the social terror spread in a population through the threat of torture – belong on a continuum of cruelty that has one culmination point in the torture chamber. Excluded from the “standard definition” of torture are long-term collective and individual, emotional and social consequences. These include

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9 Context and purpose change not only our judgment but also our experience of pain; the same acts of violence are not torture if the receiver of the act participates “willingly in the meaning-making process,” as in a BDSM relationship or in religious ritual.

its debilitating effects and repercussions on society at large, on language and social relations; the traumatization of survivors and of the torturers, who sometimes must live side by side; the historical continuity of torture and its links to a number of cultural concepts.

The torture cases that provide the reference points to the films examined here took place under different systems, at different times, and were documented, or not, by different media. Precisely because of these differences, similarities in methods and discourse seem all the more remarkable. These continuities bolster the claim that torture exists in a “global economy of punishment and discipline,” and suggest that in fact there has been little paradigmatic change.12

Encouraged by a similar discussion by David LaRocca, I expanded the definition of a film that speaks to and about torture. In the introduction to his book on the philosophy of war films, LaRocca discusses how the relation of war and film encompasses a variety of aesthetic phenomena and poses a combination of ethical quandaries that go far beyond definitional problems in terms of genre.13

Like war, torture “defies total comprehension.” LaRocca concludes that for such a subject, which “perpetually exceeds the limits of any single view ... we are in need of scholarship that can ably make some sense of the aspects and angles,

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12 These similarities include, for instance, discursive strategies to dehumanize the enemy, a linguistic distancing that projects its substantiation in spatial terms. Cavanaugh compares the “significant differences and distressing similarities” between torture in the U.S. and in Chile. W. T. Cavanaugh, ‘Making Enemies: The Imagination of Torture in Chile and the United States’, Theology Today, 63 (2006), p. 308.
13 LaRocca adds an appendix with a taxonomy of subgenres, where war features as subsidiary topic in film, films that focus on war’s aftermath, for instance, on the homecoming, or on civilian victims. David LaRocca, ‘Introduction’, in The Philosophy of War Films, ed. by David LaRocca (University Press of Kentucky, 2014), p. 38.
the degrees and the debris of depiction, all constituent parts of the big picture.”\textsuperscript{14} In the endeavour to contribute such “aspects and angles,” this thesis will be guided by research questions per chapter, each to illuminate one of these “constituent parts of the big picture.”

**Why the U.S. and Chile?**

In the context of the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, B. Ruby Rich had suggested that the vantage point of past films about terrorism may help to better understand present events. In a similar way, a historically informed and transnational approach may help understand something fundamental not only about torture, but also about how we relate to our current reality through our images. As Robert Stam and Ella Shohat emphasise in their work on “cross-border looking relations,” one must be careful not to “crystallize identity in ways that prevent the recognition of commonalities.”\textsuperscript{15}

What unites these two specific countries is an on-going moment of impunity,\textsuperscript{16} the struggle to open up public memory to incorporate dishonourable aspects of their history, including torture. Both countries manifest national narratives of exceptionalism, which frame the moment that permitted or fostered torture as outlier, a fall from grace.\textsuperscript{17} Ken Loach’s piece for 9’11’01 (Youssef Chahine et al,

\textsuperscript{14} LaRocca, ‘Introduction,’ p. 65.

\textsuperscript{15} Stam and Shohat’s reference point is the transatlantic traffic of race-related and colonial debates. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (London: Routledge, 1994). One must also be careful, of course, not to advance universalist generalities.

\textsuperscript{16} See appendix.

\textsuperscript{17} In the U.S., even the criticism of torture tends to suffer from such ideologically infused amnesia, and the concept of “American (i.e. U.S.) exceptionalism,” for instance in the line “this is not who we are.” Influentially, Chilean sociologist Tomas Moulian deconstructed
2002) alerts the viewer to discursive similarities by pairing the bellicose rhetoric of the U.S. administration under George W. Bush with images of the Chilean coup. In Loach’s segment, Chilean poet and playwright Ariel Dorfman writes an empathetic letter to the U.S. public after the 9/11 terror attacks, asking them not to forget the Chilean “once de septiembre,” the day of the military coup. Beyond the historical contingency that both of these events occurred on a Tuesday on the 11th day in the month of September, 18 years apart, Loach’s and Dorfman’s point is to remind the viewer of a moment when the U.S. was more or less openly supporting and instigating state terrorism, to not forget historical responsibility even in crisis of grief and anger. The United States has offered substantial support to regimes and movements that did and do routinely practice torture. The U.S. Army’s School of the Americas brought Latin American military officers to the U.S. for advanced training that included torture techniques. Members of former Latin American military leaders accused of murder and torture at home continue to be on the Pentagon’s payroll. Military leaders in Bolivia, Colombia, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Paraguay used training they had received at these U.S. Army Schools to torture and execute dissidents.

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18 The abbreviation “9/11” is obviously problematic: there have been several terror attacks on a 11th of September, and “9/11” is typically associated with the attacks on the World Trade Center, forgetting the other planes. Nevertheless, permitted perhaps for its ubiquitous usage and for practical reasons, I will use the abbreviation here as well.

19 During the 1970s and 1980s, the U.S. propped up dictators throughout Latin America, offering training, arming, and economic resources. Pinochet himself was trained at a U.S. Army School of the Americas.

In 1996, the Pentagon admitted officially that “army intelligence manuals used … to train Latin American military officers contained instructions on torture techniques.” 21 As is well documented now, the U.S. destabilized Chile economically, and the CIA helped direct the military coup. Exported through the so-called “Chicago Boys;” 22 Chile emerged as a petri dish for an extreme version of unchecked neoliberalism. 23

Why now?

What unites the U.S. and Chile further is the fact that films about these torture cases, what led to them and what followed, are emerging now. U.S. and Chilean films expose and tap into deep fissures in their respective societies in this regard. There are also similarities in the mainstream critical response. As a recent New York Times story put it: “NO has provoked a Zero Dark Thirty-scale controversy in Chile.” 24

The body of films examined here are chosen for and demarcated by their reference to factual cases of political torture and by their recent production. I focus on how contemporary cinema re-examines the past, distinct or recent, and

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22 The name given to a group of Chilean economists, trained at the Department of Economics of the University of Chicago under Milton Friedman, who propagated Chile’s neoliberal model.
24 Andrew O’Hehir, ‘Pick of the Week: This Is How You Overthrow a Dictator’, Salon (15 February 2013).
how this relates to the present moment. Thus, this thesis takes a cue from Žižek’s question – “Why torture now?” and from Rosenstone’s suggestion to look at both what the films say about the present moment of their production and what they say about the history they depict. Memory is always about the present, for “we do not remember the past … we ‘remember’ what remains living within our situations now.”

The time span is set to encompass films released between 2004 and 2014. In 2004 the Abu Ghraib images went viral, while Machuca (Andres Wood, 2004), a film set in the dictatorship, became a hit in Chilean cinemas. Previously, fiction cinema had avoided the subject, after a brief spike immediately after the return to democracy, in the early 1990s. While a number of recent fiction films speak to Chile’s past, these films are not “about” torture in visually obvious ways, they do not follow the common torture iconography. As explained above, I expanded the scope of what counts as torture on film to include its social and emotional effects, to look at what it does to its various target audiences. This allowed me to include films that indict the brutality of a system that allows or fosters torture, and films which enable a way to perceive the long-term effects of such a system on a society, on limits of perception, thought and language.

26 Robert A. Rosenstone, History on Film/Film on History (New York: Pearson, 2012).
28 The important cinematic precursors dealing with the dictatorship past include Imagen Latente (Pablo Perelman, 1987), La Luna en el Espejo (Silvio Caiozzi, 1990), La Frontera (Ricardo Larraín, 1991), Amnesia (Gonzalo Justiniano, 1994), as well as foreign productions such as Missing (Costa-Gavras, 1982), Death and the Maiden (Roman Polanski, 1994).
The unravelling of seemingly obvious and self-explanatory terms and images appears of limited practical use to abolish factual torture. Yet miscomprehending the nature of torture means miscomprehending the incentive to resort to it. Beyond the fear and anticipation that history will repeat itself, there is a social cost to this denial of global complicity, historical responsibility and a lack of accountability. There is a primary ethical debt to the victims of torture, but the ethical and emotional aftermath affects societies at large. Thus, part of an answer to Žižek’s question, why such films are coming out now, would be that in some ways the torture has never really ended: we still live in an age of impunity.

Why these films?

As expected, it was easier to find U.S. films with clear visual representations of the scene of political torture – films such as Zero Dark Thirty (Kathryn Bigelow, 2012), Rendition (Gavin Hood, 2007), Syriana (Stephen Gaghan, 2005), Body of Lies (Ridley Scott, 2008), and Standard Operating Procedure (Errol Morris, 2008), but only one Chilean film which features such a direct visual instance, La Danza de la Realidad / The Dance of Reality (Alejandro Jodorowsky, 2013). The selected films self-referentially expound on the problem of truth claims in the visual image, while explicitly referencing factual events. This tension culminates in Redacted (Brian de Palma, 2007).

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29 The awareness of impunity in the torturing agent creates the conditions for torture and explains its continuance in the transition period, according to Myriam Reyes G., Federico Aguirre M., and Oliver Bauer, Tortura durante la transición a la democracia (Santiago de Chile: LOM, 1999), p. 23. In the case of terrorism, it has been argued that such myopia leads to a warped self-perception of innocence attacked by an inexplicably evil other. Cf. Cedric J. Robinson, ‘The Comedy of Terror’, Radical History Review (2003), p. 168.
Based on the expanded view on torture outlined above, I selected films which address issues of impunity and social and emotional pain as the result of torture: *Nostalgia de la luz / Nostalgia for the Light* (Patricio Guzmán, 2010), *Pena de Muerte / [Death Penalty]* (Tevo Díaz, 2012), and *Carne de Perro / Dogflesh* (Fernando Guzzoni, 2012). As the first mainstream case of the dictatorship past in fiction cinema in a long time, Pablo Larraín’s trilogy – *Tony Manero* (2008), *Santiago ’73, Post Mortem* (2010) and *NO* (2012) – reflect social pathologies and expound the difficulty of accessing historical truth.

The films examined here are located in a generically ambiguous space. I initially wanted to explore mainly fiction for its capacity to create “poetic truth,” to activate the potentials of imagination, and to access “what lies beyond the possibility of language, what is inaccessible or inexpressible.”\(^{30}\) Liberated from a narrowly defined truth (the indexical truth, the truth of archival images, the truth of historical detail), the imaginative and political potential of fiction attracted me, its potential to stretch and expand the imaginary space beyond what was previously possible or think-able.\(^{31}\) However, the films tended to resist strict generic categorization; in fact, their hybrid nature came to be a central


\(^{31}\) Cf. Etienne Balibar who argues that the imaginary and the virtual are probably no less material, no less determining than the real” and Judith Butler who defines fantasy as a way to challenge the “supposedly real” and offer instead “what is not yet real, what is possible or futural, or what belongs to a different version of the real.” For Butler, then, fantasy can have collective value, and potentially political force. Etienne Balibar, ‘Outlines of a Topography of Cruelty: Citizenship and Civility in the Era of Global Violence’, *Constellations*, 8 (2001); Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004).
argument: \textsuperscript{32} the more fiction-identified films explicitly engage with a documentary real of the historical past as their more or less present or visible “silent” signifier, and the documentaries clearly include fictional elements in their aesthetic strategies.

The generic hybridity of the material seems to speak to the contemporary moment. Never neat to begin with, the lines between documentary and fiction are today perhaps more blurred than ever, with increasingly hybrid and complex combinations of forms in nonfiction film. \textsuperscript{33} In spite of this increased performativity, as a cultural code between spectator and filmmakers, Bill Nichols’s “discourse of sobriety”, the rationality of historical veracity, and historical neutrality, remains a template.\textsuperscript{34} Wary of losing the distinction between these categories, Paul Arthur criticizes “the lenient ethical standard” of contemporary documentary.\textsuperscript{35} Arthur’s intervention points to the anxieties that

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{32} In official material, the films tend to be described in hybrid terms, such as “imaginary autobiography,” or the inherently hybrid term “docudrama.”

Nichols’s notion of “sobriety” as desired mode for documentary has been highly influential; in this model, rationality and deliberation as “essential values of documentary discourse” are contrasted with “matters of ‘emotion’ and ‘feeling.’” John Corner, Theorising Media: Power, Form and Subjectivity (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011). p. 122. Stella Bruzzi emphasizes that the ‘blurred boundaries’, to use Bill Nichols’ expression, between fiction and non-fiction are not a new trend; nevertheless, documentary and fiction remain “forever the polarities that are invoked in this debate.” Bruzzi, New Documentary, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{35} Arthur refers to the rise of dramatic reconstruction as a supplement to or replacement for archival material in the essay nonfiction film. He seems to consider an interview or observation of subjects as less interventionist, less entertaining and (therefore?) more
arise in relation to the various models that are discussed today to describe how a film can codify its authenticity or authority. Sobchack for instance suggested that the distinction between documentary and fiction is one of learned, historically situated viewing habits.\(^{36}\) As the dividing lines between non-fiction and narrative cinema becomes ever more and more porous, the contracts between spectator and film and our conceptualization of the archive also evolve alongside.

These questions concerning a “poetics of the real” are central throughout my thesis, from reframings of the archive, to the re-examination of cinema’s presumed indexical basis. Regarding this subject matter – political torture based on factual events – the ethical urgency affects both fiction and nonfiction (this is, of course, why fiction films based on such topics tend to be discussed in terms of historical accuracy). While art may offer healing, poetic truths, there is still a need for the corroboration of atrocity, for evidence based in the facts of the material world. This balancing act between real and imagined, beyond any facile “dichotomy of truth and fiction”\(^{37}\) is precisely what these films are engaged with.

**Structure & Methodology**

Both hypervisibility and absence point to the limited ability of the visual metaphor to foster our understanding of torture. In a first instance, this thesis is organised as a movement from visually present torture towards such films that, I argue, are also about torture, but which do not necessarily show it. The visual

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\(^{36}\) Sobchack, ‘The Charge of the Real’.

presence of torture is not the main access point in these films, which feature the presence of absence, the proverbial elephant in the room, or the process of being made invisible. The shift to the absent and “invisible” in the thesis is further generated from the ontological definitions of torture itself within the existing framework, as outlined in the Review of Literature. By its very nature – abject, hidden, secret, subjectively experienced – the “limit event” torture impedes a clear understanding. Thus, the distribution of vision, looking relations and types of gazes are central to the power differentials that structure torture. As this “ocularcentric” metaphor is also central in our epistemological strategies to how we learn about history, this thesis moves beyond issues of selective, incomplete, distorted representation, tied mostly to the visible sphere, and towards questions of epistemology.

Visual media are implicated on various levels in the production and dissemination of political violence. Prompted by technological and social changes, scholars describe new forms of seeing and propose new ontologies of film and the image. Such aspects have been discussed in the context of war and terrorism, but less so in relation to torture, which is typically framed as subcategory to these forms of violence. Yet would these visual regimes not naturally also impact on our understanding of the nature of torture? If filtered through visual media, is torture still a spectacle? Does it still need a witness? Are images a part of torture? Who is the target audience of images of torture? If torture needs a witness, and film

needs a spectator, what is the relation between torture and film, and between torture and media today? Thus, adding to Rosenstone’s points about the relation between past and present history in the films, one may also look at what the films say about themselves.

Films always relate to their predecessors, a process which Thomas Elsaesser described as “a series of palimpsests, a sequence of texts, each rewriting other cinematic and pre-cinematic spectacles in the form of intertextual narratives.”39 To address the question of how fictionalized torture on film relates to how torture is already documented, it is necessary to link hermeneutical textual analysis to a contextual reading of the historical and social context, to the presence and reception of existing iconographies in the public sphere. Previous documentation may include archive material, such as photography or testimony, as well as previous films on torture, and also reference discourses on torture. In both cases addressed here, there exist images that have become iconic as well as images that are largely unknown, that were covered up, censored, marginalized, even destroyed.40 For my particular cases, I will examine in detail the digital images


40 The marketing ploy of the recent television feature, Chile: Las imágenes prohibidas [Chile, The Forbidden Images] (Claudio Marchant, Chilevisión, 2013), to feature “never before seen” images, is based on the fact that many documentary images are not largely known. As Ramírez explains, such archival footage was not at all locked up and was in fact much used in post-dictatorship documentary; however, as “Chilean documentary has been systematically marginalised from television and … remains largely unknown both to the general public and researchers alike,” such images may have never been shown on free-view television. Ramírez (Un)veiling bodies, p. 2.
that emerged from the Abu Ghraib prison\textsuperscript{41} and percolated through public culture, as well as images from Chile’s “concentrationary imagery”\textsuperscript{42} that appear in the films, such as the images of “disappeared.”\textsuperscript{43} [image 1.1. - 1.6. below]

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{images}
\caption{Image 1.1 - 1.3: Chile’s concentrationary images, Image 1.4 The Disappeared in Nostalgia de la luz}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{41} While I will analyse the Abu Ghraib images in particular, I am aware of the problematic condensation of many such images, from Bagram, Guantánamo and black sites around the world, into the umbrella term “Abu Ghraib images.” However, precisely because of this short cut in the public sphere, as the name has become a shorthand for the entire CIA programme, I will use the term as a reference point to the event “U.S. torture at (places like Abu Ghraib).”

\textsuperscript{42} This imagery describes archive material on the violence committed by the dictatorship, circulating in Chile’s public memory pool, such as footage of the presidential palace being bombed, of demonstrators attacked by army tanks and water cannons, or the images of “disappeared.” The term is modelled on “concentrationary cinema” (to speak about films such as Night and Fog (Alain Resnais, 1955) or the torture in Battle of Algiers (Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966) as “concentrationary motif.” Michelle Brown and Nicole Rafter, ‘Genocide Films, Public Criminology, Collective Memory’, British Journal of Criminology, 53.6 (2013), pp. 1017-1032. In the Chilean context, Felipe Victoriano describes the “concentrationary imagination” of the coup, quoted in Elizabeth Ramírez Soto (Un)Veiling Bodies: A Trajectory of Chilean Post-Dictatorship Documentary (University of Warwick, 2014), p. 160.

\textsuperscript{43} The estimated three to four thousand detenidos desaparecidos are known as “disappeared” in English. In the following, I will speak of the disappeared without quotes.
This process opens questions on the status of the document and the image. The central insecurity regarding the authenticity of visual proof is exacerbated with the digital turn, the loss and current re-conceptualizations of the archive. Textual analysis of the films demonstrates that this is not an intellectual exercise but that the films position themselves in relation to this struggle, through self-reflexive gestures. They engage with the role of visual media in the construction of violence itself. This led me to include popular television shows as another layer in this palimpsestic, cultural narrative of torture, and also to an examination of the properties of specific media formats, both on a material level (digital, video, film) and in terms of the distinct cultural encoding of these formats, which provide the case for both resistance and for complicity.

In the Review of Literature, I outline fields that had to be traversed when thinking through the ontology of torture, such as sociological and cultural studies and political philosophy. Research in these disciplines sustains the definitional

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expansion of torture. I then map the theoretical and methodological paradigms usually applied to political violence on film. As the dominant criticism of torture in the movies is based on a critique of “Hollywood” – sometimes merging aesthetic and narrative terms with ideological critique – I will sketch how Chilean cinema has been framed differently, but I will eventually not discuss these films with a separate theory. An appendix will give details on the factual events.

The first half of this thesis concentrates on the visuals of torture. Before spreading out thematically, the first chapter begins with a synthesis of the conventional approach to discussing torture on film. This chapter also offers suggestions for a more complex reading of such films. Applied in close textual analysis to Zero Dark Thirty, the analysis shows how ambivalence is inscribed into the film, which helps to better understand audiences’ diverse reactions to it, and why its meaning has been subject to so much controversy. Not only does the film refer, openly and directly, to the recent case of political torture, perpetrated by U.S. Americans, but it generated intense debates and its impact on these debates offer an ideal example to think about the role of film on the public sphere. The chapter then expands the theme of watching and witnessing to explore other aspects of the central visual metaphor in torture, with punctual close readings of Rendition, Syriana and Body of Lies.

The second chapter moves on to torture on serial television which links U.S. and Chilean audiovisual production. A show like 24 (Fox, 2001-2010), renegotiated in Homeland (Showtime, 2011-), had an undeniable impact on the public imagination of torture, while popular Chilean television shows such as Los
Archivos del Cardenal (2011-2014, TVN) and Los 80 (2008-2014, Canal 13) seemed to address more clearly issues largely absent from the movie screen. Precisely the characteristics of contemporary serial television – its breadth of audience reach, its “rhetoric of discussion,” and its sophisticated narratives – allow for wider audience involvement, and a different negotiation of topical political issues. Bookending the main analyses of Homeland and Los Archivos are discussions of 24, as precursor to Homeland, and Los 80, which handles archive material in a very different way than Los Archivos, allowing for an examination of the contrasting emotional impact on the audiences.

The second part of the thesis moves towards more abstract, less tangible questions, entering epistemological territory. The third chapter discusses first the changing status of the image in relation to the infamous torture images that emerged from Abu Ghraib, and then their exploration in Standard Operating Procedure. SOP extends its investigation to an exploration of the relation of language and various media to the creation and perception of the “event” torture at Abu Ghraib. I will read SOP’s epistemological questions alongside The Unknown Knowns (Errol Morris, 2013), followed by a discussion of Redacted, which takes the dissection of media images in their (in)capacity as truth-producing documents to the extreme.

While contemporary U.S. films on recent historical events negotiate the status of the image and the primacy of visual epistemological strategies, contemporary “World cinema,” including contemporary Chilean cinema, features a trend towards renewed forms of cinematic realism (coinciding with a renewed
academic interest in realism as a formal category). I argue that these films, too, can be discussed as responses to a crisis of faith in epistemological systems, to a debilitating moment in the global and local memory landscape. Close textual analysis of some of the striking aesthetic choices in the films *Post Mortem*, *Tony Manero*, and *La Danza de la Realidad* demonstrates how these films explore the capacity of their own medium in the making and telling of historical events.

The fourth chapter discusses a number of approaches taken by Chilean films to render visible the missing referents – the bodies of those who disappeared; and the absence of evidence in the sense of a failure to document –, and the processes of being made invisible. This chapter includes briefer examples to show how films translate “the erasure of the erasure.” The films offer invitations to the audience to see differently – via sensuous forms of looking, by activating spectators’ affective responses and embodied memories.

Chilean cinema has frequently been described in historical lineage with post-traumatic melancholy, but also in relation to contemporary alienation in a neoliberal society. The examples of *Pena de Muerte* and *Carne de Perro* show how these films invite the spectator to access and understand such social toxicity. A perpetrator narrative, *Carne* creates an affective space, chiefly through non-visual devices, that allows negotiating uncomfortable emotional reaction to its protagonist. If history in postmodern time is defined as fact-based but nevertheless mainly as experience, expanding on Jameson’s “history is what
hurts,“45 one might be tempted to say, “history is how it feels.” Yet what the
films offer is not history itself, but an invitation to establish a different relation
and a personal connection to the past through an emotional experience.

Textual analysis of NO and Nostalgia will be complemented by scholarship on
the nostalgic and material “turn,” in particular comparative media studies and
media archaeology. To anchor the real in a material presence, NO uses the
materiality of the film medium; Nostalgia turns to profilmic objects, spaces, and
certain people as embodied archive, supplementing traditional documentary
strategies, to speak to intangible concepts such as time and memory.

This is then a partial account, far from an immodest attempt a comprehensive
account of all torture in all U.S. and Chilean films. Seen through this prism,
political torture in contemporary cinema provides a nexus where various angles
and approaches cross, where ontological and spatial invisibility coincide with
absence and excess of visual evidence, where documentary meets poetic truth
and affective excess clashes with the difficulty to represent the unrepresentable,
where spectatorial (dis)interest or disgust intersect with an ethical duty and
emotional need to know, to tell and to affirm these events.

45 Frederic Jameson tells us so in The Political Unconscious, cited in Linda Williams,
‘Mirrors without Memories: Truth, History, and the New Documentary’, Film Quarterly, 46
(1993), pp. 9-21 (p. 10).
1. Chapter One: Review of Literature

This project investigates the way in which contemporary Chilean and U.S. fiction cinema imagines political torture, based on or in reference to factual torture cases. Initially, the research revolved around questions relating to how the visual representation of torture influences our understanding of real torture. Through the course of writing this thesis, I increasingly moved away from such a surface-based critique of representation.

Apart from fundamental conceptual issues which I will outline here, I felt that a different framework was needed to gain a deeper understanding of these films in particular – contemporary films that speak to the question of factual political torture, that are highly aware of their constructed nature, that use fictionalization as well as documentary. The analysis of these contemporary hybrid movies that are about real political torture and that do advance arguments pertaining to truth and authenticity in relation to torture is not satisfyingly addressed within frameworks based on traditional indexicality, which separate documentary truth from fictional fantasies, or which seek to find a hidden Truth (reality, history, a repressed collective trauma) behind the phenomena (simulacra) we see, to be extracted by a crafty critic. Initially I hoped to achieve a synthesis of various theoretical paradigms of thinking about torture, from philosophical-sociological definitions to historical discourses. Instead, by uncovering the historical and intellectual links between torture,
truth, and Theory, I uncovered my own fallacy in assuming that such a near complete account of torture would be possible.

The first section of this Literature Review addresses the notion of the unrepresentable. Either the event torture itself is framed as unrepresentable, or a particular medium is deemed insufficient to capture its magnitude. Hence the first question is whether or not to show the violence at all. Representation-centred approaches, as the second and dominant angle, are able to circumvent the postulation of the “unrepresentable” but tend to focus on the image as surface. Despite their conceptual limitations, the lasting presence of these ideas points to the fact that they address fundamental ethical and political issues when it comes to the taking and watching of images of torture. Movie torture, in particular torture in fiction film tends to be discussed as a corollary of other forms of violence, a consequence or an aspect of terrorism and warfare, not on its own terms.\(^1\) Torture, however, is not just an aspect of war (films). This thesis thus fills a gap in critical attention on this specific form of violence. The next section will sketch seminal work into the nature and history of violence, pain, 

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\(^1\) As I am looking at political torture, I largely exclude torture in allegorical or mythical reworkings, as in the so-called “torture porn” films. The discussion of 24 is a borderline case: situated in a fantasy framework, 24’s importance in reception and as a reference points for the debates on audiovisual torture necessitated the show’s inclusion. In an influential piece in New York Magazine, David Edelstein coined the term “torture porn” for mainstream films, such as Hostel and the Saw series, that inflict extreme and gratuitous violence on “victims that we care about.” David Edelstein, ‘Now Playing at Your Local Multiplex: Torture Porn’ (February 6, 2006) [accessed 6 February 2016]; see Adam Lowenstein’s rejoinder for a stimulating and nuanced reading of the same films. Lowenstein suggests that Hostel’s evocation of the “hooded man” image from Abu Ghraib and its ‘wishful reversal of Abu Ghraib gets complicated by how its spectacle is routed through horror film genre iconography.” Adam Lowenstein, ‘Spectacle Horror and Hostel: Why ‘Torture Porn’ Does Not Exist’, Critical Inquiry, 53 (2011), p. 51.
and torture specifically, from social sciences, philosophy, history and cultural studies, upon which many film analyses draw. Faced with the fundamental ethical questions that surround the representation of violence, scholarly approaches naturally branch out towards the philosophical, from the ontological nature of various media and formats – advancing a more media-specific argument – to epistemological questions regarding the nature of emotions, empathy or compassion, and pain. I will outline where these approaches link such questions to the potential and promise of cinema.

Memory and trauma studies are the third dominant approach when thinking through how factual torture cases are depicted in film. The discussions on the relation between memory and film have provided useful ways to connect the social to a personal level. I will outline where the conceptual problems of these theories restricted its use value for this project. The representation of violence is frequently discussed specifically with U.S. (“Hollywood”) cinema in mind. Chilean films tend to be negotiated on different terms: much scholarship on Chilean film remains dominated by memory studies and close to the antinomies and terminology that were generated in a different era of political (class) struggle. There is undisputable value in locating this scholarship in its specific socio-cultural and historical context and in debating whether the parameters of the situation have really shifted or only acquired new names. But this is not the debate I am after; I will abstain from using separate theories for the analysis of Chilean and U.S. films, and I will speak to this methodological challenge at the end.
Representing the Unrepresentable

Torture as a topic approaches the limits of representation in several ways: the emotional and physical pain of somebody else, like the moment of death, is fundamentally unknowable, it exposes the limits of any language, any means of translation. Speaking about torture means speaking about (or representing) a paradox, for “torture deliberately sets the victim out of those human communities within which … pain is communicable.” Torture cuts people off from their communities, marks them as abject and their experience as unspeakable. Bourke emphasises how the “pain event” of torture needs to be rendered public, but to represent torture in any way – in language or other forms of translation – means always also speaking about or approximating “the fact that torture is the extreme example of incommunicability.”

Historically the idea of an “unrepresentable” event has been exhaustively discussed with the Holocaust as a “limit event” that shattered previously existing categories of thought and reach of imagination, thereby affirming the enormity of the event by insisting that not every experience can be mapped.

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4 Hayden White argues that the “holocaustal,” the especially gruesome events of the 20th century, have challenged conventional historiographic narratives and representational capacities. A “limit event” is characterized by such magnitude and profound violence that its effects rupture the previous normative foundations of the political and moral community. White, ‘Modernist Event’.
5 Framing the Holocaust as eternally exceptional and therefore inherently unrepresentable is also problematic in its implicit devaluation of other victims. There is of course an older tradition to this idea: “Much of the force of the injunction against misrepresentation … relies implicitly on a religiously grounded Bilderverbot (iconomachy)” Elsaesser in Vivian Sobchack, *The Persistence of History: Cinema, Television and the Modern Event* (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 9.
Conventional narrative “emplotments” are considered a betrayal of respectful silence; some representational modes are rejected; some a priori favoured.⁶

Contrarily, scholars such as Didi-Huberman and Jacques Rancière suggests that it is not the event that resists representation but certain ways of articulating it.⁷

Certain aesthetic codes and formal strategies have become the prevalent way to point to such events and to “represent by not representing,” creating a “whole discourse (as moral as … aesthetic) on the unrepresentable, the unfigurable, the invisible, the unimaginable, and so on.”⁸ Referring to seminal works of art, such as Shoah (Claude Lanzmann, 1985), Didi-Huberman reminds us that “these formal choices were specific and therefore relative: they lay down no rule.” ⁹ Likewise sceptical of the argument on the limits of


⁷For Rancière, this results in a rejection of dramatization. The Holocaust does not represent unrepresentability but “only denies that such an [artistic] equivalent can be provided by a fictional embodiment of the executioners and victims.” Jacques Rancière, The Future of the Image (London: Verso, 2009), p. 127.


⁹Didi-Huberman, Images in Spite of All. The Holocaust is considered, in Shoshana Felman’s words, as a “historically ungraspsable primal scene;” a notion which seems to find ideal expression in Claude Lanzmann’s Shoah (1985) a film which “centres on lack as opposed to gratification: the lack of archive images (themselves a conventional source of catharsis), the film’s lack of satisfying closure despite the excessive searching, traveling, talking.” Bruzzi, New Documentary, p. 114.
representation, Elsaesser argues that the attempted “non-mediation” can result in merely another mode of representation.\footnote{10} Eric Sundquist points out that such formal strategies can work only because the audience is in fact familiar with the Holocaust’s visual vocabulary; by now the “unknowability” of the Holocaust is also a trope,\footnote{11} a development observable for later catastrophic events, such as the terror attacks of September 11, 2001.\footnote{12}

Both the notions of the unrepresentable event and of an incomplete or false representation of reality are premised on a set of problematic assumptions. The first fallacy is that there is an underlying reality which exists prior to and is potentially accessible through representation: “Haunting the interest in a repressed or unrepresented reality is the idea of a hidden totality.”\footnote{13} Reality is then defined as something distinct and separate from its representation, to which it is compared and found lacking. Yet our relationship to reality is always already mediated, and visual culture stands in a dialectical relation to processes


\footnote{11} In this context, Sundquist’s discussion of fraudulent Holocaust texts is illuminating. Written in the (critically preferred) fragmented style, these texts were enthusiastically received, an illustration of the danger of severing the event/trama from history and turning it into a globalized code of a specific representational style. Eric J. Sundquist, ‘Witness without End?’, American Literary History, 19 (2007), pp. 65-85.

\footnote{12} The “unrepresentable” of 9/11 is expressed with the absent image (a black screen) and archive sound in Zero Dark Thirty, in Fahrenheit 9/11 (Michael Moore, 2004), and at the end of United 93 (Paul Greengrass, 2006). This strategy works only on the premise that an audience has seen the original images. It also implies that the audience shares a common reading of the events. Meek points out how conceptualizing 9/11 as consensual mass trauma for all of Western world employs a terminology which “already constitutes … a specific kind of interpretation of events.” Allen Meek, Trauma and Media: Theories, Histories, and Images (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 172.

of perception and to the subjective history and response of the viewer. Richard Rushton offers a thoughtful and in-depth critique of the current state of film theory as still dominated by “the discourse of political modernism” which assumes a “fundamental distinction between illusion and reality in the cinema” as well as, Elsaesser seconds, the possibility of “‘correct representation,’ or at least that ‘reality’ can be distinguished from ‘illusion’ and that a ‘truth’ can be meaningfully opposed to ‘mere appearance’.”

Secondly, there is often a false binary in place between language and images, wherein language features as transmitter of more fixed or objective meaning. But the “problem of representation” affects any means of communication, including language and historical discourse. Both fiction and factual historical analysis share the element of what Hayden White called narrativity. Rancière’s criticism strikes at the heart of the matter: when horrific historical events are fictionalized, the impression of “obscenity” is generated because we do not

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Instead of opposing mainstream Hollywood films as offering diegetic transparency and the illusion of reality” with aesthetically and ideologically ‘progressive’ (modernist) films that ‘foreground the apparatuses of cinematic production, Richard Rushton proposes, instead, to view film as part of our (always already mediated) reality: “rather than providing departures from reality, films can be said to provide us with ways of understanding, conceiving, navigating, and imagining reality.” Richard Rushton, ‘Post-Classical Hollywood Realism and Ideological Reality’, *Cinephile*, 7 (2011), p. 15.
have a separate (audiovisual) language.\textsuperscript{17} There is no language to express the horrific event in ways that are separate from the language of the everyday. This inappropriateness may be the root of the attempt to fix ethical boundaries between documentary, fiction, and news media discourses. (For the increase of hybrid forms such as “infotainment,” a growing conversion between documentary, media and fiction are frequently criticized on such “media-essentialist” grounds.)

If every representation – every narrative, every memory, every image – is necessarily fragmented, mediated, subjective, and subject to changes over time, it is the wish for total encumbrance that is the problem, not the limitations of the medium to deliver such an impossible demand. As Stella Bruzzi argues in relation to the impossibility of the “perfect” documentary, the impossibility of total representation does not devalue the effort to approach truthfulness and integrity in representation.\textsuperscript{18} That images are created fragments does not mean that what they show is not true. They are “fragmentary, incomplete, and urgently necessary,” as Didi-Huberman argues with regards to the images from Auschwitz, and I would suggest the same urgency applies to contemporary images that may help us understand the trauma of torture in Abu Ghraib and in

\textsuperscript{17} Brigitte Nacos, professor of political science and counter-terrorism expert, criticizes the separation between news and entertainment media in academic discussion as artificial as they use the same medium and tend to focus on individual stories, rather than on collective processes. Brigitte Nacos, ‘The Image of Evil: Why Screen Narratives of Terrorism and Counterterrorism Matter in Real Life Politics and Policies’, in Screens of Terror: Representations of War and Terrorism in Film and Television since 9/11, ed. by Hammond, Phil (Suffolk: Arima Publishing, 2011).

\textsuperscript{18} Bruzzi, New Documentary, for instance p. 3.
Chile’s torture centres, such as Villa Grimaldi\(^\text{19}\): the fact that it is impossible to communicate the experience of torture completely does not invalidate the approximation.

The search for appropriate form and the insistence on “correct” representation is understandable, given the stakes. The “traditional cultural representation of torture” was intended to provoke a revulsion against the practice;\(^\text{20}\) the film is supposed to “shock” the spectator into action. This is based on the assumption that art compels us to revolt when showing revolting things, that to make torture explicitly visible would indict and help to eradicate it.

But seeing does not equal understanding, nor does understanding or knowledge necessarily result in political action. Such didactic models misrecognize the cinematic experience, the relationship between film and audience.\(^\text{21}\) Watching violence does not lead to violence,\(^\text{22}\) and gaining

\(^{19}\) I use “Villa Grimaldi” here as shorthand similar to the one for “Abu Ghraib” outlined in the introduction. There were thousands of torture centres in Chile, see Susana Draper, ‘The Business of Memory: Reconstructing Torture Centers as Shopping Malls and Tourist Sites’, in *Accounting for Violence: Marketing Memory in Latin America* ed. by Ksenija Bilbija and Leigh A. Payne (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

\(^{20}\) Beverley makes this argument in reference to films such as *The Battle of Algiers* (Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966) or Amnesty International’s mass mailings of letters under the title “Someone Is Being Tortured.” John Beverley, ‘Torture and Human Rights: A Paradoxical Relationship?’, *Hispanic Issues Online* (Fall 2009). This classic conception of the political use of the image presupposed “a straight line from the intolerable spectacle to awareness of the reality it was expressing; and from that to the desire to act in order to change it.” Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, p. 103.

In an earlier work, Elsaesser also argues for modes of representation which would arouse affect “in an active, radical sense of being ‘stung into action.’” Elsaesser, ‘Subject Positions, Speaking Positions’, p. 173, emphasis added.

knowledge and information or experiencing an emotional response does not necessarily lead to change in thoughts, beliefs, or to action.\textsuperscript{23} On the contrary, it seems that we must already be predisposed to be made feel guilty by a film.\textsuperscript{24} Secondly, this model privileges the visual as a mode of epistemology. Yet sheer visual representation does not yet equal political visibility. There are phenomena – including identities – that perhaps cannot really be made visible on film. Further conceptual fallacies concern the seemingly self-evident but actually quite complex assumption that the appropriate emotion can be causally and directly elicited by a film,\textsuperscript{25} that empathy is best pursued by creating structures of identification with the victim, and that feeling empathy fosters ethical and pro-social behaviour.\textsuperscript{26} As a result, both spectators and

\textsuperscript{22} In his work on censorship, Julian Petley shows how there is the continuing assumption of linear input-output model in media consumption and behaviour. A broad and unquestioned understanding of “harm”, supported by media and politics (each with their own intentions) For instance, the BBFC understands “harm” includes not just any harm that may result from the behavior of potential viewers, but also any ‘moral harm’ that may lead to desensitizing etc. Julian Petley, ‘Who censors films in Britain? The film industry, the British board of film classification, the government?’, in \textit{FilmForum} (Gorizia, 6 April 2014).

\textsuperscript{23} Elsaesser, ‘Subject Positions, Speaking Positions’, p. 146.

\textsuperscript{24} Contrarily, it seems that we must already be predisposed to the targeted feeling. For instance Rancière thinks that the spectator “must already feel guilty about viewing the image that is to create the feeling of guilt” Rancière, \textit{The Emancipated Spectator}, p. 85. Cf. Jane Gaines on radical political documentary. Jane Gaines, ‘Political Mimesis’, in \textit{Collecting Visible Evidence}, ed. by Jane Gaines and Michael Renov (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), pp. 84-102.

\textsuperscript{25} The choice of words reveals the presumption that the right image would move to action. For instance, Kaplan criticises images which evoke only a “brief and sentimental response” and which “do not move the viewer to action.” E. Ann Kaplan, ‘Empathy and Trauma Culture: Imaging Catastrophe’, in \textit{Empathy: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives}, ed. by Amy Coplan and Peter Goldie (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 255-76 (p. 268).

\textsuperscript{26} The seemingly common sense assumption that “empathy is anathema to killing, to torture, and to the waging of war” is apparently surprisingly difficult to prove. Rafael Moses, ‘Empathy and Dis-Empathy in Political Conflict’, \textit{Political Psychology}, 6.1 (1985), pp. 135-39 (p. 136). Some scholars even argue that there is little evidence that empathy
cinema are indicted for not achieving what they never set out to do, instead of adapting the theoretical framework.²⁷

On Violence

Among the seminal writing on torture, a fundamental distinction resides between thinkers who emphasise the rupture of violence and those who consider even its most abject forms as an extension of civilization. Carl von Clausewitz’s famous line that “war is a mere continuation of politics by other means,” or Michel Foucault’s dictum of peace as secret war can be set against scholars such as Hannah Arendt and Elaine Scarry, in whose writing torture features as “destruction of a pre-existing domesticity of civilization.”²⁸

Paul Kahn emphasises that “to understand the turn to torture we need to understand the symbolic matrix of political violence.”²⁹ As a form of political violence, torture encompasses preventive, punitive and symbolic dimensions.³⁰ In taxonomies of violence, torture tends to be paired with terrorism. There are indeed significant similarities and overlaps: torture can be necessary or not sufficient for moral behaviour: “one could feel another’s suffering and yet, like the empathetic torturer, use that sensitivity to further increase the suffering of the other person rather than to mitigate it.” Amy Coplan and Peter Goldie, ‘Introduction’, in Empathy: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives, ed. by Amy Coplan and Peter Goldie (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. ix-xlvi (p. xliii).

²⁷ Rancière suggests that the suspicion and scepticism regarding the political capacity of any image is “generated by the disappointed belief in a straight line between perception, affection, comprehension and action.” Rancière, The Emancipated Spectator, p. 103.


seen as a “terrorist tactic,” a form of state terrorism; both torture and terrorism are frequently depoliticized; both target a social body, an audience beyond those immediately hurt. Torture is always constructed as a response to a (perceived) state of emergency, an exceptional moment, often related to terrorism. In practice, however, torture remains a relatively routine procedure, which spreads and migrates, despite being banned and “held in condemnation.”

In relation to its discursive misrepresentation, torture bears a stronger affinity to rape than to terrorism; as David Sussman argues, it forces its victim into a position of collusion, leading to an experience of being “simultaneously powerless and yet actively complicit” in the violation. Sexual violence is worth

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32 Kahn, Sacred Violence.
36 The UN defines torture as “any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental … inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity.” ‘Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment’ (1984/1987) <http://www.ohchr.org> [17 March 2016]. Along with slavery, torture is “held in condemnation,” and defined as “uniquely barbaric and inhuman: the most profound violation possible of the dignity of a human being” David Sussman, ‘What’s Wrong with Torture?’, Philosophy & Public Affairs, 33 (2005).
37 Sussman, ‘What’s Wrong with Torture?’, p. 4. Such pairings and struggles with justifications frequently feature in films as well. Both rape and torture appear as figures
highlighting, not only because in practice sexualized violence and rape are often part of torture. Both practices are also mis-defined in their alleged goal: rape is not about sexual satisfaction, although sexuality is its weapon, and torture is not about generating actionable intelligence, although information and words may be exchanged. Rape vindicates any pretension of the use of torture to obtain intelligence. Much more so than terrorism, which frequently carries a connotation of fascinating elusiveness or even sublime,\(^{38}\) both rape and torture are associated with the abject, feelings of disgust, violations of the body’s fundamental boundaries. Both practices result in profound shaming of the victim, both taint the perpetrator as well as the victim, and both are frequently positioned as “improvable.”\(^{39}\)

In her seminal work *The Body in Pain*, Elaine Scarry argues that physical pain resists description in language and that the pain of another is fundamentally outside of the range of things we can know. This inherent inexpressibility of pain and the discrepancy of experience – “having pain” is absolute certainty

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\(^{39}\) See appendix for details on Chile’s first Truth Commission which excluded torture on these grounds.
and “hearing about pain” the epitome of doubt – leads to the misdescription of activities such as war and torture. Thus, Scarry largely sets violence and language in opposition. She examines in detail how the interrogation in torture reverses the factual power relations and thus plays an essential role for the “political fiction” of torture, namely that the purpose of torture is to gain intelligence. Scarry’s rigid oppositions between body/pain and world/language have been challenged. For instance, Judith Butler’s discussion of how language can act as perpetrator of violence and power expands the notion of violence as a threat to language; and Jean Franco points out that the physical absence, the “disappearance” of the torturer’s body does not work in the case of rape and sexual violence.

Joanna Bourke, Sara Ahmed, and Elizabeth Dauphinée also offer critical interventions and expansions on Scarry’s work. Bourke criticises Scarry for the

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41 Pain destroys language and imagination for the prisoner, while the interrogation monopolizes language for the torturer. Scarry does show how certain discursive forms, such as interrogation, assist violence, but tends to set violence and language in opposition. Shapiro argues that “Scarry’s perfunctory treatment” of film is derived from “her fixation on language rather than images as the basis of intelligibility.” Michael J. Shapiro, Cinematic Geopolitics (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 40.

42 Butler speaks about the fact that we can be hurt by speech; we are vulnerable to language. Judith Butler, Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative (London: Routledge, 1997). Franco argues that the cruelty of insults and hate speech are therefore often a necessary aspect of torture, for the degradation and dehumanization of the victim helps to lessen the guilt of the torturer. Franco, Cruel Modernity, p. 13.

43 Other critics object to Scarry’s concept avant la lettre. For instance, Boltanski cites Adam Smith with a “common sense” example of a man sympathizing with a woman giving birth. We can believe in the pain of the other. Boltanski, Distant Suffering, p. 38.
reification of pain and suggests instead thinking about pain as a “type of event.” Pain is subjective, it belongs to the individual’s life, it possesses what Ricoeur called mine-ness and yet this pain-event is not privately named, it is “rendered public through language.”

In her work on the “affective economy,” Ahmed explains that “how … feelings feel [and are read] … may be tied to a past history of readings.” Turning Scarry’s argument on its head, Ahmed suggests that the ungraspable nature of another’s pain forces me to realise that the other cannot grasp my pain either. Ahmed calls this pain of the other – which one perhaps cannot know but feels nevertheless affected by – the “sociability” of pain; and she considers this an intimate part of the emotion “pain.”

What is pain, then, this word that “encompasses a host of incommensurable phenomena”? While most feeling-states are difficult to express in language,  

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44 “Scarry argues that pain is outside of language, absolutely private, and untransmittable … Pain, rather than a person-in-pain, is given agency. This is an ontological fallacy.” Bourke, The Story of Pain, pp. 4-5.
47 The very fact of someone else’s unknown pain leads to the recognition of the uncertainty of one’s own pain in the perception of the other, argues Ahmed. Beyond the flattening of differences in pain experience into universalism or the appropriation and commodification of suffering into wound culture, Ahmed argues that we must “learn how to hear what is impossible … [which] is only possible if we respond to a pain that we cannot claim as our own.” Ahmed, The Cultural Politics of Emotion, p. 31.
48 Some philosophical arguments propose that the emotional and physical pain of somebody else is fundamentally unknowable, cf. Elsaesser on the “epistemic challenge” posed by other people’s minds and feelings. Elsaesser, ‘World Cinema’. This raises the question what makes pain exceptional in terms of interiority. Scarry’s focus on physical pain as being particularly difficult to express has been objected to, for instance by Peter Singer in Barbara J. Eckstein, The Language of Fiction in a World of Pain: Reading Politics as Paradox (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990).
Bourke suggests that “painful bodies might be especially indisposed to acts of communion”\(^5\) because they are difficult to express and understand even for the sufferer herself. Pain alienates from one’s own body-in-pain and tends to be experienced and described as an independent entity within the body or attacking from the outside.

Having “clarified” that it is by no means clear that we can know somebody else’s pain, nor our own, these questions become only thornier when the ethical obligation that Levinas postulated for a face-to-face encounter is mediated through the screen. When expanding Scarry’s focus on the verbal dimension of torture to film and audiovisual media, one must take into account how the cinematic experience addresses the audience-witness not only on a cognitive but also on an affective and physical level.\(^5\)

Focusing on images, Dauphinée also contests Scarry’s claim on the fundamental unsayability of pain. She argues that the verbal expressions of pain are not representations of pain but are part of pain experience itself. Such expressions do not point to the presence of pain, as imperfect attempts to convey an interior state or language, but are fundamentally part of the experience, of the event pain. This is based on Wittgenstein’s later theory of language. Here he argues that in order to carry meaning, words for emotional or affective states such as pain must be social, inter-subjective, learned, and, to an extent, public. This means that the one in pain does not have privileged


\(^5\) The questions whether and how emotions felt in the auditorium of cinema are different from emotions felt outside, which relates to how we conceptualize perception in cinema, cannot be answered here.
access to (the meaning of) that state of pain via the interiority of the self – a complete reversal of Scarry’s conceptualization of pain.

Scarry has further been criticized for not locating pain culturally and historically in specific terms; and her concept of pain does not consider closely enough the vicissitudes of emotional pain. Considering that even physical torture will always involve an emotional dimension and long-term response, the concept of the pain of torture should be expanded to include the emotional dimension and the social fall-out.  

**Torture, Truth and Theory**

Foucault’s seminal *Discipline and Punish* offers a historical perspective, tracing the development and dynamics of penal systems and forms of punishment. Foucault’s work is fundamental in developing the terminology to understand and describe (misleading) discursive practices. In the Medieval Ages, torture displayed power relations and functioned to restore a momentarily injured sovereignty. The witnessing audience was integral to and even the main addressee of this public ritual. The extracted confessions, abdications and recantations produced “a different order” of truth. Foucault describes how

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52 The emotional dimension of torture deserves more attention also because part of the intention of forms of violence such as torture and rape is perhaps precisely the dynamics by which feelings of shame or guilt are internalized and attributed to the self by the victim.

53 For a colonial context, Barbara Eckstein qualifies Foucault’s comparison of torture to a duel for its implication of equality for “no such [moral] dignity, identity, or equality is granted indigenous peoples as objects of torture.” Eckstein, *Language of fiction*.

54 In this context Foucault also indicates that the ritual contained aspects of “carnival” - as in power-reversal - and that the power of the watching masses consisted in insisting on the rules of the ritual, sometimes even of a pardon or reversal of the sentence. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin, 1991).
torture gradually began to disappear as public spectacle; punishment became increasingly invisible. The shift from penalty to correction transformed public space and created a different kind of society, aimed at disciplining bodies and controlling their activity. Foucault’s work can be used to explain such qualitative shifts but also to highlight continuities between imprisonment and torture, often thought of as qualitatively separate systems.  

Page DuBois demonstrates how torture is historically and discursively linked to Western heritage, philosophical tradition and some of our most cherished beliefs about truth. DuBois dates the idea of torture as truth-producing tool to slave torture in ancient Greece, founded on the belief that the slave will lie, unless tortured. The torture brings forth an absolute truth (which even overrules a free man’s testimony), contained in the slave’s body: “Slaves are bodies; citizens possess logos, reason.” DuBois shows how these characteristics are embedded in and interlace with modern notions and practices of torture. Her approach thus provides an important complementary to Foucault’s work.

Secondly, DuBois carves out how our notion of and belief in the existence of an ultimate and absolute truth is intricately related to our conception of a superior,

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55 Modern penalty, Foucault argues, claims a concern with correction, healing and therapy, yet “the practice of the public execution … still haunts [our penal system] today.” Foucault, *Discipline and punish*, p. 268. In contrast to the public spectacle of medieval torture, modern torture, while known to those who want to know, is mostly conducted in secrecy and out of sight. Today even capital punishment takes place in secret and is inaccessible to the public, see appendix.

56 The Greek word for torture, basanos, originally referred to a touchstone that attested authenticity of a golden artefact. The conceptual foundation of slave torture was the belief that the slave will lie, unless tortured. Slave torture brings forth an absolute truth contained in the slave’s body, which overrules a free man’s testimony. It is only the testimony that overrules, the slave him- or herself was not permitted as witness.

capital-letter Theory. This idea of truth is inseparable from the Western practice of torture. According to Richard Allen and Malcolm Turvey, the model of Theory in the Humanities positions a hidden cause – such as disavowed, sub-conscious drives and intentions – that needs to be discovered by the scholarly expert. This dynamic seems not unlike the truth harboured and hidden inside the body of a subject in spite of him- or herself that needs to be extracted by the crafted torturer. Thus, truth, theory, and torture are discursively linked.

This is also reflected in a social obsession with empirical facts and a concurrent devaluation of all that is messy, contradictory, emotional and irrational. The link between torture and truth is evident even in the presumably liberal claim that torture will make people say anything. In fact, it does not seem to matter what or if the tortured speaks; torture creates its own world where confession, lies, and silence each play a part.

Further needed is a witnessing and feeling body, a body that anchors a “certainty” of truth: DuBois describes how the truth of the basanos, the stone

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58 Allen and Turvey criticise the application of theory as used in the natural sciences onto the Humanities. They define as theory any practice that tries to unify diverse phenomena through positing an underlying principle (an Urphänomen), uncovered by the theory. While the natural sciences can empirically confirm such premises, they argue that to understand human behaviour and practice, different types of explanation are needed. Modelled on their reading of Wittgenstein’s later theory of language, they propose we content ourselves with “a reason given in sincerity.” Hidden causes are ruled out in favour of perspicuous description - perhaps not unlike textual analysis, if seen as less a theory than a method. Richard Allen and Malcolm Turvey, Wittgenstein, Theory and the Arts (London: Routledge, 2001).

59 Cf. Foucault on performing truth through torture. Avelar also suggests that this metaphor is “complicitous with the history of punishment in modern, disciplinary societies … Could one not perhaps postulate that torture is a key chapter in the history of truth?” Avelar therefore denounces the convergence or collapse of confession and truth in Death and the Maiden (Roman Polanski, 1994). Idelber Avelar, ‘La muerte y la doncella o la hollywoodización de la tortura’, Revista de Crítica Cultural, 22 (2001).
that tells the truth of a metal, was extended to the hidden truth inside the slave’s body; then to the truth felt by a body – for Scarry, the tortured victim, for Foucault and DuBois, the witnessing body.

DuBois criticizes Foucault’s argument of a “progression” from torture to punishment to discipline as Eurocentric and points out that the separation between “barbarians who use torture and “progressive” societies neglects our historically and contemporary bloody hands. Hutchings and DuBois argue that torture remains public but is displaced onto and performed in media relations. DuBois ventures that the “function of torture today ... is still one of spectacle ... the production of broken bodies and psyches, both for local and international consumption.” Likewise, Hutchings argues that public punishment of an individual continues as a mediated spectacle in modern surveillance, a process he calls “spectacularizing.” In this paradigmatic formulation, movies, along with the entire “society of spectacle,” are categorically indicted.

Also from a historical perspective, Jennifer Ballengee examines torture as rhetorical device in Greek tragedy and early Christian novels. Ballengee argues that the palpable truth of the body’s suffering in representation is open to

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60 As far as torture is no longer systematically carried out in Western societies, “surely the displacement of torture into the third world, the training and funding of torturers by North Americans, must be taken into account in any history of torture.” DuBois, Torture and truth, pp. 154-5. Framing torture as something that takes place “elsewhere,” in the past or the so-called third world, ignores a long and ‘productive’ history of exporting torture techniques, the training and funding of torturers as well as ongoing collaboration and collusion.

61 DuBois, Torture and truth, pp. 154-5.

62 Hutchings defines “spectacularizing” as a “move from the specific, embodied singularity of spectacle to the condition of a generalized, disembodied, and continual insistence ... [a] shift from spectacular sovereignty to disciplinary surveillance.” Peter J. Hutchings, ‘Entertaining Torture, Embodying Law’, Cultural Studies, 27 (2012), p. 27.
appropriation as the “dispersive polysemy of the image” may produce a range of possible meanings. She offers various examples of how the polysemic potential of the tortured body could serve to buffer for legal, political, erotic, and moral arguments. Due to the combined resistance of image, bodies, and pain to a fixed meaning, it is the audience who determines the meaning of torture, by passing moral and aesthetic judgment. “Torture’s rhetorical intent, as it is represented before an audience, demands interpretation; it solicits a verdict.”

Again, the witness has an integral role in torture’s rhetorical function, as well as the media in staging this performance. “The rhetoric of torture is currently performed upon a stage not unlike the [ancient] dramatic and literary stages.” This witness is located both within the diegesis (the choir in the Greek play, the witnessing character in the film) and also outside of it (the theatre audience, and transposed to the contemporary arena, the film spectator).

Ballengee also emphasises the primacy of the body in this process. The audience’s response is felt as certainty: when we witness a representation, we have a visceral reaction that feels true, and this bodily response stabilises the semiotic slipperiness and rhetorical potential of the representation. At this point, the scholarship on the rhetorical function of torture can be productively intersected with scholarship on cinema spectatorship. Ballengee’s perspective suggests a structural complicity in watching. As the witness “cannot not judge”,

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64 Ballengee, The Wound and the Witness, p. 133.
he or she is necessarily implicated. Even though Ballengee points to cinema, her analysis is contained within the tools of literary analysis. Cinema theory, especially when emphasising the affective, may offer a differentiated perspective to nuances of watching. The cinematic experience emerges as an option of public “witnessing” where the audience’s response determines the judgment for the effectiveness and legitimacy of the torture. Ballengee’s fine-grained argument on the polysemic nature of an image of torture in fact invites textual analysis.

Among the numerous insights that these studies bring forth are several seemingly enduring properties of torture. These include a tension between visibility and mediatic spectacle and, conversely, invisibility or secrecy; the aspect of ritual and performance; the prevailing notion that torture produces truth, often re-baptized as “intelligence” – with a model of truth as something hidden and situated in the body; and the key function of the public or witness in the performance of torture.

Applied to the factual cases at hand, political torture helped to create visible enemies, conspicuously absent both after the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, where the hijackers died in the crash, and after the coup d’état in Chile, where the military, met with little resistance, gained control within 24 hours. Comparing torture in Chile and torture in post-9/11 America, Cavanaugh reads torture’s primary purpose as the production of enemies in a situation of “enemy
deficit."65 "Wars are about the imaginary dividing of the world into friends and enemies. And enemies must exist in sufficient abundance and sufficient monstrosity if a war is to be sustained."66 In Chile, torture was necessary to create a fictive “atmosphere of war.”67 Considering the lack of resistance and in order to justify the already realized coup as the only way to save the nation "from a diabolical Marxist conspiracy to destroy the liberty of Chileans,"68 the military needed to produce an internal enemy. Regarding the contemporary torture in Iraq, Butler argues that the torture produced that which it purported to defend itself against: “The torture was also a way to coercively produce the Arab subject and the Arab mind.”69 This demonization of the prisoners as terrorists “allows us to justify their maltreatment.”70 From a legal perspective, the detainment produced the terrorist.71

Both Butler and Cavanaugh argue that torture targets our “social imagination,”72 it stabilizes the identity of a collective by ascribing an identity to another group of people. The intended targets of torture are not so much

65 The idea that the Cold War left the U.S. with an "enemy deficit", which led to the conflation of the elusive Osama bin-Laden with the more visible Saddam Hussein as target for a principal enemy, is mentioned for instance by Anne McClintock, ‘Paranoid Empire: Specters from Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib’, Small Axe, 13 (2009).
68 Cavanaugh, ‘Making enemies’, 312.
69 Butler, Frames of War, p. 126.
70 Cavanaugh, ‘Making enemies’, p. 313.
71 See appendix for more detail on legal loopholes and the reflection in discursive othering. Foucault suggests that the “monotonous critique” of the prison system is based on the “mistaken” idea that the goal of imprisonment is to prevent or abolish crime (Foucault, Discipline and punish, p. 268).
72 Cavanaugh, ‘Making enemies’, p. 308.
individuals but “social bodies.” Torture is a discourse of power enacted through bodies, by “producing” certain kinds of bodies, which are in turn defined by their quality of “torturability.” Torture always affirms something beyond its immediate or alleged purpose. In sum, the goal of torture is not the gathering of intelligence, but ideological reinforcement and a contest over the social imagination. In Chile, torture served to enact a real “social war,” and as a means of control through collective shock and memory, spreading fear, disrupting social relations, and establishing “the ability of the state to impose its narrative.”

The Standard Criticism: Torture and the Media

The intimate relationship of movies to real violence begins with a shared metaphorical, historical and terminological field – frequently encapsulated by Sontag’s equation between camera and gun. Historically, the “enhancement and proliferation of communications technologies is tied up with war-making.” There is an intellectual golden thread from the idea of the camera as part of the

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74 Beverley analyses how torture in Chile was “part of a social war against a broad popular political bloc – the lower middle class, the rural poor, and the urban working class – that gave strong support to Allende and his project of a parliamentary ‘Chilean Road to Socialism.’ The whole apparatus of torture and disappearance … simulated the atmosphere of war that the regime needed to justify its policies.” John Beverley, ‘Torture and Human Rights’, p. 312.
75 Naomi Klein, The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism (London: Penguin, 2008). Klein refers to Chile and Argentina in the 1970s as examples for the application of the “shock doctrine,” for how “corporate capitalism and neoliberal ideology” as well as the liberalization of markets has been “premised in many cases on mass slaughter and torture of those who resist” in Meek, Trauma and Media, p. 177.
76 Cavanaugh, ‘Making enemies’, p. 308.
violence, the active use of images in the process of torture, to the notion of media as conveyor of ideology through often distorted and rudimentary representation, and to the complicity of both mass media and its spectators. The image – moving or still – is constructed as indecent,79 feared to incite copycat violence or produce desensitization, or to objectify and thus re-victimize, especially when the body is depicted in a particular form: spectacular, sublime, or erotically charged. In Regarding the Pain of Others, Susan Sontag draws attention to the long-standing relationship between photography and war, and in War and Cinema, Paul Virilio explores historical points of convergence due to technological developments, even an “osmosis” between industrialized warfare and cinema.80 Virilio’s conceptualizations remain influential – or return to gather influence81 – when reflecting on particular gazes and their logistics of perception, such as aerial surveillance, even though the notion that a technology prescribes particular forms of watching and the “concomitant view of the photographic gaze as monolithic and potentially

lethal has been significantly qualified as theorists have stressed the multiplicity of looks structuring a photographic image.\textsuperscript{82}

Cultural studies scholars argue that media – both film and news media products – function as cognitive and emotional training grounds, which steer our emotional reaction by their representational forms, by a “proposal of commitment.”\textsuperscript{83} Butler’s work in particular offers sophisticated grounding for the critique of representational forms. In her influential \textit{Frames of War}, Butler suggests that the representation of suffering along “frames of perception” in media and public discourse constructs certain bodies as outside of humanity. These frames regulate our normative judgements, our affective and moral response to violence. Visual and narrative norms determine a “field of perceptible reality” which a priori excludes, selects or marks certain groups of people as expendable, “ungrievable,”\textsuperscript{84} examples of “bare life.”\textsuperscript{85}

The dominant criticism of torture in the movies is based on a critique of the “Hollywood”\textsuperscript{86} form as one which focuses on action and individual characters

\textsuperscript{83} Boltanski claimed that such proposals allow us to “look at a body in pain and not feel compassion.” Boltanski, \textit{Distant Suffering}, p. 43.
\textsuperscript{85} Giorgio Agamben, \textit{Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life} (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998). Butler argues that these groups are not apprehended as alive, and thus their deaths are not coded as grievable. Thus, in a move away from multiculturalism’s identity politics, she wants to interrogate the power structures that make it (im)possible to become a subject in the first place.
and depoliticizes torture. Political stories in general are “individualised, displaced in time and space, and abstracted from their rootedness in systems and institutions.” Historical and socio-cultural complexities are reduced to “simple, often psychological causes which, in turn, lend themselves to apparently easy (and mostly violent) solutions.” As a result, according to critics, such films propagate a “torture saga,” reproduce the tropes of a “torture folklore” and the “standard account” of torture, and replicate the notion of “legitimate” and “productive” torture, so deeply ingrained in political and legal narratives.

Hollywood films always attempt to solve the paradox of how to both celebrate and denounce violence: “the violence of wrong-doing is wrong, whereas the

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87 Devji describes how “torture in its conventional narrative plays the role of a mere supplement to politics, one that lacks any ontology of its own. The confession or resistance of the torture victim is also therefore non-political.” Devji, ‘Torture at the Limits of Politics’, p. 253.


91 Darius Rejali includes in this folklore the notion that the end may justify the means – which is where the trope of a “ticking bomb” and a “race against the clock” enter –, that there is a “science” to torture, that torture can be justified when/if it produces intelligence, or the framing of torture as the “lesser evil” of an assortment of violence. Rejali, ‘Convenient Truths’; Darius Rejali, Torture and Democracy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007). Rejali discusses these trends in general, with occasional reference to older films such as Battle of Algiers.

violence which responds to wrong-doing is righteous." Like other forms of cinematic violence, torture may be employed, even on narrative terms, to negotiate moral choices and questions, including the central issue of the legitimacy of violence. However, violence can be considered as the form in which Hollywood does express the political. One may argue that the dominance of violence in Hollywood films is a form to imaginatively negotiate quintessential ethical, existential and inherently political questions. Scholars of North American Studies, such as Richard Slotkin and John Cawelti, explain the predominance of violence in U.S. popular culture as giving “symbolic expression” to contemporary value conflicts, such as vigilante violence and legal process, conformity and individual freedom. These tensions or conflicts are resolved “in an increasingly ambiguous moment of violent action.”

Codified in the myth of “regeneration through violence” Slotkin outlined how the use of violence could become a normative response to the problems of society, in particular how myths generate ways of dealing with historically recurring problems: “myth expresses ideology in a narrative.”

A recurrent problem with the existing scholarship on torture on film concerns precisely the literal application of extrapolated insights from other disciplines.

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93 Alison Young in Chaudhuri, ‘Documenting The Dark Side’.
95 Slotkin argued that central myths of the frontier experience consolidated in popular culture, in particular in the Western genre. These myths, Slotkin argues, including their codex of violence, have become sources of American national identity, most prominently the myth of a “regeneration through violence,” which promises rejuvenation of the social order by ritualizing the mythical origin of the frontier violence. Richard Slotkin, Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998).
onto a film, neglecting the complexity of the experience of watching a film, and excluding specifically cinematic strategies of creating this experience. Movie torture is addressed in terms of (mis)representation and historical veracity, narrative justificatons of types of violence, and a focus on who tortures in relation to spectatorial identification.

Apart from the implicit distrust of a presumably easily duped spectator and the neglect of the complexity of the cinematic experience, this criticism is also based on the assumption that a learned theory is needed to uncover the true meaning of the films which are assumed to be both unequivocal (possessing a true meaning) and doubled (exhibiting a surface of false consciousness). Hollywood films are alleged to appear apolitical, or even “seemingly preoccupied with attempting to produce ethically implicated and culpable spectators,” but in fact serve to assuage guilt and shame, and they inform the public on the treatment of detainees “at least as much as information provided by the news media.”

Particular forms and formats of representation, such as violent torture, associated with titillation, voyeurism, and gratuitous pleasure, or action films for

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their penchant towards spectacle, are considered a priori guilty.99 Generic codes revel in the “currency of destruction and devastation” and “appropriate the trauma [for instance] of 11 September 2001 and the war on terror for entertainment.”100

The recent anthology Screening Torture exemplifies a critical media discourse that remains wedded to a more or less causal link between cinematic representation of torture and public opinion. A frequently cited statistic, observing a quantitative increase of torture scenes on television,101 is correlated with real torture, public opinion and political language, as if the contemporaneous existence of these phenomena were already empirical proof of a causal chain that begins with the media representation. The increase in quantity is said to lead to increased acceptance.102 Linked to this quantitative shift are the claims that torture is the “new normal” now, no longer integrated

99 In a clear reference to Edelstein’s “torture porn,” Cettl’s “cinema of terrorism” includes the description of a type of “terror porn”, alluding again to the “gratuitous pleasure” audiences may draw from these forms of violence. Cettl, Terrorism in American Cinema.

100 McSweeney, 9/11 Frames Per Second, p. 204.

101 “From 1996 to 2001, there were 102 scenes of torture, according to the Parents Television Council. But from 2002 to 2005, that figure had jumped to 624 … During this uptick in violence, the torturer’s identity was more likely to be an American hero such as “24’s” Jack Bauer (Kiefer Sutherland) than the Nazis and drug dealers in pre-9/11 days. Martin Miller, ‘24 Gets a Lesson in Torture from the Experts’ (13 February 2007) <http://articles.latimes.com/2007/feb/13/entertainment/et-torture13>. This statistic is also cited in Thomas A. Bass, ‘Counterinsurgency and Torture’, American Quarterly, 60 (2008), p. 234; Nacos, ‘The Image of Evil’.

102 A blatant example of this reasoning is offered by McCoy: “By the time Bush left office in late 2008, screens large and small across America were saturated with torture simulations, conducting an ad hoc mass indoctrination of the public into a belief in the efficacy of torture.” Alfred W. McCoy, ‘Beyond Susan Sontag: The Seduction of Psychological Torture’, in Screening Torture: Media Representations of State Terror and Political Domination, ed. by Michael Flynn and Fabiola F. Salek (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), pp. 119-152 (p. 126).
into a framework of exception,¹⁰³ and that there is a post-9/11 Hollywood trend of cultivating identification with torturers, rather than with their victims, which is set in contrast to earlier films that featured torture.¹⁰⁴

This claim is premised on identification as a process which incites the dissolution of boundaries, the appropriation of experience by the affective movements of an unthinking and uncritical mass. Not surprisingly, the concept has developed a bad reputation.¹⁰⁵ Conversely, film scholars emphasise that audiences are usually well able to perceive the difference between fictional representations and documentaries, aware that they are suspending disbelief and that “viewers usually do not act on what they observe.”¹⁰⁶ To circumscribe such reductive notions of identification, I am indebted to non-binary models

¹⁰³ For instance, Bächler, Inszenierte Bedrohung. Even though 24 is frequently framed as the principal instigator of this new normalcy, the show does establish a permanent framework of exception, which, as discussed, features among the tropes of torture, offering a justification.

¹⁰⁴ The referent for this claim is a spokesman from Human Rights First who argued that “today the good guys torture,” a generalization quickly disputed by the briefest of surveys of older and contemporary films. The quote is cited in Chaudhuri, ‘Documenting the Dark Side’; McCoy, ‘Beyond Susan Sontag.’

¹⁰⁵ Compare Tabanelli’s praise for the Italian-Argentine-Chilean film Garage Olimpo (Marco Bechis, 1999) for not “allowing” empathy with the perpetrators: “The lack of a detailed (verbalized) analysis, combined with Bechis’s anti-psychoanalytical approach, in which the characters are not given much psychological depth ... guarantees that the viewers will not be empathic towards the perpetrators, something which does happen with a well-rounded character like Alicia in The Official Story.” Roberta Tabanelli, ‘The Violence of History in Marco Bechis’s Argentina’, New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film, 9 (2012), p. 139, emphasis added.

¹⁰⁶ Jens Eder, ‘Ways of Being Close to Characters’, Film Studies (2006), p. 69. Eder states sarcastically that “usually, viewers do not identify with Lassie, empathize with the Alien, or parasocially interact with the computer HAL”, p. 68.
developed specifically for the study of film such as those proposed by Murray Smith and Carl Plantinga.  

**Empty Witnessing & Ethical Spectatorship**

Much of what is written on torture onscreen does not extend beyond a critique of representation which operates with spectatorship as a non-embodied, textually inscribed position. In this “standard criticism” of movie torture, the spectator enjoys screen torture as guilty pleasure, stills a “primitive urge for retributive justice,” or indulges in self-righteous empty empathy.

How cinema influences belief and behaviour remains an eternally vexing question. Any assumed causality between film text and spectatorial response

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109 This ultimately refers back to the structuralist-psychoanalytic theories which conceptualized the viewing subject (presumably not the critic) as a textually inscribed position rather than an embodied viewer. The totalizing tendency of these notions allows the critic to indict anyone of appropriation and vicarious pleasure. (In its logical conclusion this could also subpoena academic scholarship for empty empathy and disavowed enjoyment, but the argument is not taken there.)

110 Influence is a category notoriously difficult to measure. Torture in film, for instance, neither causes violence in reality, nor is it “innocently” simply mirroring (a unified) society at large. Almost as an article of faith, Chaudhuri declares that “the use of the cinematic medium to articulate historical and political issues is inherently transformative, whether in documentary or fiction”. Chaudhuri, ‘Documenting The Dark Side’. 
grants both too much transformative powers to the representation\textsuperscript{111} and too little power to the spectator to resist. Often, this spectator is modelled as exasperatingly complacent, or as a naïve, easily duped vessel. Such models allow little space for fluidity, potential changes and shifts in spectatorial responses and viewing positions, whether during the initial or with later viewing. They are also built, at least implicitly, on a devaluation of emotions and affects in the cinematic experience.

Recent scholarship has addressed and reframed such notions, emphasising that spectatorship is inherently performative,\textsuperscript{112} that looking relations are dynamic and dialectical,\textsuperscript{113} and that the intent of the photographer and the eventual context of the exposure or exhibition are not guaranteed within the images. Logically, then, “ethical spectatorship” is framed as something that has to be enforced against our natural inclinations: the right kind of representation will force us to act ethically, whereas what makes us feel good reeks of manipulation. For instance, Stefano Odorico praises Standard Operating Procedure as the film “forces the spectator to be … self-aware … Morris creates an active participation that is painful … the spectators can no longer hide. There is no way for us to escape from the violence.”\textsuperscript{114} Odorico’s own

\textsuperscript{111} Gaines had pointed out this contradiction when she suggested that there is actually no track record of politically activist documentaries leading to social change. Gaines, ‘Political Mimesis’.
\textsuperscript{112} Compare Sophie Anne Oliver’s proposition to work from the “creative potential of the squirm,” i.e. “problematic” spectatorial responses, such as disgust, the desire to look away, pity, or voyeurism. Sophie Anne Oliver, ‘Trauma, Bodies, and Performance Art: Towards an Embodied Ethics of Seeing’, Continuum, 24 (2010).
\textsuperscript{113} Bruzzi, New Documentary, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{114} Stefano Odorico, ““That Would Be Wrong”: Errol Morris and His Use of Home Movies (as Metalanguages) in Feature Documentaries”, in Amateur filmmaking: The
rather violent language demonstrates this fundamental distrust of cinema and its audience, which seems to originate in a Puritan and elitist distrust of popular culture and those who like it.

The arousal of emotions in cinema continues to be viewed with suspicion, as if feeling and critical insight were necessarily divorced, or had to be tightly tethered. In her influential writing on photography, Sontag initially suggests that photographs, without captions, cannot foster understanding;115 “something of a persistent split occurs between being affected and being able to think and understand.”116 To avoid fatigue in seeing images of atrocity, Sontag advocates an “ecology” in images of atrocity117 and a stern etiquette of detachment. And yet, her fear of saturation and her argument regarding the desensitization through images is implicitly based on the idea that we need to keep fresh our emotional and initial pain.118 In contrast to such quantitative arguments, Rancière suggests that horror is banalized not because we have too many, but too many of the same images; the problem is not quantity but how we select

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115 Photography haunts by affecting the senses and body but it is writing which fosters understanding, according to Sontag. Sontag, On Photography; Sontag, Regarding the Pain.


118 In her later work, Sontag qualifies her claim on the limited use of (non-captioned) photography but remains exasperated and critical – rightly so – at how the produced affect could generate, be transformed into political action.
among an excess of possible images and how these arrive, pre-packaged with meaning.119

Discussed across the disciplines, the related questions of emotions, affect and empathy are posed under a bewildering array of different names and distinctions.120 The interrogation of our emotional response to an image of violence opens a theoretical and methodological minefield. E. Ann Kaplan’s model of empathy and Michele Aaron’s “ethical spectatorship” can serve as examples of the problematic tendency to operate with a binary between films that evoke either higher evolved or instinctive emotional responses, between genuine and pseudo-empathy, based on a notion of hereditary spectatorial complicity. Kaplan distinguishes between “empty empathy” which offers a self-awarded absolution, and “witnessing.” Empty empathy is “elicited by images of suffering provided without any context or background knowledge.” 121 Witnessing, for her, allows “reconciliation … a new level of responsibility [which] happens when a text aims to move the viewer emotionally but without sensationalizing or overwhelming her with feelings.” 122 Kaplan criticizes “sentimental” photographs which “focus on individuals rather than on the

120 A brief survey offers empathy, affect or affectivity, Betroffenheit, Einfühlung, and arousal. Within film studies, a central distinction has historically been made between emotion and affect, to separate the emotional invitations of some movies from the sensational spectacle of others.
122 Kaplan, Trauma Culture, p. 23. Kaplan seems to contradict herself with the example of Sontag’s first encounter with images from the liberated German concentration camps. Still a child, Sontag was profoundly affected by these images, and Kaplan offers this as a “clear example of vicarious image-induced trauma.” Yet Sontag had not any context for understanding at this point and was, arguably, overwhelmed. Kaplan, Trauma Culture, p. 91.
larger issues [such as] the reasons for war.” Yet how would it be possible to feel for such “larger issues,” and again, why erect a binary between feeling and thinking?

Michele Aaron contrasts “higher-evolved” ethical emotional responses with instinctual or automatic affective responses. The former are described as more in our intellectual control and the latter as easier to manipulate. Aaron distinguishes between emotional engagement and ethical encounter, and between moral and ethical spectatorship. Ethics is about “thinking through one’s relationship to morality rather than just adhering to it.” Ethical spectatorship, defined as a sense of self-awareness, reflection on, and responsibility for our active role and implication in looking, must surpass “involuntary” emotion, which she defines as “the opposite of reflection and implication.” In a damning conclusion, Aaron finds that “externally displayed emotions and … emotive reactions are ‘our bit’ in the economy of spectatorship and visual culture; in a sense, we relinquish ethical investment by shedding tears” which “disavow us of any potential responsibility for those images.”

123 Kaplan, Trauma Culture, p. 94.
125 Aaron quoted in Mark Straw, ‘The Guilt Zone: Trauma, Masochism and the Ethics of Spectatorship in Brian De Palma’s Redacted (2007)’, Continuum, 24 (2010), p. 102. Compare the description of the dangers of compassion, which risks “substituting a sense of affective agency for other forms of action; because we have responded emotionally, we ‘feel right,’ believing we have behaved correctly and generously” Berlant quoted in E. Deidre Pribram, Emotions, Genre, and Justice in Film and Television: Detecting Feeling (New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 121.
Aaron’s preference for cognition recalls Sontag’s reservations of “involuntary” emotional impact. This notion of manipulable affects versus “refined” emotions is odd to begin with. It is not convincing that “instincts” should be more easily tricked than our cognitive faculties. One could even flip the model and argue that those emotions closer to the cognitive realms are more socially constructed and therefore more affected by and steeped with ideology.

The Affective Turn in Film Studies

Several scholars wrestle with the role of affectivity as a base for political claims. Lauren Berlant emphasises the inherent power dynamics of compassion: always selective, compassion carries the weight of the ethics of privilege, and is therefore a poor foundation for political action. For Michelle Brown, the personal dimension of emotions such as empathy, love and compassion threatens to de-politicize political or juridical claims. Butler considers the public and political dimension of affect, sensual perception and emotions as socially conditioned; and Lucy Bond points out how sentiments of compassion

In the context of recent U.S. torture, Alphonso Lingis claims that the “intensity of disgust and repugnance [upon seeing the Abu Ghraib images] functioned as evidence, in each viewer, of his or her own core decency, his or her instinctual moral integrity.” Alphonso Lingis, ‘The Effects of the Pictures’, Journal of Visual Culture, 5 (2006), 85.


For Berlant, compassion validates existing power differentials as it requires a privileged person who can alleviate the suffering of some. Lauren Gail Berlant, Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion (New York: Routledge, 2004). Conversely, Pribram argues that selective compassion helps to construct identities “that then act [presumably, for good] in the world” Pribram, Emotions, Genre, and Justice in Film and Television: Detecting Feeling, p. 8.

Brown and Rafter, ‘Genocide Films’. Ironically, this seems almost a reversal of Second Wave Feminism’s battle cry that the personal is political.
“derive from social training, emerge at historical moments, [and] are shaped by aesthetic conventions”.\textsuperscript{129} Any distinction between affect as universal, biological and timeless, and emotions as culturally and temporally specific, can therefore only serve with qualifications.\textsuperscript{130} Both affect and emotion are sociocultural constructs as well as neurological categories.\textsuperscript{131} A model that does not contrast affect as pre-cognitive, pre-ideological, preconscious, and separate from more clearly felt emotions, but that considers affects and emotions as distinctive yet interacting “points on a continuum going from body to mind”\textsuperscript{132} seems thus not only more truthful but also useful in precluding judgments of films according to a normatively framed emotional impact.

Crucially, Butler’s argument in \textit{Frames of War} suggested that the frames of perception, whether in public discourse or media representations, also determine our emotional response to forms of violence.\textsuperscript{133} Her argument thus


\textsuperscript{130} Greg Smith summarizes: “Cultural anthropologists and social constructivists have clearly demonstrated the potential for culture to shape emotional experience, thus challenging the predominant Western conception of the emotions as universal” Greg M. Smith, \textit{Film Structure and the Emotion System} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 35.

Carl Plantinga speaks of “a core of panchultural similarities for the expression and recognition of basic emotions” which are however tempered by “display rules, social conventions governing the appropriateness of emotional expression.” Plantinga, ‘The Scene of Empathy’, p. 242 and p. 254.

\textsuperscript{131} Frey and Choi also complicate the binary between the refined and the instinctive. Affective mimicry, which might be “considered as universal, precognitive forms of empathic response” can in fact be “rendered in the viewer through such film techniques as close-up, texture, editing pace, and camera movement” Jinhee Choi and Mattias Frey, ‘Introduction’, in \textit{Cine-Ethics: Ethical Dimensions of Film Theory, Practice and Spectatorship}, ed. by Jinhee Choi and Mattias Frey (2014), pp. 1-14 (p. 9).


\textsuperscript{133} This explains the positioning of terrorism, but not torture, as a priori morally wrong.
potentially rehabilitates media products, as their affective potential may also be reversed to put issues and lives on the agenda that are otherwise excluded or absent from public discourse. Photography’s sensual appeal, for instance, has the capacity to generate “grievability.”  \(^{134}\)

For scholars of emotions, a level of distance or a space of ambivalence is framed as solution to an incapacitating empathy and to identification\(^ {135}\) – enough space to distinguish between self and other. Film can help to take the perspective of the other while recognizing the difference between self and other. The excitement over the discovery of mirror neurons, their role in the mimetic-emotional response, and their potential to incite an empathic response sometimes led to slightly utopian interpretations and a tendency to introduce

\(^{134}\) Butler builds here on Roland Barthes’s *Camera Lucida*. For Barthes, photography points to its own limitation or absences, the before and after which we do not see. Barthes encapsulates these negative temporalities in the French verb modus of the *futur antérieur*: “this will be a life that will have been lived.” Hence Butler declares that “to confirm that a life was [for example in a photograph] … is to underscore that a life is a grievable life” (Butler *Precarious*, p. 97).

\(^{135}\) Some scholars have tried to rescue the term “identification”: Noël Carroll defines the term “imaginative identification” as the activity of imaginatively adopting the other’s perspective; Magdalena Nowak recovers the German word *Einfühlung* to separate “positive empathy,” able to enter via imagination while remaining aware of one’s own separated self; Amy Coplan contrasts (automatic, self-oriented) emotional responses (“how would I feel”) with the “ethical benefits” of genuine empathy, which involves taking the perspective of the other; LaCapra calls this empathy with awareness and choice. Didi-Huberman distinguishes between “imagination” (good) and “identification.” Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All*; Magdalena Nowak, ‘The Complicated History of Einfühlung’, ARGUMENT, 1 (2011); Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); Carroll cited in Amy Coplan, ‘Catching Characters’ Emotions: Emotional Contagion Responses to Narrative Fiction Film’, *Film Studies* 8.1 (Summer 2006), pp. 26-38.
behaviourist assumptions, letting discarded simplified notions of identification re-enter through the backdoor.  

Foucault and Butler have provided seminal thinking on how the body itself is already culturally and socially constructed, and phenomenologists have pointed out how viewers, as the subjects of perception, are not separated from its object, but come to it always already infused with a subjectivity that is in turn produced by collective processes. What we are able to perceive is filtered through pre-existing conditions that determine our perception, a “cultural screen.” Social structures “create the conditions of possibility for the emergence of an object of perception.”

The rebellion against normative spectatorship began in the early 1990s. Scholars such as Vivian Sobchack and Steven Shaviro emphasize the embodied, affective aspect of the cinematic experience. Rejecting the psychoanalytic notion of subjectivity fundamentally constituted by lack, Sobchack’s phenomenological model argues that we know ourselves through the mediation of the body, and in relation to other bodies. Phenomenologists consider the conceptual rift between things seen and things felt a fallacy and

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136 Neuronal connections, so-called “mirror neurons” fire both when performing an action and when observing the same action performed by someone else, and are therefore considered the foundation for intersubjectivity. See Jane Stadler, ‘Affectless Empathy, Embodied Imagination, and The Killer inside Me’, Screening the Past 37 (2013). For a more cautious reading of this research, see Dee Reynolds and Matthew Reason, ‘Introduction’, in Kinesthetic Empathy in Creative and Cultural Practices, ed. by Dee Reynolds and Matthew Reason (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), pp. 17-26 (p. 20). Considering how much we are still learning about the brain, the assurance with which some theorists separate instinctual from refined sensation is astonishing. So far, neuroscience suggests a high degree of connectivity between regions of the brain.

137 Kaja Silverman in Shapiro, Cinematic Geopolitics, p. 64.

138 Shapiro, Cinematic Geopolitics, p. 64.
object to a form of thinking about vision which linked “the distanciation from the body and to the objectification and control of self and others.” In these approaches, attention to the sensual is frequently linked to a critique of the dominant systems of Western epistemological systems, which privilege vision at the expense of other senses, equate vision with possession, and use vision to control, objectify and distance bodies from each other, and the body from the mind. Dissatisfied with ideas on cinema as mirror image, Shaviro argues that cinema can in fact destabilize spectators’ identities or multiply the effects of subjectivity. Thomas Elsaesser and Linda Williams look at “genres of excess”, such as horror, pornography, melodrama as well as the spectacular action film, to theorize cases where the bodily affective viewing experience dominates over narrative process.

Rather than focus on the reception end or the production process in empirical form, I depart from the phenomenological notion that spectatorship as experience and perception is embodied. These scholars suggest that cinema has the potential to appeal to senses it cannot technically represent and that there exist forms of looking different from the violent, possessive gaze. Laura

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140 Scholars are careful to emphasize the historical dimension of their research, to point to alternatives to the Cartesian model of hierarchical perception.

141 Sobchack links the cultural obsession with physical appearance to Debord’s “society of the spectacle.” By mainly looking at our bodies instead of living and feeling them, we develop a distanced and alienated relationship to our own and other people’s bodies. Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, p. 189.

142 Linda Williams, ‘Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess’, *Film Quarterly*, 44 (1991). Elsaesser’s analysis of popular “cinema of excess” can be considered a defence of the affective, as its affective and emotional appeal has “the potential to break through coherent and comforting subject position of conventional narrative and fictional dramatization.” Elsaesser, ‘Subject Positions, Speaking Positions’, p. 173.
Marks’s highly influential model of “haptic visuality” to describe such a different form of seeing cinema has been expanded by Jennifer Barker, Davina Quinlivan, and Martine Beugnet to include other sensual modes of vision. I will draw on such models in the final Chapter. As a tool or method, these ideas work well within certain parameters, and for specific sets of films, where the materiality of the image dominates, rendering it “tactile.” Contrary to a structurally inbuilt complicity, this scholarship sees possibilities, under certain circumstances, to be “touched” by a film to find a “mutual” gaze, an “affective encounter” rather than the reviled “emotional identification.” This scholarship offers a more complete image of the cinematic experience, especially when considering films that seem to grasp us affectively, as is the case with violent images, and therefore offer a better foundation to discuss the ethics of violence in film.


144 Marks examines intercultural cinema; Shaviro is interested in postmodern cinema’s sensory shock; Beugnet adds cinematic synaesthesia and correspondences to the idea of haptic visuality to in a “cinema of sensation.”

145 Blackman, Immaterial Bodies: Affect, Embodiment, Mediation.

146 Jill Bennett, Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005). There is a limit to the claims of intersubjectivity through films as the profilmic characters may affect us but not the other way around.
Trauma and Memory

Trauma theory has been influential to explain both the factual cases of torture that emerged from the Iraq War,\textsuperscript{147} as well as their reflection and representation in the media and media structures more generally, with categories such as latency or the compulsion to repeat, and the “belated” appearance of contentious topics. Torture and its psychological root cause are always set in context of the terror attacks of September 11, 2001. Where the Holocaust has tended to serve as primary example for a trauma of such a magnitude that it exceeds representational capacity, 9/11 has often been used as examples for secondary traumatization, for the role of the news media in actually producing trauma through dissemination and repetition.\textsuperscript{148} Susan Faludi’s *Terror Dream* begins with our reluctance to look and the experience of watching 9/11, with the diagnosis of a “traumatic paralysis”\textsuperscript{149} or “fetishistic disavowal,”\textsuperscript{150} when the

\textsuperscript{147} Faludi explains the sexual aspect of the factual torture cases with the need to reassert a wounded “U.S. national manhood,” and to restore a “national fantasy in which we are deeply invested, our elaborately constructed myth of invincibility,” a shield of omnipotence in the “contemporary national imagination” Susan Faludi, *The Terror Dream: Myth and Misogyny in an Insecure America* (New York: Picador, 2008), p. 3. Danner argues that the real torture program allowed the CIA to “alleviate their own anxiety.” Torture was used as a means of “better to be safe than sorry,” as “internal communication” from the agency that failed to prevent 9/11. The torture worked, because “when it did not render information, it might absolutely certain that there was no information to be rendered. … We translated our ignorance into their pain” Mark Danner and Hugh Eakin, ‘Our New Politics of Torture’ (30 December 2014) <http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2014/dec/30/new-politics-torture/> [accessed 21 March 2016]. Similarly, Chuck Kleinhans interprets the torture at Abu Ghraib and other places as recover hardness and masculinity in a moment after 9/11 exposed vulnerability, both as a “personal power trip” and to answer “the separate need to look omnipotent again” and to “make up for” 9/11.” Chuck Kleinhans, ‘Imagining Torture’, *Jump Cut*, 51 (2009).

\textsuperscript{148} Kaplan speaks of “vicarious trauma” in the reader or viewer of stories or film, as well as “empathic over-arousal” in trauma therapists. Kaplan, *Trauma Culture*.

\textsuperscript{149} Buckland, *Film nation*, p. 3.
images of the crashing planes became a “cocoon.” Formulaic narratives and incessantly repeated footage were interpreted as attempts at containment, and the emerging films as “in denial.” Temporal proximity to the original event is obviously a factor in audience responses but too often institutional constraints are disregarded in favour of trauma paradigms.

The notion of trauma developed a path towards recovery for individuals. Transposing its diagnoses onto collective bodies, and extending psychological to cultural trauma problematically conflates individual and collective memory processes. Central concepts – the unconscious, the return of repressed – do not work offhandedly in a collective context, as nations do “not have ‘psyches’ or

150 Žižek advances the idea of fetishistic disavowal - “We know but we don’t want to know, so we pretend that we do not know” – or “unknown known”, as a response to Rumsfeld’s infamous quote about “unknown unknowns.” Slavoj Žižek, ‘What Rumsfeld Doesn’t Know That He Knows About Abu Ghraib’ <http://www.lacan.com/zizekrumsfeld.htm> [26 March 2016].

151 Faludi, The Terror Dream, p. 3. Faludi problematically equates the first post-9/11 films, World Trade Center (Oliver Stone, 2006) and United 93, as “slavishly literal reenactments … [and] unrepresentative tales of triumphal rescue.” Burgoyne considers the same set of films “scrupulous in their pursuit of authenticity,” and characterizes them as examples of Rosenstone’s metahistorical films that “revision” history, using “expressive modes of representation that expand the vocabulary of the historian.” Robert Burgoyne, Film Nation: Hollywood Looks at U.S. History (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), p. 3.


154 Temporal proximity is often discussed in the context of the archive and the question when audiences will no longer be able to recognize the original. Cf. Sobchack, ‘The Charge of the Real’.

Provocatively, Frank Rich argued that it might be rather “too late” than “too soon” to create 9/11 stories, as the event, even one as momentous as the 9/11 attacks is “quickly fading” from memory. If this is true, traumatic latency provides a poor category of analysis for contemporary U.S. films. Quoted in Robert Burgoyne, The Hollywood Historical Film (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), p. 148.
an ‘unconscious’; only people do.”¹⁵⁵ This objection is central to counter arguments that build on the alleged transmission of trauma and memory through the channels of (mass) media.¹⁵⁶ Nevertheless, trauma has been helpful in establishing the idea that certain events need a different kind of memory work, that fantasy, a “common response to real trauma,” can produce very real effects in the psyche¹⁵⁷ and that an “affective truth” can help unpack the “vicissitudes of memory”¹⁵⁸ – even though one should abstain perhaps from diagnosing whole nations with unconscious desires.

Trauma and memory studies have developed in such close interconnection that some consider their difference frequently reduced to one of emphasis rather than “any intrinsic specificity to be delineated from a historical, thematic or methodological perspective.”¹⁵⁹ Yet a number of terms have emerged in contemporary memory scholarship that differentiate between and account for diverse ways of experiencing and remembering,¹⁶⁰ and describe a variety of

¹⁵⁵ McClintock, ‘Paranoid Empire’, p. 91.
¹⁵⁶ See Wulf Kansteiner’s methodological critique of Collective Memory Studies. Wulf Kansteiner, ‘Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies’, History and Theory, 41 (2002), pp. 179-97. The paradigms of trauma theory are based on a problematic, specific (historically Western) theory of identity formation, which might not be the appropriate rubric for all kinds of traumatic events. Cf. Jill Bennett and Rosanne Terese Kennedy, World Memory: Personal Trajectories in Global Time (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003). Nevertheless, trauma scholars such as Kaplan have suggested that societies may exhibit cultural “symptoms” of traumatization, similar to those experienced by individuals.
¹⁵⁸ Janet Walker in Kaplan, Trauma Culture, pp. 42-3.
¹⁶⁰ For instance, Marita Sturken’s notion of “tangled memories” describes the relationship between cultural memory and history, here of the AIDS epidemic and the
memory modes. Assisted by neuroscience, memory studies today support a notion of memory not as an accurate and accessible storage, a container of truth, but a more “liquid” formation of the brain, moving it closer to a performative, and partly fictional realm. The complexity and vicissitudes of memory and its symbolic encodings are inadequately addressed with absolute categories of true and false or “regular” and traumatic.

Originally developed for Holocaust survivors to describe the way in which the second generation is related to and marked by the trauma of the first, Marianne Hirsch’s concept of postmemory has found much traction in Latin America, as we shall see below. Postmemory refers to the transmission or inherited recollection of an authentic event over time and across generations, emphasizing both the temporal gap and the affective connection.

Vietnam War, as a dynamic between history (in the sense of original event) and memory as cultural and individual formation as so occluded that it is practically impossible to distinguish between the two. Marita Sturken, Tangled Memories. The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

The idea of “liquid” memory is inspired by the flexible characteristics attributed to memory by Anna Reading’s keynote at the conference “Memories of Conflict, Conflicts of Memory” (London: Birkbeck, 12-13 February 2013).

Memory is commonly understood to refer to a kind of realistic registration of past events, as if the mind were a passive photochemical surface (and terms such as “false” or pseudomemory can in themselves be criticized for continuing such a distinction). The purity of a binary distinction between original and secondary form, based on exclusion, authorship, and originality is untenable. Memory changes over time, and with each re-telling, which is not falsification but a natural process. There is an original event, but the experience always only exists in relation to its mediation. Neuroscience has backed up the claim that by telling an event or even only remembering a past action, we immediately change our own memory of it, that it is possible to implant “false memories” and that we can, more or less deliberately, choose to remember and choose to forget.

Recent neurological research backs up central tenets of postmemory. The new research on epigenetics for instance explores how the effects of stress and trauma can transmit biologically, beyond cataclysmic events, to the next generation. For instance, the children of Holocaust survivors and of pregnant women who survived the 9/11
Approximating memory in its affective force, postmemory is transmitted via absorbing, diffusing, and filtering screens, which “function analogously to the protective shield of trauma itself.”\textsuperscript{164} Images and mnemonic objects such as photographs may help memory transmission, but the memory itself is accessed via the body, via sensory, emotional, and physical states.\textsuperscript{165} This is the basis for the claim that cinema can play a role in this process by providing a space to experience fictional encounters and the adjunct emotions through a screen which distances yet allows a mimetic encounter. Hirsch defines postmemory not as an identity position but a generational structure of memory transmission. She writes that in postmemory, less-directly affected participants can become engaged in the generation of postmemory, which can thus persist even after all participants and even their familial descendants are gone … Postmemorial work … strives to reactivate and reembody more distant social/national and archival/cultural memorial structures.\textsuperscript{166}


\textsuperscript{165} Not coincidentally, Hirsch looks at memory transmission within families, where memory is closely tied to the language of the body, to the close, intimate, familial and familiar space.

Thus, Hirsch herself had implied that this connection perhaps needs no base in familial ties. Many scholars have objected to such expansions, which potentially open the position of secondary witness to everyone, including perpetrators.\textsuperscript{167} Alison Landsberg concept of “prosthetic memory” expands the argument that postmemory can carry on a “living connection” between the generations to a sweeping possibility of inclusion for a much larger collective, losing Hirsch’s initial emphasis on the small and familial. “Prosthetic memory” is constructed as able to evoke affective solidarity across lines of gender, race, and nationality. Rather than creating a mediating or protective distance, images in “prosthetic memory” offer the possibility to create visceral experiences, a mimetic-experiential and hence emotional access to history. Created by modern technologies – and therefore prosthetic – this “memory” seems (problematically) no longer grounded in lived experience.\textsuperscript{168}

\textsuperscript{167} In ‘Surviving Images’, Hirsch suggests that we can all become “witnesses by adoption” (a term she takes from Hartman), oddly, through repeated exposure: “In repeatedly exposing themselves to the same pictures, postmemorial viewers can produce in themselves the effects of traumatic repetition that plague the victims of trauma.” Hirsch, ‘Surviving Images’, p. 29. In the later article, Hirsch cautioned against the problematic essentialising of identity politics and its victims (we are all Mothers of Plaza de Mayo and so on). Hirsch, ‘The Generation of Postmemory’, p. 114.


While traumatic events “are not fully owned by anyone and, in various ways, affect everyone,” Dominick LaCapra emphasises the need to distinguish between specific historical trauma, and transhistorical or structural trauma. He cautions against “trauma for everyone.” To some extent everyone, perpetrators included, is subject to structural trauma, but not everyone is a victim. LaCapra, Writing history, writing trauma, p. 79.

To dislocate the experience from its specific context, transferred from the individual to a global collective, is problematic yet tempting, as it grants impressive powers to media products. Landsberg argues that Maurice Halbwachs’s concept of collective memory must be redefined as old allegiances and social categories have been dissolved.\(^{169}\) Mass technologies make the dissemination of specific groups’ memory material available to a broader public in the public domain, crossing ethnic and group identifications, and thereby offer different ways of connecting through the experience of “prosthetic memory”, defined as “privately felt public memories.” Cinema can structure “imagined communities”\(^{170}\) that in fact do not share a common heritage, a geographical or national bond. For Landsberg, these prosthetic memories are the solution to a private memory culture which premises memory on authenticity, heritage, and ownership and thereby creates obstacles to political alliances. Landberg’s model is based on the idea that transferential spaces, such as films and experiential museums, teach empathy by helping the visitor share vicariously in a “bodily, mimetic encounter with a past that was not actually theirs.”\(^{171}\) As sketched above, the question of empathy is complex, and while this ethical potential may exist, the transfer from the fictional world is by far not as assured as Landsberg seems to suggest.\(^ {172}\) Moreover, in her claim

\(^{169}\)Maurice Halbwachs’s concept of collective memory relied on social categories like family, religion, and class and a geographically bounded community.


\(^{172}\)Precisely why the reception of mass-mediated memories would begin from a “position of difference ... encouraging people to feel connected, while recognizing the alterity of, the ‘other’” is not entirely clear. Landsberg, *Prosthetic memory*, p. 9.
that prosthetic memories challenge the distinction between collective and individual memory, Landsberg neglects that access to and the infrastructure of mass-mediation are also socially constructed. Also, precisely why the reception of mass-mediated memories should begin from a “position of difference, with the recognition that these images and narratives concerning the past are not one’s ‘heritage’ in any simple sense” “encouraging people to feel connected, while recognizing the alterity of, the ‘other’” is not entirely clear. Prosthetic memory seems a problematic term precisely because of the insistence to use the word “memory,” which, granted all modifications to the concept, all acknowledgments of memory’s unreliability and malleability, still carries the grain of an individual’s experience in the past. Thus, while Landsberg is clearly right that modern technologies of mass culture function as experiential modes of knowledge acquisition, the claim that these personal, deeply felt experiences constitute a memory is not convincing.

Landsberg draws on models such as Kaja Silverman’s “heteropathic memory” which recognizes that the subject of an injustice “could have been me … but I was not me.” Quoted in Marianne Hirsch, ‘Projected memory: Holocaust Photographs in Personal and Public Fantasy’, in Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present, ed. by Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe and Leo Spitzer (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1999), pp. 3-23 (p. 9).

Halbwachs argued that even individual memories are always collective in the sense of being shaped by the infrastructure of a collective, and that “collective memories” need to feel like memories individually. Landsberg argues that prosthetic memories challenge the distinction between collective and individual memory, because they are “not ‘socially constructed’ in that they do not emerge as the result of living and being raised in particular social frameworks” Landsberg, Prosthetic memory, p. 18.

Landsberg’s use of “memory” is predicated on the idea that ‘history’ employs a distanced mode of address, while memory is subjective and affective. This binary has been eloquently contested by LaCapra. Her assumptions regarding the dissolution of group allegiances seem also disputable, or perhaps Eurocentric in a pre-ISIS period.
I have outlined these two concepts in depth as I ask similar questions throughout, namely how the films provide an opening to link an individual spectator’s memory to a collective history. Films are frequently considered expressions of collective memory, a focal point where private and public dimensions intersect. Rather than delineate the precise boundaries of these memories or follow Landsberg’s slightly utopian pedagogic project, I will work with the notion that the hybridity of cinematic texts allows for different points of access. The films draw from a pool of (collectively shared) stories and images. Hirsch called such cultural image pools “screen memory,” “figures for memory and forgetting.” Visual mediation has been variously considered constructed as incapable, re-traumatizing or helpful. These pools of memory moments or snippets for collectives may provide a starting point, which does not replace but exists alongside individual or other group memories. I agree with Landsberg on the (possible) expansion of the addressee; these images can be shared among groups of audiences, whether or not these are generationally, culturally or geographically bound.

177 Some scholars argue that there are specific capacities of the visual media, or specific forms that are appropriate and helpful in relating these events. “If the traumatized are unable to articulate their experience verbally, then photography, proposed [Barbie] Zelizer, has sometimes filled the gap where other forms of narrative were yet to offer a coherent interpretation of events.” Meek, Trauma and Media, p. 179. Hariman and Lucaites argue that because of the similarity between the (iconic) image and the psychological structure of trauma (both exhibit a fragmentary character, a gap between an event and its interpretation, the disruption of continuity or story, the “eternal present” as fixed temporality in both image and traumatic memory), the pictures can create a public culture by displaying the public to itself show a performative model of citizenship and, via emotional identification, by creating “the habit of being benignly attentive towards strangers.”.
Rejecting the narrower psychoanalytically inspired categories, it is possible to operate with “memory” as a figure, to use the term less as a storage of truth than as a “liquid,” changing pool of collective narratives and (screen) images that can be shared among (generationally, culturally or geographically) diverse audiences. In my analysis of the films, I will work with such more “fluid” notions of memory, in the sense that non-living entities, such as objects and places, may be constructed as embodiments of history and as signalling authenticity. Regardless of whether or not individuals truly remember in still images, as Sontag argued, images, moving or still, may serve to condense knowledge about global events for audience groups, and the groups able and willing to access and share the existing pool of visual memory is changing and perhaps even expanding.

Chilean Cinema

In Latin America, attention to memory and trauma is inescapably political, interwoven with the pursuit of truth and justice. The paradigms of memory and trauma studies have provided dominating tools to address social suffering, and the categories of mourning and melancholia dominate analyses of Chilean cultural production, including film. This dominance of the memory discourse

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178 Sontag’s claim that we remember in images, that memory “freeze-frames” moments into (single) images. Sontag, Regarding the Pain, p. 19.
is historically rooted in Chile’s “memory war(s).” After the official return to democracy in 1990, the objective of post-dictatorship governments was to ease political tensions within a deeply divided society, and to dissipate the danger of a second coup. Negotiated on the basis of shared fear, and in the continued presence of Pinochet, the Chilean transition left in place many of the dictatorship’s institutions, most notably the constitution and the amnesty laws. During this transition period, official policy disciplined and excluded

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180 I added the plural “s” to María Angélica Illanes’s term “la batalla de la memoria” which points not only to the several contentious narratives of several historical events, but also to historical shifts and developments in these struggles. María Angélica O. Illanes, *La batalla de la memoria: Ensayos históricos de nuestro siglo: Chile, 1900-2000* (Santiago de Chile: Planeta/Ariel, 2002).

181 One must recall that the celebrated ousting of Pinochet by a national referendum was achieved by little more than 50% of the popular vote.

182 Pinochet’s continued political presence as senator for life, the legal securities he had put into place before relinquishing power, the fact that the transition was negotiated, all contributed to a “consensus” politics of the post-dictatorship governments.


184 The uneven playing field was unmistakably expressed in Pinochet’s statement, on 14 October 1989, that “the day they touch one of my men, democracy is over.” (“El día que me toquen a alguno de mis hombres se acabó el estado de derecho.”) ‘Las frases de un dictador’ [http://especiales.lasprovincias.es/2006/pinochet/noticia04.html] [accessed 4 February 2016].

185 I use the term “transition” here as a period circumscribed by the figure of Pinochet as threat to the re-established democracy, roughly lasting from 1990-1998, when his arrest in London ended the period of “untouchability.” Pinochet’s renouncing the leadership position of armed forces and his eventual death are also often used as psychological-institutional endpoint, cf. Ascanio Cavallo, Pablo Douzet, and Cecilia Rodríguez, *Huérfanos y perdidos: El cine chileno de la transición 1990–1999* (Santiago de Chile: Grupo Grijalbo Mondadori, 2007). The precise beginning and end of the transition are a contentious issue. Manuel Garretón suggested that, incomplete and transitory, the transition took place between democratic elections of 1988 and the inauguration of the first democratic administration in 1990. Manuel A. Garretón Merino, *Incomplete Democracy: Political Democratization in Chile and Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), pp. 146-7. Others suggest that the transition is ongoing as long as Chilean society continues to work with institutions inherited from the military regime (as suggested to me in an interview with Diamela
contentious issues; a “pact of silence”,186 forged by the political class, permeated all of society, enforced by the judiciary and the media,187 pressuring for “consensus” and reconciliation “by means of an institutional pluralism that forced diversity to become non-contradictory.”188 Numerous scholars argued that this effectively led to the suppression of division, to the exclusion of contentious topics and marginal voices, and, at least officially, to a repression, even a negation of the past. Chile was diagnosed as suffering from collective amnesia.189 In practical terms, this meant “as much justice as possible” (or “within the limits of the possible”)190 as impunity and “silence regarding the crimes committed under the dictatorship” were named as the price for a (free-market) democracy.191

Eltit). Avelar finds that the real transitions were the dictatorships themselves in their social transformation. Idelber Avelar, Letter of Violence, p. 253.


187 See appendix for more details on the judicial shortcomings and attempts at redress, for the aggressive media campaign to self-impose forgetting, see Mónica Villarroel, La voz de los cineastas: Cine e identidad chilena en el umbral del milenio (Santiago, Chile: Cuarto Propio, 2005).


189 Jocelyn-Holt characterized Chile during this period as an amnesic country, Gómez-Barris diagnoses a “culture of amnesia” Gómez-Barris, Where Memory Dwells, p. 89. Moulian describes a “national compulsion of forgetting” and denial as a “national constant,” that upholds a mythological idealised version of the country. Moulian, Chile Actual, p. 2. Outrageously, Pinochet himself suggested in 1995 “oblivion” as the “only solution” to the “problem” of human rights: “La única solución para el problema de los derechos humanos es el olvido.” Cf. ‘Las 40 frases macabras del tirano’, The Clinic Online (3 September 2013).

190 The first post-dictatorship President, Patricio Aylwin, coined this phrase (“justicia en la medida de lo posible”).

191 “el silencio frente a los crímenes cometidos en dictadura era condición tanto para el retorno de un sistema democrático como para la implementación del sistema de libre Mercado.” Antonella Estévez, ‘Dolores políticos: reacciones cinematográficas.
Certainly, alternate memories cannot be and have never been truly “erased.” As Elizabeth Jelin points out, there have always also been marginalised memories, pitting “memory against memory”\(^\text{192}\) within “persisting antagonistic memories.”\(^\text{193}\) Historian Steve Stern has devoted several books to the history of memory in Chile, identifying the development of several emblematic memory “scripts.” Stern suggests that the result of the disciplining consensus was “not a society of amnesia but one of contradiction and ambivalence.”\(^\text{194}\) According to Stern, the “stagnation” of (official or public) memory was only broken in 1998 with Pinochet’s detention in London,\(^\text{195}\) when negacionismo, historical revisionism, became an untenable position and a false democracy of memories could be addressed.\(^\text{196}\)

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\(^\text{194}\) Stern speaks of a “memory impasse” in Chile, which extends beyond a simple binary of remembering and forgetting, and introduces the metaphor of a “memory box” which contains multiple, often contradictory accounts. Steve Stern, Reckoning with Pinochet: The Memory Question in Democratic Chile, 1989-2006 (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 361.

\(^\text{195}\) Pinochet’s detention resulted in a seminal moment for universal, international human rights jurisdiction and a seismic shift in the perception of what was possible. In general, the Latin American dictatorship experience created terms, concepts, and a language to describe similar or analogous cases of human rights abuses worldwide, such as the term “disappeared.”

\(^\text{196}\) The right’s revisionist history described pre-coup Chile as bankrupt, at the point of civil war, and claimed that politicians and the public wanted the military to re-establish law, order, and economic stability, to save the country from chaos and communism. Human rights violations were framed as lamentable, rare, and historically necessary evil.
The scholarly focus on memory has also been criticized, but it must be understood in the context of the fight over official political memory and the sense of “unfinished business” in terms of justice. “Official memory” slowly expands its acknowledgements, but conflicting memory narratives still shape the social net of Chile. It is because of these contested versions, because “the future of the past … [prefigures] the future … [that] memory has become the locus of epistemological debate and political dispute.”

In the immediate aftermath of the return to democracy, a number of fiction films addressed the dictatorship. After these initial films – which oddly mirrored the limited reach of the country’s first Truth Commission, by excluding

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197 Verónica Garibotto suggests that main scholars such as Nelly Richard, Francine Macielo, Idelber Avelar, Alberto Moreiras are “trapped” in recurrent topics, cf. Verónica Garibotto, ‘Contornos en negativo: reescrituras posdictatoriales del siglo XIX (Argentina, Chile y Uruguay)’ (University of Pittsburgh, 2008).

198 A national Museum of Memory, the Museo de la Memoria y de los Derechos Humanos (MMDDHH), was inaugurated as late as 2010, twenty years after the end of the dictatorship. On the politics behind the MMDDHH as prestige project, pushed forwards with “incredible haste” and other places of a memory marketplace, see Cath Collins, ‘The Moral Economy of Memory: Public and Private Commemorative Space in Post-Pinochet Chile’, in Accounting for Violence: Marketing Memory in Latin America, ed. by Ksenija Bilbija and Leigh A. Payne (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011). See appendix for some more details on such politics of place.

199 These contested versions of its past face each other in entrenched, opposing and largely irreconcilable positions. See, for instance, Mitnick for some examples of how “memory battles” are fought in the present. Mitnick, ‘La Persistencia’; cf. Richard, Cultural Residues and a telling named conversation between Nelly Richard and Jorge Arrate. Nelly Richard and Jorge Arrate, ‘Las derrotas son completas solo cuando los vencidos olvidan las razones por las que lucharon’, Revista Cultural (November 2005).


201 La Frontera (Ricardo Larrain, 1991), La Luna en el Espejo (Silvio Caiozzi, 1990), read as the grand metaphor of the dictatorship, the belated/eventual exhibition of Imagen Latente (Perelman, 1987) in 1990, Amnesia (Gonzalo Justiniano, 1994), as well as foreign productions such as La Spirale (Armand Mattelart, Valérie Mayoux, Jacqueline Meppiel, 1976), Missing (Costa-Gavras, 1982), and Death and the Maiden (Roman Polanski, 1994).
the topic of torture – the national/dictatorship past largely disappeared from the fiction format, while dominating the documentary format.  

This scarcity of contemporary Chilean fiction cinema dealing explicitly with political topics has been read in reference to the country’s socio-historical context. Cinema, too, was seen as suffering from the neoliberal policies, from a “repression of mourning,” a “truncated past,” a general lack of faith in political solutions, resulting in a cinema “apolitical” in nature. In particular the sombre tones of Chilean films of the 1990s have been linked to the Freudian idea of melancholia as blocked mourning of the aborted national project, the loss of a socialist utopia, of a collective dream. Contemporary Chilean cinema is also often described within the post-traumatic framework, as “a cinema of melancholy,” characterized by a “melancholic cinematography,” by

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202 One may argue that the results of the dictatorship feature everywhere, but relegated to the background of fiction cinema. For instance, there is a family in the grips of unachieved mourning in *Te amo, made in Chile* (Carmen Castillo, 2001); a strange moment of double entendre with regards to the National Stadium in *El Chacotero Sentimenal* (Cristián Galaz, 2001).


207 Tal, ‘Memoria y Muerte’.

sensations of unease, uncertainty and alienation, a “poetics of malaise.” The task of remembering is ascribed to documentaries, described as “guardians of popular memory.” Documentaries’ social function, of informing and educating viewers, has been repeatedly affirmed for Chilean documentary, shaped historically through its distinctive ‘political vocation.’

John King reminds us how important it is to remember the early history of Latin American cinema; he rightfully criticizes the “very visible [tendency] in English-language criticism of Latin American cinema – namely that the only films worthy

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210 For instance, Mouesca claims that the documentary genre in Chile is more important than the fiction film in terms of its contribution to the genre and to the Chilean public’s engagement with its past and present sociocultural surroundings; she neglects that this dominance also has economic and infrastructural reasons. Jacqueline Mouesca, Plano secuencia de la memoria de Chile: Veinticinco años de cine chileno (1960-1985) (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones del Litoral, 1988). The “division of labour” between documentary and fiction is comparable to Argentina. Cf. Gonzalo Moisés Aguilar, New Argentine Film: Other Worlds (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 155.


212 Chilean documentaries appear in relatively high numbers, and encompass all kinds of subjects, according to Mouesca and Orellana. Jaqueline Mouesca and Carlos Orellana, Breve historia del cine chileno: Desde sus orígenes hasta nuestros días (Santiago de Chile: LOM, 2010), p. 209. Nevertheless, Ramirez claims that there used to be an “ellipsis” in critical attention. Ramirez (Un)veiling bodies, p. 33.

213 Zuzana Pick, ‘Chilean Documentary Continuity and Disjunction’, in The Social Documentary in Latin America, ed. by Julianne Burton (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990), pp. 109-30. There is also a rich and diverse history of artistic visual mappings of the dictatorship, including its practice of torture, from the theatre and performance activities of C.A.D.A., to the cultural programme Off The Record, television interviews with ex-torturers, the visual art of Carlos Altamirano, Pedro Lemebel, and of course books.
of discussion ... [are] part of the loosely defined ‘New Cinema’ movement."\(^{214}\)

Anglophone academia in particular tends to concentrate on a certain type of Latin American cinema; but Verónica Cortínez and Manfred Engelbert suggest that many Chilean scholars have also been slightly tunnel-visioned in their focus and selection.\(^{215}\)

Critical attention to Chilean cinema predominantly reads the films alongside historical, sociological and cultural developments. As a dominant topic of the 1990s in Latin-American cultural studies, the preoccupation with identity, when extended to cinema, explains auteurist and prescriptive tendencies.\(^{216}\) Related approaches seek to isolate recurring themes, motives, topics, and types or to identify trends and movements in Chilean cinema in terms of generations,\(^{217}\) most recently manifested in the proposition of a New New Chilean cinema.\(^ {218}\)

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For examples of an approach that focuses on auteurism, and the role of the artist and filmmaker as cultural mediator or broker, see Villarroel, *La voz*; Andrea López Barraza, *Nuevo Cine Chileno 2005 - 2010* (Universidad de Chile, 2011). Several authors ask for chilenidad, a specifically Chilean cinema, in which Chileans can “recognize” themselves; for instance, Mouesca demands political consciousness. Mouesca and Orellana, *Breve Historia*; Cf. Verena Schmöller, *Kino in Chile – Chile im Kino. Die chilenische Filmlandschaft nach 1990* (Aachen: Shaker Media, 2009). Schmöller uses the idea of chilenidad to argue that the “new Chilean cinema,” while oriented on commercial aesthetics, still has value for such identity politics.\(^{217}\)

Cavallo, Douzet, and Rodriguez propose a number of themes and motifs which constitute a “united filmic imaginary” of the “generation de los noventa”; Carlos Flores discusses the “generation of 2000,” which he contrasts with the famous New Chilean
The dearth and neglect of archival documentation factors in the emphasis on historical research on Chilean cinema. For reasons ranging from the “absence of a conversationist conscience” and likeminded state policies, to intentional or accidental destruction of culture and documentation, falsifying, neutralizing, excluding, marginalizing, and killing by neglect, Chile’s cinematographic archive faces a perilous existence, and the loss of cinematographic memory fosters a “privatization of memory.” Recently, however, there has been an


218 Coined by Ascanio Cavallo, the “Novísimo Cine Chileno,” translatable as New New Chilean cinema or Newest Chilean Cinema, has attracted considerable scholarly national and even international attention; Cortínez and Engelbert consider it largely a marketing strategy. Ascanio Cavallo and Gonzalo Maza, El Novísimo Cine Chileno (Santiago de Chile: Uqbar Editores, 2010).

219 Mirrored in other Latin American countries during the period of military dictatorships, in Chile, from the 1970s to 1980s, films and filmmakers were banned, exiled, or killed. Cf. Udo Jacobsen and Sebastián Lorenzo, La imagen quebrada, palabras cruzadas: Apuntes y notas (provisionales) sobre el ensayo fílmico (en Chile) (Valparaíso: Fuero de Campo, 2009); Traverso and Crowder-Taraborrelli, ‘Political Documentary Cinema in the Southern Cone’.

One of the most dramatic and well-known examples of the fascist attack on cultural expression is the now-iconic image of soldiers burning films at the Chile Films central office after the military coup. While this famous picture is irrefutable, Cavallo disputes that such actions took place wholesale. In Jorge Letelier, ‘El Nuevo Cine Chileno es una entelequia’ (1 July 2007) <http://www.mabuse.cl/entrevista.php?id=78073>. Contrarily, Mouesca reproduces in full the testimony of a Chile Films worker who describes how soldiers made a great bonfire in the central yard of the film company and for three days burned hundreds of master prints of films ranging from recent political documentaries to national cinema classics and precious historical relics. Mouesca, Plano secuencia.

220 Before founding of Cineteca Nacional in 2006, the archiving of national film heritage remained in the hands of private people, cf. Schmöller, Kino in Chile, p. 21.

221 Jacobsen and Lorenzo, La imagen quebrada, p. 90.
upsurge in valuable scholarship on early Chilean cinema, cinema in exile, and the era between 1950s and 1970s.\textsuperscript{222}

Less attention is generally given to lack of state support and infrastructure as explanations for the scarcity of Chilean fiction films, even though these factors may be more determinant than “political interest and opportunities [],... the persistence of trauma or ... any ‘leakage’ in the collective unconscious.”\textsuperscript{223}

These structural impediments originate in the dictatorship period and change at a slow pace.\textsuperscript{224} Only around 10% of films shown in Chile are not North American; if more than a dozen Chilean films come out in a given year, these will compete amongst themselves.\textsuperscript{225}

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\textsuperscript{222} Some of Chile’s earliest cinema was saved in exile. Especially for the films between 1950s-1970s, there exist few copies and the quality of those that survive is a problem; Cavallo compared scholarship on these works to archaeology. Letelier, ‘El Nuevo Cine Chileno’. For recent publications on the period between the 1950s and the 1973 military coup, see Pablo Corro, \textit{Retóricas del cine chileno: Ensayos con el realismo} (Santiago de Chile: Cuarto Propio, 2012). Mónica Villarroel and Isabel Mardones, \textit{Señales contra el olvido: Cine chileno recobrado} (Santiago de Chile: Cuarto Propio, 2012). Alfredo Barria Troncoso, \textit{El espejo quebrado: Memorias del cine de Allende y la Unidad Popular} (Santiago de Chile: Uqbar Editores, 2011).

\textsuperscript{223} Kansteiner, ‘Finding Meaning in Memory’, p. 301.

\textsuperscript{224} Apart from censorship, financing films was difficult under Pinochet. There are few grants, credits and subsidies; the Chilean state remains comparatively hands-off regarding the fledgling national cinema production. Only the Lagos administration (2000-2006) passed an audiovisual law to offer state support in 2004. There were also huge improvements of movie theatres, technical film education and post-production. After a long period of minimal production and circulation, bad reviews, and little public interest, \textit{Historias de Fútbol} (Andrés Wood, 1997) marked the reawakened public interest, and the box office hit \textit{El chacotero sentimental} (1999) kicked off a remarkable increase in Chilean audience for Chilean films. Since 1999, these numbers have settled at 6% of total spectators or 1 million, even though production has considerably increased - from an average of 4 films a year, to a peak in Chilean history of 25 in 2012. 90% of the films shown in Chile are U.S. films. Roberto Trejo Ojeda, \textit{Cine, Neoliberalismo y Cultura: Crítica de la economía política del cine chileno contemporáneo} (Santiago de Chile: Arcis, 2009).

\textsuperscript{225} Antonella Estévez, ‘Cine contemporáneo chileno: Joven cine chileno: En la movilización de los márgenes’, in \textit{El cine que fue: 100 años de cine chileno}, ed. by Claudia Barril and Jose M. Santa Cruz G (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Arcis, 2011), pp.}\end{flushright}
If contemporary Chilean society, restructured on neoliberal terms, is “constructed on corpses of Chileans,” then every aspect of this society can be considered unescapably political. For cinema, this means that the absence of more overt political stances is read as evidence of “internalized” neoliberalism, a privatization of pain, demonstrating the effects of neoliberalism, which replaces ethics by aesthetics, where style takes priority over substance or story, evidence of a successfully depoliticised daily life. The penchant towards individualism is read as narcissist expression – or victory – of the neoliberal model, as the “exorcism of the political and the ‘social’ … celebrated as artistic and critical advance of the individual may well be considered the ultimate triumph of the military and market forces.”

Aesthetic forms are read from this political angle, discussed in a framework of the wounded collective project. For instance, the disappearance of “the popular

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75-83 (p. 75). Considering these structural limitations, the ascriptions of a lack of public interest in Chilean films is questionable, for instance by Mouesca, Plano secuencia.

226 As suggested by Moulian, Chile Actual; Estévez, ‘Dolores Políticos’.
227 Lechner in Claudia Barril and Jose M. Santa Cruz, El cine que fue: 100 años de cine chileno (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Arcis, 2011), p. 92.
229 Roberto Trejo, ‘El cine chileno en la primera década del siglo XXI: el agotamiento ideológico de una estrategia de desarrollo material’, in El cine que fue: 100 años de cine chileno, ed. by Claudia Barril and José M. Santa Cruz (Santiago de Chile: Arcis, 2011), pp. 84-101 (p. 94).
231 “el exorcismo de lo político y de lo ‘social’ … celebrado como avance artístico y crítico en nombre del individuo, podría ser un triunfo tardío de los militares y de las llamadas fuerzas del marcado.” Cortíñez and Engelbert, ‘El cine chileno de los sesenta’, pp. 16-7; cf. Moulian, Chile Actual; Carlos Alberto Saavedra Cerda and Luis Horta, Intimidades Desencantadas: La poética cinematográfica del dos mil (Santiago de Chile: Cuatro Propio, 2013); Roberto Bruna Henríquez, ‘El cine chileno de ficción, la última conquista de Milton Friedman’ (3 September 2013) <http://www.elmostrador.cl/cultura/2013/09/03/el-cine-chileno-de-ficcion-la-ultima-conquista-de-milton-friedman/> [28 March 2016].
subject” and a prevalent focus on small, subjective stories is read as the result of distrust and shattering of grand narratives in favour of “local truth”;²³² Carlos Saavedra discusses a “cinema of intimacy,” films that take shelter in interiority, as a manifestation of what Beatriz Sarlo had called the “subjective turn.”²³³ Even such sensitive interventions on Chilean cinema are often encased in the political parameters of the previous political debate. Cortínez and Engelbert masterfully demonstrated the high politicization of film scholarship of the 1960s to 1970s and these scholars’ propensity to discuss films in relation to their politics, to read specific aesthetics as expression of particular ideological messages, and to chastise films for their self-absorption and an alleged lack of historical consciousness.²³⁴ To an extent, this tendency seems to be still reverberating today.²³⁵ The conclusion that “[w]hatever the vision, it seems


²³³ Sarlo suggested the term “el giro subjetivo” – which Moulian links to a ‘de-politisation’ of society (quoted in Ramírez, p. 226) – in the context of the rise of testimony. Sarlo, Tiempo pasado. The “cine de la intimidad,” refers to films made around 2000, allegedly privileging topics such as disenchantment, sexuality and nihilistic individualism. Saavedra and Horta, Intimidades Desencantadas, p. 22.

²³⁴ Cortínez and Engelbert show how in the 1960s, critics were surprisingly impartial; the confusion between politics and aesthetics, the idea that “a positive critic of a movie implied the agreement of the critic with its political posture” only appeared in the 1970s and 1980s. Cortínez and Engelbert, ‘El cine chileno de los sesenta’, pp. 22-4.

²³⁵ For instance, Schmöller reads film, and art in general, as memory work, with attaining social responsibilities; Barraza interprets the absence of “aesthetic national references” in contemporary Chilean films to a “desmemoria histórica,” a “historical dis-memory.” Barraza, Nuevo Cine Chileno, p. 23. Schmöller, Kino in Chile.

Jorge Letelier (on the film criticism website Mabuse, in 2002) charges that contemporary Chilean fiction cinema, while artistically “mature” is incapable of showing the true and profound problems of the country, such as the social and political inheritances of the dictatorship. Jorge Letelier, ‘Algunos Peligros Del Cine Popular’: Avanzar Sin Transar (2002) <http://www.mabuse.cl/cine_chileno.php?id=14427> [accessed 8 March 2016].
nearly impossible to avoid politics in the art of Chilean film, either on-screen or off.⁹²³⁶ might then evidence both social realities as well as a selective critical focus.⁹²³⁷

Thus, to some extent, politicised approaches face the same methodological-conceptual challenges as the representation-based criticism outlined above. The important difference is of course a brutal historical experience, the forceful implementation of neoliberalism via a military dictatorship. In Chile, the political coup was also a “coup against representation,” an “aesthetic coup.” The radical extirpation of cultural production rendered artistic expression illegitimate, enforced (self-)censorship, the destruction of films and closure of cinema studies departments, the exodus or forced exile of artists and came to be called a “cultural blackout.” The result was a destruction of historical meaning-making narratives; ways of thinking and speaking were rendered illegitimate. This loss of discourse, of a form with which to speak of the dictatorship experiences is what Nelly Richard describes as a cultural aphasia.⁹²³⁸

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⁹²³⁶ Leah Kemp in Cortínez and Engelbert, ‘El cine chileno de los sesenta’, p. 22.
⁹²³⁷ Even when there is criticism of this earlier period of filmmaking and appraisal of contemporary cinema, the “mythical period” often remains the reference point. For instance, Villarroel reappraises Chilean fiction cinema for allowing the spectator a form of identification with the history of the country, in difference to the earlier, political cinema. Villarroel, La voz, p. 164.
The aesthetic coup and the search for a lost collective explain also the attempt to reconnect current cinema, through the gaps of the dictatorship years, to its own historical predecessors, to find an aesthetic, theoretical or thematic continuity, especially with the celebrated New Chilean Cinema. The analysis of cinema is always usefully built on and in reference to previous aesthetics and templates. Yet, given how many scholars themselves refer to this cultural-cinematic past as “mythic.” such longings for earlier periods of more collective filmmaking and the hopeful, even idealistic movements in which these operated perhaps reflect perhaps more the longings of many academics than those of the films and filmmakers. While it seems legitimate to reject, with Gonzalo Aguilar, such political demands made on cinema, this is a balancing act. Theory, including textual analysis is of course not free from ideology and political choice. In their historiography of Chilean film scholarship, Cortínez and Engelbert point out how political predilection often shapes the selection of

241 Among these movies are seminal work such as Largo viaje (Patricio Kaulen, 1967), El chacal de Nahueltoro (Miguel Littin, 1969), Valparaíso mi amor (Aldo Francia, 1969), and Tres tristes tigres (Raúl Ruiz, 1969).

242 Among these “mythical” moments feature the organization of the Festival de Viña del Mar in 1967, the organization of the NO campaign, which Silvio Caiozzi has called “the first collective work” of Chilean filmmakers (in Cavallo, Douzet, and Rodríguez, Huérfanos, p. 29), “even more mythically, the cinematic movement of the seventies” (“aún más míticamente, el movimiento cinematográfico de los años sesenta.”) Villarroel, La voz, p. 165.

Compare Carlos Flores’s ultimate verdict on contemporary films. He connects the latest generation of cinematographers to artistic movements as different as the art of C.A.D.A. or the NO campaign, linked in their “attempt to exit the known and enter the inexplicable” (“salir de lo conocido y entrar a lo inexplicable”) and their use of a hybrid, baroque, antisentimental language which the Left of the 1960s and 1970s had rejected in favour of an emphasis on the content. Flores, Excéntricos, p. 34.

243 Gonzalo Aguilar identifies these for Argentine Cinema, and it is applicable to Chilean film as well. Aguilar, New Argentine Film.
films and methodological approaches. On the other hand, Cortínez and Engelbert also chide scholars such as Pablo Corro, Ascanio Cavallo and Carolina Díaz as exaggeratedly apolitical and formalist.

Thus, a methodological challenge of this thesis was to strike a balance between textual analysis and historically and contextually grounded arguments. For lack of attention to specific audiovisual strategies risks finding only what one set out to find, and hermeneutical close-readings threaten a reduction to pure formalism. Narrative and stylistic references points are both global and local; while the films are produced and consumed in a global world, they remain historically and politically grounded in specific cultural and national situations. In my analysis I will take into account at how the film asks to be read and also how this textual invitation indicates what the film imagines its

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244 Cortínez and Engelbert trace the development of the scholarly apprehension of Latin American cinema as political cinema to the Cuban revolution as the defining moment. The tendency to emphasise historical links or political claims, and to group films in generational terms, or along overarching commonalities, they argue, is made possible only by excluding a large number of films and directors from the canon, ironically often those which are most popular. Cortínez and Engelbert, ‘El cine chileno de los sesenta’, p. 26.

245 Cavallo and Díaz wish to deconstruct the myth of the Chilean cinema of 1960s. Ascanio Cavallo and Carolina Díaz, Explotados y Benditos: Mito y Desmitificación del cine chileno de los 60 (Santiago de Chile: Uqbar, 2007); Corro, Retóricas del cine chileno. Cortínez and Engelbert discuss these approaches as a reaction against the leftist discourse of previous cinema scholarship, and find them eventually equally programmatic and too hermeneutically closed. Cortínez and Engelbert, ‘El Cine Chileno De Los Sesenta’, p. 45.

246 King, Magical Reels. See Chapter 4, New Realism in Chilean Cinema, on the influence of the film festival circuit. Even though the technology (and perhaps also audience tastes) has moved on towards transnationality, media analysis tends to be dominated by a national paradigm. Stam and Shohat suggest that the “centrifugal forces of the globalizing process, and the global reach of the media, virtually oblige the contemporary media theorist to move beyond the restrictive framework of the nation-state.” Shohat and Stam, Unthinking Eurocentrism, p. 145. Cf. Athique on the lack of a framework to study transnationality Adrian Athique, ‘Transnational Audiences: Geocultural Approaches’, Continuum, 28 (2013).
audiences to know about the events referred to in the film. Linking textual analysis to a contextual reading helps to explore how this treatment of torture “also looks and feels,” offering a way to “think not against the movies or about them but with them.”

The affective turn has provided venues of interventions that could help frame a politics of the contemporary and the everyday that escapes the overpoliticised parameters. Using these tools, Carolina Urrutia suggests that the alienated representation of life in contemporary fiction “cinema of mood” turns into a purely political feeling of unease and uncertainty. In my own interpretations, I draw on Urrutia’s insightful and delicate readings of Larraín’s films, as well as the important work on memory and recent history for instance by Ksenia Bilbija, Macarena Gómez-Barris, Claudia Bossay, and Marianne Hirsch.

Built on Canclini’s notion of the “glocal,” various scholars – Poblete’s supplementarity, Haddu and Page’s Visual Synergy, as well as Avery Gordon’s work on the social imaginary of Chile – provide models that I draw on to develop my ideas around layered or palimpsestic texts, in which “liquid” memories may appeal to various pools of audiences. In these layers, national or social imaginaries reside alongside transnational pointers, signifiers for the

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248 Aguilar, New Argentine Film, p. 3, emphasis in the original.

249 Urrutia focuses on the affective aspects of this cinema and its “unchecking” of big subjects, Laura Podalsky and Elizabeth Ramirez take this approach for documentary. Urrutia also claims that, even though at first glance uncommitted to political topics, from this intimate arena, previously subordinated points of views emerge, small stories of vertiginous subjects, individuals in crisis. Podalsky, The Politics of Affect; Ramirez (Un)veiling bodies; Urrutia, ‘Política en tránsito’.
festival scene – here I build on the work by Antonella Estévez on the “invisible” in Chilean fiction cinema; Jacqueline Mouesca on the historical and industrial parameters of the Chilean cinema landscape; Maria Peirano, Deborah Shaw and María Montañez and David Martin-Jones for the influence of the festival cycle on cinemas today. For the historical role of photography and video in Chile, I will draw on the scholarship of Germán Liñero in particular.

The tendency towards hybridity that scholars have registered for a number of cultural practices in Latin America provides an extremely useful paradigm for Chilean cinema as well.\(^{250}\) Aesthetically hybrid forms, argues Juan Poblete, are accessible and productive for “glocal publics,”\(^ {251}\) and they are also inscribed with a particularly local meaning. Poblete suggests that political critique is inscribed in these cinemas through a process he calls supplementarity: narratives extend beyond the surface, adding further, subordinated information and double-entendres.\(^ {252}\) Similarly, Haddu and Page suggest that the formal and generic experiments in contemporary Latin American films present an

\(^{250}\) Expanding from Canclini’s concept of hybrid cultures. Kantaris and O’Bryen point to Moreiras’s term “savage hybridity” to rescue the concept of hybridity from its capture as postmodern, flexi-cultural hybridity, from “globalized multiculturalism.” Geoffrey Kantaris and Rory O’Bryen, *Latin American Popular Culture: Politics, Media, Affect* (Woodbridge: Tamesis Books, 2013), p. 14. While these concepts are developed for Latin American cinema, to some extent these “visual synergies” and double entendres can usefully inform the analysis of U.S. cinema as well.

\(^{251}\) The term “glocal,” developed by García Canclini, denotes “publics globalized in their image consumption and connections but localized in their languages, memory, and national sensibility.” Juan Poblete, ‘New National Cinemas in a Transnational Age’, *Discourse*, 26 (2004), p. 221.

\(^{252}\) Poblete suggests that the aim of these hybrid forms is to re-appropriate formal tools, to produce a critique of the dominant form and of Hollywood’s narratives. Poblete, “New National Cinemas in a Transnational Age”, p. 223. The violence of economic restructuring of Latin American societies is linked to the violence of hegemonic forms of representation or “regimes of globalized visuality,” p. 230.
“alliance” of aesthetics and politics. They are particularly able “to represent the gaps and contradictions of … post-dictatorship memory”\textsuperscript{253} and to speak about topics such as migration, (post-) nationalism and exile. Haddu and Page draw attention to the “visual synergies” between fiction and documentary forms.\textsuperscript{254} Their guiding questions are compelling: “What then is the need that fiction fails to fulfil? And what is it about the real world … that escapes the documentary camera?”\textsuperscript{255}

\textsuperscript{253} Poblete, “New National Cinemas in a Transnational Age”, p. 13.
\textsuperscript{254} Miriam Haddu and Joanna Page, \textit{Visual Synergies in Fiction and Documentary Film from Latin America} (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 21.
\textsuperscript{255} Haddu and Page, \textit{Visual Synergies}, p. 23.
2. Chapter Two: Seeing Torture

This chapter begins with an in-depth discussion of Kathryn Bigelow’s *Zero Dark Thirty* (Zero). While this film was thoroughly cross-examined by the media in relation to its alleged position on torture, its historical (in)accuracies, and the graphic visibility of its torture scenes, aesthetically, it has been considered in rather limited terms. This lack of attention precludes a deeper understanding of why the film was understood in vastly different ways, to the extent that it became the focal point for a debate on torture and turned into munitions for oppositional interpretations of U S. policy.

I will begin by sketching the parameters of the torture debate that preceded and followed Zero’s release in 2012, followed by a close textual analysis of key moments in the film. Attention to structure, approach towards history, and spectatorial alignments demonstrates that there is a significant amount of ambivalence built into the cinematic text. The film was inserted into a situation brimming over with images of the historical events it depicts, in this case the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, the extra-legal prison camp Guantanamo, and the torture scandal of Abu Ghraib. Zero is soaked through not only with awareness of these contemporary events but also of its generic history, and of cinematic torture tropes. How does the film position its aesthetics in relation to this pool of knowledge? In particular, I examine the effects of its aesthetic choices – the use of archive material or fiction – with regards to what Zero is saying about torture.
On account of the relatively close temporal proximity between the film’s release and the events it depicts, Zero is better understood as a political actor in itself, operating in the present moment and actively shaping the history of these events. Building on Elsaesser’s concept of double bind, I would like to demonstrate how the systematic layering of Zero with conceptual ambiguities creates a complex material and helps to explain the diverging views on the film. Regardless of their makers’ personal persuasion, spectatorial “pre-existing political conditions” must somehow find sustenance in the film in order to arrive at such different readings.

The second part of this chapter expands the theme of watching torture, already encountered in Zero, to three other, relatively mainstream U.S. productions. This focus on visibly represented torture and its attending witnesses and gazes explains why I focus on U.S. films in this chapter as representations of visible torture, before I expand the definition of torture to locate invisibilities and to focus precisely on those aspects which are inaccessible through vision, or surpass the visible, and it is here that Chilean films will figure more prominently.

**Zero Dark Thirty**

*Zero Dark Thirty* (Zero) condenses the decade-long manhunt for Osama bin Laden into 2.5 hours made up of investigative work, the interrogation and torture of prisoners, sifting through intelligence, wrong leads and dead ends, and the eventual discovery of Osama bin Laden’s compound in Pakistan. The
film culminates with a Navy SEAL team’s night-time raid and the killing of bin Laden in May 2011.

In interviews, the filmmakers of Zero have described their film as “journalistic,” as a “reported film,” and they claim to have taken pains to depict the events leading to the capture of Osama bin Laden “truthfully.” Already the epigraph asserts: “The following motion picture is based on first hand accounts of actual events.” At the same time, Bigelow points out that “depiction is not endorsement;” she asserts that her film “doesn’t have an agenda, and it doesn’t judge.” Somewhat contradictorily, screenwriter Mark Boal insists that Zero is “a movie, not a documentary” but also claims that their intention was “to make the point that waterboarding and other harsh tactics were part of the CIA program.” While Boal’s argument oddly opposes movies and documentaries, he still advances a claim on the historical real. This is why Alex

1 Dexter Filkins, ‘Bin Laden, the Movie’, The New Yorker Online (17 December 2012).
3 In an interview on USNI, Bigelow uses the term truthful several times: “you owe it to the project to be truthful and respectful, if not literal in every way, but truthful. … I just hoped in general that people would see that we were telling an exciting, heroic story that was as truthful and fascinating to them as it was to us.” Fred Schultz, ‘Exclusive: USNI Interview with Kathryn Bigelow’ (22 February 2013) http://news.usni.org/2013/02/22/exclusive-usni-interview-with-kathryn-bigelow%3E> [accessed 20 March 2016]. To be “truthful” is of course the word used by CIA agent Maya to reject a prisoner’s cry for help. More on this complex relation below.
4 As Zero uses such journalist terminology, it was held by some to the standards of reporting.
5 This assertion is unassailable, somewhat convenient, and also understandable, given the frequency with which the presentation of violence is taken to be intended for gratuitous titillation. Echoing the CIA’s terminology and line of defence, Bigelow has argued that we cannot know whether the U.S. would have captured Osama bin Laden without using what she described, rather tellingly, as “harsh interrogation techniques.”
6 Filkins, ‘Bin Laden, the Movie’.
7 As Alex Gibney points out in Chaudhuri, ‘Documenting The Dark Side’.
Gibney counters that “fictionalized ‘movies’ purporting to be based on historical events are not exempt” from questions of ‘truthfulness’. This touted fidelity to historical facts provided fodder for the debate following the film’s release and their focus on historical accuracy. But what do we mean by historical truthfulness? The “boots on the ground experience?” The obsessive fidelity to indexical place? The truth about the alleged utility of torture? To lean on Rosenstone, “what truth? The factual truth, the narrative truth, the emotional truth, the psychological truth, the symbolic truth?”

Following Rosenstone and Žižek, we can look at what the films say about the history they show, but even more, what they say about the present moment of their production, and also, I argue, what they say about themselves and their role in this process. A film acts simultaneously towards the future, impacts on the present and shapes the perception of the past, as it selects, enacts and influences “perspectives in the present by refiguring the past.”

The “torture debates” are central to the reception not only of the film Zero but also of the original events, and its images. Unfortunately, the debate that

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8 Chaudhuri, ‘Documenting The Dark Side’
10 Filkins, ‘Bin Laden, the Movie’.
11 Hoby describes “Bigelow’s fidelity to truth [as] maniacal; it extended to building a perfect replica of Bin Laden’s huge compound, brick for brick.” Hermione Hoby, ‘Zero Dark Thirty: Jason Clarke Confesses’, *The Guardian Online* (18 January 2013). Boal’s original reporting and meetings with CIA officials; its composite characters Maya and Ammar are based on real people, living and dead.
13 Shapiro, *Cinematic geopolitics*, p. 63.
preceded and followed Zero’s release in theatres in 2012 repeated, in content and in its limited circumference, the debate following the publication of the Abu Ghraib images in 2004, which already reproduced within its limited parameters the cluttering effect of the barrage of images from Abu Ghraib. Essentially the same debate was reprised when the Senate released parts of its investigation into the programme at the end of 2014. All three debates, as well as the report itself, focussed on whether the torture programme had produced “results” in the form of intelligence. The discussion of Zero mirrored this focus on the disputed utility of torture.

Apologists for torture repeated that it is enough if torture works sometimes for it to be considered a tool – to be regulated and supervised but legitimate as one of several forms of violence. Several progressive programmes attempted to scientifically disprove torture’s utility – admirable in intent, but failing to re-define the agenda. Others have argued that discussing utility is unethical:

15 Alan Dershovitz, ‘Should the Ticking Bomb Terrorist Be Tortured? A Case Study in How a Democracy Should Make Tragic Choices’, in Civil liberties vs. national security in a post-9/11 world, ed. by Katherine Darmer, Robert Baird and Stuart Rosenbaum (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2004), pp. 189-214; Sanford Levinson, Torture: A Collection (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). Insights from the humanities, philosophy, critical media and cinema studies are rarely taken into account in such models, nor even of counter-terrorist studies. Shapiro points out that “Heedless of the phenomenology of perception … war and security analysts attribute the results and limits of perception to the lack of a clear view of the terrains of battle … neo-Clausewitzian war analysts impute the fog of war to external conditions rather than collectively engendered mentalities.” Shapiro, Cinematic geopolitics, p. 65.

16 For instance, Christopher Hitchens and Hilary Andersson, the reporter of Fighting Terror with Torture (2015) both volunteered to undergo waterboarding and, predictably, emerged to describe its horror. As admirable as these attempts at self-experimentation might be – Andersson also subjects herself to being closed in a box and slammed into a wall – they will not convert new members to its cause. Any apologist of torture is aware of its pain; the pain is essential and intended. Neither do
“Torture – like murder – is categorically wrong no matter what benefits it produces.” 17 The official CIA line of defence suggests that the efficacy of the torture programme has been, at best, “unknowable.” 18 The CIA issued a statement that both disputes a pro-torture interpretation of the film and leaves the question on potential utility wide open. 19 The findings of the Senate Report on the Programme support the opposing side, which contests the insinuation that the programme may somehow have helped in tracking down Osama bin Laden. 20

they fulfil the conditions for a scientific experiment. By contrast, they do create some vaguely titillating footage.

17 Glen Greenwald, ‘Zero Dark Thirty: CIA hagiography, pernicious propaganda’, The Guardian Online (14 December 2012). Likewise, The Economist argued that “obnoxious measures” might well help to foil terrorism, but refused to endorse them because they are morally self-defeating. ‘Terrorism and civil liberty: Is torture ever justified?’, The Economist (20 September 2007). It is remarkable that, in contrast to abortion, gay rights, or almost any other contentious issue in the U.S. political landscape, torture seems rarely if ever debated on moral grounds.

18 Considering the horror of torture and the magnitude of breaking the international torture ban, this line of defence seems absurdly flippant. Compare Rumsfeld’s equally flippant reply in Unknown Knowns (Errol Morris, 2013), discussed in the third chapter, about the decision to go to war in Iraq: “Some things work, some don’t. That one didn’t.”

19 Acting CIA Director Michael Morell issued a statement that both disputes a pro-torture interpretation of the film and leaves the question on potential utility of the practice wide open: “the film creates the strong impression that the enhanced interrogation techniques that were part of our former detention and interrogation program were the key to finding Bin Ladin. [sic] That impression is false. ... the truth is that multiple streams of intelligence led CIA analysts [to bin Laden’s hideout] ... Some came from detainees subjected to enhanced techniques, but there were many other sources as well. And, importantly, whether enhanced interrogation techniques were the only timely and effective way to obtain information from those detainees, as the film suggests, is a matter of debate that cannot and never will be definitively resolved.” Morell, Michael, ‘Message from the Acting Director: Zero Dark Thirty’ (21 December 2012) <https://www.cia.gov/news-information/press-releases-statements/2012-press-releases-statements/message-from-adcia-zero-dark-thirty.html> [29 March 2016], emphasis added.

20 See appendix. Several U.S. Senators as well as high-ranking members of the intelligence community Protest contested what they saw as the film’s reading of history. Cf. Winter and Rothman, ‘Art of Darkness’. 
Among seasoned interrogators, it is consensus that the testimony obtained by torture is notoriously unreliable.\textsuperscript{21} The tortured might well not know anything, might be lying or telling the truth, might never “crack”, or might just pretend to crack (false confession).\textsuperscript{22} How can torture be both a tool that makes people say anything – and also fail – as when some people never break? If we tortured to obtain information, we should stop when it becomes clear that this is not a productive way of achieving that goal. As discussed in the Literature Review, there is ample evidence that the objective of torture is not the production of information but the reification of power relations, the production of certain bodies. In that sense, torture does indeed always “work,” as the act of torturing creates the victim as “torturable,” and manifests the tortured’s guilt retroactively: the performance of torture doing creates its cause.

Rejali argues that both opponents and supporters of torture remain invested in maintaining “convenient truths” about torture, albeit for differing reasons.\textsuperscript{23} One of these central truths is the notion that the prime purpose of torture is to “make people talk,” whether the focus is on torture as a tool that breaks biological defences (the torturers in Zero claim that “everybody talks – it’s

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\item It is impossible to test claims that torture can be effective in procuring information under specific circumstances with tests that would adhere to scientific standards (empirical, double-blind, peer-reviewed and so on). There exists however the knowledge derived form experience and historical and comparative research.

\item Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, identified as “the principal architect of the 9/11 attacks” by the 9/11 Commission Report, was waterboarded for a total of 183 times, and the fact that he only gave false information or did not say anything proved only his militant indoctrination, cementing his guilt. His torture produced the proof of stubborn resistance or that there is nothing more to be gained.

\end{itemize}
biology”) or on the unreliability of the produced information (the opponents in Rendition fear that “people will say anything on the rack”).

In fact, it does not matter what or if the tortured speaks for the torture to be “productive.” As a rhetorical tool, its truth is performative, not factual. It is not the actual reliability of torture that matters but rather “the perception that evidence was obtained through the use of torture.”

The torture creates its own reality where lies, confession or silence each play a part. Thus, the catch-22 is that torture proves itself and in that sense, it does indeed always work. The utility fallacy persists in the debates and in the public imagination, and the intellectual autism of these continuing torture debates work to cement torture’s “political fiction,” namely the claim that producing intelligence is in fact the purpose of torture. Yet, even though the utility paradigm appears in Zero, the conceptual dead-end in discussing torture cannot be blamed on such films, which are in fact much more complex, as I would like to demonstrate with textual analysis of particularly relevant scenes.

Footage and Fiction

Zero opens with audio footage of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, which is immediately followed by a long torture sequence. Four more terrorist attacks punctuate the narrative trajectory, and briefer torture sequences are sandwiched in between. Through this chronological juxtaposition, the 9/11 attacks are positioned as the fall from

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25 Scarry, The body in pain, p. 47.
innocence, the starting point and torture as defensive reaction, a causal link that ignores the long U.S. history of using, exporting, and funding torture.\textsuperscript{26} Locating the origin of conflict (and the story) with terrorism, never with state violence, applies a “hegemonic grammar” which defines terrorism as more or less implicitly as “unjustified acts against First World nations.”\textsuperscript{27} No external or additional information on these acts of terrorism is presented, but their presence sustains the impression of threat as well as the imperative to kill bin Laden. As Guy Westwell points out, the logic of the film’s structure seems to imply “that the 7/7 bombings were part of some kind of grand scheme orchestrated by Osama bin Laden.”\textsuperscript{28}

Framing terrorism as cause of and justification for torture suggests that if you eradicate one, the other will go away, and the end of the film suggests that the use of torture has ended, a closure not backed up by the political reality.\textsuperscript{29} To tell torture this way helps to perpetuate a historical amnesia and the myth of American exceptionalism.\textsuperscript{30} Westwell criticises the film’s “neat chapter-like structure” as condoning of torture, by offering a fictitious transparency and unity which reduces historical complexity, lending “a purifying coherence to the

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\item[26] Cf. Bass, ‘Counterinsurgency and Torture’; DuBois, Torture and truth; and appendix.
\item[27] Butler, Precarious, p. 13.
\item[28] Westwell, ‘Zero Dark Thirty’.
\item[29] See appendix for more details.
\end{itemize}
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chaos and contingency of the recent past.”

Omitted from this neat structure are also dissenting voices within the government and its agencies, the fights about (il)legality of the practice at the time the real CIA torture program was implemented.

After the epigraph, the film opens with a black screen and authentic audio recordings of distress calls of people trapped in the World Trade Center towers. The original footage moves from criss-cross static to intelligible sound material as “September 11, 2011” is blended onto the black screen, situating the spectator temporally, and unmistakably evoking the iconic visuals of 9/11 in the spectator’s mind. This strategy avoids the saturation or fatigue at the much repeated 9/11 film footage might have provoked, while preserving the legitimating power of the index on the soundtrack and its less familiar sound footage. As a counterargument to this claim, it has been suggested that the aesthetic strategy to combine audio archive material with a black screen has become something of a 9/11 staple, a codification of the “invisible signifier” 9/11. The 9/11 soundscape evokes a different level of traumatic indexicality: akin to a documentary still image, the 9/11 auditory footage points to a specific

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31 Westwell, ‘Zero Dark Thirty’.
33 The term “invisible signifier” is adapted from Nichols’s “absent signifier” in his discussion of The Act of Killing (Joshua Oppenheimer, 2012). Bill Nichols, ‘Irony, Cruelty, Evil (and a Wink) in the Act of Killing’, Film Quarterly, 67 (2013), p. 28. The “unrepresentable” of September 11 is frequently expressed via the cut or fade to black – for instance in Fahrenheit 9/11, in Zero Dark Thirty or at the end of United 93. Compare how Rosenstone describes that the “standard” fiction and the “standard” documentary history film produce authenticity through a codified “film historical language.” Rosenstone, History on film/film on history. Perhaps the absence of visuals is due to the desire not to provoke attacks regarding secondary or re-traumatization, cf. Kaplan, ‘Empathy and Trauma Culture’.
moment in the past. While the attacks appear to have been choreographed specifically for visual media, the traumatic experience itself is shaped at least as much by other senses, such as sound, smell, and taste. With the usually privileged visual sense blocked, the audio footage induces viewers to recall the first time of seeing and experiencing these images. The image of a black screen does not change, enhancing the reach of and our attention to the audio signal as well as awareness of other senses. At the same time, this strategy draws attention to the aspect that is missing and creates “presence by absence.” The black screen draws on a rich symbolic register: In the colour of mourning, it creates a sense of foreboding or doom, evoking also the ending and beginning of a film, or of a “dead” camera, whose “eye” is broken. All kinds of possible associations are allowed to play out in the spectator’s mind.

There is a progression of terror in the footage, which functions like an auditory long take, as the callers’ comprehension of their situation increases, culminating with a female caller locked in the burning towers, moments before her death. The sequence ends on that call being disconnected, and the emergency call worker, aghast, saying in a toneless voice: “Oh my God…” We hear the voice of the woman trapped in the burning towers moments before, as an auditory futur antérieur – she will have died. The disconnection of her call signifies this death – she might not have been dead yet, but at that moment she was beyond the point of return, out of reach. The tapes may be considered the point of view of those locked in the tower who have no vision or knowledge of what has happened and are only about to realise what will happen to them.
We, the audience know, but like a backward-facing Cassandra, are sentenced to helplessly experiencing it all over again. We are put in place with the person trapped in the dark (in experiential alignment), but we know what has happened and the person does not – a disparity in knowledge that is a classic staple of the tragedy. Thus, authentic audio material creates an affective entry into the film, by evoking personal sense memories.

This two-minute-long footage is followed by the first and longest torture sequence of the film, which stretches to slightly over twenty minutes. As this sequence begins, two graphic titles – “2 years later” and “The Saudi Group” – orient the viewer temporally, but not spatially. The transition of two years in real time; two seconds in screen time “establishes a direct correlation between terrorist atrocity and the unbridled CIA response, lending urgency to the investigation and legitimacy to torture.”

The first image shows a hole in the ceiling of a dark space, a short shot that is reminiscent of the haptic “easing in” of opening shots, symbolic in its connotations of heaven, a yearning for freedom, from a point of view that can be associated with that of the off-screen, not yet introduced prisoner. Off-screen sounds of footsteps and a metal door opening are audible. In the next shot, the camera rapidly pans along a row of blurred, camouflaged faces to focus on an unmasked man entering, followed by another figure whose face is

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Westwell, ‘Zero Dark Thirty’, p. 86. Some spectators might perceive this juxtaposition of 9/11 and torture as a horrible parallel of evils – this, again, depends on the pre-existing condition of the audience, as we shall see below.
concealed with a balaclava, who is later revealed to be protagonist Maya. A short close-up of her masked face centres the spectator’s attention on her eyes. In a quietly edited sequence, the unmasked man is seen approaching the prisoner, and he speaks the first (non-documentary) words of the film: “I own you, Ammar. You belong to me.”

An over-the-shoulder shot shows the prisoner’s bruised and cut face, then medium shots alternate between Ammar and the man who begins a monologue that escalates into a shouting rant, during which Ammar is pushed from side to side, as the agent, who continues talking nonstop, circles him, establishing his freedom of movement. In a fast-paced montage, images flash by: fragments of Ammar’s body – his hands, his legs and feet as he is dragged along the floor, then strung up by the arms. As he is tied up, the man and the masked person are seen exiting in the background, and the camera lingers for a moment, its frame crowded by the blurred outlines of the guards in the foreground, while the agents are sharply silhouetted against the light pouring in from outside.

Only in the next scene does the audience receive an expository reading on the situation. Standing in a sunny area outside of a white edifice, the shouting man is introduced as CIA agent Dan, who explains the situation to the now-unmasked character, the novice Maya, who has “just arrived from Washington.

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Masks and other disguises are used inconsistently, and sometimes illogically, apparently more for their ominous effect than as historical detail. The mask also points to the issues of (in)visibility, the right to remain invisible and make others visible.
in her best suit.” We see a surveillance screen depicting the interior of the prison cell. Already, watching and access to vision are configured as absolutely central: when Dan suggests that Maya should stay outside and watch the process in mediated form on the surveillance screen, she refuses. Control over the prisoner’s body extends to his vision: he is hooded or told where to look.

“Look at me!” Dan shouts repeatedly, and his prisoner’s refusal to obey seems to imply remnants of a free will and control over his body’s actions. In the next shot, the graphic title “Black Site: Undisclosed Location” is blended in over a nondescript image of the building from an elevated angle, offering spatial information to the viewer that is to equal measures informative and obscure.

In sharp contrast to the high-tech images of modern warfare elaborated below and especially to the raid at the end of Zero, the torture sequences seem archaic in their embodied, naked brutality. At the same time, the torturers’ spoken words attempt to establish a rationale. Westwell complains that “torture is here conducted with professionalism and intellectual purpose by highly qualified CIA operatives;“one of the torturers “even holds a PhD,” which, he argues, is in stark contrast to the real torturers at Abu Ghraib and other places. There have been, in fact, two narratives, one about the torturers as

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36 This detail may be counted as one of the “invisible” reality effects I will discuss in the last chapter. As was leaked only much after the release of the film, the “torture queen” Alfreda Bikowsky flew in from Washington to watch the torture of a prime suspect. Thus, at the time the film was made and released, the allusion to this fact, known only to the select few, could not be widely understood nor could its leakage be anticipated. Connie Bruck, ‘The Inside War’ The New Yorker Online (22 June 2015).

37 Westwell, ‘Zero Dark Thirty’. As I elaborate in the third chapter, this assessment of the real torturers is reductive. Abu Ghraib itself was visited by Rumsfeld, as we see in Standard Operating Procedure; the orders for the torture program, its particular
low-ranking soldiers, scapegoats or institutionalized into brutality, the other
about the chain of command that created the incentives and the programme.

In Zero, the physicality of the torture images and the ostensible familiarity
between the personnel (Dan says he knows Ammar) is oddly matched with the
cool, rational efficient demeanour of the torturer Dan and the quasi-scientific
rationalizations he offers. This tension is consciously created and not resolved
by the film. Dan's pronounced physical proximity to Ammar is emphasized in a
number of shots, such as close-ups of Dan taking his prisoner’s hands, which
would seem intimate, even loving, were the context different. But Ammar’s
hands are bound, and Dan is peeling away his prisoner’s fingers from a juice
bottle he is clutching. This exemplifies what Scarry describes as torture’s
“unmaking” of civilization, by corrupting formerly normal objects and turning
them into instruments of torture. In another scene Dan, to change Ammar’s
position, holds him from behind to release his overstretched bound arms,
before putting a dog-collar on him. Again, there is a perversion of the codes of
social relations: the function of objects, the physical intimacy and the act of
“helping,” are perverted and made complicit to aid the next torture technique.

Initially, Dan and Ammar are filmed from the same medium-level distance in
over-the-shoulder framings.\(^38\) During and after the physical torture, Ammar is
increasingly framed in extreme close-ups of his bruised face, gasping for air, or

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\(^{38}\) An exception to this is the rare American two shot of Dan and Ammar facing each
other, each head almost exiting the frame. This is when Dan says, “I know that you
know this [the answer to his question], bro!”
hidden under a towel. Interspersed are medium shots and close-ups of Maya watching. Sometimes she is visible in the background, often “neutrally” positioned between them. Objects in shallow focus frame and centre Maya’s face, particularly her expressive, compassionate eyes. Unidentified with any character in the film, the camera shows the perspective of an unknown first person. Initially the camera seems to attempt to follow the dialogue between Ammar and Dan, moving in an increasingly hectic fashion to trace the pushed body of Ammar, then “crouches down” to be on a level with the torturing action and tilts upwards to Maya’s face.

In this sequence, the viewer’s point of view correlates with various perspectives. Initially, the audience shares the experience of the prisoner: the brief shot of the hold in the ceiling; no introduction of locale or personnel is given. Next, we are told information on the prisoner, such as his name, before we know anything about the torturers. The images that show fragments of Ammar’s body as well as the shots of Maya’s face could again be read as Ammar’s point of view and his attempts at gauging the situation. Quickly though, the experiential alignment of the viewer is largely channelled through Maya: we know what she knows, see what she sees and follow her – until the last sequence, the raid on bin Laden’s compound, from which she is excluded.

More than the graphically realist mode of the depicted violence itself, what likely fuelled the debate on Zero was the relation of the re-enacted images to factual and then-recent torture cases. Not only are there worse images of factual violence accessible and visible on screens every day; even in Zero, much
violence and humiliation remains off-screen. For example, the characters remark that the prisoner “soiled” himself, and his pants are being pulled down as sexual humiliation – as this happens outside of the frame of the image, the audience is not made to participate visually in these humiliations (and a nudity rating is avoided). But the ghosts of Abu Ghraib, Bagram, Guantánamo, and the (potentially disavowed) knowledge of black sites and rendition practices hover in the consciousness of the spectator. The haunting quality of these scenes does not originate in indexical power of the images but is derived from the knowledge of the relation between the depicted scene and the real world. This explains both the acrimonious battle over historical veracity and the oppositional interpretations of the film, as the “pre-existing (political) condition” of the audience’s consciousness colour their interpretation of the scenes. The original iconic photographs of Abu Ghraib are evoked but not shown. Ammar is subjected to waterboarding, a torture practice around which much of the torture debate clustered; and he is tied up in a manner that recalls iconographically the “Hooded Man” (where the latter’s arms are stretched out to the side, Ammar is hung up as if on a cross [image 2.1, p. 183]).

Can these scenes be counted as re-enactments? Set at the interstice of real and fictional, bringing together “factual evidence, enactment and hypothesis or fictionalisation,” re-enactments always carry de-stabilizing potential regarding their “truthfulness.” As far as they can count as re-enactments, the scenes fit into Nichol’s category of the “typical particular – a form of generalization in

39 Bruzzi, ‘Restaging History’.
which a single entity is taken as exemplary of an entire class.” For Nichols, such re-enactments forfeit the “heightened sense of viewer responsibility that attends to the historical instead of a fictive world.” Rather than historical evidence, such dramatizations “contribute persuasiveness,” they fulfil “an affective function,” “which he opposes to the ethical appeal of footage.”

Regardless of the ethical interpretation of the emotional impact of the re-enactment, this effect is here effectively dampened in a first movement by its pairing with the 9/11 audio material. The indexical claim of this material, which evokes the physically experienced sense of certainty by sense memories, overpowers the emotional claim of the torture sequence. As entry into the film, the 9/11 audio footage generates an emotionally loaded atmosphere.

Where the 9/11 tapes, obviously a recording, combine an “immediacy [that] is strangely divorced from presence,” the torture scenes are more suspenseful, less tethered to historical evidence, and located firmly in the diegetic present. Archive material is used again to locate other terrorist attacks with precision. This combination creates fundamental instability: 9/11 and other terror attacks uncontestably and irrevocably happened, whereas the aesthetic presentation of

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40 Nichols, ‘Documentary Reenactment’, p. 87, p. 85, emphasis added, and p. 88. This assessment, along with Nichols’s “discourse of sobriety” has been eloquently criticized, see Literature Review.


42 Zero features the terrorist attack on the Khobar Towers residential complex in Saudi Arabia, the 7/7 attacks in London are reported on the news, the September 2008 bomb attack at the Marriot hotel, and the suicide attack on the CIA’s Forward Operating Base Chapman in December 2009.
the torture seems more ambivalent. Torture happened maybe, perhaps, in this way or a similar one.

**Double binds**

Yet the film is consistently aware of its performative nature. The stagey light in the torture scene evokes “high brow” culture, the light of experimental theatre, the spotlight in the third scene recalls a movie set or stage and evokes the idea of media as performative and as construction. Together with the torture scenes’ dialogue and delivery – the oddly over-familiar address that Dan uses towards Ammar, his manner of speaking and his lines resemble a clichéd action film – this codes the whole sequence as potentially fictional and clearly constructed.

In the following I want to explore how *Zero* continuously creates such oppositional pulls. In his article on post-Hollywood cinema, Thomas Elsaesser called this a strategy of “conceptual double binds.” Elsaesser argues that these double binds constitute a paradigmatic shift that operates in addition to classical strategies of creating ambiguity. A film like *Avatar* (James Cameron, 2009) strategically inscribes such ambiguities into its very structure, as part of a strategy to provide “access for all.”

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44 Thomas Elsaesser, ‘James Cameron’s Avatar: access for all.’ *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, 9 (2011), pp. 247-264. “Access for all” is not used in the sense of the lowest common denominator but as stretching the possibilities of meaning, similar to the way in which “poetry is said to aim at maximizing the levels of meaning that specific words or works carry.” Elsaesser highlights that Hollywood texts have always
If the undecidability of a film’s premise motivates the spectator cognitively, it would explain these ‘strong readings’ that Avatar has given rise to: since the message is fundamentally self-contradictory, unravelling its meaning results in a higher ‘ontological commitment’ on the part of the viewer to his or her particular interpretation – a commitment that works in favour of the affective bond formed with a given film.45

In Zero, we also encounter self-contradictory messages, which necessitate high cognitive investments and perhaps result in equally “strong readings.” The apprehension of certain tonalities is often contingent on extra-textual knowledge and perhaps even catered to specific audiences. A visual double bind is encountered in the image of Ammar, strung up in the position of a man being crucified, evoking the Western archetypal image of torture, Jesus on the cross. His symbolic counterpoint is CIA agent Maya’s countenance and her “exquisitely beautiful suffering” “form[ing] a pieta.”46 The perceptive spectator might also associate the stagey light in the torture scenes, together with ropes dangling from the ceiling like gallows, with the medieval idea of torture as a punishment and spectacle [image 2.2, p. 183], and the performative and semi-fictional nature of re-enactments might also reinforce ontological doubt. Such layers of association, however, are not necessary to comprehend the scene.

The attacks levelled against the film were fierce,47 caused precisely by the aesthetic decisions in handling this incendiary subject matter. Many reviewers

been permeable to different readings for different audiences. Elsaesser, ‘Access for all’, p. 248.
46 Westwell, ‘Zero Dark Thirty’.
concluded that the film condones torture, that the film was “pernicious propaganda”, essentially an apology for real political torture, an “ideologically sutured … vehicle for American exceptionalism that lets U.S. audiences relive over and over again the triumphalist moments associated with the death of bin Laden.”

A common critique claims that Zero shows torture as “necessary and effective” measures after 9/11. Shohini Chaudhuri for instance unhelpfully collapses films as different as *V for Vendetta* (James McTeigue, 2005), Zero *Dark Thirty* and the television show *24* as cut from the same cloth.

Although they often show the tortured writhing in agony … these fictional representations do not tend to linger on the phenomenon. They deploy a conventional cinematic iconography of torture … As Chuck Kleinhans suggests, action drama’s kinetic pace ‘allows the audience to recognize, experience, and quickly move on past the torture event.’

Oddly perched on scene length, this argument is difficult to maintain for the twenty minutes long torture sequence in *Zero*. As discussed in the next chapter, it does not really hold for the multi-faceted role of repetition in *24* either.

Other reviewers had more ambivalent views or even read an anti-torture message in the film. Some critics attempt to tout the aesthetic qualities while calling out ideologically problematic moments, to partition the film’s politics
from its (praised) aesthetics which leads to fundamental yet different set of questions. It seems that viewers of different political persuasions discerned different messages in this “strategically ambivalent” text, as in a “litmus test”: “Like a white-on-white canvas, Zero Dark Thirty has become a projection screen for the audience’s perceptions and sympathies, taking on different colours and contours depending on what the viewer brings to it.”

Robert Burgoyne suggests that Zero offers a new violent imagery that draws on a historical one, evoking and appropriating the close connection between aesthetic form and the history of violence. In Zero’s articulation, the symbolic

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51 Westwell praises the film’s “tight, detailed and fast-paced script,” the camerawork, editing, sound design and “Kathryn Bigelow’s direction [as] nothing less than commanding” yet insists that “this is a film about which we should be deeply suspicious.” Westwell, ‘Zero Dark Thirty’. Žižek evokes the Holocaust in his question regarding “banality” (Žižek, ‘Hollywood’s Gift’), as does Greenwald who conjures Riefenstahl to debate what he calls the “art excuse.” Greenwald, ‘CIA hagiography’. Similarly, Jane Mayer finds that “the hunt for bin Laden is essentially a police procedural, devoid of moral context. If [Bigelow] were making a film about slavery in antebellum America, it seems, the story would focus on whether the cotton crops were successful.” Jane Mayer, ‘Zero Conscience in Zero Dark Thirty’, The New Yorker Online (14 December 2012).

52 Hasian, ‘Military Orientalism’.


54 Winter and Rothman, ‘Art of Darkness’, p. 25. Another example for the double binds is the way in which American presidents appear in Zero. There is no footage of President George W. Bush, but an archive snippet of President Barack Obama announcing the end of the torture program, decontextualized in such a way that appears as a denial rather than a condemnation of his predecessor’s programme. It would depends on the viewer whether these selections are interpreted as excuse for Obama’s drone policy, side-lining Obama’s role in killing bin Laden, deflecting Bush’s guilt in initiating the programme.

55 Robert Burgoyne, ‘The Violated Body. Affective Experience and Somatic Intensity in Zero Dark Thirty’ in The Philosophy of War Films, ed. by David LaRocca (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2014), pp. 247-260 (p. 258). In contrast to many contemporary war films, which “appear to illustrate the point, envisioning war as a technological, mediated experience, far removed from the trauma of embodied violence” (p. 252), violence here is embodied. Burgoyne interprets the felt experience,
and cultural potency of violence is both used and refused.\textsuperscript{56} Thus, Burgoyne also reads Zero as ambivalent, as its final violence is “sobering, rather than transformative [and] the effect of violence on both character and history is left open, unresolved.”\textsuperscript{57}

Regarding the violence of torture specifically, Zero creates a fundamental ambivalence in the oppositional pulls between sound and visuals in the torture sequence as well as a double bind regarding its utility. The dialogue in Zero – both within and outside of the interrogation – invites a way of reading the images of pain, of the hurt body, that stands in sharp, sometimes even literal\textsuperscript{58} opposition. Many scholars suggest that looking at the physical act of torture is so appalling that the spectators’ moral response and emotional alliance with the victim would be a given, and only when “the focus of attention shifts to the verbal aspects of torture, those lines have begun to waver and change their shape in the direction of accommodating and crediting the torturers.”\textsuperscript{59}

Initially, both Dan and Ammar speak: Ammar shouts clichés and vitriolic outbursts, and Dan, coolly detached, retorts with equally hackneyed phrases and jingoistic swagger. This duel of two irreconcilable positions is filmed in

\footnotesize{the extreme haptic experience of torture, as the emblematic expression of contemporary war.\textsuperscript{56} Building on Sarah Cole, Burgoyne offers to distinguish between “enchanted” and “disenchanted” violence – “[t]o enchant, in this sense, is to imbue the violent experience with symbolic and cultural potency; to disenchant is to refuse that structure, to insist on the bare, forked existence of the violated being, bereft of symbol.” Burgoyne and Rositzka, ‘Goya on his Shoulder’.\textsuperscript{57} Burgoyne, ‘The Violated Body’, p. 251.\textsuperscript{58} For example, Dan asks his prisoner, who is obviously not hurting or torturing himself, “Why are you doing this to yourself?” Scarry, The body in pain, p. 47.\textsuperscript{59}}}
shot-reverse shot format. The exchange can also be read as a meta-comment, aimed at the audience – “What do you know about this topic, this history? What do you know about the pain of torture?” – especially since the question, like the one that ends the film, is not answered.60

With the torture, Ammar’s voice is extinguished – literally, as he is being waterboarded, and afterwards, gasping for air, his capacity for speech is reduced to pure sound – while Dan continues speaking without pause. Described by Scarry as the goal of torture – “to make … the body, emphatically and crushingly present by destroying it, and … the voice, absent by destroying it” 61 – the interrogation deconstructs Ammar’s voice, and monopolizes language for the torturer.

Within the diegesis, Dan demonstrates to Ammar the extent of his knowledge about him, and Dan’s narration also explains the situation to the audience – how the CIA got hold of him, why they keep him, and what they want to know from him. This again establishes a scientific, targeted procedure not borne out by the frequently chaotic imprisonment and torturing in the factual cases. Verbally, no alternate version or point of view is offered. Ammar remains largely a described image of pain, with Dan’s voice as a caption read aloud. We are told that Ammar is a terrorist before the torture begins. When Maya has come to accept torture, the same structure is used: She narrates a story of familiarity

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60 When Ammar spits derisively, “What do you know about our pain?” Dan replies, “Don’t give me that crap!” Again, this can probably go both ways, depending on the audience’s political volition.

61 Scarry, The body in pain, p. 35.
and certainty, about and to the (silent) detainee, as well as to the audience. Furthermore, Dan’s narration follows the script of what has been called the “Omniscient Narrator Fallacy,” wherein the torturers have absolute certainty of almost all relevant information: their prisoner is a terrorist, an attack is planned and he possesses actionable intelligence; the torturers are only missing only tiny piece of information, which can be extracted by torture. The “Omniscient Narrator Fallacy” is a cinematic torture trope usually combined with the “Ticking Bomb Myth” to create a hyperbolic framework in order to undermine the absolute prohibition of torture. Narratively, in Zero, this way of dividing and perceiving the world passes unquestioned.

62 She says: “I know you. I’ve been following and studying you. I kept you alive instead of killing you because I believe you are not a violent man and you don’t deserve to die. / You do realize this is not a normal prison. You determine how you’re treated. Your life will be uncomfortable until you give me the information I need.”


65 If an exception is granted for a specific (hyperbolic) case, the prohibition cannot be absolute. The scenarios that invent under what circumstances, if any, torture is permissible have been discussed extensively by various scholars, from Alan Dershovitz’s “torture warrants” to Žižek’s rebuttal that the discussion of permissible exceptions to the categorical prohibition of torture, normalizes torture (Žižek, ‘Hollywood’s Gift’).

66 For instance, as the prisoners in the film speak largely irreproachable English and never have any difficulties comprehending even colloquial discourse, the very real possibility of language-based misunderstandings, to acknowledge and reflect on the possibility of culturally inflected, alternate ways of perceiving the world, shaped through our language, is foreclosed.
The interrogation is of course hugely significant within the “political fiction” of torture, as it credits torturers with a justification and motive and discredits the prisoner, who “cracks,” “betrays,” “confesses.” As long as the viewer is invested in the belief that the prisoner is guilty – to a degree that pushes him outside the zone of those owning human rights – this linguistic shift in assigning responsibility and blame on the victim is not exposed. Repeatedly, the discourse of the interrogators in Zero asserts that the victim is inflicting the pain onto himself through his sheer obstinacy, and it affirms the omnipotence of the torturers. They know when he is lying: Dan reiterates that “partial information will be treated as a lie,” and, “When you lie to me, I hurt you,” which presumes of course that he knows when Ammar is lying. The torturers also seem to possess a surprising degree of personal liberty in their choice of interrogational practice, extending to seemingly complete autonomy in the decision of who to kill or who to let live. Their choice of words – “You determine how I treat you” (Maya); “Why are you doing this to yourself?” (Dan); “Give me one email and I will stop this” (Dan); “Why are you doing this? You wanna have the water again? – Have it your way” (Dan) – alleges that the prisoner has the power to stop the torture by complying with demands. This alleges both free will and voluntary concealment and recalcitrance, contested both by theory and testimonies on torture, and also by the visuals of the scene. The torturer controls the narrative – what the torture means, what silence means, who is doing what to whom. The notion of compliance is predicated on the

67 Scarry, *The body in pain*, p. 47.
assumption that the victim does indeed possess and refuses to give up the desired information. Accordingly, silence is automatically interpreted as unwillingness to cooperate. Such is the most outrageous justification of torture, of course, as it upholds all the premises that constitute the fiction of torture – the correct person, the correct question, it is about the question, subject knows answer – operates in blatant disregard of all the advances of due process and rule of law, framing the situation instead as one of voluntary cooperation and goodwill versus suspicious reticence. Thus, the narrative of the torturers also constructs torture as truth-producing tool, which features among the enduring properties of torture: that the pain of torture produces a truth, located as hidden in the body, to be extracted by force. Maya responds to the victim’s plea to help by telling him “You can help yourself by being truthful.”

The continuous display of the interrogation as motive confirms the idea that the purpose of torture was to obtain intelligence. Zero’s torture scene does not interrupt the “Omniscient Narrator Fallacy,” even while it visually explores our horror of it. When Ammar is allowed to speak again, he corroborates Dan’s definition of him as guilty, a recalcitrant, indoctrinated, and hateful enemy: “We wanted to kill Americans,” and “Jihad will go on for a hundred years;” and the film confirms that Ammar knows the information they are after. According to Scarry, as long as we subscribe to that “political fiction” of torture being perpetrated for the sake of information gathering, we are – at least cognitively

\[^{68}\text{Cf. “Regardless of who is correct, a simple countermeasure that can be used by the subject to avoid this ordeal is to fully and truthfully answer each of the interrogator’s questions.” Cf. Nathan Gordon and William Fleisher, Effective interviewing and interrogation techniques. (London: Amsterdam Press, 2011), p. 231, emphasis added.}\]
– positioned with the torturing side. In Zero, privileging the interrogation legitimizes torture as a meaningful strategic tool of counterterrorism and intelligence gathering.

In a convoluted way, Zero sheds doubt on the utility of the information gained in this particular torture but never on the practice in total. A key piece of information ostensibly gained through Ammar’s torture – the tip that leads to bin Laden’s hiding place – is later revealed to have been in the files all along. The brief scene revealing the doubled intelligence takes place late in the film, far distanced from the emotional impact of torture sequence, and it is embedded in a larger, emotional sequence related to another terrorist bombing.\textsuperscript{69} This economy of delayed and buried revelation allows the visual and visceral impact of the torture scenes to subside, and even an astute journalist such as Dexter Filkins missed the courier part.\textsuperscript{70}

Moreover, as the general utility of torture is not discredited, the implication is less a regret on the pain inflicted upon victims than chagrin over the futility of the torturers’ efforts and an indictment of the inefficiency of (bureaucratic) agencies. Thus, the admission that the data gained by torture was not instrumental to the capture of bin Laden – a focal point in the reception of the

\textsuperscript{69} The context is a sequence on Maya’s renewed and even more personalized determination, after her colleague dies in a terrorist suicide attack at a CIA facility, the attack on the CIA’s Forward Operating Base Chapman in December 2009. The sequence suggests the colleague’s goodwill and naïve trust was exploited by the enemy, a portrayal that has been criticized by the intelligence community.

\textsuperscript{70} The dispense of information takes place in such a convoluted way that many reviewers concluded that “the suspect eventually surrenders information that helps lead to bin Laden.” Filkins, ‘Bin Laden, the Movie’.
film – appears almost as buried in the film structure as the piece of information that was lost in the files.

Torture in *Zero* is hardly shown to be problematic in and of itself. While the torture does not produce immediate results, the credible threat of and option to use torture are depicted as critical tools in this first and primary torture scene. After having been extensively tortured, Ammar is offered some food and threatened with further torture should he continue to withhold information. The fact that the prisoner had been tortured seems important to establish the credentials of his adversaries: they mean business, and Ammar relinquishes the desired information. The same double bind is used in a later scene when Maya threatens a prisoner with torture, provoking him to immediately assert his willingness to comply.\(^{71}\) The film shows this threat of torture as blatantly effective and as educational: the prisoner has been tortured and does not wish to suffer it again. Thus, even when torture is not used, *having used it* and *having the option* of using it again is shown as a powerful weapon. At another instance, a frustrated Maya complains that their prisoner does not divulge information, despite the use of all available measures, and Dan warns her that the prisoner might die if she does not lower the pressure. That he might not know never appears as an option.

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\(^{71}\) The prisoner is threatened with delivery to Israel – implying and assuming the audience’s knowledge regarding Israel’s real use of torture. The detainee immediately cooperates: "I have no wish to be tortured again. I will tell you what I know."
Questions of Identification

Speaking on a general level, Devji suggested that framing torture as part of the world of bureaucracy and regulation empties a film of a moral centre. Following this logic, Zero was criticized for banalizing torture: Žižek objected to its normalization, and Westwell took issue with showing it as professional activity. Yet showing torture in this way disables the convenient narrative of a few aberrant “bad apples,” which I discuss at length in the fourth Chapter. As Nicholas Lehmann points out about terrorism, neither practice belongs “to an entirely separate and containable realm of human experience.” And could it not be the normalcy of the perpetrators in Zero that feels so terribly uncomfortable to the audience? These torturers do not exist on a separate existential realm; they are not sadistic monsters, conveniently distanced from ourselves. In his empirical research on torturers in Argentina’s so-called “Dirty Wars,” Mark Osiel points out that its torturers did reveal awareness of facing a moral conflict, “a sense of moral obligation [which] surpasses the ‘role morality’ of the unreflective clerk, that is, the highly limited sense of moral duty that Arendt ascribed to Eichmann” and concludes that “it would be a mistake to overestimate the gap between the moral universes of officers and civilians.”

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74 Osiel, The mental state of torturers, p. 135.
75 Osiel, The mental state of torturers.
The political fiction of the interrogation “enables the torturer’s power to be understood in terms of his own vulnerability and need.” This “false motive syndrome,” a concept based on Arendt’s work in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, shifts the focus towards the pain of the torturer, his personal burden and ethical dilemma. The graphic messiness of the torture scenes in *Zero* would then serve to reinforce this “Eichmann Syndrome,” in which the perpetrator considers himself as the true victim, and his horrible acts as duty and heavy cross to bear. Yet are we really involved in this way? How much are they “like us”? If these cinematic torturers are neither monsters nor Arendt’s bureaucrats who simply follow orders, is the decision to torture shown as the weighty moral decision, the result of an intense struggle of the protagonist, as a typical violence template would frame it?

There are few indications of an internal moral conflict for torturing agent Dan. Near the end of the film, he refuses to torture Maya’s latest detainee and tells her he is quitting after a scene in which he is playing affectionately with some monkeys at a location that suspiciously resembles Guantánamo. When we see Dan next, he informs Maya that the monkeys have been killed. He seems quite depressed, and Maya, in a rare moment of displayed compassion, tells him she is sorry. The inbuilt double bind here, resulting from the minimal available

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76 Scarry, *The body in pain*, p. 58.
77 Hannah Arendt writes about Eichmann’s trickery to position himself as victim instead of culprit: “the trick … consisted in turning these (human) instincts around, as it were, in directing them toward the self. Instead of saying: What horrible things I did to people!, the murderers would be able to say: What horrible things I had to watch in the pursuance of my duties, how heavily the task weighed upon my shoulders!” Quoted in Scarry, *The body in pain*, p. 58.
information, allows us to either imagine Dan as a morally questionable person who cares more about monkeys than the people he tortures, or to read this attachment symbolically, where the monkeys function as a “legitimate” emotional outlet of (male) vulnerability.

Maya on the other hand does seem to evolve with regards to her position on torture. This alleged approval of torture was a major argument for those arguing the film condones torture, and it therefore merits closer attention. The first torture scene begins abruptly for the audience. The viewer, like Maya, is shocked and new to the situation. In this scene, Maya seems nauseated and occasionally averts her eyes, as might the film’s audience. In Maya’s own torture scene, 43 minutes later into the film, the mise-en-scène, framing, setting, and shot length are similar to the first torture sequence, alternating between close-ups of her face, master shots of the scene and close-ups of the prisoner’s face. The opposition between the darkness of the settings remains, torture takes place in dungeons or prisons, where people are locked up in ever smaller cages, paired with an overly bright light: outside natural light in the first torture, the over-lit neon light of a bathroom in the second. These symmetries highlight Maya’s changed behaviour: where she conveyed her discomfort in the first torture sequence with movements of physical discomfort and by looking away, she now stares at her prisoners coldly.\footnote{This contradicts the “autism” argument brought forth by William Brown who “suggests that Maya’s dogged determination to capture Bin Laden as presented in the film, and constructed as such by the director, is a form of autistic behaviour, characterised by a complete lack of empathy.” Cited in Piotrowska, Agnieszka, ‘Zero
never seen torturing herself. With a slap, she orders another guard to beat her prisoner, and she watches that scene – which is why for Burgoyne, in Zero “witnessing becomes enmeshed with violence.” This acceptance of torture as necessary is all the more weighty as it appears to be her only character development. After Maya has a prisoner tortured, there is a short shot of her putting water on her face in a bathroom, then gripping the lavatory as if for support, a scene juxtaposed with images of people locked up in cages. The bathroom scene is important to demonstrate the toll her work takes on Maya, also mentioned in the dialogue, which turns torture into a personal weight for the torturers.

Maya’s behavioural shift has therefore been read as a form of “teaching” the spectator to condone torture. Her use of torture attests to her determination, her resolve to catch Osama bin Laden at all cost, without having the law tie one’s hands behind the back. Described as America’s “Joan of Arc,” Maya “stands for American virtue” in ways that make it “easier for us to identify with


79 Burgoyne argues that Maya’s witnessing, beginning with the suggestion to go back in, becomes inseparable from the violence itself: “the intimate witnessing of torture becomes inseparable from the act itself.” Burgoyne, ‘The Violated Body’, p. 249. It could also be considered as toeing the line of white femininity, unsoiled from physical contact with the evil other. It could also be historically accurate depiction of the separation of labour.

80 The Israeli Supreme Court Judge Aharon Barak, in a 1999 landmark against the use of torture, insisted in his majority opinion statement that a democracy “must sometimes fight with one hand tied behind its back,” in other words bound by the rule of law.

81 Economist, ‘Terrorism and civil liberty’.
the SEALs who take out Osama.” Westwell finds that “by the end of the movie her successes become national successes.” By contrast, I argue that such interpretations assume that the film’s ideological position is identical to Maya’s and overestimates our emotional engagement with her.

For the most part, the audience is visually aligned with the CIA personnel. Like the torturers and unlike the prisoners, the spectator is allowed to see both the inside and the outside of the prison compounds. Maya in particular is almost a visual constant throughout the film. She is more closely framed than other characters, cueing the viewer to feel physically near, and this “closeness in spatiotemporal attachment may contribute to the impression of a shared semantic-perceptual space.” However, although our perspective is largely channelled through Maya and we share a feeling of physical closeness in space, screen time and perspective, the audience is in fact offered little incentive to feel close to her. We end up knowing little more about Maya as a person than

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83 Westwell, ‘Zero Dark Thirty’. The film is layered with national symbols, flags in particular; it has been suggested that Maya - beautiful, exceptional, obsessed - represents America.
84 Similarly, Greenwald reads Maya literally as a “CIA agent who sacrifices her personal life, disregards bureaucratic and social niceties, her careerist interests, and even her own physical well-being, in monomaniacal pursuit of The Big Terrorist” but fails to see that the film sets us up to see her like this. Greenwald, ‘CIA hagiography’.
86 According to the mere exposure hypothesis in social psychology which suggests that we tend to react more positively to people we see repeatedly, this guides us favourably towards Maya, cf. Eder, ‘Ways of Being Close’. Westwell suggests that in scenes which “make the film tick … Maya’s fragile, glowing certainty renew[s] faith both in the CIA and in America’s resolve to wage war.” Westwell, ‘Zero Dark Thirty’.
when the film started. Her backstory consists of a few sparse details.\textsuperscript{87} Compare Murray Smith’ account of the limits of emotional engagement in United 93 (Paul Greengrass, 2006):

\textit{[United 93] gives ample screen space to the facial expressions of the hijackers – mostly expressions of anger and fear. And I think we do feel their fear by mimicry and contagion. But the film doesn’t nurture a deeper imaginative engagement with the hijackers; no attempt is made to contextualize their immediate affective states in terms of their life stories.}\textsuperscript{88}

In not dissimilar ways, Maya is presented as a person without personal networks, or at least, we are not privy to any of her vulnerabilities and inner emotional landscape. Her inner life remains opaque.\textsuperscript{89} Moreover, at crucial moments, we are not aligned with Maya. In the raid scene, Maya is monitoring remotely while we share the SEAL team’s “boots on the ground” vision and experience. For most of the film, the audience knows more, with the certainty of hindsight, and sees more, with aerial shots, than Maya – the exception is Maya’s final look at the killed Osama bin Laden: here, she sees more than us.

Our immediate emotional response to torture is not channelled through Maya; in the first long torture sequence, Maya is wearing a balaclava, and is only introduced afterwards, thereby removing a primary route to identification. This

\textsuperscript{87} None at all is given for any other character.

\textsuperscript{88} Murray Smith, ‘Empathy, Expansionism, and the Extended Mind’, in Empathy: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives, ed. by Amy Coplan and Peter Goldie (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 99-117 (p. 101). Smith’s reading could be more nuanced. In United 93, the hijackers are the only characters granted any scenes that do not belong to the kidnapping of the plane; and there is a scene of a kidnapper having doubts. In Zero as well, it is true that while we know little about Maya, we know even less about the prisoners. One could therefore argue that the film as a whole is “cold” in this sense, or perhaps that distributions of empathy function differently in today’s Hollywood films.

\textsuperscript{89} Burgoyne, ‘The Violated Body’, p. 254.
is why the argument on the film teaching approval of torture is problematic; in the end, Maya’s position on torture does not seem to really shift that much. For even in the first torture scene, Maya’s dislike seems to have more to do with a disapproval of the messiness of it all rather than with genuine compassion.

As already indicated by the title, Zero is a world of signs and codes. Most of the dialogue is conducted in military jargon, and information is disclosed in such a way that the viewer is one step behind the narrative (except for the ultimate ending, the killing of bin Laden). This might position the audience to be critical of the unfolding actions; it certainly requires imaginative detective work. Within its paradigms of the hunt and investigative work, the search for clear vision within an onslaught of contradictory, potentially unreliable information that buries the most important pieces of the puzzle, the film’s narrative becomes a mise-en-abyme – in the sense of duplicating a component of the textual whole – of its own relation to its audience. Mirroring the narrative, the audience has to decode much of the information, aligning us with the CIA personnel. Like the agents, the spectator is also decoding an onslaught of information. We are aligned with the agents through the common work of decoding; like them, we rather suffer from too much information. The film here “articulate[s] the conditions of possibility for the characters’ understanding of

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90 The detective or discerning task that the spectator has to perform to understand the film can be usefully framed as part of what Murray Pomerance sees as markers of the current “indicative” mode of film experience both of filmmaking and film viewing. Murray Pomerance, ‘Talking Space in Vertigo’, Movie A Journal of Film Criticism, 4 (2013).

91 A notable exception to this decoding work is the information on the prisoners, which is exposed to the audience unchallenged.
what they and the world are about."\textsuperscript{92} Thus, the spectator is drawn into the story through the act of having to piece the message together. This kind of shared activity can result in an alliance between the character and the audience, as Perkins argues in his analysis of \textit{Marnie}:

\begin{quote}
By restricting his heroine to an activity which the audience can share on completely equal terms, Hitchcock involves us more closely with her. We enter into her situation and become to some extent accomplices to her theft.\textsuperscript{93}
\end{quote}

Like \textit{Marnie}, Maya is a singularly focussed but oddly blank mask. By trimming off all the fat of the thematic material (there are no secondary or subplots, training, life before or after or outside), the film’s narrative mirrors the set-up of Maya’s mind, while its superb and glacial aesthetics mirror her beauty. It seems legitimate then to wonder to what extent we resemble her, and to what extent she is a heroine.

\begin{quote}
We can see that there’s something monstrous in the zealotry that sustains [Maya’s] belief … but … American viewers understand her because ‘she’s our monster.’\textsuperscript{94}
\end{quote}

Maya’s singular obsession with capturing bin Laden occasionally features undertones of providence, of an almost religious zealotry, which of course echoes with U.S. civil belief. Maya says that she believes she has been “spared” for this mission: “I’m going to smoke everybody involved. And then I’m going to kill bin Laden;” and she tells the SEAL team to kill bin Laden “for her.”

\textsuperscript{92} Shapiro, \textit{Cinematic geopolitics}, p. 143.  
\textsuperscript{94} Hasian, ‘Military Orientalism’, p. 474.
Regardless of where they are geographically, the characters are completely confined to their work-world, held in an almost claustrophobic present. No scene that presents a social relation between characters is unrelated to the manhunt; all narrative material is integral to zoning in on finding and killing bin Laden, the “needle in the haystack”. When sparse personal details are given, this happens retrospectively and strategically: not to get to know Maya but to propel the narrative. For instance, a brief moment of quasi-friendship between Maya and fellow CIA investigator Jessica (who we see here for the second time) is introduced suddenly, and features as a prelude to the bomb attack at the Marriot hotel in 2008. The audience is not given enough incentive, time, or information to be emotionally involved before Jessica is killed off shortly after, an event that is used as narrative explanation to steel Maya’s resolve.

Then there is the question of Maya’s beauty and whiteness and how either works together with her pathology. Burgoyne comments that

[Maya’s] striking ‘whiteness’ … creates a disturbing and dramatic contrast of skin tones and textures during the interrogation scenes … At the same time, her beauty challenges the easy notion that violence is deforming and dehumanizing.

There is then, firstly, a problematic colour policy or palette present that creates a Manichean world, in which “the whiteness and goodness of Maya and the West is juxtaposed with the darkness and dangerousness of detainees and

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95 Piotrowska offers interesting points regarding Maya’s gender and beauty – she compares Maya’s to “Antigone’s ‘inflexibility’ and even her ‘monstrous’ unfeminine and ‘raw’ stubbornness to her mission.” Piotrowska argues that Maya’s behaviour is ethical if read through a Lacanian lens and his notion of the ethical act in which, once a commitment is made, one is faithful to it “beyond the limit.” Piotrowska, ‘War Autism’.
those who may be aiding Al Qaeda or the Taliban.”

Chastain’s porcelain skin seems to be in the tradition of pure, innocent, “transcendent” whiteness, in contrast to the darker hue of the prisoner’s skin and also to Dan’s tanned face. On the other hand, there is something cold, ghostly, and uncanny in her whiteness. Whiteness as signifier of death, like the signifier of a transcendence of the body, stands in the tradition of whiteness as an ideological category, culturally and historically coded, visibly invisible, as masterfully analysed by Richard Dyer.  

Maya’s beauty also serves to clearly code her as to-be-looked-at. Maya is frequently described by others: we hear people – mostly men – describing and discussing her: a sceptic remarks that she is young, another retorts that “in Washington, she is known as a killer,” “recruited right out of high school,” and the pilot at the end of the film says, “you must be pretty important, you got the whole plane to yourself.” Even the camera’s frequent close-ups can be seen as much attempt to find out what motivates Maya, to understand the intricacies of the procedural as to adore her beauty. Her beauty also provides a necessary visual counter-point and aesthetic respite from the torture; she remains an image of extreme and remarkable beauty, more a slate than a rounded character. Maya is beautiful in the way of traditional femininity: a delicate, fragile, slender frame, “Pre-Raphaelite looks, bone china complexion and watery gaze,” and long red Gilda-esque hair. These physical attributes make

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99 Westwell, ‘Zero Dark Thirty’.
her stand out visually, enhanced by spatial separation from other characters in the frame. These descriptions of Maya recall Roland Barthes portrayal of Greta Garbo’s face as the “essence” of her star persona, both beautiful and somehow removed – ethereal, divine, solitary in its perfection.100

Like a hunter entering a “magical” alliance with her prey, Maya knows, as if by instinct, that a certain lead is important. While her knowledge is unsubstantiated within the information available in the diegetic world at that particular moment, the audience knows (already during the film) with retrospective certainty that she is right. At one instant she seems to corroborate the truthfulness of a prisoner’s account with a probing, scrutinizing gaze. For Westwell, Maya’s physical attributes “are shown to belie a ferocious strength and sense of purpose … [her] exquisitely beautiful suffering … renews faith in an institution subject to considerable, and legitimate, criticism” and finally “seeks to elicit sympathy for the traumatic experience suffered by those working within it.” He suggests that in scenes which “make the film tick … Maya’s fragile, glowering certainty renew[s] faith both in the CIA and in America’s resolve to wage war.”101 Sharing Maya’s stressful and dangerous life encourages sympathy, perhaps, but she certainly does not appear as a role model, a heroine to emulate. On the contrary, in her obsession and proclivity to

101 Westwell, ‘Zero Dark Thirty’. 
use violence – even to “drop a bomb” on a hunch – she appears slightly unbalanced.\textsuperscript{102}

Driven at the expense of almost everything else, Maya’s devotion to her cause mirrors the single-minded focus of her prey. Often framed in enclosed spaces, imprisoned by her surroundings, Maya is narratively and spatially isolated [image 2.5, p. 183], as if this was a duel between her and the al-Qaida chef. When the SEAL team horses around after their killing, she leaves and stands in the silent desert, completely alone; she is alone when she recovers briefly in the bathroom; and she is alone in the carrier taking her away at the end of the film. This access to intimate moments may arouse feelings of complicity.

The extent to which Maya devotes her life to this quest, overruling any other, personal interests, resembles the consent of men who go to war, agreeing to hand over their lives and their bodies.\textsuperscript{103} Maya is seen in personal danger – she is shot at in her car, and she survives the September 2008 bomb attack at the Marriott hotel. Narratively, this is a classical pattern where the hero must be in danger so that his willingness to sacrifice his own life gives permission to step over the ethical boundary – either to kill, as a soldier and as a suicide terrorist, or to use or allow torture.

Clearly, Maya is not defined in terms of domesticity, nor through relationships, except her relationship to her work. There is even a pointed avoidance of a romantic subplot, after raising the spectre of possible romance with Dan. Such

\textsuperscript{102} This inherent pathology of CIA protagonists will be re-encountered in \textit{Homeland} in the following Chapter.

\textsuperscript{103} Scarry, \textit{The body in pain}, p. 112.
an unusually defined heroine and the foiling of genre expectations are in line
with previous films of Bigelow, who is known for “feminist reconfigurations of
action genres” featuring “assertive, active, and even violent female
protagonists,”104 according to Shaviro in his work on Bigelow’s previous films,
her pedigree as film director and visual artist. Shaviro suggests that her
cameralwork in Strange Days produces “a new regime of vision and affect,” a
“free-floating,” “presubjective regime of vision,” that implies affect but is not
linked to a particular subjectivity, a known entity.105 Regarding Bigelow’s Point
Break, Shaviro argues that “the film elicits a visceral, emotive response from its
viewers as well as an intellectual one,” for instance when Bigelow uses extreme
close-ups and a hand-held camera “that jerks and rolls with the punches”106 for
the final showdown.

In Zero, too, at crucial moments the camerawork takes the perspective of an
unidentified first person and goes beyond any character’s point of view. During
the raid and in the torture scenes, the perspective of the camera is
independent of a particular character; at the same time, these images are
clearly presented as coming from a particular point of view. The camera is
emphasised as an independent, distinct participant with a particular

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104 Shaviro, ‘Straight from the Cerebral Cortex’, p. 174. Maya is subject to a flippant,
casual sexism, continuously called “the girl”, even after she identified bin Laden. In the
torture sequence, her gender is used to supposedly humiliate the Arab prisoner:
stripping his prisoner, the torturer says “you don’t mind if my female partner checks out
your junk”. On the surface, a joke on presumed Arab misogyny, with this gesture Dan
also uses Maya as a tool and puts both her and the prisoner in their place: at his
command.

105 Shaviro, ‘Straight from the Cerebral Cortex’.

106 In Point Break, it was the act of surfing which “encapsulates a state of being that
affects us, that washes over and sensuously engulfs us.” Shaviro, ‘Straight from the
perspective, in contrast to the self-effacing, invisible camerawork and narration usually identified with classical Hollywood.

This point of view appears to be human in direction and tempo of movement: The rapid panning back and forth between action and witness resemble eye-movements; the camera also frequently tilts to the floor and up, as if looking down and peering into a character’s face; the unsteady images of a handheld camera seems embodied, resulting in images as “faulty” as human perception. The increase in tempo and movements of this visceral camerawork correspond to the kind of vision Shaviro described as led by affect but not linked to a stable ego. We are drawn into the action and the scene but not into either the mind of a particular point of vision or identified with a character.\textsuperscript{107} This signature camera here also expresses various affects in condensed form: the stress and disorientation of the prisoner, the hectic and anxious movements of an anonymous witness trying to grasp what is happening, perhaps the adrenaline and excitation of a torturer.

The raid on Osama bin Laden’s compound is visually structured similarly to the torture sequence, moving from an introductory overhead shot to close-range action from a “fluid” camera, mediated via screens and through the night vision goggles of the SEAL team. These images eschew first-person shooter suspense, gung-ho dialogue, and action film heroics. They visually translate the

\textsuperscript{107} Shaviro considers the “fluid” camerawork in \textit{Strange} as “something of an authorial signature for Bigelow.” Shaviro, ‘Straight from the Cerebral Cortex’ p. 171. Westwell describes similar shifts in points of view for \textit{The Hurt Locker} as “diegetically unanchored positions. … these point of point of view shots … remain at all times thoroughly decontextualized, with no attempt at characterisation.” Westwell, ‘In Country’, p. 27.
lack of clear vision, and symbolically, of definite knowledge. Once inside, the camera stays too close to the action for us to make out bin Laden or his murder; all we hear is the shot. The camera then holds back and lingers; as the soldiers leave, the camera tilts down to a blood stain on the floor, showing the chaos and destruction they leave behind.

**History as Experience**

In summary, the main arguments of those condemning *Zero* claim the identification with torturers and the narrative embedding of torture as effective. Neither of these claims can be unanimously sustained by a thorough analysis of *Zero*. The final violence is “sobering, rather than transformative,” and *Zero* employs a concerted strategy of inscribing ambivalences. Moreover, the important questions raised, often indirectly, by the film do not dissipate with its formal closure. For instance, if terrorism caused, necessitated and justified the torture, how can it have ended? Where did this expertise in and readiness to use torture come from? Who gave the order, and who is, ultimately, accountable?\(^\text{108}\) For the death of bin Laden, while closing this particular narrative, did obviously not end terrorism, and the repeated terror attacks in the film have reminded viewers for over two hours of the continuing danger.\(^\text{109}\) Another indirectly raised unresolved issue concerns the fate of the prisoners. There are scenes taking place in settings that visually resemble Guantánamo;

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\(^{108}\) The question of accountability is at most evoked marginally, when Dan gives Maya offhand advice not to be “the last one holding a dog collar” in view of an upcoming policy change.

\(^{109}\) Even though these are here insinuated as the work of bin Laden.
Maya and the audience are informed early in the film that a certain prisoner will never get out.

Nicholas Rombes reproaches Zero for depicting an empty and pathologized version of history, where history becomes an “absence that leaves nothing but consequences, traces, its very shape an infinite loop,” leaving out any larger meta-narratives or what he calls “deep history”. Precisely because there is no interiority to Maya and psychological explanations are discarded, “history itself becomes psychotic.” Rombes seems to be blind to Maya’s pathology and neglects the fact that Zero is mainly directed at a U.S. American audience, which, it is safe to assume, already has a perspective on and knowledge of the events depicted. The temporal proximity between original events and their fictionalization – Zero appeared only 18 months after the killing of bin Laden – is certainly a factor in the decision to leave out more detailed historical background information. Thus, Zero is less a film aimed at “setting the record straight” than it is an attempt to offer (Western) audiences a way of participating, witnessing, experiencing their history. This experience is translated through an intense visual style, where the camera expresses a largely un-attributed affect. Perhaps this is what Rombes found “psychotic.”

To conclude, this film is about process rather than narrative – not to explain history but to offer a feeling through Maya as proxy. In the scene near the end,

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110 Rombes, ‘Zero Dark Thirty’, emphasis in the original.
111 The agents are portrayed by attractive and moderately well-known actors who will appear more familiar to a Western audience than the Iraqi or Pakistani characters. Besides Jessica Chastain (Zero was perhaps her breakthrough film) and Jason Clarke, the film stars Harold Perrineau, Jennifer Ehle, James Gandolfini, and Kyle Chandler. The only “good Muslim” is found among the SEAL team.
where Maya confirms the corpse as the body of bin Laden, she is clearly acting as surrogate for the audience. She channels an approximate – a visual and cinematic – habeas corpus. She sees, whereas our final image of bin Laden’s corpse remains a fragment, a distant, oddly angled shot.112 This mere hint of an image does not fill a projective screen with the image of death, “the epitome of tropes,”113 and it leaves bin Laden an empty surface for projection for us. Death remains ungraspable, the protagonists are as much ciphers as their antagonists, and there is no neat resolution and closure. The ending is profoundly ambivalent and only modestly cathartic; Zero “ends with victory — as most American war movies have — it also ends in tears,”114 as Maya embarks alone on a cargo plane, crying [image 2.6, p. 183].

The problem was the vacuum of information and the failure of other institutions to act on the torture scandal. Amy Davidson suggested that the debate on the film’s merits became virulent because the filmmakers claimed privileged access in a “vacuum of classification … So much about our recent history as torturers has been left unexamined, with no accountability … and the lines between the parts we do know left open to the imagination.”115 It seems that releasing (only)

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112 Compare Jason Horowitz’ reading on the famous “Situation Room” image as some kind of ersatz visual: “With so much to see, and with the government withholding the bloody bin Laden images, it’s no wonder that the photo is on track to become the most-viewed image on Flickr.” Jason Horowitz, ‘Breaking Down the Situation Room’ The Washington Post Online (5 May 2011).
115 Davidson, Amy, ‘Three Senators and Zero Dark Thirty’, The New Yorker Online (20 December 2012). Before this release, the proximity between CIA personnel, Bigelow and her scriptwriter Boal had come under scrutiny, extending even to a Senatorial
the executive summary of the Senate Intelligence Committee’s report in December 2014 did not change this situation.\textsuperscript{116}

Considering this lack of apology, admission and punishment, the lack of clear culprits in Zero might resonate bitterly; but contrary to Rombes, I consider this ambivalence the strength of the film. Rombes perceives the discarding of the psychological focus (“their motives are not personal,”) to be “radically out-of-step with the prevailing mood that favours individual psychology at the expense of historical psychology.”\textsuperscript{117} Zero does not shy away from where the medium and the spectator might be seen as implicated, guilty. Shaviro suggests that Bigelow’s “witnessing” camerawork in Strange Days had gone beyond voyeurism, that the references to Peeping Tom (Michael Powell, 1960) indicate her awareness both of cinematic and audience complicity. Towards the end of Zero, Maya does not look away from the torture. While she watches the torture, we are watching her. There is alignment in the act of watching, but no collapse, as we see very different things. The fluid camerawork “seems to create a new point of view, neither precisely objective nor conventionally

\textsuperscript{116} It has since been revealed that the character of Maya is partly based on CIA officer Alfreda Bikowsky who headed the Bin Laden Issue Station and the Global Jihad unit. Bikowsky has been named as one of the chief apologists of torture. She allegedly flew in to watch over a torture session and told congressional overseers that the torture worked. Bruck, ‘The Inside War’; Jane Mayer, ‘The Unidentified Queen of Torture’, \textit{The New Yorker Online} (18 December 2014).

\textsuperscript{117} Rombes, ‘Zero Dark Thirty’.
subjective, but transpersonal and social.”

Could this doubled tension and ambivalence not be precisely the emancipatory space for the spectator?

As demonstrated by Patricia Pisters and others who have charted the influence and reworking of Pontecorvo’s seminal Battle of Algiers (Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966), a single film a “can turn into a transnational memory, part of a collective open archive.” In a similar way, Zero has become part of a transnational pool of screen images, and acquired a meaning beyond itself. Battle is a remarkable precursor. [image 2.7, p. 183] A seminal film, it refocused central claims about historical events and political torture. Screened at the Pentagon in 2003, Battle seems moreover to have played a role in the issuing of the infamous “torture warrants.”

To conclude, rather than film creating an incorrect understanding of torture, the limited analysis of the film reflects the narrow circumference of the debates on real torture. On account of the relatively close temporal proximity between the film’s release and the events it depicts, one may consider that Zero has become part of the event “U.S. torture in Iraq,” as far as the film becomes part of the history of these events, creating its own, recognizable and copied, iconography.

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121 Compare how the BBC documentary Fighting Terror with Torture reworks Zero’s visuals; as this is never spelt out, sufficient familiarity with the source text is apparently
Witnessing Torture

Continuing the theme of seeing torture, this section explores the politics of witnessing – of our watching torture and watching those who watch it - through selected close-readings in the U.S. films Rendition, Syriana and Body of Lies (Body). Torture bears an intimate relation to spectacle in that it always has an addressee. When examining a representation of torture in cinema, the regimes of vision, the gazes, and their audiences must be addressed. What is the relation between the spectacle of torture and film-as-spectacle? What does witnessing mean in the context of film? How does either (the witnessing and the spectacular dimension) implicate the media and the audience? Who is exposed when to (visual) information on torture?

Exposure, however, can denote power as well as vulnerability. ¹²² The counterpart of visual horror – the mediated terrorist attacks and execution videos, designed for widespread dissemination – is the terror of the invisible, intangible, (half-)known secret. The primacy of the witness and of seeing torture derives also from a structural instability of any and in particular modern torture. As torture is held abject in the official rhetoric of the contemporary “Western” hemisphere’s political culture, “modern” torture is concealed, and displaced,

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¹²² Not coincidentally, the editors and lexicographers at Dictionary.com picked “exposure” as their word of the year 2014, a word denoting visibility and vulnerability.
along with other practices of stealth, such as extraordinary – extra-legal – rendition or the (at best) precarious legality of drone attacks.

Contrary to the school of thought that argues that the only true witness is dead, the testimony of the historical eyewitness has often been framed as a duty to speak of atrocity. Witnessing appears as an action that works against the attempted erasure of lives, silencing of voices. Yet even those present at an event cannot speak with absolute authority, even the historical eyewitness may have a “blind” or “impossible” view and come to understand their actions only later. As discussed in the Literature Review, memory studies, adjunct with neurological experiments, have broadened and complicated our understanding of the vicissitudes of all kinds of memory. This dilemma of the eyewitness, the always “insurmountable impasse in communication,” is exacerbated with additional screens.

Who can be a witness, then? In an attempt to distinguish forms of witnessing, especially between the historical eyewitness and screened mediation, various

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123 See appendix for more details of such semi-hidden practices.
124 Seminal Holocaust literature generated a theoretical commitment to the notion of the unsayable or unrepresentable, and the idea that the true witnesses of the Concentration camps, those who have witnessed it all, are the dead. Cf. Brown and Rafter, ‘Genocide Films’.
125 In Latin America, testimony, from Truth Commissions to onscreen witnesses, and the connection to a “witnessing” audience, have functioned as empowering, political acts. Compare Pino-Ojeda’s interpretation of the witness in films as model and metaphor for collective responsibility. Observers of “the fate of others”, these protagonists have a “need and duty to bear witness”, and to bear “a model responsibility for that segment of the community that, despite not having experienced abuse directly, has been affected by it and must acknowledge its role in it [and pay] psychological, intimate and social debt by narrating what happened.” Pino-Ojeda, ‘Latent Image’, pp. 141-142.
126 Bronfen writes that those in the centre of a war zone “have no view, only experience”, theirs, like ours, is an impossible view. ‘Hollywood im Krieg’, Tagesspiegel Online (12 February 2014, translation mine).
127 Bronfen, Specters of War, p. 145.
terms and phrases have appeared, such as “secondary witnessing, co-witnessing, proxy witnessing, and witnessing through imagination.” Sundquist and LaRocca criticize the erosion of “the boundary between the original and the surrogate experiences” as an attempt to acquire a “privileged position in relation to the event.” A witness is traditionally defined as someone who sees something – a crime, a marriage – happen and can therefore attest or testify. There is thus an element of embodied presence in the definition, and LaRocca deduces that only a person can be a witness, not a machine like a camera. Given our increasingly interdependent relation with machines, this categorical statement seems difficult to maintain. Nevertheless, whether

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129 Sundquist, Eric J., ‘Witness without End?’ pp. 68-69. LaRocca rejects the broad use of the term for instance by Apel who calls those who bear witness by hearing (or viewing) testimonials “secondary witnesses”: “the presumption that by watching a film, a viewer bears witness, involves a category mistake: viewers are not passive … they are active creators of their interpretations, always inhabiting a specific point of view.” LaRocca, David, ‘Introduction’, p. 46.
It is certainly different to experience an event live and unplanned, rather than mediated through a screen, in a safe space, as part of separated dimension of leisure or work life; yet the witness as viewer is never only passive, whether “live” or recorded.
131 The verb “to witness” is defined by Merriam Webster as firstly to see (something) happen; secondly, to be present at (an event) in order to be able to say that it happened: to act as a legal witness of (something); and thirdly to be the time or place when (something) happens.
132 Even when the camera (wo)man is dying, LaRocca upholds the fundamental distinction between camera eye and human eye. LaRocca, David, ‘Introduction’, p. 46.
witnessing through the media can “count” as witnessing remains a bone of contention and definition.

The anthology Media Witnessing begins with the claim that “every act of witnessing implies some kind of mediation … putting an experience into language for the benefit of those who were not there.” 133 Traditionally documentary footage and live news media134 were seen to provide this kind of witnessing or evidence; yet, in transforming our perception of time and space, the immediacy of real-time technologies seem to have distanced and altered the perception of presence.135 Menahem Blondheim and Tamar Liebes suggest that a “joint venture” of modern news media and its audience today fill the functions of “archaic witnessing,” namely the “public recognition of significant change in the world … [and on the other hand] the act of transforming the world through public recognition.”136

134 In a pre-digital era, seeing the diegetic object meant that it existed – bar the trickery that has, of course, also always existed, and which serves as the exception that proves the rule. This combination of political-ethical convention and indexicality cemented a distinction between fictional and documentary material. For instance Peters suggests using the political ethical convention of witnessing as defining distinction between fact and fiction.
135 Lev Manovich proposes that in the “telepresence” of digital media and virtual reality the subject may affect the reality at a location via remote control, which results in a qualitatively different presence. Lev Manovich, ‘To Lie and to Act: Cinema and Telepresence’, in Cinema Futures: Cain, Abel or Cable?: The Screen Arts in the Digital Age, ed. by Thomas Elsaesser and Kay Hoffmann (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998), pp. 189-99.
In the context of the Gulf War, Paul Virilio suggested that “time… is now exposed instantaneously. Cited in Brian Larkin, ‘Degraded Images, Distorted Sounds: Nigerian Video and the Infrastructure of Piracy’, Public Culture 16 (2004), pp. 289-314 (p. 305);
Yet there exist also troubles and atrocities that lack documentation, where there are no witnesses alive or these are not willing or able to speak. In such cases, recorded and fictionalized stories may stand paradigmatically for a wrong. It follows that the process of mediating a reality, is not necessarily verbal, and a witness neither has to be alive, nor able to speak, otherwise we would exclude the dead, the mute, the mentally disabled, those who have forgotten or repressed the memories, or who might have been too small, those who may choose to remain silent but embody a witnessing function.  

Peters suggests that the boundary between fact and fiction is ultimately ethical before it is epistemological, and it is a logical next step to propose witnessing as an ethical position. Peters argues that witnessing implies to be, morally and politically, on the right side; he defines witnessing as “a mode of perception that makes us responsible.”  

For Peters, “the attitude of witnessing is hardest to sustain” in recording as it is both temporally and spatially remote. In this “profane zone” of recording, “our duty to action is unclear … We are witnesses without a tribunal.”  

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132 (p. 120 and 115). See Literature Review on the propositions of Ballengee and DuBois on the spectacle of torture as displaced onto media relations today.

137 Memories can be literally inscribed in the body even of infants, as epigenetics demonstrates, a science which studies how genes can be turned on and off and expressed differently through changes in environment and behaviour. For instance, Rachel Yehuda’s epigenetic research shows that the children of Holocaust survivors and the children of women who survived the 9/11 attacks and were pregnant at the time exhibit modified genetic markers akin to the trauma survivors themselves. Yehuda, ‘Transgenerational effects of posttraumatic stress.’


Leach suggests that “testimony” and “witness” may belong to “a previous regime of epistemological concerns,” unable to account for current “human–machine reconfigurations,” and proposes to view witnessing “as a rhetorical stance, a way of managing subject positions.” 140 This rhetorical stance aims “to make the recipients of scientific testimony [the presumed objectivity of the machine] into virtual witnesses: we can all say that we have seen by proxy.” 141 On the other hand, as Ellis and Boltansky point out, this also means that “we can no longer say that we didn’t know.” 142

**Media Witnessing: Embodiment and Presence**

The ethical appeal of media witnessing is unclear because of the spatio-temporal distance between event and witness. 143 Does Levinas’s argument on the ethical appeal of a direct, face-to-face encounter – which creates an ethical relation that situates the ethical subject as perpetually obligated to the other 144 – hold for a mediating screen, which keeps the encounter at a distance? These are fundamentally philosophical questions which I will not attempt to answer; however, I would like to draw attention to the fact that the element of presence and the notion of embodiment are central to how we define and understand cinema, witnessing and torture. “The legitimation of the veracity gap in media followed the same path as in witnessing: using pain and the body as a criterion

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140 Leach, ‘Scientific Witness’, p. 194.
143 Boltanski distinguishes various strategies of transmitting “distant suffering” along their focus, and representational forms according to their “proposal of commitment” to the spectator (Boltanski, Distant Suffering, p. 149).
144 Levinas is taken as starting point for instance by Choi, Cine-ethics; Cubitt, ‘Archive Ethics’.
of truth and truthfulness.”

The “truth” extracted by torture – the truth of the heretic, of power relations, of punishment – is anchored in the tortured body and in the bodies of those watching.

There is, moreover, a collective, public, or communal aspect of witnessing. For instance, Hannah Arendt distinguishes “factual truth,” which is witnessed with the body, from the truth produced by the mind in solitude. Arendt’s “factual truth” must be seen, depends upon testimony, and “exists only to the extent it is spoken about.” The witness wants and needs somebody to witness his performing the witnessing. This collective moment can be translated to film – even if we are not watching together in time and space – for cinema enables an audience to be ‘actually present’ in other moments and other parts of the world. Cinema expands the subject’s mobility virtually, while its presence extends that subject’s sense of sovereignty over a range of events from which she was previously excluded.

A witness does not have to be able to interfere, but must perceive him or herself to be present at the event. And what about the machine itself, the camera or film as witness? In the seminal Rome Open City, a comparable case of fictional-yet-real material to the ones I am discussing here, Karl Schoonover describes an image that “invites us to watch while telling us that we are just watching”, thereby complicating the act of witness and confronting “the viewer

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146 Quoted in Eckstein, Language of fiction.
with the profound ambiguity of the real.” 148 Building on André Bazin, Schoonover calls this “cinepresence,” an image unadulterated by a possessive, guiding montage. In the final chapter, I will return to this idea of an object as witness, both in terms of diegetic objects, and how the film itself, as material and symbolic object can obtain a witnessing function. The camera, I suggest, can mimic both subjectivity or stand in for what Leach called the “scientific witness,” that is a presumably “objective” machine.149 I remain with inverted commas on this “machine as witness” or use the formula of a witnessing function as any such witness still depends on a receiving, embodied reader.

As discussed in the Literature Review, the watching and witnessing audience is necessarily a component of the performance of torture; explicitly, Ballengee suggested locating the witness both within the diegetic performance as well as outside, with the spectator as extra-diegetic witness.150 If the cinematic experience is framed as an option of public “witnessing,” its spectators, as the addressees of the torture, are turned into participants; they become part of the performance of torture and its various functions, from visual spectacle and sacrifice to the demonstration of power. This can be interpreted (and performed) either as structural complicity, where the watchers uphold the functioning of the performance of torture, or as an involved participation.

148 Schoonover, Brutal Vision, p. 27.
149 Leach distinguishes between the “traumatic” and the “scientific witness”. Witnessing is often considered authentic because it is not impartial, but in the scientific witness this moment of subjectivity is disguised. The presumed objectivity of the machine gains a privileged position “by disavowing the very position of witness and disappereing, through various literary technologies, from the narrative of scientific research.” Leach, ‘Scientific Witness’, p. 190)
150 Ballengee, The Wound and the Witness.
Textual analysis of central moments of witnessing torture in Rendition reveal various gazes and instances of watchers-witnesses. Following Laura Mulvey’s ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’, we can distinguish between three main gazes: the looking relations between the diegetic characters, the gaze of camera, and the gaze of the spectator. To this I would add the gaze of the (invisible) factual witness – as these films are based on or are representative cases of actual torture.

**Witness politics in Rendition**

In Rendition (Gavin Hood, 2007), Anwar el-Ibrahimi, an Egyptian living in Chicago with his pregnant wife and young son, is abducted from a flight home and flown to an undefined North African country where he is tortured at the behest of the CIA. Present as observer, CIA analyst Douglas Freeman grows increasingly critical of the proceedings and ends up freeing Anwar at his own discretion; he then publicizes the story, causing public outrage.

The moral core of Rendition is undoubtedly situated with U.S. policy positions and Douglas’s decision to free Anwar. The film has been criticised as a case of “empty empathy” and appropriative witnessing: Douglas, as a “good white citizen … of the world,” redeems himself – and vicariously the audience – through “the act of bearing witness,” substituting and effectively


152 Kaplan, Trauma Culture, p. 23.

153 Rachel Walsh, ‘What Stories We Tell When We Talk About Torture: Mapping the Geopolitics of Compassion and the Post-Abu-Ghraib National Family in 24:
appropriating the pain of the racialized other, and through his eventual decision to free Anwar.\textsuperscript{154} The white Anglo-American bodies of the protagonists are read rather literally as embodiment of a threatened or hurt national body, and their family relations as standing in for a vulnerable “national family.”\textsuperscript{155} This obliteration of the other’s suffering constitutes what Goldberg aptly termed the “political instability” and “representational violence” at the heart of “supposedly politically liberal” films such as \textit{Rendition}\textsuperscript{156} which seem to assume a Western audience incapable of imagining this suffering unless channelled through the suffering of a (white) Western person. As a result, the real violence and the real pain – \textit{Rendition} is based on factual cases of mistaken identity\textsuperscript{157} –

\textsuperscript{154} Jean Rahbar, on the other hand, chose to criticize post-9/11 films such as \textit{Rendition} for featuring “onlooker-characters” who are not interfering. Jean Rahbar, ‘U.S. Ambivalence About Torture: An Analysis of Post -9/11 Films’, \textit{Jump Cut}, 56 (2015). As always, the quest for historical veracity is tricky. \textit{Rendition} may be considered a fantasy in which “one good man” alleviates Western conscience but also a form of corrective to public narratives which exclude dissenting voices from within the CIA.

\textsuperscript{155} Cf. Bächler, \textit{Inszenierte Bedrohung}; Devji, ‘Torture at the limits of Politics’. Walsh criticises that the ending of \textit{Rendition} “demands very little of its viewers politically” Walsh, ‘What stories we tell’, p. 162. Compare James Agee’s remarkably similar critique, in the context of postwar U.S. audience for films such as \textit{Rome Open City} which, he argued, erode culpability, and absolve the viewer into a comfortable fiction; Agee criticizes “a self-satisfied smugness in the American viewer about his or her own place in the world.” Schoonover, \textit{Brutal Vision}, p. 106.


\textsuperscript{157} \textit{Rendition} is based on the kidnapping of Khaled el-Masri, a German citizen mistaken for a terrorist in 2003. In December 2012, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that el Masri’s treatment amounted to torture. He was never charged with a crime or given access to a lawyer. ‘About those black sites’, \textit{The New York Times Online} (February 17, 2013). There is also a similarity with Abu Zubaydah who was put under forced sleep deprivation for 180 hours and waterboarded 83 times, the last times
recede into little more than a background foil for the moral conundrums of the Western heroes to play out.

Following the none too subtle call of his surname Freeman, Douglas acts on his “luxury of choice.” Devji describes such scenarios thus:

a free moral agent, [the hero] must take on weighty moral responsibility, to the extent of putting his own life and career on the line. … [the] moral dimension of pain, both inflicted and endured, belongs to the torturer.

Serving a higher law, the hero must break common law, at some risk to himself, and in this process he must accept a great personal amount of responsibility. From the pain of his witnessing to his momentary alcohol abuse and inability to perform sexually, Douglas’s struggle – the one we do not see in Zero’s torturers – claims “the very suffering of this tortured victims for himself.” At no point does Douglas apologize to Anwar – which would acknowledge not only Anwar’s humanity but also Douglas’s responsibility and role in his ordeal.

Similar to the case of Maya in Zero, the actual doing of the torturing in Rendition is displaced to Fawal, the local head of security. Crucially, feelings of shame and guilt are also pinned onto these “other” bodies. Shame, grief, imposed on the direct orders of officials at CIA headquarters, over the strenuous objections of the interrogators who were performing the procedure. The interrogators emphasised that Abu Zubaydah was completely compliant; he just had nothing to give up. Danner and Eakin, ‘Our New Politics of Torture’.

Douglas’s surname Freeman also evokes the genre of slave narratives, in which the freed slave fashioned a new identity through self-naming, which would support a reading of appropriating pain.


Even though it is clear that the U.S. ordered the rendition, the dirty fingers remain elsewhere. While this is clearly criticized in the film, as a visual experience, we remain with the image of Fawal as torturer.
self-loathing are visible on torturer Fawal's face in *Rendition*, when he realises that his actions led to the death of his daughter.

Walsh argues that for an (Western and white) audience, the cathartic ending of *Rendition* provides the possibility to assuage a shame that arose after the release of the Abu-Ghraib prison photographs.

> [These narratives offer] a form of compassion which assumes the other’s pain … while simultaneously maintaining a barrier between the one who witnesses and the one who suffers … compassion is a term denoting privilege: the sufferer is over there.\(^\text{163}\)

The witnessing sequences – cutting between close-ups of the eyes and face of the prisoner to those of the witness, between images of torture and of the onlooker, and the camera following Douglas’s gaze – establish an analogy between the physical pain of the prisoner and the moral pain of the witnessing protagonist who wrestles with the theme of torture [images 2.8 - 2.9, p. 183-4].

Schoonover condemns such visual strategies as “uninterrogated witness politics”:

> [*Rendition*] appears to be unable to condemn state-sanctioned violence without structuring its climatic scene of gruesome torture around the gaze of the white Hollywood star."\(^\text{164}\)

I would go even further and suggest that it is not clear whether Douglas’s awareness has been developed, which enhances the aforementioned “political instability.” The motivation of Douglas’s act remains unclear: it might be a cost-benefit calculation, the recognition of the futility of this particular torture or the result of having developed a more general abhorrence of the practice. In the


\(^{164}\) Schoonover, *Brutal Vision*, p. 223.
film, Corinne Whitman, Douglas’s CIA superior and the woman responsible for the rendition contrasts the many potentially saved (Western) lives with a single sacrificed person. When Douglas seeks a rationale against torture, his arguments – perhaps purposefully – resemble hers, limited to efficiency, blowback and quantitative comparisons. At one point, Whitman is petitioned by a Senate aide, aptly named “Smith,” and she replies, “What are you taking issue with? The disappearance of a particular man – or national security policy?” As in Zero, the movie does not answer this poignant question, and it can be safely assumed to be directed fundamentally at us, all the Smiths in the audience.

The most forceful moment of questioning the use of torture takes place at the home of a local colleague, Douglas’s friend Saeed. The setting is sumptuous, Orientalist and denotes affluence, even decadence: a large, dark, slightly cluttered room filled with comfortable sofas, geometrically patterned décor, low-lit lamps, a fireplace (perhaps a sign of prestige or postcolonial mimicry in what appears to be a rather warm country). A bath-robed Saeed tells Douglas, “We have a saying: beat your woman every morning. If you don’t know why, she does.” The statement, which Douglas neither corroborates nor

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165 The character of Whitman orders the rendition and insists to continue the torture in spite of objections from her own people.

166 He asks to be given a statistical analysis of the efficiency of the programme: “Give me a fucking pie chart - I love pie charts!” Douglas’s objection does not appear to be on principle; rather, he wants reliable information on the odds. The implication is less a regret on the pain inflicted upon victims than chagrin over the futility of the torturers’ efforts and an indictment of the inefficiency of (bureaucratic) agencies.
contradicts,\textsuperscript{167} crystalizes that it might not be knowledge (or information) that is at stake, but the upholding of power relations and punishment. However, framing this response as an Arab “tradition,” which stands in direct contrast to the Western paradigm of innocent until proven guilty, suggests that this is the appropriate and only language “they” (women, slaves, terrorists) will understand. In the film this discourse is uttered by Saeed who therefore, in spite of his wealth, education, and British accent, remains fundamentally ‘other’.

While Anwar’s physical pain is “made feelable” to the audience through the moral pain of Douglas, the emotional pain and moral injustice is channelled through the injustice suffered by his U.S.-American wife Isabella, played by Reese Witherspoon. In a neatly gendered division, beautiful, young, pregnant, and white\textsuperscript{168} Isabella functions as a more overtly emotional catalyst. Similar to Maya in Zero, Witherspoon’s beauty is used as a respite from the visual terror of gruesome torture scenes. While Anwar’s innocence or guilt is in doubt during most of the film, unequivocal innocence is located with Isabella and the homeland America, where she remains throughout, frequently framed before national monuments in Washington or within wholesome small town suburbia.

\textbf{The Spectator as Witness}

As elaborated in the Literature Review, in theories of torture the element of embodiment is central for the “truth” or certainty of torture to emerge – from

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\textsuperscript{167} Douglas facial expression (and actor Gyllenhall’s comic timing) in his response – “I don’t know what that means” – turn this problematic instance of (projected or real) misogyny into a moment of comic relief.

\textsuperscript{168} This is a critical change to the factual abduction story of Khalid El-Masri, whose wife is Lebanese.
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Scarry who discusses how the pain of the tortured body reifies power relations, to Ballengee who suggests that the “effectiveness” of torture, its rhetorical meaning is determined by and anchored with the certainty felt in the witnessing spectator’s body. *Rendition* constantly destabilises this embodied certainty and thus the affective anchoring of torture as truth. The narrative entity strategically and repeatedly withholds crucial information, creating uncertainty with regards to Anwar, which intertwines suspense and moral focus and exposes our readiness to believe in these codes. From the beginning, as Egyptian, Muslim, and engineer (potential bomb-building knowledge), Anwar’s character is constructed with racial-religious red flags. Regardless of its possible failings as a film, *Rendition* earnestly attempts to engage the audience with the naturalization of such codes. For instance, in the second or third torture scene, Anwar suddenly “breaks” and gives out names. So far the viewer has been encouraged to believe in Anwar’s innocence. Like Douglas, who had just called for the torture to stop, we are dumbfounded, shocked, scared. Yet this dramatic turn of events is closely followed by a second twist, when Douglas reveals to Saeed, and to the audience, that this “intelligence” was bogus: in the attempt to provide something to make the pain stop, Anwar gave out the names of the Egyptian football team of the year he left the country. In the time that elapses between such pieces of information, the spectator may oscillate between doubt and belief.

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In order to engage the viewer with the question of torture’s legitimacy, the audience is purposefully misled with regards to the different temporal levels (past-present-future) of *Rendition*’s intersecting storylines, which are only revealed in a twist at the end. As Elsaesser notes for what he calls the “mindgame film,” “we, like the characters, are [tricked] into mistaking ‘replay’ as play.” The final twist demonstrates the futility of torture, and its part in perpetuating a vicious circle of violence. There is no information to be gained in the interrogation because the terror event has already happened; moreover, it has been the result of blowback from previous torture. By making this realization experientially available to the spectator, the effect is magnified.

The standard account of torture in fiction film claims the audience as positioned in control within a wish fulfilment fantasy and omniscient narrator fallacy. In *Rendition*, the audience is initially set up in a position of superior knowledge to each individual character and especially in relation to the blindfolded Anwar and his misinformed family. The eventual revelation of disparate narrative time lines disrupts such fictions of control. To make sense of the film’s plot, the audience must acknowledge that we always had access only to partial and pre-

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170 After introducing the spectator briefly to the protagonists, their locations and relations, *Rendition* begins with a terrorist bomb attack in Egypt, which, we are led to believe, sets Anwar’s abduction and torture in motion, in the attempt to hunt the perpetrators and to prevent a second attack. Repeated at the end of the film, it is revealed that the initial bomb attack was a suicide mission by the boyfriend of Fawal’s daughter, who also dies in the attack; therefore an entire plot line has already happened, that of searching for the eloped couple and preventing the mission young man, whose brother had been previously tortured to death by Fawal.

171 Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener, *Film theory: an introduction through the senses* (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 149.

172 While we do not know where exactly Anwar is held, we know that he has been abducted, who gave the order and so on.
selected information, a recognition reinforced by the fact that the ending does not tie all loose ends.

Considering the effects of the mindgame film on a more abstract level, Elsaesser notes that this kind of intervention exposes “epistemological problems (how do we know what we know) and ontological doubts (about other worlds, other minds)” and encourages “new forms of spectator-engagement and new forms of audience-address.” The film creates an experiential moment that un-settles our relationship to the image, our epistemological trust in the certainty of our senses. The images were not so much false than decontextualized, presented to and read by us in an inadequate framework: we did not even suspect that other information was missing. Tricking the viewer thus is also a way of acknowledging his or her presence – and the presence of a witness is a central element to the performance of torture.

So far it has been a character within the diegesis, who performed this act of witnessing. Rather than considering this diegetic witness as a stand-in for the spectator, we might say that the spectator corroborates the performance of witnessing: we are watching them watching. This idea can be usefully linked to the widely circulated image capturing President Obama and his inner circle gathered in the White House Situation Room on May 1, 2011 to monitor the night-time raid on Osama bin Laden’s compound in Pakistan from a live feed from a drone. [image 2.10, p. 184] The viewer of the photograph cannot see

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174 The image, called “Situation Room,” was taken by Official White House photographer Pete Souza, and it is one of the most widely circulated images associated
the broadcast or even the set being watched. Clearly, the message is the witnessing, and the viewer of the photograph is turned into the witness to their witnessing. Only if witnessing is limited to the vision of a disembodied spectator, and only if vision is moreover considered a passive activity, does the spectator become complicit with the performance of torture and empty witnessing. If affective, physiological and emotional dimensions are included in the examination of the spectatorial response,175 watching a film might be considered a way to be in the presence-at-distance of torture.

**Regimes of Vision**

This presence-at-distance may include “problematic” responses, such as spectatorial discomfort, including the wish to look away. Moving on to discuss such various “regimes of vision”, this section will interrogate some of the gazes and modes of looking prominently encountered in these films. Not only does torture’s position among various fields of in-visibilities invite an exploration of “regimes of vision,” but these films negotiate central themes regarding power, anxieties, and information through their formal construction of various modes of watching. In particular, “power gazes,” images of surveillance and the panoptic aerial shot, feature centrally in the films. Central questions are who controls, exposes, or reads these images, who has agency in this distribution of visibility?

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with the ‘War on Terror’ and its continuation under the Obama Administration. Cf. “With so much to see, and with the government withholding the bloody bin Laden images, it’s no wonder that the photo is on track to become the most-viewed image on Flickr.” Horowitz, ‘Situation Room’

When does looking enact control and when compassion? How is seeing related to knowing or understanding?

The “performance of vision” can take the form of an exercise of power. As put forth in influential models on the dynamics of the look and the gaze by critical race, feminist, cultural and post-colonial studies, as well as film theory, vision often expresses control and agency. The translation into social structures which, thus normalized, seem invisible, limits identity options; the internalization of this external gaze into the self in the form of “double consciousness” is among the most pervasive exercises of power, as they deny the object of the gaze the possibility to exit their status of “to-be-looked-at-ness.”

However, both looking and choosing not to look can be considered a right and a privilege, in ways that interlink with the way in which both exposure and invisibility – the choice not to be seen, to disappear from someone else’s vision=reality=world – can denote power as well as vulnerability. For instance, in Zero and Rendition, there are moments when the American witnesses avert their eyes from the spectacle of torture presented to them; when the protagonist of Body attempts to do the same, his Jordanian

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177 A frequently cited example is news coverage, where dignity and discretion in news coverage and visual representation of violence are often granted to one’s own group while no such discretion is offered to images of dead “Others.” Cf. Burgoyne, ‘Embodying in the War Film’. Sontag singles out a new insistence on “good taste” regarding 9/11 imagery and the allied dead of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are rarely photographed. Sontag, Regarding the Pain.
counterpart insists, “Keep watching!” Here, torture is clearly not a scopophilic, pleasurable spectacle; and the camera, like us, would rather not want to see. These are instances of a visualized “politics of the squirm.” Another example is featured in Syriana, discussed below, where the camera “hides” when the protagonist’s fingernails are pulled off, and focuses instead on his trembling feet; torture is translated by its effects.

Beyond the notion of a general structural complicity of cinema with warfare, particular gazes carry more historical baggage. Perhaps the most militaristic of gazes is the panoptic aerial shot, typical of war films and newsreel footage. This disembodied panoptic gaze objectifies the target, conflates military and media apparatus, and constitutes a viewing subject that, it has been suggested, (forcibly) shares this “imperialist gaze”: “by viewing we are bombing, identified with both bomber and bomb.” The all-seeing panoptic vantage point connotes military might and technological superiority and is also associated

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178 Cf. Oliver, ‘Trauma, Bodies, and Performance Art’.
179 A similar translation takes place in the Rome, Open City - unless one argues, with Wittgenstein, that sounds and reactions are not a translation but part of the pain-phenomenon, see Literature Review.
180 For instance, Sontag on the camera as prolongation of the gun, Virilio on the historical “osmosis between industrialized warfare and cinema.” Sontag, Regarding the Pain; Virilio, War and Cinema, p. 58. There has been a concurrent development and mutual influence – technological, conceptual and rhetorical – between war and cinematic machinery, an historical collusion, alliance or dependency (depending on point of view), between Hollywood and the military and defence sector.
with the Central Intelligence Agency, which is introduced in Body and Rendition with such an aerial shot of its headquarters and a legend spelling out "Langley, Virginia." Aerial panoramic shots feature prominently; in Zero, the raid on bin Laden’s hide-out is initiated with such a possessive aerial gaze before shifting to a different aesthetics, the fragmented, multi-screened chaotic plurality of gazes which visually reproduces changes of modern warfare.

This shift reflects also that the politics of visibility and the ethics of looking relations have changed dramatically. More and more, watching is occurring all the time – in the information overload, promise of total visibility and option of endless repetition in surveillance footage and CCTV. The previously dominant ocular metaphor, both in cinema and warfare, suggested a worldview in which seeing equalled the agency and possessive power described above. The “hypermediated optics of War on Terror films” reframes this metaphor and reorganizes how power and knowledge are constructed through the gaze.

These films translate the chaotic closeness, confusion, and excess of visual

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183 The “panoptic vision” which turns the whole world into a target emerged as a standard shot of the coverage of the second Gulf War. Virilio’s 1984 conceptualization of an “aesthetics of disappearance,” in which even warfare is “derealized” connected the technological advances in cinema and warfare to how these influenced our perception, and Shapiro has expanded these ideas for newer media and changing forms of warfare. Shapiro, Cinematic geopolitics.


information with what Bordwell has called “intensified continuity.” This style is characterized by a decrease of average shot length, a narrowed focus of the camera on actors, as opposed to expansive shots, close framing and a free-ranging camera. Filmed through night vision goggles, the raid sequence in *Zero* with its images of chaos and confusion reflects the prevalent aesthetics of “remediated” modern warfare.

Usually, these optics are discussed in relation to “our new media wars [which] are themselves executed, not just disseminated, in new media,” and to terrorism; Gooch for instance points to the centrality of the image in terror and counter-terror in contemporary war films which “yoke their use of surveillance to terrorist attacks, turning the terrorist’s production of spectacle into content to be analysed.” In the next chapter I will continue this discussion of how contemporary violence is reflected in aesthetic and formal construction through new media types with the example of *Redacted*.

Regarding the representation of torture in these films, we encounter the traditional distribution of power through gaze relations and multiple perspectives – for instance through point of view shots, when the camera follows the gaze of the guard who looks at the victim. Added to this are

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188 Stewart, ‘War Pictures’, p. 112.
189 Gooch is talking about *Body of Lies* and *The Kingdom* (Peter Berg, 2007) an earlier film about similar topics (Gooch, ‘Beyond Panopticism’, p. 164).
different, frequently remediated and distorted images, which include the multiplied screens in public and private spaces as well as what Farocki called “operational images”\(^{190}\) – those of surveillance control, reaper or drone remote control devices. Both surveillance and torture are incorporated as narrative devices, and Catherine Zimmer suggests an intrinsic link between the two as

the ambiguous narrative formation around surveillance asks for torture, hailing it in order to turn the zones of indistinction into resolved deployments of power.\(^{191}\)

Notwithstanding the “folk epistemology” that insists on “the truth-telling status of machinery and instrumentation,” with the result that “the data spewed from machines authorize a kind of moral discourse: ‘facts don’t lie,’”\(^{192}\) present in the films is also a strong current of ambivalence regarding this data, its reliability, suffocating quantity, and the distrust of who is and might be watching.\(^{193}\) Who sees (and understands) these images? Neither the barrage of surveillance footage nor the remediated modern warfare allows for an ideal viewing

\(^{190}\) In his TV documentaries Eye/Machine I, II, III, Harun Farocki criticizes and analyses who uses when, in what historical dispositive. “Operational images” present themselves as objective but were created for a particular purpose. Elsaesser discussed such images in the context of Farocki’s Parallel I-IV (2012-14). Thomas Elsaesser, ‘Simulation and the Labour of Invisibility: Harun Farocki’s Life Manuals ’ (presentation at A Life Remade Conference: Birkbeck, London, 2015). Such images anticipate Manovich’s distinction between “images to lie with” (simulation) or to act with. Manovich, ‘To Lie and to Act’.


\(^{192}\) Leach, ‘Scientific Witness’, p. 191.

\(^{193}\) Cf. David Lyon on “dataveillance,” its mobilization in “mobiveillance” and its virtualization in “cyberveillance.” Lyon argues that such surveillance implicates “basic questions of social justice to do with access, risk distribution and freedom.” Lyon, David, ‘Surveillance, Power, and Everyday Life’, in Oxford Handbooks Online, ed. by Chrisanthi Avgerou, Robin Mansell, Danny Quah, and Roger Silverstone (Oxford University Press: February 2009); See also Zimmer, ‘Caught on Tape?’.
position; the expert necessary to read and select among the barrage of images is clearly not the spectator, who needs additional information – hence the superimposed titles (“Black Site,” “Samara, Iraq” and so on).

As solution, the films discussed in this chapter indicate an “expert” reader who receives this scientifically mediated data; CIA analysts in Zero, Body, Rendition, and Syriana (as we shall see, also those in Homeland and 24), are increasingly or even primarily characterized as

knowledge worker[s] whose work depends upon [their] control of surveillance equipment and [their]... ability to interpret images and signs ... What empowers the FBI is not their technology but their interpretive skills.194

This figure of the expert reader negotiates the problem of intelligibility and the tension between digital video’s failings and on-going reliance on ocular evidence.195 Shots of a diegetic expert decoding and interpreting these screened images and data unintelligible to the viewer seem almost requisite. [image 2.11, p. 184] Their study of these images is contemplative, they repeat, rewind, dissect, zoom in, compare, superimpose. As a result, the audience frequently watches images of experts watching images. We become witnesses to the performance of their expertise, without necessarily understanding the minutiae of the investigating process. The audience is excluded but also absolved from feeling “in some complicated way, responsible to act.”196

195 By contrast, Rob White suggests that the films resolve this “crisis of imaging,” by asserting “inherent cinematographic power to figure an ethics of clarified vision” (Rob White, ‘Heaven Knows We’re Digital Now’, Film Quarterly, 62 (2009), pp. 4-5 (p. 5).
Without this expertise, the images can be misleading. In Rendition, the images’ significance eludes the (Arab) investigators. Torturer Fawal is given a tourist’s accidental footage of the explosion, but the footage does not only not provide Fawal with the information he was looking for – the identity of the bomber – but more crucially, it does not give him the information he was not looking for but would have needed in order to understand the events. He fails to read the image expertly. In Zero, Maya scrutinizes torture footage and when the camera mimics her behaviour, offering the audience the image of such footage in close-up, the image dissolves into unintelligible pixels. During the raid, we move from a distanced helicopter shot to greater and greater proximity to the target. Paradoxically, the closer we get, the less we seem to see, and at the end of the raid, we never even see bin-Laden. This expert gaze which suddenly discovers the crucial detail which eludes the uninitiated is related to the medical gaze, which may also pair healing and policing, and an expert look inside a body’s truth, hidden to the subject itself, which provides the link between the expert torturer and the CIA knowledge worker.

On the other hand, there is a frequent parallel between technological progress, high-tech modernity and the Western world, versus cultural and religious

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197 This evokes many famous cases where footage is used in the attempt to reconstruct a crime, such as the Zapruder film of president Kennedy’s assassination in 1963, security video of the Rodney King beating, and more recently, the footage caught on cell phone of black men being killed by U.S. law enforcement, see appendix.

198 On a narrative level too, it is a failure of adequate communication, a confluence of missed signs that leads to catastrophe, and the loss of the innocent: not only Anwar’s torment, but also the death of the young Arab couple sacrificed as pawns of the extremists. Dysfunctional U.S. politics and dysfunctional family politics are equated and personalized – torturer Fawal’s refuses to listen to his daughter or to his prisoner, head of CIA Corrine Whitman refuses to listen to any of the many warnings and arguments.
otherness that is equated with backwardness and archaic forms of conflict resolution, expressed through gazes and bodies. The films switch between aerial and distant shots – taken from drones, satellites or helicopters, often silent, mediated through a screen, suggesting sublime and control – and scenes in close proximity. These are often filmed with hectic camera movements or edited into a fast-pace montage, frequently taken by a hand-held camera, featuring shots of closely framed bodies, teeming masses of unknown extras, suggesting confusion and latent danger. The movement is thus not only from air to earth and large-scale to close-up, but also from machine to concretely physical body, and from high-tech spectacle to human craftsmanship. Where “the aerial view of surveillance transforms places into space, [and moves] from concrete to abstraction, and distancing,”¹⁹⁹ its oppositional type of vision, up close and chaotic, is more human: intimate, inhabited, tangible, sensual. The division between gazes corresponds to a separation of spaces and bodies. These bodies are coded as “other,” pre-modern, a discourse with historical roots.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ Butler, Frames of War, p. 77.
²⁰⁰ Compare Kahn who describes the “pre-modern feel” to torture and Franco’s discussion of the link between modernity, linear conceptions of progress, and the othering of certain populations, with regards to indigenous people in Peru. Indigenous bodies are rendered as a pre-modern (and “un-modernizable”), as obstacle to the implementation of progress. Kahn, Sacred Violence, p. 2; Franco, Cruel Modernity.
Tortured Bodies in *Syriana* and *Body of Lies*

Certain forms of vision are linked to certain places and the bodies that inhabit them. *Rendition, Body,* and *Syriana*\(^{201}\) build up contrasting worlds on visual, narrative, and spatial registers. In all three films, the place of the torture is connected with the “specifically unspecific” locale of a Middle Eastern setting that is visually interchangeable.\(^{202}\) In *Rendition*, the safe and “Westernized” places are named or clearly coded by visual landmarks\(^{203}\) whereas the country where the torture takes place is specified only as “North Africa.” Postcolonial criticism has legitimately criticized the pitting of such “othered” places, with the “openness of the United States and the American vision of equality and human rights ... to signify ‘U.S. exceptionalism.’”\(^{204}\) Yet this can also reflect how a

\(^{201}\) These terrorist-themed thrillers are sometimes grouped as a vaguely defined genre, for instance as “terror porn” (Hamid Mowlana, George Gerbner, and Herbert I. Schiller, *Triumph of the Image: The Media’s War in the Persian Gulf: A Global Perspective* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), p. 7) or “the war-on-terror action film ... [which has become] as de rigueur as the Cold War one used to be.” Foundas, Scott, *Ridley Scott’s Body of Lies is the Post-9/11, Tech-Savvy Terror Thriller We Deserve: Lies we can believe in*, *Village Voice* (8 October 2008).

\(^{202}\) Jordan in *Body of Lies*; Iran and Lebanon in *Syriana*; Iraq, Pakistan and Iran in *Homeland*; in *Rendition*, an intertitle places us “somewhere in North Africa” and even on television there are images of a “suicide bombing in north Africa” This country cannot be Egypt, yet there is no acknowledgment that the Arabic spoken by Anwar, an Egypt native, and the “North African” torturer might differ. This unspecific specificity is why mistakes in historical detail seem so infuriating, as they often suggest carelessness.\(^{203}\) Such as Cape Town’s table mountain, and national monuments in Washington.

\(^{204}\) Shome in *Hasian, ‘Military Orientalism’*, p. 466. Compare *Hasian’s reading of Zero*: “[the film] creates a world divided ... between American warriors speaking in English and Middle Eastern streets filled with teeming masses and an air of chaos, where everyone looks untrustworthy, at best, threatening, at worst, and speaks in alien tongues. ... [we] get to see Pakistan visually configured as a degenerate nation, ... where bombs are set off all of the time.” As a result, such films “promote the notion of Western superiority in ways that treat other geographic locales as spaces and places that provide mere backdrops for geopolitical conflict.” *Hasian, ‘Military Orientalism’,* p. 475.

Similarly, Goldberg argues that the conflict zones and tortured bodies in films on contemporary conflicts demarcate danger zones that the white hero has to cross and navigate in a standard quest narrative and from which he ultimately emerges safely,
Western public is excluded from precise knowledge regarding these programmes and their location, representative of how anonymous black sites have become judicial spaces “devoid of law.”\textsuperscript{205} In \textit{Rendition}, for instance, the film audience remains excluded from precise knowledge, as do the diegetic victims, Anwar and Isabella.

Introducing \textit{Body},\textsuperscript{206} CIA handler Ed Hoffman’s hawkish narrative articulates an anxiety and a deep sense of vulnerability due to U.S. reliance on technology. The U.S.-Americans are described as “guys from the future” who are an easy target to an enemy who “lives like it’s the past.”\textsuperscript{207} The film’s images of Americans dying and its formal language – notably Bordwell’s “intensified continuity” – seem to corroborate Hoffman’s discourse. Various mobilities influence our perception of contrasting temporalities, the past as an immobile, pre-modern Middle East, and the future, as a hyper-connected West, where characters are constantly on the phone, and (the fetishization of) speed (and

\textsuperscript{205} See appendix.

\textsuperscript{206} In \textit{Body of Lies}, CIA agent Roger Ferris forms a fragile bond with Hani Salaam, head of the Jordanian Intelligence, but is repeatedly foiled by his double-crossing controller Ed Hoffman. In one of the many ploys, Ferris is captured, tortured, and, about to be executed on video, saved at the last minute. At the end of the film, disgusted with Hoffman’s lack of ethics and having fallen in love with a local nurse, Ferris decides to “unplug” from the CIA’s reach.

\textsuperscript{207} The U.S. has hegemony over normativity of time. Hoffman does not single out the American dependence on (fallible) machines and technology, polarizing instead Western civilization to its Other, the endemic barbarism of Arab culture contrasted with enlightened modernity. The film begins with Hoffman’s voiceover: “prolonged war … most likely will make your enemy stronger. They get used to the deprivation, and they adapt … Our enemy has realized that they are fighting guys from the future. … If you live like it’s the past, and you behave like it’s the past then guys from the future find it very hard to see you.”
connectivity) is linked to progress. Spatial contrast is congruent with a temporal difference. The Western-associated aesthetics also express a freedom of permanent, fast, virtual and literal mobility, as a resource and demand and a signifier of asymmetrical power relations, as the “control over mobility both reflect and reinforce power.”

Torture is one more element in the construction of these binaries, expressing two kinds of conflict resolution, one guided by disembodied machines and one by brute physicality. This framing upholds the political fiction of torture coming to us from a spatial or temporal distance, as well as the fiction of torture as some form of duel. A duel, of course, is impossible against terrorism, in surveillance, disembodied drones or in the panoptic view of satellite targeting. As a method, torture requires human action on the body; it needs and provides absolutely embodied enemies.

Even if it is enacted with the support, tacit approval or directly on behalf of the U.S., in the films the torture is stuck – visually, narratively, symbolically – onto an “other.” This suggests and perpetuates a fallacy that locates the practice with a place and perpetuates the idea of torture being vaguely infectious: where there

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208 Ochonicky compares the depiction of these places with the stereotypical depiction of the Midwest as a “region of atemporal space of nostalgia”, whose inhabitants are both culturally backwards and upholding the heartland values of America through “nostalgic violence.” Adam Ochonicky, ‘The Millennial Midwest: Nostalgic Violence in the Twenty-First Century’, Quarterly Review of Film and Video, 32 (2014), pp. 124-40

is torture, there are barbarians. In *Syriana*, torture’s othering is refractured, as the Middle Eastern torturer lectures his U.S. prisoner on “ancient Chinese” torture methods. With the exception of Dan in *Zero*, it is always only this (dark) “other” who we see torturing, visualizing in its colour codes former U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney’s infamous declaration that America needs to cross over “to the dark side” to fight her enemies, to use “their” methods. The homeland remains free of contamination in this narrative; Torture is outsourced. Continuing Walsh’s and Schoonover’s arguments that even “liberal” Hollywood productions such as *Rendition* feel the need to translate the pain of the victim into the pain of a white, Western person, in *Syriana* and *Body* the central torture is perpetrated against a Western protagonist, played by Hollywood stars George Clooney and Leonardo DiCaprio. In *Syriana*, when the Western prisoner loses consciousness, the image “falls” along with him to the ground, as a blinking lens and black blend mimics his loss of vision. [image 2.12, p. 184]

In *Body*, after a failed double play, CIA agent Ferris is taken by Hani Salaam, head of Jordanian Intelligence, to see a room in which a man – a local agent working for the CIA – is being whipped. Upset, Ferris remarks, “I thought you don’t believe in torture” to which Hani retorts, “This is punishment, my dear. It’s a very different thing.” What the audience sees, of course, is a man being tortured, and the contradiction between visual and spoken information exposes

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210 The complicated plot of *Syriana* features various intersecting storylines all emanating from the ways in which the oil industry affects the lives of the characters. The plotline which features torture revolves around CIA agent who is sent to assassinate the Emirate prince and heir-apparent deemed insufficiently responsive to the will of the American oil companies. Double-crossed and upset, Barnes attempts to warn the prince and is deliberately killed by a CIA-led drone strike, along with the Prince and his entourage.
the linguistic manoeuvre as hypocritical. Clearly, calling it by a different name does not succeed in transforming the act into something else. As with Saeed’s saying in *Rendition*, the suggestion that torture is, essentially, punishment, is displaced onto the Arab “Other,” implying either a difference to U.S. “interrogational” torture or the well-intentioned but hypocritical idea “this is not who we are.”211 There is no interrogation in any torture scene in *Body*; when Ferris is tortured, no question precedes the smashing of his fingers. Shue distinguishes between “interrogational” and “terroristic” torture. The latter, he argues, is used to intimidate a larger group; it therefore is “the purest possible case – of the violation of the Kantian principle that no person may be used only as a means.”212 The Arab victim of the aforementioned torture-as-punishment scene remains unnamed, a demonstration, a literally embodied figure of speech, for Hani towards Ferris, and for the cinematic narrator towards us. The victimized Arab character serves as tool,213 representative and disposable, in contrast to the highly individualized plight of the U.S. character. Film critic Dana

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211 As with Saeed in *Rendition*, the very British phrasing “my dear” is used to indicate Hani as educated and “civilized.” A British accent is also given to the terrorist leader who personally comes to interview and torture Ferris in *Body*.

212 Henry Shue distinguishes between “interrogational torture” and “terroristic torture,” which is arbitrary, without a “natural limit” on “appropriate” targets. Henry Shue, ‘Torture’, *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 7 (1978), pp. 132-3. This theoretically neat distinction is disrupted by the track record of real torture.

213 A similarly representative character in *Syriana* is a Pakistani guest worker, standing in for the fate of “untold millions” and who “follows a predictable route from the unemployment line to a terrorist-spawning Islamic school ... he isn’t given even the illusion of choice [which denies] the possibility of political agency.” Klawans, Stuart, ‘The Best Intentions’, *The Nation Online* (22 November 2005).
Stevens described this as a shift “from the political to the personal, from ‘Never again’ to ‘No! Not Leo’s fingers!’”

In a more benign interpretation of the torture as punishment scene, Hani’s smug and finely ironic demeanour in the exchange suggests that he is consciously copying (and thus exposing) a Western rhetorical strategy of double-speak, of hypocritical renaming performances, such as the terminology of “enhanced interrogation techniques.”

A similar farce appears in *Rendition*, when a shaken Douglas is asked whether he is new to “this.” He replies, taken aback but also slightly annoyed, “This is my first torture” and is reprimanded, “The United States does not torture, Douglas.” While the rhetorical dimension points to different codes for reading the violence as punishment or interrogation, the images in *Body* translate equivalence. When Ferris is tortured and about to be killed, his flashbacks include a torture scene from the film’s beginning, in which Ferris was witness – and instigator? – to a man being tortured to death. The montage translates equivalence – I torture, you torture; I kill, you kill – and explain the events as a cycle of violence, as does the film’s opening line, a quote from W. H. Auden, “those to whom evil is done, do evil in return.” In contrast to Zero’s neat narrative structure which positions 9/11 as the original sin and “time zero,” all three films discussed here illustrate a global interconnectedness and mutual vulnerability that may be read as a lesson from Butler, a (sometimes convenient)

214 Stevens, ‘Glossy Torture’.
215 Emphasising his awareness of Western practices and of Ferris’s past, Hani sweetly comments to Ferris that he trusts him to have had “experience” with torture.
universal humanism expressed through family relations.\textsuperscript{216} Yet this cyclical nature of violence also functions to relieve the U.S. to some extent of specific guilt; as the choices of various midlevel characters, pressured by more powerful forces “have large personal consequences … they cannot affect the great oiled machine” of history.\textsuperscript{217}

In \textit{Rendition}, the torture is framed as a test of Douglas’s manhood. When Douglas, a self-described “pencil-pusher,” voices doubts regarding Anwar’s guilt and the use of torture, his Arab friend Saeed personalizes the request telling Douglas, “I can’t help you,” and, “If you don’t have the stomach for it, let someone else do it.” The conventional torture narrative often revolves around such components, “the theme of manliness. … Real men will have the courage to torture …[it is] a rite of manhood, a test of moral character.”\textsuperscript{218}

In \textit{Body}, too, manliness and different types of masculinity are negotiated via their stance towards torture. The three male protagonists compose what Scott calls a dramatic, even erotic center of the film, an “all-male triangle.”\textsuperscript{219} \textit{Body} spells out that its story is to be read as a competition of male egos. The contextualization with masculinity problematically supports the narrative of torture as a method of separating bodies; the persistent “political fiction” of

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{216}] All characters introduced via family relations in \textit{Rendition}, and father-son relationships are dominant themes in \textit{Body} and \textit{Syriana}.
\item[\textsuperscript{217}] Alison Young in Chaudhuri, ‘Documenting the Dark Side’.
\item[\textsuperscript{218}] Devji, ‘Torture at the Limits of Politics’, p. 228.
\item[\textsuperscript{219}] A. O. Scott, ‘Big Stars Wielding an Array of Accents, Fighting the War on Terrorism’, \textit{The New York Times Online} (9 October 2008).
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
the interrogation; the attempt, even by opponents, to lionize those who remain silent and condemn those who “break” under torture.\textsuperscript{220}

DuBois discusses such an attempted naturalization between population groups with the example of the artificial division between slave and free man in ancient Greece. Here, “torturability” delineated the slippery boundary to separate “free, truth-telling creatures”\textsuperscript{221} from barbarians. Silence under torture was coded as an aristocratic virtue and associated with nobility, whereas the slave had no resources through which to resist. This means that the quality of torturability – and thus the evidence of belonging to a certain group – emerges as a kind of evidence-after-the-fact. As far as the films uphold this function of separating people according to their behaviour (or even exposure) to interrogatory torture, they can be considered as supportive of a narrative in which only some bodies are susceptible to torture. The tortured Western characters are not interrogated; the Muslim population is coded as not responsive to other approaches.\textsuperscript{222}

Initially a confident traveller of two worlds, Ferris masters both U.S. and Arab cultures, forms of negotiation, communication and technology, demonstrating a cultural awareness derided by his superior Hoffman. Physically and culturally

\textsuperscript{220} Compare the proud assurance in \textit{Rome Open City} that the victim, tortured to death, did not breathe a word. A strong opponent of torture, Sartre builds a stark dichotomy between the prisoner who heroically remains silent and the one who speaks, in his interrogation of humanity in the context of Algerian journalist Henri Alleg published his account of being tortured at the hands of the French colonial regime it became an instant bestseller, where torture features as a central confrontation.

\textsuperscript{221} DuBois, \textit{Torture and truth}, p. 62.

\textsuperscript{222} Compare the explanation that Saddam was not tortured because he is not “the kind of person” who would be responsive, in Gordon and Fleisher, \textit{Effective interviewing and interrogation techniques}. 
mobile, Ferris is able to “pass” visually and linguistically; he speaks Arabic and moves with ease back and forth between two worlds, in contrast to all other characters. The hawkish Hoffman is characterized as decadent, gluttonous, deliberately disrespectful, and ignorant. When Ferris says he wants to stay put, Hoffman laughs in incredulity “Nobody likes the Middle East. There is nothing here to like.” His lack of ethics is linked to childish impertinence: In response to Ferris’s legitimate criticism in an agitated phone call, Hoffman’s petulant response – “Whatever” – is echoed immediately, matched in pitch, pace, and tone by his pre-teen daughter responding “Whatever” to him.

Torture – witnessing torture in *Rendition*, and being subjected to torture in *Body* – turns out to be turning points for the U.S. characters. Like his local counterparts, Ferris is watched via live drone feed, deceived, manipulated and double-crossed, eventually victimized and tortured by forces beyond his control. Initially characterized as being ruthless and cynical like Hoffman, by the end of the film, utterly disillusioned, Ferris seeks to escape the grasp – and the panoptic surveillance – of his callous superiors. No reckoning is implied

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223 Ferris’s gung-ho action gets his local guide and friend killed. When an informant realizes that Ferris will not help him to safety, as promised, his angry outburst is immediately subdued at gunpoint. “Are you going to send me to Guantánamo?” the man shouts angrily, and Ferris snaps, “I will execute you right here if you don’t do what I say,” flaunting his total, sovereign power over life and death. He will eventually kill the informant.

224 In this transition, there is an echo of the famous “frontier thesis,” and the trope of “going native,” of the American discovering the “savage” in himself. It is foreshadowed when Ferris’s Arab friend is shred to pieces and his bone fragments are found in Ferris’s wounds, fused with his whole body which becomes a scar, a vessel for memory, physically incorporating his friend. The frontier thesis conceptualises American democracy as the product of a frontier (the expansion towards the West of the continent) which releases the European mindset of decadent and dysfunctional customs in favour of a strongly individualist, egalitarian,
for any of Ferris’s actions – his role in the torture scene of the flashbacks, his betrayals and killings.

*Rendition* channels the loss of certainty for the spectator through unreliable narration; in *Body*, the loss of control is enacted by the deceived protagonist. This division of blame allows the film to have its cake and eat it too. Decisions made by abstract bureaucracies, or callous men, embodied by the unscrupulous Hoffman who, in safe distance, gives cruel orders, with “the bravery of [those] being out of range,”\(^{225}\) while the foot soldier has to bear the consequences on the ground.\(^{226}\)

In *Rendition*, the case against Anwar is built on the flimsy evidence of a suspicious phone call placed to the phone registered in his name;\(^{227}\) after his abduction, Anwar’s name is erased from the passenger list of his flight home. He is digitally “disappeared.” Yet Isabella is able to use mass data collection


\(^{225}\) *The Bravery of Being Out of Range* is a song by Roger Waters on *Amused to Death*.

\(^{226}\) The cowardice or treason of powerful superiors, far removed from the daily threat of assassination or abduction, versus the courage and sense of duty of front-line personnel is of course a syntactic property especially of the war movie genre. Compare Gooch’s analysis of the biopolitical labor in *Body*. Gooch, ‘Beyond Panopticism’.

\(^{227}\) The movie begins with a missed call received by Anwar which might be the one which puts him on the CIA’s target list. While the details are never really cleared, a liberal politician (who ultimately refuses to help Isabella and Anwar, in full awareness of his moral compromise) offers an explanation when he comments, in mildly racist manner, on the improper use of cell phones “over there.” Peter Bradshaw took this as a “sleight of hand”: “infuriatingly, the movie fudges the most important issue, with a fundamental flaw that goes to the heart of the matter: the question of whether the CIA’s phone-record evidence against Anwar is sound or not. If it’s all just a mistake, then how can such a mistake be made?” Peter Bradshaw, ‘Rendition’, The Guardian online (Friday 19 October 2007). I see this not as a fudge but a conscious decision, as the point of the film is to make the viewer reflect upon torture regardless of the victim’s status of guilt or innocence.
for positive means, proving her husband’s abduction with his credit card records. Mechanical or digital documentation is only as good as the humans who design and use it. Images need editing, like all information, they can be hacked.

On a basic level, technology is dangerous: cell phones trigger bombings in Body and Syriana, and they help to track, police and visually “possess” people. In Body, technology initially serves U. S. goals, even if that means distorting the truth on a massive scale: Roger and Ed stage a significant terrorist attack at an Air Base in Turkey (using “unclaimed” local bodies as victims, transforming human bodies into props) and frame a Jordanian architect as the culprit. At another moment, the terrorists manage to trick a drone by raising a sandstorm that prevents the watchdrone from registering a crucial moment.

The rogue CIA agent must outwit his opponents, now both the Islamists and his superiors along with their devices. At the end of Syriana, the renegade agent is killed by a remote-controlled U.S. strike; in Body, Ferris is released from “protective” satellite surveillance. At the beginning of Body, Ferris’s Iraqi friend and colleague Bassam asks him to promise that if he is killed, Ferris will not allow his death to be filmed and distributed. Bassam does not want to be turned into entertainment or a message, to be used as a tool. Similarly, when Ferris is saved at the last minute from being executed on video, the first thing his rescuers do is to switch off the camera. This interruption of visual documentation via live stream is part of the rescue. The live camera is not a separate, subsequent documentation but is an integral part of the performance,
and its disconnection interrupts the event itself. Cettl describes such narrative moments as a trope of the terrorist film, the U.S. hostage “bound and videotaped by terrorists in preparation for a beheading-execution video to be broadcast over the Internet;” \(^{228}\) they clearly refer to factual beheading videos.

Culminating with Ferris’s “unplugging” in Body, the films articulate anxieties about the role of the human in a world of machines, which connects a disappearing human presence, and specifically male-coded skills, and the failure of the presumed objectivity of machines. In Zero, torture is coded as a practice that requires skill, and (male) craftsmanship, which the machine (the computer, the lie detector, the documentary image) is unable to provide.

To recapitulate, even in films that have been critically understood as more clearly opposed to torture than Zero, the political instability at their core creates a conflictive message. A Western protagonist remains the affective centre, channelling violence, including torture, through his own violated body or his empathetic gaze.\(^{229}\) Torture is used to define the profilmic bodies, and to separate healthy from conflicted spaces. Western protagonists traverse danger zones, remain largely unharmed and serve to channel empathic emotions for an imagined Western spectator.

\(^{228}\) Cettl, Terrorism in American Cinema, p. 51.

\(^{229}\) This contradicts the claim that there was a major paradigm shift in contemporary mainstream U.S. cinema towards having “the good guys torture,” see Literature Review.
Zero Dark Thirty

Maya in Zero Dark Thirty

Torture Iconography

Image 2 1

Image 2 2

Image 2 3

Image 2 4

Image 2 5

Image 2 6

Image 2 7, Battle of Algiers

Image 2 8, Rendition
Western Witnesses: *Rendition, Body of Lies and Zero Dark Thirty*

Image 2.9

Image 2.10: Situation Room

Image 2.11: the Expert in Zero

Images 2.12: *Syriana*

Image 2.13 *Body of Lies*
3. Chapter Three: Television Torture

Continuing the self-referential dimension and exploration of the role of the media and its gazes, I will now move on to representations of torture on serial television. This chapter provides a structural fulcrum that combines U.S. and Chilean audiovisual products, as I will focus on the U.S. show *Homeland*, and the Chilean *Los Archivos del Cardenal*. These shows are examples of contemporary audiovisual productions that speak to factual events of the historical past and engage with their previous documentation. These shows feature existing visual archive material and position themselves clearly in relation to the real.

I will initially devote some space to explaining why I include serial television shows in this thesis. Firstly, a television show clearly speaks to, and reflects, its moment of production and, perhaps more immediately than cinema, it may insert topical references and respond to current events.\(^1\) Secondly, television serials and series stand in a generic tradition that prioritizes affectivity and melodrama, priming these formats to explore the effects of the “recovery of emotion as an important yet neglected, or even denigrated aspect of media consumption.”\(^2\) In contrast to narrative Chilean cinema, which is marked by a

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\(^1\) For instance, the NYC skyline was changed, erasing the Twin Towers from the title sequences and also narratively from the (already shot) season premiere episode in *Sex and the City*. *The West Wing* produced special episodes addressing the attacks; many shows began the season premiere of fall 2001 with tribute to the victims (*Law and Order, Friends*).

frequent absence of overt references, melodramatic binders and affective invitations, Chilean television shows allow for complex audience involvement, and offer varied positions of the emotional presence of history. Thirdly, the serial rhetoric lend itself particularly well to the examination of current political issues, collective structures, and systemic problems, and to exploring productive and ambiguous effects of repetition, offering a chance to revisit dominant yet problematic arguments on the effects of repetition.

Before turning to my case studies proper, I will begin with a brief discussion of the long-lasting television show 24, which has become shorthand for “U.S. television on torture.” Even though 24’s fantasy nature and complete absence of engagement with torture documentation might seem to position it outside the perimeters of my research, the show must be addressed for its long-lasting impact. Given its infamy and commercial success, subsequent U.S. media position themselves in relation to 24’s torture iconography, and 24 has been considered as Homeland’s spiritual precursor in particular.3

I will occasionally speak about the representation of torture in a specific scene, but I am more interested in the function of torture for each series. A microcosm of my thesis, this chapter moves from torture as central set piece in 24 to a focus on its relation to visual evidence in Homeland and Los Archivos, ending on Los 80 where the presence of torture is not visually explicit but its shadow and repercussions are clearly felt.

Particular emphasis will be given to the symbolism and analysis of the title sequence of each show, as these initial iterations typically reflect and condense major preoccupations of the show at large. Based on Lury’s proposition that the title sequence encapsulates the essence of a TV show, this approach thus offers not only the advantage of managing such a large body of material but, I hope, also illuminates what Lawrence Kramer called “narrative image,” the feeling, unrepresentable whole and general form of a television show.\(^4\) This includes theme tunes, which, apart from their “heralding” function,\(^5\) are often “quite complex audio signifiers of the style, pace and structuring narrative of the programmes they identify.”\(^6\) What is highlighted in the title sequence can therefore be considered as essential – to identify the show, and to create expectations regarding its major preoccupations.

**Torture on Serial Television**

Long before the touted “second golden age of television” beginning in the 2000s,\(^7\) television scholars have addressed the medium’s advantages.

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\(^4\) To convey the narrative essence of a general plot that “cannot be represented directly,” the title sequence combines “music with a succession of visual forms that compose the narrative image,” giving both a general form and specific feeling. Lawrence Kramer, ‘Forensic Music: Channeling the Dead on Post-9/11 Television’, in *The CSI Effect: Television, Crime, and Governance*, ed. by Michele Byers and Val Marie Johnson (Lanham; Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2009), pp. 202-3. This useful conceptualization of the title sequence “translates especially well to series television in which the plot to be grasped belongs not just to the individual episode, but to the series as a whole.” Georg Stanitzek, ‘Reading the Title Sequence (Vorspann, Générique)’ (University of Texas Press, 2009), p. 44.


\(^6\) Lury, *Interpreting Television*, p. 75.

\(^7\) This golden age is marked by a confluence of factors such as high production value, audience receptivity, homogeneity between cable series and networks series,
Television drama, with its “rhetoric of discussion,” works as a “cultural forum,” according to Newcomb, and provides a way to influence “public thought”: “Conflicting viewpoints of social issues … structure most television programs … comment[ing] on ideological problems.” Comparatively intimate, emotional and “vernacular,” the medium of television historically brought its reproductions into the domestic space.

Contrary to the still-frequent tendency to associate television with the commercially standardized and aesthetically conservative, the lament that television trivializes history and acts as “death to memory,” television scholars have demonstrated that television and (collective) memory are not only not mutually exclusive, but that the format offers distinct possibilities and potential advantages for the depiction of history.

increasing diversity. As television sets were becoming bigger and better, and a variety of technologies allowed the audience to watch and return to an episode at any time, increasing receptivity for complex storytelling.


9 This is an interesting aspect to keep in mind regarding national cinema in Latin America. For instance, Elsaesser suggests that the “demand for a ‘different depiction of reality’ has, for most audiences, been met by television and its documentaries, its soap operas, its serious dramas and sit-coms.” John King, Mediating Two Worlds: Cinematic Encounters in the Americas (London: British Film Institute, 1993), p. 123.


The narrative formulas and aesthetic strategies associated with classical Hollywood cinema\textsuperscript{12} have been criticized for “privatizing” collective pain and historical stories. Hollywood typically reconciles ideological-political issues by projecting them onto the level of individuals.\textsuperscript{13} Serial television on the other hand “give[s] voice to an increasing number of perspectives and points of view.”\textsuperscript{14} These multi-narrative strands, subplots and digressions, Glen Creeber argues, help to understand history as “a shared social experience … not as mere ‘fact’ or ‘polemic’, but as memory and experience,” a memory that “reveals the complexity and not the simplicity of historical ‘truth’.”\textsuperscript{15} Thus, such contemporary formats may even create a sense of collectivity. Creeber works on a different set of (mini)series, yet his main observations remain valid within this increasingly flexible form.\textsuperscript{16} Many contemporary television drama series

\textsuperscript{12} David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, \textit{Film Art: An Introduction} (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010. Bordwell and Thompson’s account of the development of a classical style as the “fulfilment” of cinema has been criticized for its teleological and ethnocentric angle as well as for its exclusions of popular genre and cinema’s genesis from and relation to art forms other than photography.


\textsuperscript{16} Charlotte Brunsdon has argued that we are moving away from issues of ontology and epistemology towards fundamentally having to reconstruct what television is. Charlotte Brunsdon, ‘Is Television Studies History?’, \textit{Cinema Journal}, 47 (2008). What can be measured is a radical change in consumption that is shaped by technology, as television is moving online, but it is unclear whether this results in an aesthetic paradigm shift.

Yet even in our diverse, increasingly complex and rapidly changing media environment, where the process of convergence between various types of screens and formats and the re-conceptualization of cinema as dispositif includes the increasing overlap
“employ a complex form of ‘flexi-narrative’”\textsuperscript{17} which includes both narrative complexity and the personalised preoccupation of soap opera techniques to re-examine historical matter. These television shows manage to achieve both emotional intimacy and “paradigmatic narrative complexity,”\textsuperscript{18} producing a peculiar relationship with its engaged and dedicated audience.

The temporal structures of a television serial allow for extended psychology and development of characters and situations, for resolving some storylines and leaving others undeveloped or open, achieving partial and temporary closure, and allowing the audience’s emotional relationship to the characters and situations room to mature and change over a longer period of time.\textsuperscript{19} Creeber finds that this narrative complexity, particularly a structure that “mixes a number of narrative levels together [frequently without offering any neat resolutions], is arguably better able to reflect and respond to the increasing uncertainties and social ambiguities of the contemporary world.”\textsuperscript{20}

The way in which such complex television dramas offer variations on endings, within the episode or season, is linked to how the television serial, by its very

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Robin Nelson in Creeber, \textit{Serial}, p. 4.
  \item \textsuperscript{18} Compare for instance, the critically acclaimed drama series \textit{Lost} (ABC, 2004-2010), in which survivors of a plane crash are besieged by malevolent ‘Others’ and bizarre, quasi-supernatural events, while stranded on a tropical desert island. The principal pleasure of \textit{Lost}, according to Holloway “came from its enigmatic refusal to explain anything clearly” David Holloway, \textit{9/11 and the War on Terror} (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), p. 78.
  \item \textsuperscript{20} Creeber, \textit{Serial}, p. 7.
\end{itemize}
nature, is related to repetition. The format offers ideal opportunities to explore the effects of repetition – repetition as an inbuilt formal structure, repetition in content, repetition in the form of reference, citation, or reworking, as far as preceding iconic media images, themes or television memories are evoked.

24: Torture on Repeat

While torture is frequently quoted on contemporary television,\textsuperscript{21} 24 has been particularly and exhaustively vilified for its representation of torture. Rejali’s description of “conventional cinematic iconography of torture” could have been written for the representation of torture in 24. Exceptional circumstances, incorporated by the repeated scenario of a ticking bomb,\textsuperscript{22} and given dramatic form in 24’s narrative structure,\textsuperscript{23} became the show’s formal structuring device. The trademark temporality of “real time” communicated a sense of emergency in a “world of the permanent emergency, the permanent exception, the absence or exceptional suspense of law.”\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{21} Compare the flippant waterboarding joke in \textit{G.I. Joe: Retaliation} (Jon M. Chu, 2013), which has no relation to or impact on the film’s narrative, to complex shifts of meaning of visual and verbal references in various television shows which confound our expectations through twists and reversals. For instance, \textit{Lost} features torture in the episodes \textit{Confidence Man, Solitary, Collision, One of Them}; in \textit{All the best cowboys have Daddy issues}, there is an unmistakable allusion to Abu Ghraib, a survivor is discovered hanging from a tree with a hood on his head. A central character has a backstory as a torturer in Saddam Hussein’s Iraq. At one point the survivors use torture, which initially seems vindicated as necessary, followed by self-recrimination and temporary expulsion of the torturer from the community; the extracted information proves to be false.

\textsuperscript{22} Rejali, ‘Convenient Truths’, p. 228. The torture iconography includes an emphasis on immediate, stereotypical effects, such as convulsions from electro shock.

\textsuperscript{23} Prince in Chaudhuri, ‘Documenting the Dark Side’.

\textsuperscript{24} Hutchings, ‘Entertaining Torture’, p. 6.
Critics argued that 24 normalised and promoted torture, institutionalizing a “torture culture,” and an “unrestrained advertisement for torture,” thereby shaping the attitude of the general U.S. public towards torture. The show did pick up on and feed off a zeitgeist of collective paranoia, vulnerability and insecurity in post-9/11 America; and its terminology seeped into public and even political language to a disturbing extent.

The criticism of 24 as “torture show” – as well as of other examples of dominant Hollywood cinema and television – is based on two interrelated notions, namely that quantitatively intense exposure to violence dulls our senses, and that repetition reinforces a (fixed) message. This is taken from the observation in cultural studies that the very slipperiness of hegemonic ideological constructs

26 A core reproach is that new recruits took its depiction of torture literally and that the show thus formed part of “political socialization.” In 2006, the Dean of West Point came in protest to talk to 24 producers and writers. Timothy Dunn, ‘Torture, Terrorism, and 24: What Would Jack Bauer Do?’, in Homer Simpson Marches on Washington: Dissent through American Popular Culture, ed. by Timothy M. Dale and Joseph Foy (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2010), pp. 171-84; Joram Ten Brink and Joshua Oppenheimer also claim that “Guantanamo torturers developing their ‘enhanced interrogation techniques’ looked no further than prime-time television for inspiration: Jack Bauer offered a treasure trove of techniques in his weekly torture of terrorists.” Joram Ten Brink and Joshua Oppenheimer, Killer Images: Documentary Film, Memory and the Performance of Violence (London: Wallflower, 2012), p. 2.
27 Jane Mayer, ‘Whatever It Takes. The Politics of the Man Behind 24’, The New Yorker Online (19 February 2007). Certainly, media often act as intensifier or catalysts, selectively reinforcing certain emotional states. However, as seen with Zero, the feelings that are addressed are “pre-existing” conditions; for a show to take up momentum, its representations have to fall on fertile grounds. “[Entertainment] works with the desires that circulate in a given society at a given time, neither wholly constructing those desires nor merely reflecting desires produced elsewhere” (Richard Dyer, Only Entertainment (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 185.
28 24 has become a commonly recognized reference point. Various public figures, including former U.S. president Bill Clinton and current U.S. Supreme Court justice Antonio Scalia, have referred to Jack Bauer in their arguments.
29 To avoid the dulling effect of quantity, Sontag called for an “ecology of images”, combining the notion with a didactic twist (self-)censorship to avoid fatigue and saturation through repetition. Sontag, On Photography.
needs repetition, display and performance to stabilize and naturalize these abstractions.

By contrast, I want to explore the potentially productive aspects of repetition. As an exercise in excessive emphasis, repetition may highlight where the fragility and strenuousness of the performance calls attention to itself. Repetition may be a way to revisit and navigate emotionally charged imaginative scenarios. Therefore, it is necessary to pay close attention to the shape of repetition that is performed.

In 24, an agent of a fictional agency, the Counter Terrorist Unit (CTU), Jack Bauer, is in a race against the literal clock in order to stop multiple terrorist plots. Each season is made of 24 episodes, spanning the 24 hours of one day. In this show, the sheer quantity of torture is remarkable – beginning with the second season, there is a torture scene in almost every episode. Over 24’s eight seasons, torture is applied compulsively and infallibly produces results.

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31 Plots include the assassination targeting the Presidential nominee, a nuclear bomb planted in the centre of Los Angeles, and a drug cartel threatening to release a virus.

32 24’s spin-off video game effectively fulfilled Sontag’s nightmare “can the video game ‘Interrogating the Terrorists’ really be far behind?” (Susan Sontag, ‘Regarding the Torture of Others’, The New York Times Online (23 May 2004). Mark Sample analyses two videogames that specifically employ interrogation – Splinter Cell and 24: The Game; he shows how these games go to great lengths to create and integrate torture as a repeatable, quantifiable action, as a craft that can be learnt. Mark L. Sample, ‘Virtual Torture: Videogames and the War on Terror’, Game Studies, 8 (2008).
Precisely its function as quick dramatic fixer and narrative shortcut demonstrates that the use of torture in 24, like the show itself, is more sensibly understood in terms of a brutal fairy tale.33 The magic wand of torture is not an interruption of the show’s primary framework but a continuation and culmination of its wish-fulfilment fantasy of omnipotence. At its core, 24 works from a fantasy framework, of revenge, infallible weapons, absolute mastery and total control, a “fantasy about national, economic, and communication systems free of drag, whether it be the drag of subversive activity, the drag of wasted time, or the drag of ‘obstacles and opacities’ … inherent in mediation.”34 Precisely the fantasy structure of 24 is a “fundamental part of its enjoyment,” as Lisa Coulthard argues in relation to the interlinking of popular music and violence in Tarantino’s films; “the framing, artifice, referentiality, and clear parameters of violence give the spectator a permission to enjoy – an authorization that domesticates the audiovisual violence, renders it isolated, controllable, and slightly unreal.”35 In 24, cause and effect clearly correlate; there are no language barriers, no messy complications, no uncertainties.

Richard Grusin’s concept of premediation – the remediation of future events and affective states, as attempt “to prevent citizens of the global mediasphere

from experiencing again the kind of systemic or traumatic shock produced by the events of 9/11” – is also indirectly built on this idea of repetition as training. Yet premediation is a repetition that is not only a reworking or working through of the past but also a repetition oriented towards the future: “Premediation imagines multiple futures which are alive in the present, which always exist as not quite fully formed potentialities or possibilities.”36 Thus, if one wanted to interpret the fantastically fictitious world of 24 as collective working through of current events and their aftermath, a release of psychic threats, these negotiations are also directed towards the future, anticipating potential threats, mastering hyperbolic what-if-scenarios.

Even though opposition to the use of torture is either converted or proven wrong, 24 does not propose so much a pro-torture world tout court, than promote a pro-Jack-Bauer world. Bauer is sorcerer, superhero, vigilante, morally righteous, silently suffering hero-victim, paternal sovereign who alone decides who to torture and who to trust.37 In this narcissistic fantasy, “things [tend to] happen to other people … because Jack has, or has not, acted.”38 The prohibition of torture is never dissolved in the show; it remains an extra-legal

37 The template for this hero, combatting both the enemy and an inept bureaucratic apparatus, is the figure of the vigilante. In Slotkin’s seminal analysis on the role of “regenerating” violence in U.S.-American imagination and identity, the “recourse to violence … expresses a fundamental discontent with democracy as an institution of progress, preferring instead to place faith in ‘a gun in the hands of the right man’.” Richard Slotkin, Gunfighter Nation, p. 134.
38 Lury, Interpreting Television, p. 145.
method. The world of 24 is released from the normal yet contained within the formality of ritual, neither separate nor fully within the real world, existing within a carnivalesque, liminal stage.\textsuperscript{39}

Within its outlandish set-ups, the show also maintains a sense of stability through a comforting formal rigidity. Repeated each season, the set-up of the show follows the narrative premise of “real time”: each episode takes place over the course of one hour, and time continues to elapse during the commercial breaks.\textsuperscript{40} Time, in the sense of constant urgency, is built into this formal set-up, from the title and narrative premise to the exact time denoted by a literally ticking clock, an onscreen countdown and a digital display at the beginning and end of each segment. The title sequence eloquently displays this focus on time. Over nine seasons, the sequence stayed exactly the same: synchronized to the sound of accelerating electronic beeping, a pulsing pixel expands to a blinking digital clock, which flickers faster and faster and finally settles on the numbers “24.” This is followed by an intertitle outlining the time frame of the episode.\textsuperscript{41}

To intensify suspense, the show made extensive use of the split screen, a technique which allows the viewer to enjoy the vantage point of an all-seeing

\textsuperscript{39} Newcomb, who links television in general to the formalism and repetition of ritual, describes this as “a state of license, when rules may be broken or bent, when roles may be reversed, when categories may be overturned.” Horace Newcomb, Television: The Critical View (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). p. 47.

\textsuperscript{40} The protocol is that mundane events occur during commercial breaks.

\textsuperscript{41} This intertitle follows always the exact same manner, for instance “The following takes place between 11:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m.”.
structure and conveys the “sense of time passing as simultaneity.” This spatial omnipotence never extended to a temporal dimension or to time travel. The split screen collapses various places into screen space but it does not cross temporal lines. What happened and what will happen cannot be changed afterwards. There is precisely no possibility of repetition in 24, only a relentless and inescapable thrust forward; nothing can be undone. The structural conceit of a race against time generates suspense; beyond this fact, the primacy of time seems to speak also to (repressed?) memory.

Far from an exemplary rupture, 24’s aesthetic iconography and repeated use of torture is embedded in a historical tradition of fantasy and a familiar pantheon of characters embodied by its protagonist Jack Bauer. Using real time and torture as narrative element stabilize and structure the show, in formally rigid and ritualistically repeated fashion. 24’s appeal derives at least in part from this tension between rigid rules and fantasy, between allegiance to the real of real time, and the artificial space of panoptic omnipotence, between the inability to undo time and the ability to use torture as magic wand, again and again, a

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42 Lury,Interpreting Television, p. 172. The split screen allows the audience to follow several narrative strands at the same time. Sound – many times in the form of phone calls - directs attention towards the primary plotline to avoid confusion. At other times the split screen shows the same event from different focal points. Julie Talen, ‘24: Split Screen’s Big Comeback’, Salon (14 May 2002). The split screen also reminds viewers of the programme’s constructed nature. This aggressively artificial image is embedded in a “visual style that is otherwise excessively intimate and atmospheric,” dominated by the use of “hesitant, intimate, almost intrusive” close-up. Lury, Interpreting Television, p. 173.

43 The filming for 24 began in March of 2001 and thus preceded the 9/11 attacks. The show underwent considerable change in its narrative paradigm in the aftermath of the attacks: The terrorist bombing an airplane of the premiere episode was drastically edited, and the premiere itself delayed. In Season 1, though he threatened torture, Bauer never actually resorted to it. From Season 2 onwards, torture becomes a central and recurring spectacle of the program.
fantasy of control opposing the forces of unreason, disruption, and
calcubatility.

**Homeland**

Created by two veteran writer-producers of *24*, *Homeland* (Showtime, 2011-) was widely perceived as a re-negotiation and engagement with *24*. Both *24* and *Homeland* clearly speak to the moment of their production: the terror attacks of 9/11 and the ensuing “War on Terror” in *24*, a time of reckoning in *Homeland*. The implicit narrator of *Homeland* is clearly aware not only of *24* but also of the Abu Ghraib scandal to which visual and verbal references abound.

Where *24*’s narrative line is twisted but ultimately reliably teleological, *Homeland* showcases uncertainty and doubt. Not only is “knowledge ... depicted as problematic, but just what knowledge is is itself problematic.”

The prisoners of *24* are guilty and in possession of relevant information which will be divulged under torture; *Homeland*’s main device is a suspense structure that arises precisely from the indeterminate uncertain status of the enemy,

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44 New Yorker TV critic Emily Nussbaum even considers the show as an apology for *24*. There is certainly a strong engagement with the previous text; two veteran writer-producers of *24*, Alex Gansa and Howard Gordon, work on *Homeland*. Emily Nussbaum, ‘*Homeland*: The Antidote for *24*’, *The New Yorker Online* (29 November 2011).

*Homeland* is in fact an adaptation of the Israeli original *Hatufim/Prisoners of War*, whose writers and producers (Avi Nir, Ran Telem, and Gideon Raff) are also credited on *Homeland*. This link is highly prominent in the first season, where several narrative premises and motifs are kept, and it is subsequently weakened to nonexistence.

45 Brody asks whether the guard will be tortured, and Carrie answers, suavely, “we don’t do that here.” As the man is naked to the waist down and looks beaten, the implication seems clear: not here, but elsewhere.

46 West Close-reading.
constant plot twists and lack of certainty through unreliable and partial information.

*Homeland*’s first season follows CIA officer Carrie Mathison in her attempt to prove that a recently released prisoner of war, Marine Sergeant Nicholas Brody, who had been held by al-Qaeda for 8 years, “turned” while in captivity. As the audience subsequently discovers, Brody’s complex identity includes his status as a suburban father, prodigal husband, convert to Islam, ex-Marine and war hero; he plans and then refrains from a terrorist attack, he works for a terrorist leader, the Vice-President and in the end, for the CIA. This ambivalence turns him into a difficult character, both to sustain and to kill off, as demonstrated by various attempt to do either. Brody’s similarly complex counterpart is CIA operative Carrie, his hunter and lover. Where Brody is introverted and frequently unable to express himself, she is impulsive and excessively emotional. Her uncompromising behaviour ties her career and sense of self-worth to this question of his identity: conclusive evidence Brody’s guilt or innocence would prove Carrie’s clairvoyant brilliance or have her fired for insanity. As it happens, both results occur. The absence of a clear line between self and other is a key theme on *Homeland*.49

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47 Twice, Brody attempted suicide – once as POW in Iraq and in the U.S. – and both times he is saved, but only to serve as somebody’s tool.

48 She is overreaching by putting him under illegal surveillance, acting out her trauma of having “missed” the signs that might have prevented 9/11, which can be read in relation to the high-ranking female CIA operatives who, according to reports, were “traumatized” by having missed 9/11, for instance *The Inside War*; Danner and Eakin, *Our New Politics of Torture*.

49 For instance, Carrie characterizes both the chief terrorist Abu Nazir and the ruthless U.S. vice president Walden as despicable monsters.
Just as 24’s Jack Bauer, in a video he makes to justify his actions, “in his rage ... comes to resemble a suicidal terrorist,” Brody emerges as a most ambivalent protagonist. He even makes a suicide video before attempting to blow himself up surrounded by politicians. The video emulates the classic style of the videos of Islamist fundamentalists, from the way in which he is framed in the image – changing the dress code to his U.S. marine uniform, fully embracing his hybrid identity – to how he is speaking a prepared text into the camera. The suicide attack is thwarted by a wardrobe malfunction, but the tape disappears and becomes Brody’s personal ticking bomb and smoking gun.

This is not to mistake the show as progressive or to disregard its ideologically highly problematic, even revisionist content, but to insist on Newcomb’s contention that “in popular culture generally, in television specifically, the raising of questions is as important as the answering of them.” The eventual formal closure in Homeland’s third season – hanging Brody – cannot contain the proverbial box that has been opened.

The theme of Carrie and Brody as doppelgänger, counterparts, two sides of the same coin is emphasized throughout, for instance with the repeated point that she is “the only one who gets him [Brody].”


Brody’s allegiance was not decided until three-quarters of the way through the first season. The creators attempted to have it both ways with Brody: first he attempts to go through with the attack, but his suicide vest malfunctions, after fixing the vest, he does not see the attack through a second time.

In spite of repeatedly stepping his toe over the line of legality (perhaps even towards audience’s disapproval) Jack Bauer is ultimately granted a pardon and remains the hero. Brody on the other hand, after his (malfunctioning) attempt to assassinate the vice-president, is irredeemable, and he is eventually killed – hanged in front of Carrie’s eyes – in the last episode of Season 3.
Regarding how the show deals with collective structures, the relation between individual and institutional accountability, the messiness of the decision-making process is much on display and often appears chaotic and random. The CIA of Homeland replaces not only the fictional CTU of 24 but also the family relations of the traditional soap.\(^{52}\) Unlike 24, the institution appears more powerful than any of its individual members,\(^ {53}\) and obedience is often demanded for decisions that appear opaque, mistaken, or motivated by personal political gain. This supports Westwell’s argument that Homeland (like Zero) defends the CIA and seek “to elicit sympathy for the traumatic experience suffered by those working within it.”\(^ {54}\) Yet, unlike Zero, Homeland also features frequent – and unresolved – clashes of opinion, risk-evaluations and preferred approaches within the CIA. For instance, Carrie’s mentor Saul, a key and sympathetic figure, opposes torture, and at one point, gathers (ultimately false) intelligence by means of rapport building; whereas the CIA’s chief torturer Quinn in later seasons increasingly resembles a killing machine. Brody underwent extreme torture while in captivity, which is shown in brief flashbacks; nothing about the representation of torture in these scenes is aesthetically remarkable. Similar to

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\(^{52}\) According to Ginia Bellafante, parenthood and the family are “the main casualties” in 24 and family relations are certainly also fatalities in Homeland: Similar to Zero’s Maya, lone wolf Carrie is not capable of a committed relationship; the CIA job ruins Saul’s marriage, and Brody’s marriage collapses. Ginia Bellafante, ‘In the 24 World, Family Is the Main Casualty’, The New York Times Online (20 May 2007).

\(^{53}\) Being fired from the fictional CTU does not stop Jack Bauer from doing his job, whereas Carrie, fired as punishment for her illegal wiretapping of Brody, looses all access and is paralysed to prevent events from happening. Several times Carrie is forcefully, physically stopped when she attempts to acts in maverick mode. She is variously drugged, shot, betrayed, institutionalized; when she is shut out from the CIA, they take her car, her money, betray her publicly and on television, and so on.

\(^{54}\) Westwell, ‘Zero Dark Thirty’. In Homeland, all characters show strong, idealised soldierly loyalty and allegiance to the CIA as an institution.
Ammar in Zero, Brody is only “turned” once he is shown kindness, by the chief terrorist Abu Nazir himself. The insinuation is that the torture was necessary to wear him down, increase his potential gratitude, and that the emotional appeal of the non-torturing party works only after weakening resistance through torture. The interesting point is that Brody appears to be “torturable.” When Brody is interrogated by the CIA, at one point, Quinn stabs his hand with a knife, which, unlike 24, does not render immediate results. As Carrie takes over the interrogation from the ostensibly crazed Quinn, she uses the same strategy as Nazir: she removes Brody’s handcuffs and gives him some water. She also shuts off the cameras as a sign of trust: as in Rendition and Body, the “performance of vision” is showcased as an exercise of power and includes the right to privacy and the right to be seen. Torture certainly does not render any permanently secure information: Quinn frames his move as a “good cop, bad cop” performance, and it remains unclear whether (and for how long) the strategy works on Brody. The show permanently toys with the audience’s convictions and speculations by adding or changing information. Along with the protagonists, the audience forms hypotheses in full awareness of their limited base of information, and these assumptions frequently turn out to be mistaken. This structure of raising, and reversing audience expectations is a remarkable reversal from the certainties of 24.55

*Homeland* engages with the media’s role in the events they are reporting and creating. In one episode, video footage of a drone attack wreaking havoc on a

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55 The tension of the entire first season stems from this chronology of disclosure, which holds the spectator in permanent doubt regarding Brody’s allegiance.
Pakistani wedding party leads to riots and a mob killing of a CIA agent. Later, the same footage proves that the whole chain of events was premeditated and the riot “faked” in order to cover the killing of a CIA agent. As Carrie is watching Brody’s interrogation, he frequently looks directly into the camera, as if addressing her. Brody cunningly stages a fight in the blind spot of the surveillance cameras in order to smuggle contraband to a prisoner. The medium – video footage and surveillance camera – is incorporated as actant in the event. The ruthless vice-president Walden denies a drone strike on television, claiming that images of killed children were propaganda fabrications.

Images and machines fail to provide sanctuary as impartial and objective – to offer the truth and certainty we seek. One example is the repeated use of the polygraph in the first season. The polygraph or lie detector promises to penetrate to the truth by surpassing the autonomous will of the subject and, through involuntary reflex, to trick the body into betrayal. Key characters are made to take the test, yet its results only provide passing certitude. Brody passes the lie detector which shortly afterwards incriminates Saul who we know to be innocent.

The absolute certainty and authority of Jack is replaced by an imbalanced and unreliable Carrie. Both in her own and the viewer’s perception, she constantly flips between confusion bordering on lunacy, and clairvoyance. Elsaesser

56 Compare how in Hatufim, we have various perspectives on a kidnapper video: as “making of” in a flashback, watched on a computer and so on.
hypothesises that paranoia is “the appropriate – or even ‘productive’ – pathology” of our contemporary society, of being able “to rely on bodily ‘intuition’ as much as on ocular perception; or being able to ‘think laterally’ and respond hyper-sensitively to changes in the environment.” 58 Carrie literally embodies such a paranoid-pathological response to the continuous threat-scenario. Her vulnerability and emotionality are continuously foregrounded, and she is characterised as an intelligence savant, her gift for espionage and counterterrorism fuelled by a genetic affective imbalance. Gary R. and Katherine C. Edgerton’s suggest that Carrie’s bipolar disorder is a

synecdoche for the current state of the post-9/11 American psyche, oscillating between aggressive offensive actions abroad and fear-filled defensive manoeuvres [sic] at home.59

In a little less allegorical interpretation, the problem and danger both for Carrie and Brody is within their heads: PTSD for him,60 an inherited mental illness for her. In Homeland, knowledge is so problematic that even the insides of our heads are not safe. Of course, diseases carry a history as cultural metaphor.61 In cinema, those suffering from mental conditions or illnesses are often depicted as genius savant, whose bodies speak, occasionally in spite of or independent

60 His PTSD includes a non-physical sexual dysfunction – a rarity on popular TV – which was much more pronounced in the original Israeli show. Historically, the politicization of PTSD included absolution: “the appeal of PTSD was that it made those who could be said to suffer it, innocent. … No stigma appeared to attach to the condition. It carried the probability of public sympathy.” Barker in Phil Hammond, Screens of Terror: Representations of War and Terrorism in Film and Television since 9/11 (Suffolk: Arima Publishing, 2011), p. 44.
of the subjects’ conscious minds. Carrie’s disease is coded as a superior state, she has an uncanny sixth sense, but this intuition is not an infallible weapon. This characterization of her bipolar disorder remains in the same paradigm that codes torture, where a higher truth – an advanced capacity of knowing – is hidden in the body. Carrie insists that she does not “see clearly” when she is on medication; she is almost always entirely and genuinely sure of her instincts, yet is mistaken half the time and changes her mind frequently. In many moments, she appears utterly inept and hysterical, and the audience can only share other characters’ perspective of her as erratic and emotionally unstable.

Homeland’s title sequence clearly announces the show’s central themes. Uncertainty, confusion and volatality of knowledge and truth are translated through the audiovisual texture of the sequence, which highlights the fragmented, necessarily selective nature of documentation, the unreliability of

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62 Such as Rain Man (Barry Levinson, 1988) or A Beautiful Mind (Ron Howard, 2001).
63 When Carrie is force-medicated, the justifications – “You are not leaving us any choice!” – resemble those used to support torture: “Why are you doing this to yourself?”
64 Carrie at least is not an example of what Meghan Daum criticized as an idealized view of CIA officers, a “mythos of the dream-girl version” as a result of the “need” in the “American imagination … to believe that it’s not mere mortals who are keeping us safe from terrorists but, rather, superhumans who never exercise poor judgment or lose their moral compass in the fog of war.” Meghan Daum, ‘Hollywood’s Idealized View of CIA Officers Is No Substitute for Reality’ (2 January 2015) <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-daum-maya-torture-report-20150102-column.html> [accessed 5 February 2016].
65 The title sequence cuts between archival footage (presidential speeches in relation to terrorist attacks, from Ronald Reagan to Barack Obama); shots of a little girl, watching these news on television, sleeping, and playing the trumpet; pictures of a young Claire Danes; footage from the show; close-ups of open and closed eyelids; the girl and various characters of Homeland in a maze; footage of a jazz concert and of news reports; citizen footage of 9/11. The sound snippets of presidential comments interweave with audio excerpt from the actual show, words from a Middle Eastern news reporter that are not translated, the sounds of a helicopters, gunshots, the guiding jazz piece of a trumpet.
human and mechanical perception, as well as accidental and purposeful media distortions. At the same time, the sequence dramatizes the danger and threat that comes from incomplete or false information.

Its aesthetic dialogue with preceding and current images and sounds, from verbal references and visual analogies to the employment of archival footage manifests the show’s ambition to speak to real events. The sequence visually and aurally sutures several narratives. A genealogy of terrorist attacks is traced through declarations of presidents in response, which, along with citizen footage from 9/11, grounds the show historically, offering both the continuity of terrorism and clearly dated attacks. This narrative strand is interspersed with moments from the diegetic world of the show, and of the character Carrie growing up. By using photos of the actress Claire Danes, who portrays her, this narrative thread also crisscrosses the boundary between fictitious and factual.

The binding “voice-over” of the title sequence is a jazz score, indicating a quintessentially U.S.-American musical genre. Interspersed with this jazz piece are “auditory snapshots” of sound footage, cut up into bites, a few words by presidents from Ronald Reagan to Barack Obama (with the notable exception of George W. Bush). A trumpet’s haunting cadence leads through the auditory

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66 For instance, when Sergeant Brody is found, he is “pulled bearded and filthy from a ‘spider hole’ à la Saddam Hussein.” Gary R. Edgerton, ‘Brody Must Die’ (29 November 2012) <http://cstonline.tv/brody-must-die> [accessed 5 February 2016]. There is generic mentioning of 9/11, Abu Ghraib, and frequent drone strikes; in Season 3, there is talk of the CIA being “punished” and mention of a “leak” that gave a Congress committee a memorandum. In an episode that is difficult not to read literally as conservative revisionism, Carrie is interrogated by a belligerent Congress Committee as if on trial (“we are going to put you all in jail ... you have done great harm to your country ... the president wants closure”). Carrie is “sacrificed to protect the agency.”
montage as if it were a grieving wail. As the show’s “DNA”67 and “über-motif,”68 the theme of free jazz is reflected in the visual texture of disjunctions.

According to its musical composer Sean Callery, the jazz motif is linked to Carrie,69 and the title sequence can be read as a stream of consciousness of a sleeping Carrie. In addition, the frequent use of the “ghostly” technique of superimposition enhances the dreamlike quality of the sequence, and the fast-paced rhythm of the montage mimics the eye movements in REM sleep. Carrie’s fictional subjectivity is thus interlinked with instances of public memory.

The title sequence of Homeland encapsulates its central themes of a search for knowledge and a crisis of trust, which extends from distrust of the efficiency and ethics of the country’s institutions and its representatives to fundamental distrust of traditional methods of visual and mechanical verification. The opening-credit sequence highlights both technological and human perceptual limitations. Emphasising the unreliability and even “failure” both of vision and visual evidence, the sequence stages doubt in their respective epistemological capacities. For instance, shots of images upside down point to the usually hidden perceptual mechanics of both our eyes and the cinematic apparatus.

Other shots emphasise limited or warped perspectives: the back of a head,

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68 Lury describes theme tunes as often “quite complex audio signifiers of the style, pace and structuring narrative of the programmes they identify.” Lury, Interpreting Television, p. 75.
69 Carrie is seen playing the trumpet as a little girl; the first episode shows Carrie putting on jazz music in times of stress; jazz posters and photographs of musicians are hanging in her apartment. ‘Homeland - Creating the Opening Titles Music’.
prolonged close-ups of open eyes and of closed eyes, a maze, and a girl wearing a lion’s mask, which evokes the notion of double-faced performance, and camouflage.⁷⁰ [images 3.1 - 3.4., p. 238].

In the title sequence – and thus repeated before every episode – Carrie frets about having “missed something before,” in a clear allusion to 9/11: “I won’t - I can’t - let that happen again!” followed by the voice of her mentor Saul suggesting that “It was ten years ago – Everybody missed something that day.” Carrie retorts, “yeah, well, everybody’s not me.” The failure to anticipate 9/11 is personalized,⁷¹ but it is also made experiential to the audience. For the rapid montage highlights the limits of the human audience perceptual apparatus to compute this onslaught of images – we cannot see fast enough or good enough to “get it” all.⁷² This experience is repeated throughout the show by strategically withholding and adding narrative information.

⁷⁰ These repeated motifs, indicating traumatic recurrence, are again linked to Carrie’s dream-subjectivity. The motif of the maze introduces the cat-and-mouse game of the show. The maze may evoke the Greek Myth of the Minotaur, a cursed offspring, with the body of a man and the head of a bull, trapped and kept in a labyrinth. Carrie and Brody appear in the maze, alone or together, demonstrating nicely that it is not clear who is beast or hunter, Carrie or her target, Brody.

⁷¹ Like Danner, who suggests, as previously mentioned, that the real torture was meant for an internal audience, as anxiety management for an agency that failed to prevent or anticipate 9/11, Michael Slowik combines “terror management theory” as psychoanalytical offspring, arguing that fictions about 9/11 wherein we wishfully regain agency served as cultural dreams serve as an anxiety buffer against mortality, to block the recognition of each individual’s inevitable annihilation. Michael Slowik, ‘Controlling Terror: The Representation of December 7th and September 11th in Film’, Quarterly Review of Film and Video, 31 (2014); Danner ‘Our New Politics of Torture’.

⁷² This density is typical for title sequences that give a historical backdrop in infotainment format, for instance in The Kingdom (Peter Berg, 2007). On a more practical level, this strategy ensures that the sequence retains enough suspense and diversion to create a slight sensual overload, in spite of not being changed over the course of the first three seasons. (The aesthetic structure and much of the visual material remains the same in later versions.)
We often see Carrie as the object of a threatening, hunting camera-gaze, beginning with the shots of Carrie-as-a-little-girl in front of the television set, always observed from behind, and a shot of her fleeing something, looking anxiously over her shoulder into the camera.

This difficulty of *seeing clearly* is also expressed on the level of the medium. Blurred and fraying images point to the limits of vision and the decay of visual evidence. Various media formats – stills, archival and diegetic footage – and image types – optics which mimic security camera images, or the photo-shopping of a home movie – are cut together and emphatically worked on, using (colour) inversion, superimposition, negative frames, images that are upside down or that seem to be filmed through a distorting glass.

Sound and images create a mutually affirming tapestry of diegetic and factual material, interweaving various media sources and different languages. Mirroring the visual material, aural effects foreground the materiality, and thus the artifice of the recording device: from the clicking noise of a slide projector, the sound of breakage or static, to aural interferences and deteriorations over time. These aspects point self-referentially to the mistakes and gaps in recordings, their delivery, and possible manipulations of the objective gaze of the recording camera eye. If we shift towards examining how a medium says something, that is, how meaning is aesthetically expressed, this foregrounded

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73 Non-English language snippets are not translated; what is mined, apparently, is not the content of the words but the texture or associative evocations of, for instance, veiled women shouting into a television camera.
materiality and self-awareness expands a notion of “televisuality” as an excess of style towards calling the viewer’s attention to the construction of the show.  

These aesthetics point to the authenticating function of media, in particular archive footage to orient the viewer temporally, while shedding doubt on its reliability, by highlighting that the material has been tampered with. The sequence also alludes to the (here mechanical) changes that happen to media memory over time, exceeding a refraction of 24, by highlighting how footage material decays over time, and it emphasises that individual and public media memory are interwoven. Thus, central to the newer texts’ renegotiation of these issues is how they were previously told and how they are remembered on television.  

The self-referential engagement with such questions links a U.S. show like Homeland to a Chilean show like Los Archivos del Cardenal. The negotiation of iconic archival material on Chilean television results in a (perhaps not entirely conscious) self-reflexive gesture: beginning with the bombing of the Chilean presidential palace La Moneda on 11 September 1974, [image 1.2, p. 22] the  

Caldwell’s notion of televisuality was formed during the crisis of network television and in response to what he saw as failure of postmodern critics to conceive of the postmodern in television; the term has been expanded in the era of post-network television. Glen Creeber, Small Screen Aesthetics: From TV to the Internet (2013).  

Apart from the references to 24, perhaps it is interesting in this regard that Homeland’s channel Showtime is a big rival of HBO, the channel which created a specific brand of self-reflexivity on television, a “television that knew it was television.” This HBO model and “quality” formula has been widely adapted and imitated. Cara Louise Buckley, Marc Leverette, and Brian L. Ott, It’s Not TV: Watching HBO in the Post-Television Era (London: Routledge, 2008).
coup was televised, relentlessly rebroadcast,\textsuperscript{76} and television played a major supporting role to the regime.

Building on Paul Ricœur’s fractioning of questions around memory,\textsuperscript{77} we may ask what is where forgotten or remembered in the format of serial television?\textsuperscript{78} How are public memory and our individual perception of events shaped by and filtered through media images? What are the effects of serialization?

As discussed in the Literature Review, Chile’s “memory wars” and “memory question,”\textsuperscript{79} the understanding and meaning of Chile’s recent historical past and its effect on the present continue to be a site of contestation and dispute. The contemporary and popularly successful Chilean television serial Los Archivos is situated in this dynamic “memory landscape.” Set in the dictatorship years, the series forms part of the current trend to return to the 1980s in Chilean documentary, fiction, film and television. Many of these works

\textsuperscript{76} The “relentless repetition of the bombing in the media [is] a ‘symptom’ of this traumatic event for Chilean society” Ramirez, ‘(Un)Veiling Bodies, p. 33.

\textsuperscript{77} Paul Ricœur encourages us to ask: “At what time are events remembered or commemorated; which are forgotten, in which form, by whom and for whom?” Paul Ricœur calls these the three attributes or addressees of memory, to oneself, to one’s close relations and to a collective (“La triple attribution de la mémoire: à soi, aux proches, aux autres” Paul Ricoeur, Memory, History, Forgetting (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 124.

\textsuperscript{78} The relation of television to “public memory” would have to be analysed with attention to the respective countries’ media history. In Persistence of Hollywood, Elsaesser suggests that television lost trust as public medium of record, and no longer offers political or social legitimation. He also suggests that this has to do with economic-industrial factors, and that in Eastern European countries the process has been different. Thomas Elsaesser, ‘Digital Hollywood: Between Truth, Belief and Trust’, in The Persistence of Hollywood, ed. by Thomas Elsaesser (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 308-18 (p. 317).

\textsuperscript{79} As Steve Stern entitles the first book of his trilogy. Stern, Reckoning with Pinochet.
employ, re-conceptualize or extend the existing archive material. The following discussion examines how Los Archivos engages with such public memory, hinting at the memory of television’s pro-government role, and focuses in particular on the serial’s approach towards (the absence of) visual archive material. The analysis of aesthetic approaches will help generate assumptions on the audience imagined by the show.

**Los Archivos del Cardenal**

The television drama Los Archivos (2011-2014, TVN) recreates some of the most striking and symbolic cases of human rights violations committed or coming to light in the supposedly stable 1980s. The show is based on the historical records documented by the so-called Vicariate of Solidarity, an institution founded by the Pope on request of Cardinal Raúl Silva Henríquez – hence the eponymous title which translates as *The Archives of the Cardinal*.

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80 Some other examples include the retro look of the biopic of Chile’s important first pop band *Los Prisioneros*: *Miguel, San Miguel* (Matías Cruz, 2013), the television shows *Los 80* (2008-2014, Canal 13) and *Prófugos* (2011–present, HBO Latin America). *Prófugos* is about a group of fugitives who are forced to collaborate in order to escape. Among its “melting pot” of characters are a torture survivor and a former torturer – information which is divulged little by little – all characters hide parts of their past, play a double game.

81 These cases include, for instance, the brutal beheading of three communist professionals in 1985, and the case of Sebastián Acevedo, a desperate father who set himself publicly to flames in protest of his children’s detainment; and the fabricated scare of manufacturing chemical weapons to exterminate opponents.

82 The Church’s powerful social standing and support provided some level of protection although the regime nonetheless sought to repress outspoken figures. Despite its initial acceptance of the military regime against the threat of atheist communism, the Church then proceeded to persistently criticize the government’s human rights’ record. The Vicariate denounced publicly the human rights abuses of the regime and provided legal assistance to 250,000 Chileans. Cf. ‘Los casos de la vicaria. Las historias reales que inspiran la serie los archivos del cardinal’, <http://www.casosvicaria.cl/> [accessed 5 February 2016]
The show combines a contemporary “global CNI aesthetic” with a distinctly Chilean, nationally resonating topic, which taps into local knowledge of the work of the Vicariate. This hybridity in content is mirrored by the show’s hybrid form. The title sequence of Los Archivos introduces an aesthetic and narrative alliance of the documentary and the fictional, the amorous and the political. The sequence begins with the first bars of a rock song, and an archive image of the historical Cardinal [image 3.5, p. 238]. Onto this photograph, text is visibly and audibly “typed,” as if by typewriter, evoking the documentary basis of the show. Then ringing church bells are added to the rock intro. There is a sharp cut to the image of a projector, emanating a blazing light which expands onto and overexposes the whole image. The image effectively dissolves into a white screen. Now the vocals of the title song set in, and the rest of the title sequence is a fast-paced montage of diegetic snippets. Apart from these initial photographs in the title sequence, the show does not use archive material until the very last episode of the last season, which ends on a montage of documentary photographs. All images, diegetic or archival, are framed as if they were emanating from a television screen. The images thus emphasise the role of media in transporting, conserving, or distorting visual evidence. Musically, the sequence evokes both contemporary and historical moments.

83 The title song Santiago de Chile is from Silvio Rodríguez, composed in 1975. The final song of the show is Déjame Pasar La Vida by Manuel Garcia and Camilo Salinas.
84 The first sentence is: “Chile, 1976: El Cardenal Raúl Silva Henríquez crea la Vicaría de la Solidaridad” / Chile, 1976: Cardenal Raúl Silva Henríquez founds the Vicariate of Solidarity. This sentence disappears and the next one is being typed: “Una organización de la iglesia católica que defendió los derechos humanos durante la dictadura militar.” (“An organization of the Catholic Church which defended human rights during the military dictatorship.”)
The sequence’s second part, which consists of diegetic snippets, sets up a way to relate to the past and its political positions via an emotional link, taking moments from the storylines that focus, for instance, on the Vicariate’s daughter having to choose between two men, who embody oppositional (and evolving) political and social positions.  

What do such fictional works offer to the Chilean public space – in a way, to paraphrase Haddu and Page, that is perhaps not fulfilled by documentary? Haddu and Page suggest that the prevalence of a “hybrid” aesthetics in Latin American cinema has to do with a “need that fiction fails to fulfil” while there is also something about the real world “that escapes the documentary camera.”

May a show such as *Los Archivos* fulfil an ex post facto “archival function,” by re-creating – and creating – missing images for the collective pool of memory?

The show’s mode of representation is of a fictional present tense with a narrative base in the documentary realm, combining fiction with dramatization of iconic images and cases. The advantages of this docudramatic mode of representation are its combination of documentary’s authenticating effect and its “promise of privileged access to information” with drama’s narrative

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85 The title sequence is changed in the second season to montage of archive and diegetic images, just about ten seconds long. The images are sutured so rapidly that it is barely possible to see the images.
86 While certain parameters of these hybrid shows are based on facts, I would include them within the material that I called “fiction-identified.”
immersion. As in documentary, the rationality of historical veracity, and historical neutrality – at least the shadow of Nichols’ favoured “discourse of sobriety” – is still a dominant norm, spectatorial absorption seems harder to achieve. This immersion may also offer increased emotional involvement. Docudrama’s “blurred boundaries” tend to generate worries about how the audience, especially a future one, will be able to distinguish fact from fiction. Arguably, however, it has always been the mode of address, the marking of material as documentary or archival that suggested to an audience the level of reality they were presented with.

Aimed at the Chilean market, the show clearly anticipated an audience aware of the historical events and of Chile’s iconic imagery. The very first case that appears in Los Archivos focuses on the discovery in 1978 of fifteen bodies found in an abandoned mine in Lonquén, a transformative case that signalled

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90 Compare Ebbrecht’s cautionary warnings - “at what point will the distinction between historically authentic and recreated footage no longer be comprehensible for the viewer?” Ebbrecht, ‘Docudramatizing history on TV’, p. 38. Ebbrecht discusses the case of Virtual History: The secret plot to kill Hitler (David McNab, 2004), where these differences in mode are deliberately effaced, helped by technical advances in digital recreation, which is, however, the point of that particular show.
Contrarily, already in 1996, Janet Staiger pointed out that the mix of docudrama and footage in JFK (Oliver Stone, 1991) was neither new nor particularly confusing. Likewise, despite critics’ misgivings, Sobchack suggested that viewers were in fact not confused or fooled as to what was fact and what was fiction in the cases of Forrest Gump (Robert Zemeckis, 1994) and Contact (Robert Zemeckis, 1997). Janet Staiger, ‘Cinematic Shots’, in The Persistence of History: Cinema, Television and the Modern Event, ed. by Vivian Sobchack (New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 39 – 54; Sobchack, ‘The Charge of the Real’; cf. also Bruzzi, New Documentary.
the end of the doctrine of the “presumed disappeared.” The images from Los Hornos de Lonquén form part of Chile’s concentrationary imaginary [image 1.5, p. 23]. These first episodes of the first season serve as example to explore the show’s poetics towards the real, in the sense of an artistically manifested aesthetic theory.

The show has been dubbed the Chilean CSI, as the narratives also happily mix politics, historical record and the vicissitudes of the heart, in the racy style developed by this model for television drama. [image 3.6, p. 238] This results in a compelling yet ultimately inadequate comparison. Shows like CSI and its spin-offs are said to provide a shortcut to experience “death by proxy” for a public obsessed with fictional cadavers, an obsession in contrast to, and perhaps a collateral of the “tastefully safe” treatment of (some) actual death and corpses. The Lonquén episode in particular follows a forensic logic where

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91 With the Lonquen corpses made public, it was possible to prove that these were the corpses of people who had disappeared from a community on the Isla de Maipo. As early as 1978, this case stood against an official narrative that sought to negate the sheer existence of the disappeared. Lonquén became one of the first proofs of state terrorism.


93 I use the term CSI as signifier for a type or genre of TV series that encompasses the various CSI’s as well as spin-offs such as Without a Trace, based on Kramer’s assertion that CSI has created a model for television drama. Kramer, ‘Forensic Music, p. 203.

94 Foltyn claims that “the cadaver has become ‘pop culture’s new star’.” Ruth Penfold-Mounce, ‘Corpses, Popular Culture and Forensic Science: Public Obsession with Death’, Mortality (2015), p. 3. The top 10 most watched TV dramas (including CSI) now regularly employ corpse actors (actors who play dead bodies). The dignity granted to the dead differs drastically, demonstrating which corpses are granted what Butler called “grievability.” Butler, Precarious.
“truth lodges in matter,”\textsuperscript{95} in the traces such corpses leave behind, from bones to photographs.

In Chile, the documentation of forensic investigations, the recovery of the remains of the disappeared featured strongly as an aesthetic figure in documentary. This creates a tension between its activist potential and a certain technological formalism and determinism, lured by the promise of scientific certainty and the fact that the “forensic turn”\textsuperscript{96} has created its own sensibility, ethics and aesthetics. Leach describes how on shows such as CSI, “the data spewed from machines authorize a kind of moral discourse … ‘The facts don’t lie … but people do.’”\textsuperscript{97} The testimony obtained from machines is understood as reliable and superior to those of witnesses, who might forget or embellish. The result is the privileged status enjoyed by machinery and instrumentation. The genre’s codification that mechanical evidence cannot “lie” taps into this desire for absolute certainty. But the “machine as witness” is again dependent on its expert reader; and forensic science too is subject to narrative.

Forensics can indeed play an activist role.\textsuperscript{98} The possibility of skeletal identification, the scientific analysis of inanimate objects, may help prosecutions against the “winners of history” who attempt to rewrite the past, backing up

\textsuperscript{95} Kramer, \textit{Forensic Music}, p. 206.


\textsuperscript{97} Leach, ‘Scientific Witness’.

\textsuperscript{98} Compare, for instance, the reconstruction of a bombing on 1 August 2014 in the Gaza Strip, which used photographs that came without metadata as part of counter-forensic architecture, to reconstruct a timeline.
documentary evidence and witness testimony. In Chile, the documentaries *Fernando ha vuelto* (Silvio Caiozzi, 1998) and *¿Fernando ha vuelto a desaparecer?* (Silvio Caiozzi, 2006) about the (mistaken) identification of a disappeared, captured forensic investigations and exhumations and how traumatic these processes were for the family members of the disappeared who had been promised and robbed of closure. As a result of such historical experiences, a construction of “forensic science as superscience,”99 would not only be anachronistic but also ring decidedly false in the Chilean context.

In *Los Archivos*, visual evidence appear as puzzle pieces to solve crimes, for instance when family members bring photographs and photographs are taken of the bodies in Lonquen. At the same time, narratively speaking, much of the work of the vicarage consists in deconstructing state media’s fabrication of false information. For instance, an early episode shows how torturers force their victim to assure, on camera, that his confession was obtained without torture. This constellation – a camera recording the visual truth of a lie – resounds in a decidedly contemporary way. Thus, forensic science functions differently in *Los Archivos* than in *CSI*, as does the motif of (looking at) corpses. Analysing these gazes, Penfold-Mounce argues that the bodies in *CSI* are subjected to various objectifying gazes, in particular Foucault’s “clinical gaze,” an abject and an

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99 Penfold-Mounce, ‘Corpses, popular culture and forensic science’. 
erotic gaze. The corpse becomes a prop that helps the science-as-detective narrative to unfold.

By contrast, in *Los Archivos*, the basis in the real disrupts any potential for glamorising and eroticising that Penfold-Mounce ascribes to the good-looking corpses of *CSI*. The reference to political realities present and past is at the very core of *Los Archivos*, and the erotic part of spectatorial desire is restricted to the love triangles of the fictional protagonists. Unlike *CSI*, there are no long talks over and with the dead bodies, and no uncannily sensitive central characters speak for and intimately with the dead. The protagonists in *Los Archivos* concentrate on talking to the living, and these conversations with survivors and relatives are more central than close-readings of corpses. Channeled through the protagonists, the gaze upon the dead bodies in Lonquén, and on the suffering relatives, is neither clinical nor abject or voyeuristic but an empathic gaze that continues throughout the show. Ultimately, perhaps, this presents a compassionate gaze on history itself.

100 Penfold-Mounce suggests that “the performance of forensic science” conceals “the erotic desire to ‘see inside the body’ and expose hidden secrets.” Penfold-Mounce, ‘Corpses, popular culture and forensic science’, p. 8.

101 Of course it is also possible to consider *CSI*’s forensic narratives as politically resonant if looked at from the right angle. For an interesting reading of *CSI* and *Without a trace* as a text that speak to public mourning after 9/11, see Kramer, *Forensic Music*. Kramer also discusses an episode of *Cold Case* that depicts “sexual humiliation and death at the hands of a quasi-military figure [which is, in the wake of torture at Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo Bay] to say the least, politically resonant.” Kramer, *Forensic Music*, p. 214.

102 Penfold-Mounce, ‘Corpses, popular culture and forensic science’, p. 10; “Most of these series [*CSI* and its spin-offs] depend on the idea of speaking for the dead, and more than that, of speaking with them.” Kramer, *Forensic Music*, p. 204.
The forensic proposition that there is truth is hidden in the body resonates with one of the theorems of torture, as elaborated above. As artistic figures, both might be considered as reflective of the search for certainty amidst a contemporary epistemological crisis regarding images as visual evidence. On the other hand, the increased attention given to forensics in artistic productions stands perhaps also in relation to the current focus on the archive and its promise of a truth locked in matter.

Although Los Archivos can be considered a show about the value of documentation, archival documentation is largely absent. Los Archivos uses production design to create a feel of 1970s and 1980s authenticity, and evokes the iconic images and footage associated with the resistance against the dictatorship but abstains from using the material texture of original material. Los Archivos thereby avoids the distinct sensibility associated with archival aesthetics. Instead of evoking a foregone temporality in our reception through the material quality of obsolescent media, Los Archivos positions itself squarely within the clarity of contemporary conventional television language. The point about this aesthetic “presentness” is germane to the contemporary memory landscape, especially in Chile. Sergio Rojas explains the current

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104 This is of course not an intrinsic quality but dependent on a historically particular reception context: We read, receive and watch the televisual (or digital) image differently from the film image or from how we used to watch television. Belton, John, ‘Psychology of the Photographic, Cinematic, Televisual, and Digital Image’, New Review of Film and Television Studies, 12 (2014), pp. 234-46.

105 Palacio, Archivos Sin Archivo.
“fetishization” of archive with the “exhaustion” of history in our neoliberal present. This might be especially true for the particularly neoliberal Chile, where the obsession with archive is generated by the failure of previous ideological sense-making narratives. Andreas Huyssen phrases his argument in similar terms when he claims that we (all) live in a culture that is obsessed with memory, inundated with an excess of information, and accused of amnesia at the same time. Huyssen argues that our “culture’s sense of time is being renegotiated,” and concludes that the present is shrinking. Following Rojas and Huyssen, it is not the past but the present that is neurotic, both lacking historical past and being choked by the demands of a past that cannot let go. We need a past in which the present can recognize itself, argues Rojas; and I suggest that Los Archivos creates a firmament of such a past. The socially relevant memory work of Los Archivos is less conducted by dramatizing the events around which key images were taken and central stories transpired, thus enlarging the collective pool of memory – although this is also done – but of bringing this history into the present.

What kind of memory is made available in a show such as Los Archivos, and for whom? To speak to this question, it is necessary to briefly recap some of the relevant parameters of the scholarly debate on memory, and the concept of memory I will be working with. Memory scholarship has addressed if and how

106 Rojas argues that the past demands justice, and that art may tranquilize these demands. Sergio Rojas, ‘Profunda superficie: El pasado no cabe en la historia’ (London, Birkbeck, 30 April 2015).
memory transmission works globally, transmitted through the media, across generations, and whether there can be collective, transnational or even global memories. To recall, Marianne Hirsch’s concept of “postmemory” resonated particularly strongly in Latin America, while Landsberg’s “prosthetic memory” reflects on the global dimension of such memory questions and today’s media. Emphasizing both the temporal gap and the affective connection, postmemory refers to the transmission of an event over time and across generations. As “figures for memory and forgetting,” images are central in postmemory because of their power to mediate affective states, “to address the spectator’s own bodily memory; to touch the viewer who feels rather than simply sees the event.” Expanding the argument that postmemory can carry on a “living connection” between the generations, “prosthetic memory” includes a much broader possible collective, crossing lines of gender, race, and nationality.

Both models are helpful to create a framework for discussing the relation between images or cinema, spectatorship(s), public and private memory(-ies) and the potential political space or role between these components. Important to retain are Hirsch’s emphasis on how images activate a spectator’s own embodied memory in affective form, and Landsberg’s discussion how prosthetic technologies such as cinema offer a mimetic-experiential and hence emotional access to history. This emphasis on the film experience for memory is

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significant if one agrees with Barratt’s argument that “contrary to popular belief, memory is not photographic in nature.”

As discussed in the Literature Review, one must not collapse the distinctions between “levels of memory,” between the lived (but past and remembered) experience, memories transmitted in the intimate setting of the family, community or larger groups. Yet a notion of memory as “liquid” reservoir of (collectively shared) stories and images – a memory pool that can be shared among groups of audiences and can therefore, along with its audiences, adapt, shrink and expand – leads me to my second point regarding the positions made available to audiences in Los Archivos.

To discuss the matter of subject positions and the audiences imagined by the text, it helps to recall that Chilean scholars have argued that the country’s collective identity lacks the sense of a shared calamity and an acknowledgement of social pain. Walescka Pino-Ojeda describes a “double distanciation” – ethical and emotional – which separates contemporary Chilean society from its recent past. The privatization of pain led to “a questionable and convenient dissociation between ‘them,’ the ‘victims,’ and ‘us,’ those who were not directly affected by the climate of fear.”


111 Pino-Ojeda locates this problem with the individualistic logic of the neoliberal socioeconomic model, which limits possibilities of social healing and communication across the political and memory divide. Direct victims are constructed as an “other” in the collective body, often resulting in indifference and boredom, even within a vacuum
such as Chilean postdictatorship documentaries, have sought to address and recover this sense of community, one must also soberly ask who has the option, inclination and financial means to watch these documentaries.\textsuperscript{112} Television, one might argue, reaches a larger pool of audiences, and it can also offer space for a plurality of memory narratives, including populist variations. Emphasizing television’s relevance for public memory, Steve Anderson describes how “part of the power and significance of televisual historiography lies in its flexibility and intangibility in comparison with ‘official histories’ ... [and] in opposition to historical discourse, which is propagated from the top down via cultural and governmental institutions.”\textsuperscript{113}

A show such as Los Archivos allows a range of generations and audiences to enter an emotional involvement with a plethora of subject positions – as perpetrator, victim, and bystander. Thus, a framework to discuss the approaches towards memory and the past enabled by Los Archivos needs to extend the direction of thought offered by prosthetic and postmemory with regards to subject positions. For neither concept entails a position for the bystander, for those who saw themselves as apolitical, yet these positions are

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[\textsuperscript{112}] Following Joshua Hirsch, Ramirez argues that Chilean postdictatorship documentaries follow a trajectory towards greater variety in creative strategies (as a result of slowly increasing democratization). However, the lack of infrastructure, funding and socio-cultural awareness means these documentaries tend to suffer from limited reach, lack of distribution and exhibition. Until recently, domestic audiences have “tended to shun Chilean cinema and documentary is no exception.” Ramirez (Un)veiling bodies, p. 107.
\item[\textsuperscript{113}] Anderson in Ebbrecht, ‘Docudramatizing history on TV’, p. 43. This is precisely not what Ebbrecht claims is happening in German remembrance culture, which he perceives as increasingly homogenous.
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crucial to develop a sense of shared social pain.\textsuperscript{114} Postmemory mainly describes the experience and relationship of children of survivors to the experiences of their parents, or in its expanded forms, of those most immediately affected. What is partly, symbolically, recovered in Los Archivos are also the stories of many people who fought against the dictatorship, often risking their lives, who did not become famous and usually fall through the cracks of publicly (and globally) remembered history. Such stories and positions are therefore also not covered by prosthetic memory: notwithstanding the fact that the show developed a transnational appeal,\textsuperscript{115} it was mainly aimed at a Chilean audience. Inherently relational, television shows may be considered a counter to the trend towards atomization and privatization of pain.

As the dominant visual code of Los Archivos is one of fictionalization, we may link it to Álvaro Bisama’s suggestion that fiction is a mode of remembering which helps to return to something already known, to relate past to present in different ways. This can be combined with the idea that the show seeks to speak to a broad audience and to activate a different form of seeing, looking again from the vantage point of the present at parts that have been left out.

The occasional narrative “soapiness” of Los Archivos is then also a way of saying: this normality also happened. People were laughing, crying, they fell in

\textsuperscript{114} This applies also to Los 80 and to some of the films I discuss in the next chapters.
\textsuperscript{115} Los Archivos was exhibited in México and sold to Uruguay, Venezuela, and the United States. ‘Los Archivos del Cardenal llega a Uruguay, Venezuela y Estados Unidos’ (14 April 2015) <http://teleseriescl.blogspot.co.uk/2015/04/los-archivos-del-cardenal-llega-uruguay.html> [accessed 5 February 2016]. Nevertheless, as a television show, it was more clearly aimed at a Chilean audience than cinema, which depends on the festival cycle, see, for instance Maria Peirano, ‘Towards a ‘cosmopolitan’ national film industry: Contemporary Chilean cinema at international film festivals’ (2013).
and out of love. Such a focus on the small, even banal obviously counters the effects of the momentous, epochal event. Moreover, the quotidian can contain some of the horror, as the love entanglements and pleasurable aesthetics provide some respite from the frequently gruesome stories. A broad variety of viewers can recognize themselves in this past, beyond the more extreme ideological positions, beyond being immediately affected as survivor or as relative or child of those more closely involved.

In Los Archivos, the political stance especially of the central young couple is meandering; other characters also frequently change their positions. The formal characteristics of serial television allow for shifts between these subject positions, fostered by the serial rhetoric of open-endedness, the longevity of running time, the possibility to let several characters evolve and develop slowly.\textsuperscript{116} The serial nature of both shows allow the audience to come to know the characters intimately, to follow as their political affiliations grow and change, as may the audience’s relationships to these characters. Yet the paradigmatic impermanent or partial closure of storylines that was possible on Homeland is not possible to the same extent in Los Archivos, due to its bottom line rooted in the documentary.

A main narrative arc features the journey of upper-class lawyer Ramón towards political consciousness and responsibility, as he begins to work for the

Recalling Pino-Ojeda’s point of social “double distanciation,” Ramón’s development may stand for various audience groups in various stages of ignorance, denial, of temporal or generational removal. Ramón’s work for the Vicariate forces his family members to show their political colours, which allows numerous more nuanced points of view to be expressed.118

The point about subject positions becomes most clear in the narrative of the “prodigal torturer.” The defection of a CNI (Chilean internal secret service agency) agent, his confession, ultimately repentance, and the varied and evolving reactions of the members of the Vicariate towards him stretch over several episodes. Torturer Mauro is introduced displaying physical symptoms of PTSD – nausea, insomnia, nightmares – and we see him with his wife and children, locating him clearly within the human family.

While the story of the defecting torturer is based in fact,119 in the TV version, Mauro is shown as personally involved both in some of the most striking cases

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117 Ramón has his eye-opening moment from relative political unconsciousness when he witnesses a man being taken off the street; his interest in uncovering political realities is then nurtured by a budding love interest in Laura, the beautiful daughter of a lawyer at the Vicariate. This emotional and political journey resembles Ana’s in La historia oficial (Luis Puenzo, 1985).

118 At some point in the show, Ramón’s father uses his connections to ensure his son’s release, whereas Ramón’s mother struggles to face the realities of his torture, and his brother breaks with him.

119 In 1984, Antonio Valenzuela “Papudo” Morales searched and found the journalist Mónica González, today director of the Centro de Investigación Periodística (CIPER). Her interview with Morales, was extensive and detailed, including names, methods, torture centres, the fate of the disappeared (including the ways of making them disappear), as well as details about those who began to talk under torture. Papudo was assassinated four months later. In Los Archivos, González’s role is decidedly less central.
of human rights violations, he personally tortured several characters of the show, and he knows what happened to the disappeared brother of Laura’s father Carlos Pedregal. This fictional liberty to condense all these facets in one character makes it possible to unfold various emotional responses and reactions when the Vicariate decides to hide him from the CNI and help him escape. The generally imperturbable Carlos explodes during the interview, shouting that he needs to know what happened to his brother, and his usually sanguine wife Mónica barely holds it together during the interview with Mauro and collapses into tears afterwards. The torturer Mauro is given time to fully realize what he has done and to repent his acts. It takes a while for Mauro to reach that point, and when he finally tells them all he knows, we are given ample shots of the pain is visible in his face.

At one point torture victim Ramón plans to shoot his former tormentor. When the moment comes, Ramón holds him at gunpoint, and a flashback reminds us of the reversed dynamics during his torture. Ramón eventually refrains, and he later describes Mauro to his girlfriend as “a poor sad [expletive] who will never again sleep at night.”

Aesthetically, the representation of torture follows the established style of translating the victim’s loss of autonomy through images sequences that reflect

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120 For instance, the murder of prominent union leader Tucapel Jiménez in plain daylight, and the subsequent scapegoating of a gardener, forced under torture to write a letter of confession. Cf. ‘Los casos de la vicaria. Las historias reales.’
121 This disagreement within the Vicariate over how to deal with Mauro is a “PBS moment”, which offers the opportunity to condense much information and explain their rationale – if they help Mauro instead of persecuting him, they can find out the truth and that others will come.
a loss of control: distorted framing, blurred focus, shaky camera movements, jarring music. Yet what is remarkable about the representation of torture in Los Archivos is its recurrent appearance; its victims include most of the main characters. Assisted by the serial format, the narrative features the aftermath of the torture, the reactions of family and friends. Ramón in particular has traumatic flashbacks, represented in the same aesthetic fashion as the original torture scenes, which interrupt the main storylines temporally. In themselves aesthetically conservative, these repetitions demonstrate how much torture was an institutionalized part of the regime’s repression.

Newcomb argues that the “cultural forum” of television reaches a broader audience and tends to feature more “local” themes. His reflections on television’s “rhetoric of discussion”122 can be combined with the notion that television remains constitutively a present- and future-oriented medium.”123 Television, like emotions, happens in the now.

I suggest that serial television lends itself particularly well to the tackling of issues such as collective accountability and guilt. Its potential to trigger a public debate on the past, is perhaps especially relevant in Chile where the predominant socio-cultural public discourse is shaped by television anyway.124

In a similar vein, Tobias Ebbrecht suggests that docudrama may work not only

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122 Newcomb Critical View, p. 49.
124 Villarroel, La voz, pp. 161-166.
as “an archive of collective memory” but also take part in the “construction of a national culture of public memory.”

Frequently produced around memorial dates and official remembrance days, “historical event television” can constitute a social and media event that forms part of remembrance culture. Programmed alongside extra-textual events, “history can become a contemporary event through remembrance.”

Los Archivos can be considered an exemplary case of such a public event. The show was widely watched, highly rated and successful in generating debates. The last episode of the first season was screened live at the Museum of Memory in Santiago, attended by 2,000 people. A book about the “real stories” was published, a website maintained by the Universidad Diego Portales gives background information on the cases, and the show itself at times condenses educational information.

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125 Ebbrecht discusses the rise of docudrama in German television about the Second World War, which, he suggests, presents this history in “more entertaining forms” and with a new focus on every-day life. Ebbrecht, ‘Docudramatizing history on TV’, p. 36.

126 Ebbrecht, ‘Docudramatizing history on TV’, pp. 37-39. Ebbrecht finds that such docudrama, which he calls, with German TV historian Guido Knopp, “historical event television,” fills a specific national need for identification and identity. There is ample room here to compare Germany and Chile’s memory cultures.

127 In this context of television memory and television as public space, it is interesting that the show was produced by TVN, a state-owned channel supposedly autonomous in executive decisions. The institution was involved in some recent controversies: they botched the initial emission of Nostalgia de la luz (Patricio Guzmán, 2010); and they bought El diario de Agustín (Ignacio Agüero, 2008), and never screened the film, which is a highly critical reckoning with the history and role of the powerful owner of the newspaper El Mercurio. The latter case in particular became an infamous symbol of more or less hidden media censorship.

Los 80: Media memories on television

Whereas in Chilean narrative cinema, it is rather the absence of classical affective invitations, via melodramatic binders and identificatory invitations in the narrative that is remarked upon, in Chilean television shows, the emotional and personal is inextricably intertwined with the political. Helped by the generic tradition of the telenovela and “the work of melodrama [which] creates affective openings that facilitate potential connections,” the personal is not in opposition to the political in the shows, but rather dramatizes and explores the personal nature and cost of history.

A good example for this is Los 80 (2008-2014, Canal 13), a highly popular show running for seven seasons, which was initially produced to commemorate the Bicentennial. The Chilean film magazine La Fuga aptly describes Los Archivos and Los 80 as companion pieces. Los 80 copiously employs all kinds of footage from audiovisual archive, both political material and private, often sentimental home movies. The show features the Herrera family, a typical lower-middle-class Chilean family living in a village far enough from downtown Santiago. A main narrative arc in Los 80 follows the initiation to political realities and the subsequent politicization of a main character. This attention to the mundane and daily might appear in a different light if considered a reaction and potential

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129 The Chilean “cinema of mood” seems to rather express dispersive moods and, I would argue, does not invite strong invitations to “identify” with its protagonists who often seem to be drifting, and whose motivations remain unclear or baffling.

130 This was Sifkin’s argument regarding the spy-themed U.S. show The Americans (FX, 2013- today); Sifkin’s focus is on cross-cultural connections, expanding the affective solidarity across lines of gender, race, nationality suggested by Landsberg. Meredith Sifkin, ‘Melodrama, the Americans, and the Global Television Imaginary’, Cineaction (2014).
remedy to the nationalist-authoritarian imaginary set into motion by the dictatorship, and arguably carried forth in the hegemonic practices of a neoliberal state. Once drawn into the story of a happy, idyllic family life, helped by the nostalgic aesthetics of 1980s memorabilia, the audience is slowly introduced to more and more controversial topics, from economic problems, class differences, gender issues, and finally to politics. The dinner-table rule of not speaking of money or politics – which also appears in in Los Archivos, in Ramón’s right-wing family – can no longer be upheld when the family’s daughter Claudia joins the protest movement. Her decision evolves slowly, as a process. Fearing for her safety, her parents intervene, she promises to abstain; she argues with her friends and struggles with her ethical consciousness and the wish to protect her family. Eventually she becomes active in the opposition movement, which causes major strife with and within her family and for her family in their community; she is investigated and escapes to Argentina with her (more radical) partner Gabriel. Tortured by CNI agents, Gabriel’s best friend tells their whereabouts. As in Los Archivos, the formal and aesthetic characteristics of the torture are unremarkable, but torture is embedded within a show that features the impact and long-term effects of fear, repression, betrayal and threats on individuals, families, and communities. In the last episodes of the fourth season, Gabriel is betrayed and killed by a man who

131 Gonzalo Quijada enumerates the construction of monuments on the main square of every city, the creation of quotidian civil-military ceremonies, commemorative rituals. Gonzalo Leiva Quijada, ‘El Golpe Estético de la dictadura’ (6 September 2013) <http://www.theclinic.cl/2013/09/06/el-golpe-estetico-de-la-dictadura/%3E> [accessed 6 February 2016].
garnered the family’s trust pretending to be a long-lost uncle. This fourth season was the most watched season of the series and the most watched show of the year, confirming public interest.

The title sequence and first images of Los 80 condense how the series uses historical document and references to its own medium. Television archive material is interspersed with found footage or home movies, linking official history – footage of Pinochet, army tanks hosing demonstrators – with the small histories of home video footage, and eventually merging into an aesthetically corresponding “fake footage” from the series itself. The editing of the sequence evokes the pre-digital snapping between channels. Remarkably, Los 80 uses a title song that remains the same but is performed by various groups and in various styles, as the show moves forward in time. Kramer describes the music of the title sequence as its “acoustic insignia” that works like a logo. Here, unlike a logo, the title song emphasizes repetition with variations that rather points to the tension between sameness and difference and is not well understood as an ideological function.

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133 The central theme song for Los 80, El tiempo en las bastillas, by Fernando Ubiero, from 1978. The song’s interpretation changes with every season, first as a rock version, then pop, punk, classic, electronic style, and so on, until the final season reprises the original version of the song, returning to the beginning, and again, musically “closing” the circle and putting the past to rest.
134 He also claims that this music is “supposed to be listened to, not just absorbed” which would somewhat contradict the hailing effect of the title sequence (Kramer, Forensic Music, p. 203).
In the title sequence of Los 80, the television is the first “protagonist” we see. In the first images of the show, the television image is identical to the series’ first image, before “receding” into an image of the television as a profilmic object on the screen. [image 3.7, p. 238] After the title sequence, these images do not overlap again. The television images are black and white and contained as emanating from the television set as an object within the series images, shot in colour, which highlights the communication between the two temporal levels. The foregrounded presence of television as object speaks to its historical relevance – the acquisition of a television set as status object and as means of political communication.

The opening image of the first episode of the six-season of Los 80 is of a television set that shows a black-and-white image of a Chilean athlete doing crunches. The image becomes static, and a fist is seen hitting the set. There is a cut to a “reverse shot”, which takes a perspective from behind and slightly above the television set, showing the family around the dinner table, mesmerized by the device and shouting excitedly about the changes in the legibility of the image, the father next to the set, knocking it carefully. [image 3.8, p. 238] The elder son joins his father, and both are whacking the television. Then the daughter intervenes and smartly hits the object from a different angle, clearing the image, which now displays General Pinochet making an announcement. The montage cuts back and forth between the television and the family who resume eating; the sequence links small fictional history to
momentous media history, and hints at a social change regarding gender roles that is to come (and that features prominently in the show).

The sequence establishes the time line of the show: the first season, for instance, extends from Chile’s successful qualification for the 1982 FIFA World Cup to the first national protest against Augusto Pinochet in 1983. Already, the centrality of television set in the home as well as the medium’s political relevance are positioned. As “a domestic object watched within the space of the home,”\textsuperscript{135} the television images in Los 80 often give cues for conversation or provide a pretext to initiate a conversation.

Moreover, not unlike the archival footage, the analogue television set in Los 80 – then modern and coveted, now an increasingly obsolete device – often function as a register of public memory through a nostalgic mode, communicated also through the media of the past. Television plays a central role as a powerful node of “symbolic, autobiographical and generational reference.”\textsuperscript{136} In the question “where were you when (you watched …)?” public and private memory intertwine, and the memories of television experience may feel more relational and intimate, for the ways in which the television set used to be “embedded within the sensual aspects of the domestic environment.”\textsuperscript{137}

As an object, the television set transports nostalgia for today’s convergence-trained audiences; and Los 80 operates with the mode of nostalgia, evoked by attention to materiality. However, one must be attentive to different television

\textsuperscript{135} Holdsworth, \textit{Television, Memory and Nostalgia}, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{136} Tim O’Sullivan in Holdsworth, \textit{Television, Memory and Nostalgia}, pp. 13-14.
\textsuperscript{137} Holdsworth, \textit{Television, Memory and Nostalgia}, p. 7.
memories here. In Western culture, nostalgic and archival impulses are often related to technological developments and an obsession with collecting certain commodities.¹³⁺ For Chile, the role of state media, in particular television during the dictatorship is still awaiting more critical appraisal. In contrast to other authoritarian regimes, the dictatorship did not seek to establish an official cinema; hostile to art and culture, the junta favoured only television among media,¹³⁻ a form of disciplining the populace aptly caught with the formulation of “market, repression, television.”¹⁴⁰ Both series highlight how the state channels distorted or omitted the actual news, that what really happened had to be read between the lines of what the news were literally saying.¹⁴¹

Each of the television shows examined here uses melodramatic structures to provide an emotional access to historical events. The amount of time available allows the shows to develop narrative complexity, to explore long-term developments and to offer varied subject positions to the viewer. Given these characteristics, the serial rhetoric appears to lend itself particularly well to the


¹³⁻ Cavallo, Douzet, and Rodriguez, Huérfanos, p. 32.


¹⁴¹ In one case for instance, the television news in the background is blaring about “a group of armed extremists,” and when the youngest son Felix asks about it, he is told to shut up. The daughter Claudia says derisively, “fine, let’s stick with the government version then: they killed themselves amongst each other.”
examination of collective structures. The double bind and ambivalence of Zero is replaced by a rhetoric of “opened issues” and a public emotional space.

As different as these shows are, they all formally and narratively engage with the reliability of visual documentation and epistemological strategies. A lack of complete knowledge is emphasised in Homeland’s narrative structures, the necessity of and the absences of documentation are central for Los Archivos, and Los 80 is constructed from a mediated past. This questioning, not only of original documentation, but also of how visual evidence reaches us, leads to the next chapter.
image 3.1 – 3.4: Homeland

image 3.5 - 3.6: Los Archivos del Cardenal

image 3.7 - 3.8: Los 80
4. Chapter Four: Negotiating Evidence

This chapter attempts to parse two aesthetic gestures found in the films examined here. As contemporary U.S. films on recent historical events negotiate the status of the image as truth-producing document, renewed forms of cinematic realism dominate contemporary Chilean cinema about the past. I consider both aesthetic strategies as responses to a similar set of questions, generated by an unsettled status of visual evidence in the quest for truth. Both gestures reflect on the primacy of the visual as epistemological strategy, and coincide with a renewed academic interest in realism as a formal category.

As an example of contested visual evidence, the chapter begins with an in-depth analysis of the images taken in 2003 by U.S. Military Police working in Abu Ghraib prison, Baghdad, followed by a close-reading of Morris’s documentary *Standard Operating Procedure* (*SOP*), a film which explores the events at the prison, the photographs, their mediation, and offers interviews with those who took them. Bookending the discussion of *SOP* are briefer discussions of de Palma’s *Redacted* and Morris’s *The Unknown Knowns*, films which illuminate supplementary points regarding digital representation and the relation of language to violence.

The second part of the chapter moves on to Chilean cinema and its realist tendencies. Framed as an “ethic,” which encompasses a political-ethical and an aesthetic dimension, these films are discussed as responses to a crisis of faith in epistemological systems. Close textual analysis of the long take and the role of
corporeality in Santiago ‘73, Post Mortem and NO demonstrate that historical neorealism’s aesthetics and politics are invoked and reworked. I will end on La Danza de la Realidad as an example of the “poetic truths” explored in world cinema’s new realism. This film anchors the real particularly in physical dimensions, leading onwards to the discussions of the final chapter.

The Abu Ghraib Images

The photographs that emerged from the Abu Ghraib prison came to stand as a shortcut to refer to the known, visible and assumed instances of torture in Iraq, Afghanistan, Guantánamo, and various black site prisons. These images provoked questions of intelligibility, accountability, and ethical responsibility. They implicated the direct participants, the chain of command, those present in the image as well as those taking them, and perhaps even those watching the pictures. The scandal gave occasion not only to an interrogation of the nature of these images in particular, but to a discussion on the nature of contemporary images in general.

Stories on the mistreatment of American-held prisoners in Afghanistan and Guantánamo Bay had been published as far back as 2002;¹ but it took the pictures to turn the facts into national scandal.² Five investigations followed

¹ The Red Cross had reported on prisoner abuse and practices amounting to torture, and The New Yorker began reporting on it in May 2004.
(including one that investigated the previous ones), unveiling “systemic abuse in U.S. Army detention centers.” As a sixth instalment, in December 2014, the Senate Intelligence Committee released an Executive Summary of the so-called “Torture Report,” which confirmed that the CIA rendition and detention programme was ordered and sanctioned by a chain of command, countering a narrative spin that deflected culpability on individuals. When efforts failed to contain the scandal and to suppress the release of those images that had been floated to the press, two “master narratives” quickly emerged. The first one painted the torturers as aberrant, a few bad apples among a largely honourable and benevolent U.S. military occupation. The second narrative claimed that overconsumption of violent media and pornography inspired the torturers.

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One of the first major pieces ran in the Washington Post on December 26, 2002. Several scholars have charged that the U.S.-American media was in fact slow to properly cover the abuse at Abu Ghraib; it took the pictures to make the charges impossible to (immediately) dismiss as partisan political opposition.

3 Rodowick, The Virtual Life of Film, p. 149.

4 The official name is of the report is “Committee Study of the Central Intelligence Agency’s Detention and Interrogation Program.”

5 Amnesty was offered to any soldier who turned in such images. Mitchell, Cloning Terror, p. 169.

6 The “‘pornography made them do it’ story” seems to be a variation of “watching too much/the wrong kind of violence makes people violent” argument. Steve Coll, The Unblinking Stare. The Drone War in Pakistan’, The New Yorker Online (24 November 2014). Former Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger, head of the fifth investigation into the prisoner abuse, characterized the incidents at Abu Ghraib as “Animal House on the night shift”, which was transformed into the “bad apple” narrative, cited in Judith Butler, Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable? (London: Verso, 2010); Danner, Torture and Truth; Julie Gerk Hernandez, ‘The Tortured Body, the Photograph, and the US War on Terror’, in Representing Humanity in an Age of Terror, ed. by Sophia A. McClennen and Henry James Morello (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2010), pp. 174-86;
Walsh suggests that the images’ initial effect of a wake up call increasingly turned into “a form of camouflage” at the expense of other narratives or images, effectively blocking public understanding how the events were related to U.S. policy, and to decisions made by the chain of command. The images became a “redacted and redacting spectacle,” which deflected our selective attention and “resulted ultimately in an occlusion of war crimes committed in Iraq, Afghanistan, Guantánamo, and the network of the U.S.’s black-site prisons.”7 There is indeed evidence of a “breakdown in command” and lack of oversight in Abu Ghraib, as well as documentation that the programme was the product of a rushed decision made in the days after September 11, 2001 with the threat of new attacks looming. Yet, while the program possibly began “on the fly ... under extraordinary pressure from the White House,” it appeared to quickly have transformed into a “sophisticated, refined program,”8 which included systematic training of torturers.

One of the first smokescreens cast by the Abu Ghraib images has to do with the fact that the torturers present in the images were relatively low-ranking

Torture is then a deviation, an aberration or detour from the political norm. Modelled on the famous Stanford Prison Study, social scientist Philip Zimbardo explained the images in terms of group conformity; Caldwell critically discusses this explanatory paradigm for its gender bias. Ryan Ashley Caldwell, Fallgirls: Gender and the Framing of Torture at Abu Ghraib (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).

This is also part of a general trend towards “glocalisation,” the favouring of some historical events over others, in particular global over local ones. Jerome de Groot, “Perpetually Dividing and Suturing the Past and Present: Mad Men and the Illusions of History’, Rethinking History, 15 (2011), p. 271.
8 Jane Mayer, ‘The Black Sites. A Rare Look inside the CIA’s Secret Interrogation Program’, The New Yorker Online (13 August 2007).
Yet there was another group involved. Described in SOP as “other governmental agencies (OGAs),” those interrogators charged the regular guards with “softening up” the prisoners, but their own work was unknown even to the prison guards. These interrogators have not been charged with a crime, and they do not appear in the infamous images: it has been argued that the most egregious abuses at Abu Ghraib were not photographed or not released.¹⁰

The most (in)famous images to have entered the public pantheon of iconic images include the Hooded Man on a box with wires hooked up to his limbs and genitals, the Human Pyramid (seven naked Iraqi men arranged atop one another), a naked prisoner on a leash, dogs barking at a cowering prisoners, smiling Privates with thumbs up next to a visibly beaten corpse wrapped in plastic sheeting. The easy recognisability of the Abu Ghraib photographs has provided the foil for numerous replications, often circulating on the web, artistic reworkings and re-incarnations,¹¹ where the past original shimmers through the later layers of this visual palimpsest. They are what W. J. T. Mitchell calls the “Abu Ghraib Archive” [images 4.1- 4.3, p. 302] which he extends to

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⁹ This is why Westwell takes issue with torturer Dan holding a PhD in Zero Dark Thirty. Westwell, ‘Zero Dark Thirty’.
¹¹ Such reworkings include, for instance, Botero’s overwhelmingly physical paintings, Richard Serra’s Stop Bush, Santiago Sierra’s installation Polyurethane Sprayed on the Backs of 10 Workers.
graphic secondary elaborations ... from early protest(s) ... to fraudulent images of stages (usually pornographic) Abu Ghraib ‘fakes’ ... a body of texts and images, recordings and remembrances that is centrally constituted by, but not limited to, the 279 photographs and nineteen video clips gathered by the Army’s Criminal Investigation Command (CID). ... No matter how extensive this archive becomes however, it was and is centrally constituted by the still photographs.12

The images that emerged from Abu Ghraib and other places had a resonance and credibility that cut through much of the sanitizing and censoring of the images of contemporary warfare. They briefly arrested the notion of a “disappearance” of reality even in warfare, 13 and into a drowning, overwhelming excess of (visual) information. These images still functioned as “evidence of the real,” in spite of what we know about the ease with which digital imaging technologies allow photographs to be framed, faked, or forged. Their immediate cultural impact demonstrated “that our belief in the documentary powers of digital capture is undiminished.”14

But what are these images? Were they not a spectacle, too, and of what order? They seem to have fractured into many functions – as messenger and messages, corroborating atrocity, as representations of and as acting party in a scene of violence. These images clearly, irrefutably, evidence that something terrible and ethically appalling has been done to these bodies. Bearing in mind

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12 Mitchell, Cloning Terror, p. 113
13 As suggested by Jean Baudrillard in 1991 in relation to the second Gulf War, for the Western spectator, the war “disappeared” into a hypermediated spectacle, a war game that appeared like a simulation. Jean Baudrillard, The Gulf War Did Not Take Place (Sydney: Power Publications, 2006) The media enabled audiences less to be witnesses to the war, despite the life coverage but a constant live news coverage enabled audiences to participate in an “imagery orchestrated to convey a sense of triumph.” Mowlana et al, Triumph of the Image, p. 7.
14 Rodowick, The Virtual Life of Film, p. 146.
that “we often ask too much [the whole truth] or too little of the image,” one must be careful to examine what exactly they evidence and what they have become to mean through their subsequent use.

On a related note, to what extent does it matter that these images are digital? In its legacy and history, the photograph carries evidentiary value. Yet technological innovations have destabilized the truth claim of mechanically reproduced images, weakening the effect of objectivity and the notion that reality is transferred from the object to its reproduction through the mechanical process of production. Compared to analogue ones, digital images are harder to censor or erase, they are considered less an object or document, and they are used in accelerated fashion, diminishing the distance between past and present. As mobile connectivity is rapidly changing our ways of relating to the physical movement of people and things, these changes in usage impact also on our emotional relation. The perception of proximity has been interpreted as a central factor in our desire and ability to feel for another’s suffering, to the

16 Belton finds digital images too ordered and too rational; they seem cold, electronic, and ‘dead,’ in difference to the randomness of the grain structure in film that give it emotional or haptic qualities, warmth and an intricate texture. Contrarily, Rodowick suggests that on the level of appearance and reception, the cinematic language remains the same. Philip Rosen coined the term "digital mimicry" to describe how the digital imitates photography and other “preexisting compositional forms of imagery.” This is why Manovich redefines the digital turn as less revolutionary than “paradoxical,” both a “radical break with older modes of visual representation while at the same time reinforcing those modes.” Belton, ‘Digital Image’, p. 244; Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film*; Rosen cited in Joanna Page, ‘Digital mimicry and Visual Tropes: Some Images from Argentina’, in *Visual Synergies in Fiction and Documentary Film from Latin America*, ed. by Miriam Haddu and Joanna Page (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 197-217 (p. 197); Manovitch cited in Belton, ‘Digital Image’, p. 242.
other’s same-ness to the self. How we perceive and handle the qualities of such images is then a central factor in how we relate to atrocity.\textsuperscript{17}

Aside from their formal qualities, how images are repeated and framed by the media also influences the sensation of the event they show in terms of presence or a recession into the past. For instance, Adam Gopnik describes how the GIF-like images of the 9/11 terror attacks created an “imagery running on perpetual loop,” in contrast to experiencing them as an “injury — a horrific one, but of specific dimensions and significance, a criminal atrocity rather than an intimation of apocalypse [which gives] a chance to go on.”\textsuperscript{18} Such changes in usage and reception matter, especially considering the claim that iconic images often capture perceptions of historical events, rather than factual complexity.\textsuperscript{19}

The fact that these images are digital contributes perhaps also to the increasing difficulty to separate violence – torture – as crime from violence as performance for the camera. In the case of Abu Ghraib, the event obviously exceeds its visual record, but image and event have become conflated.

To some extent, it is true that the images are the event – part of it, its prolongation, only by documenting Abu Ghraib did it achieve ‘existence’ in public consciousness.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{17} This can be seen also with tracking technologies and evolving perceptions of proximity (the “global village” idea). Regarding the relation or necessity of proximity for empathy, see, for instance Boltanski, \textit{Distant Suffering}; Butler, \textit{Frames of War}.
\textsuperscript{18} Adam Gopnik, ‘Images and Interests at War’, \textit{The New Yorker Online} (9 October 2014).
\textsuperscript{20} Rodowick, \textit{The Virtual Life of Film}, p. 149. Similarly, the videotaped ISIS beheading videos clearly serve not only as documentary evidence, but they are also part of the horrific event itself.
The images of Abu Ghraib have turned into a form of unofficial embedded journalism, which, largely unintended, clearly prompted an official investigation. Also in contradistinction to previous photojournalistic documentation, these images were precisely not meant to be disseminated publicly. The claim that digital photographs, tout court, “have come to be messages, meant for dissemination and circulation, a ubiquitous record of the war” is therefore difficult to maintain in this context. Although not taken by professional photojournalists and displaying an amateur quality seemed to vouch for their authenticity, these images were also clearly staged. Their arranged compositions distinguish them from much previous iconic material – even before they were edited and embedded into narratives. Finally, as their ubiquity appeared to have been rather short-lived, one may wonder whether their iconic nature is quite the same as that of previous iconic images.

Hariman and Lucaites describe iconic images as both universal and specific, “aesthetically powerful and politically elastic.” Iconic photographs, the authors suggest, can be changed significantly, used without reference to their origin and historicity, even rendered generic, yet they will remain recognizable.

(This idea must be qualified to the extent that the original image must still be

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21 Bronfen writes that “regarding public effect and cultural memory, the images come before the event.” Bronfen, Specters of War, p. 163.
22 Sontag in Bronfen, Specters of War, p. 64.
23 Compare Bruzzi on the Zapruder footage, where the amateur format communicated a “sense of the real,” of immediacy, authenticity, and unscriptedness. This rests also on a learned consciousness that the accidental is more objective. Bruzzi, New Documentary.
24 Other examples include the raw images of Vietnam; or accidental footage, of the real-time collapse of the World Trade Center on 9/11, even though this footage was clearly anticipated by those who staged the attack.
circulating in a common pool of known images.) More problematic is the authors’ eventual claim that iconic images help to teach a benign and empathic citizenship.\textsuperscript{26} To be retained from Hariman and Lucaites’ definition is the notion that iconic photographs offer the illusion of being legible without explanation or access barriers, and that they capture moral contradictions and unresolved ambivalences.\textsuperscript{27}

A central ambivalence of the Abu Ghraib pictures concerns the fact that its inscriptions seemed to clash with one another: the clues given by and within the image, the codes of their formal texture, the intentions of the photographers and the disseminating media, and the various audiences.

Every image is inscribed with an authorial voice, which reflects “the context of its production and a very specific embodied gaze of a photographer,”\textsuperscript{28} and every image also always has an implied and intended audience – even if it is only the photographer at a later point. In a \textit{New York Times} interview, Errol Morris said that what is shocking about the Abu Ghraib images is that “we want

\textsuperscript{26} Hariman and Lucaites’s argue that iconic photojournalism is vital to the democratic sphere, as the images display the public to itself, and thus offer a performative model of citizenship, and that they teach the “habit of being benignly attentive towards strangers,” encouraging emotional identification with people one does not know. While the case can be made for the images the authors examine, as a general rule, even pre-digital, this assumption seems a stretch. In the Abu Ghraib images, already the formal characteristics complicate this idea. To begin with, we rarely see the faces of the hooded victims but those of their tormentors.

\textsuperscript{27} In Hariman and Lucaites’s definition, the iconic image amplifies some of photography’s general capacities. Such pictures condense or synthesize history in a tiny fragment or short cut. The authors build their argument on Roland Barthes’s suggestion in \textit{Camera Lucida} that photographs seem to provide messages without needing additional codes. Hariman and Lucaites, \textit{No Caption Needed}, p. 25.

\textsuperscript{28} Hirsch, ‘Surviving Images’, p. 24.
to smile back": the images assume a benign, even complicit spectator. They have therefore frequently been compared to what appears to be structurally similar images, such as lynching postcards and the few pictures of the Holocaust taken by Nazi guards. In her discussion of the latter, Hirsch argues that when we confront such images, we cannot look independently of the gaze of the perpetrator, that a “mutual” or equal look is impossible, that there are structures in the images or the film that seem to impede a non-violent gaze.

This raises the question of whether it is possible to escape from this inscribed point of view – other than by not looking. Much writing approaches this conundrum by concentrating on the intent of the audience, or their mode of looking, or by distinguishing between an “active” witness and a “passive” spectator, who is “only” watching, consuming images. Apart from the problematic notion of spectatorship and watching as “passive” which many film scholars would heartily contest, the shift from the codes of the image to the

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30 In her discussion of pictures taken by German soldiers, Hirsch postulates a near impossibility of ethical spectatorship when looking relations are steered by the perpetrator - absent an authorial, distancing context, a caption or subtitle, that dislocates from an overfamiliar, already known status. A Film Unfinished (Yael Hersonski, 2010) works with such “impossible” images, footage originally meant as propaganda, now serving as historical documents. By inserting outtakes and through a guiding voice-over, the film encourages us to look at where it is staged.
31 Regarding lynching imagery, Dora Apel said, “we try not to see them. Looking and seeing seem to implicate the viewer, however distanced and sympathetic, in the acts ... as if viewing itself were a form of aggression. Most of us would prefer not to look.” Apel in Guerin and Hallas, The Image and the Witness, p. 207.
32 Cf. Aaron’s distinction between emotional engagement and ethical spectatorship; also Peters’s distinction between an actively participating witness and a passive spectator of a recording. Aaron, Spectatorship; Peters, ‘Witnessing’.
intent of the viewer creates new issues for the analysis, ranging from problems of methodology to the cultural histories of emotion and perception, and the relationship between viewer and image. A number of theorists suggest that taking the pictures – and presumably, also looking at them – is a part or continuation of the torture. Prominently, Judith Butler argued that the images were “clearly” taken without conscience that a crime was taking place, a claim undermined by the testimony of one of the main photographers, Private Sabrina Harman.\textsuperscript{34} Regardless of these intentions, an image is never a neutral purveyor of knowledge; it always shows more than what was intended or anticipated by the photographer.

Sontag’s claim that “the images are us,”\textsuperscript{35} that we recognize ourselves in these images has to do with the particular iconography at work in these pictures. References such as Christ on the Cross in the image of the Hooded Man are clearly part of and recognizable as a common historiographical imaginary of Western culture, a “contemporary national imagination.”\textsuperscript{36} There are also encryptions of a (particular U.S.-American) porn culture. This pornographic

\textsuperscript{34} Butler, Frames of War, p 79. Hartmann seems not only lucid and aware of a moral failure, and a terrible wrong taking place but claims to have started taking the pictures because she could see its criminality. Seymour Hersh, ‘Torture at Abu Ghraib. American Soldiers Brutalized Iraqis. How Far up Does the Responsibility Go?’, The New Yorker Online (10 May 2004).
\textsuperscript{35} Sontag, ‘Regarding the Torture of Others’.
aspect has often been read through a historical and psychoanalytical lens, explaining the mutual influence between eroticism and violence, to explain the genesis of these particular torture techniques. This focus turns “the question of torture abroad back into a question about us in the United States: our morality, our corrupt sexualities, our loss of international credibility” and it exaggerates the overlap between torture and leisure activities. McClintock is right to emphasise that neither torture nor rape equal porn: “Conflating torture with porn banalized the torture.”

And yet torture does not appear out of nowhere. Sontag described the images as a perversion of a familiar spirit of play, distraction, and fun, a sentiment mirrored, albeit under the reversed sign, by conservative talk radio host Rush Limbaugh. By dismissing the events as “guys blowing off steam,” Limbaugh turned torture into a recreational activity. Yet the notion of a “familiarity of spirit” admits that the images reveal something larger than individual misbehaviour, which cannot be contained and deflected by the narrative of some “bad apples.” The U.S. soldiers present in the Abu Ghraib images mostly smile, and give the thumbs-up sign. Just like sexualized context, this aspect of “having fun” is deeply unsettling in its familiarity. The apparent enjoyment on

37 The pornographic argument links to certain tropes in the tradition of Western painting, where torture is framed as (potentially) pleasurable for victims. Mitchell, Cloning Terror.
38 Both quotes are from McClintock, ‘Paranoid Empire’, pp. 62-63.
39 Williams, ‘Cluster Fuck’.
41 This is why Hilary Neroni criticizes the major Abu Ghraib documentaries - Standard Operating Procedure (Errol Morris, 2008), Ghosts of Abu Ghraib (Rory Kennedy, 2007), and Taxi to the Dark Side (Alex Gibney, 2007) - for neglecting what is, to her, “the most
the perpetrators’ faces seems to evince a complete lack of awareness or sense of wrongdoing. This absence of guilt and the relaxed documentation of pastime activities is an aspect shared with the lynching postcards. Commonly cited as historical and aesthetic precursor, the stylistic similarities range from the posing and attitude of the perpetrators, the handling of the victim’s body as prop and background, to the use of such images as souvenir, and commodity. Yet in contrast to the lynching postcards, which were being produced as part of a public and visible event, the Abu Ghraib images occupy a space between public and private that is related to its digital nature. Now their ownership is uncertain, as they move from a private to a public archive, confiscated yet alive online and reworked artistically in various places.

In today’s media environment modes of address and dissemination have changed fundamentally. On the confiscated cameras, the torture images were interspersed with other private digital souvenirs, in particular amateur pornographic images. Yet reading this fact as proof of the partly erotic nature of this torture misses how digital technology changes our ways of recording, hiding and sharing information. “Digital photographs have become more social disturbing aspect” of the photos, the smiles on the faces of the torturers, which she sees as the disavowed enjoyment of the torturers. Hilary Neroni, ‘The Nonsensical Smile of the Torturer: Documentary Form and the Logic of Enjoyment’, Studies in Documentary Film, 3 (2009). A stronger focus on the smiles would threaten to create a narrative of individual sadism and to neglect more systemic problems.


Cf. Mirzoeff, ‘Invisible Empire’.
than personal.”  Grusin argues that the soldiers use digital media as a form of screen to deal with the shock of a war that often does not allow direct retaliatory release. Seeing the Abu Ghraib images, Grusin argues, the viewer experiences shock upon the “recognition that we use digital photos in the same way [as the soldiers], to distribute our affective responses.” The behaviour of open posing in the pictures emphasises how the soldiers performed for and according to the rules of a larger collective.

Documentary images serve of course various purposes. Besides their authenticating function, they may support personal vanity, affection, nostalgia for beloved memories, or a mnemonic tool to preserve hatred or the desire for revenge. Anne McClintock interprets the images as “personal trophies” for the soldiers who used them as “a means of private aggrandizement” and as “fixing as spectacle, in the photographs’ promise of permanence, the soldiers’ unstable moments of power.” This “borrowed and phantasmagoric” power had to be sustained by “ritualistic repetition.” For McClintock, the recording function of modern state surveillance and private spectacle collided in the space of the web. Yet the fact that these images were “endlessly repeated” may also have something to do with the nature of the web as their medium.

In this new media landscape, the lines between private and public space are redrawn. Some of the most private moments are made visible, and there is a

44 Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film*, p. 149.
47 McClintock, ‘Paranoid Empire’, p. 60.
48 McClintock, ‘Paranoid Empire’, p. 60.
factor or element of “I take pictures, therefore I am.” Elisabeth Bronfen reads Harman’s thumbs-up as a form of embodied witness-recording, signalling, “this happened. I was there to witness what we did.” Yet this particular gesture is a typical, semi-automatic picture-gesture; thus it also clearly indicates: this is a photograph. These images are a form of self-documentation, of curating the self on social media platforms. The trophy argument is dissatisfying because in the digital age we document everything all the time. Even their ownership is uncertain, as they move from a private to a public archive, confiscated but alive online, reworked artistically in various places and forms.

What the images prove is that a camera and several bodies were present – the victims, the photographers and the bystanders. Didi-Huberman commented on this quality of embodiment already in the few surviving Auschwitz images, which also inform through absence. The four Auschwitz images testify to

“the impossibility of aiming the camera, the risk undergone the urgency, the fact that he [the photographer] may have been

49 Bronfen, Specters of War.
50 Harman’s explanation of her thumbs-up gesture and her smile as a protective automatism, a performance for the camera, is corroborated her letters of the time.
51 Laughter has been considered a Freudian parapraxis, a slip and indictment of guilt, and also as a survival strategy, in the form of gallows’ humour and its relatives. The horror this may arouse in the spectator is used to great effect in The Act of Killing (Joshua Oppenheimer, 2012) and The Look of Silence (Joshua Oppenheimer, 2015), where the former torturers – both those who seem troubled and those who do not – tend to chuckle, smile, and laugh, while or after recounting their atrocious acts. Oppenheimer clearly uses this dissonance and the troubled feelings such reactions provoke in his audience.
52 Already in relation to the Gulf War in 1991, Stacey Peebles argued that the impulse to snap pictures during fire fights was “natural” for “a generation already used to collectively archiving their lives.” Peebles, ‘Lenses into war’, p. 139.
running, the awkwardness, the sun in his eyes, and perhaps breathlessness too.”

This presence of bodies in their emphatic “picture postures” is usefully examined with Richard Bégin’s suggestions on corporeality in portable phone images or videos. Bégin proposes another form of accessing the reference in such images, linked to the movements, gestures and postures of the one filming. Such images bear witness to a corporeal presence of the one taking the picture. They are often produced to express, more than anything else, the presence of the person incorporating the device. There are important differences to Bégin’s examples, where, he argues, this presence is the event, where there is often little to see and which are produced for proliferation online, as a form of testimony or witnessing. Yet the suggestion that the semantic postures of this presence have developed an iconography of its own is useful. Clearly, in such images, there is something more going on than addiction to selfies. While they are reflecting a modern world of remediated images, here is rather a case of self-surveillance. The Abu Ghraib images speak directly to us because they are addressed to a person taking the pictures. In

54 Bégin’s ideas work even better for videos. Such images make us see the event by making us feel the condition of creating these images. In Bégin’s examples, there is an “iconographie mobile” in footage from portable phones, often of catastrophe, and ironically often marked by the fact that “on n’y voit rien.” For Bégin, such images constitute a special testimonial practice. Richard Bégin, “‘Ceci Est Mon Image, Livrée Pour Vous’”, in FilmForum (Gorizia, 5 April 2014); cf. Anna Reading’s notion of globital witnessing, about mobile camera phone witnessing. Anna Reading, ‘Globital Witnessing: Mobile Memories of Atrocity and Terror from London and Iran’, in Constructions of Conflict: Transmitting Memories of the Past in European Historiography, Culture, and Media, ed. by Katharina Hall and Kathryn Jones (Bern: Peter Lang, 2011), pp. 73-90.
contrast to the disembodied panoptical gaze discussed in the first chapter, the viewer cannot hide in the illusion of invisibility: we are being smiled at.

**Images as Torture?**

Both the act of taking the image and the act of watching the image have been considered as part of the mechanism of torture. Taking a picture of someone without the person’s consent is an act of violence, demonstrating the power difference the difference between the one who has the power and decides to “make a body do ones bidding,” to do something with and to a body – and to disseminate the visual evidence – and the person who has no say in this.

The act of taking the pictures is a clear violation and is experienced as such; the status of the circulated and received image, however, seems more inconclusive. Dauphinée points out that “almost all of the prisoners who testified about their experiences at Abu Ghraib specifically mentioned the use of photography and video [which] suggests that the shame and humiliation they experienced extends to the visual record made of it”; she therefore suggests to read the images as part of the torture. Yet once the violating act is done, is the visual record, as well as its circulation and exhibition still – and forever? – part of the torture, independent of context? The argument that we continue the torture by looking at the pictures is sometimes problematically linked to essentialist

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55 This leads back to the religious, folklore or apocryphal notion of the camera as a thief of souls and Sontag’s “equation between the camera and the gun.” Sontag, *On Photography*, p. 14; a notion which she later qualified, see Sontag, *Regarding the pain*.

56 A described by a torturer of the Algeria war, in Grajeda, ‘Picturing torture’, p. 224.

57 “The visual record, in other words, is part of the torture.” Dauphinée, *Politics of the Body in Pain*, p. 147.
assumptions of a particularly “Arab sensibility.” Based on Hersh’s initial reporting, faithfully repeated elsewhere,58 the claim has been advanced that a visual record of the torture was taken in order to exploit specific (sexual) vulnerabilities of the targeted populations; 59 McClintock alleges that the photographs were used for blackmail.60 Both claims have been contested.61 Does looking at the pictures reproduce the “torturable” subject? How much do the codes of the images cement the agency or lack of agency of the viewer and the object of the gaze? I do not pretend to be able to solve the emerging dilemma that resides in the tendency towards essentialism derived from the

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58 Hersh alleges that an orientalist and essentialist study, The Arab Mind (Raphael Patai, 1973) was used as a manual for inspiration in the design of the torture techniques.

59 “Such dehumanization is unacceptable in any culture, but it is especially so in the Arab world. Homosexual acts are against Islamic law and it is humiliating for men to be naked in front of other men” Hersh, ‘Torture at Abu Ghraib’. Hernandez points out that Hersh inadvertently conflates Muslims and Arabs. Hernandez, ‘The Tortured Body’.

Rejali includes the blackmail plan among his “convenient [un]truths” about torture: “Hersh isn’t exactly lying … [m]any others have repeated this convenient truth (Abu Ghraib photographs equal blackmail plan) because … [the] blackmail story conveniently fits the story of centrally organized torture.” Rejali, ‘Convenient Truths’, p. 221.

60 Danner argues that this torture is “public” and seems “clearly designed to exploit the particular sensitivities of Arab culture to public embarrassment, particularly in sexual matters.” Danner cited in Tony Grajeda, ‘Picturing Torture: Gulf Wars Past and Present’, in Rethinking Global Security: Media, Popular Culture, and The “War on Terror”, ed. by Andrew Martin and Patrice Petro (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006), pp. 206-35 (p. 229); cf. Mitchell, Cloning Terror and McClintock: “The photos were also used to directly terrorize and humiliate the prisoners, to intimidate other prisoners, and, when shown outside the prison, to intimidate the prisoners’ families and communities.” McClintock, ‘Paranoid Empire’, p. 59.

61 In her empirical research, cultural anthropologist Laura McNamara contests the claim that the photographs were used for blackmail, and the suggestion that anthropological texts served as a foil. McNamara concludes that there is no evidence that the images were used as leverage. “None of the 13 detainees who testified for the Taguba investigation mention photographic blackmail in their sworn statements, which are otherwise quite graphic [yet] the idea that Patai’s book underpinned ethnographically-informed sexual humiliation at Abu Ghraib has permeated popular and academic culture.” Laura A. McNamara, ‘Notes on an Ethnographic Scandal: Seymour Hersh, Abu Ghraib and the Arab Mind’, Anthropology News, 48 (2007). The techniques used here may certainly have been influenced by (misplaced) ethnographic notions; see appendix for more theories on where this particular torture came from.
desire to acknowledge cultural sensibilities, and the equally problematic exercise of “culture-blind,” normative condemnations. The emphasis on cultural specificities shifts the focus, however, away from what this behaviour says about the U.S. army and the American GIs themselves. As Butler points out, the violence says as much about the violators as the violated. And if the presence of U.S. faces in the photos implicates the viewer, projecting backwards “that we are they, that torturers are us” does that refer only to a U.S. or a Western viewer, or to any viewer?

Some scholars argue that the dissemination and exhibition of the images prolong and multiply the effects of the torture. Viewed as extensions of looking relations based on racist notions of supremacy, the photographs “not only represent and allude to [but also] reproduce and multiply the power dynamics that made these acts possible in the first place;” in this way “surveillant representation and the proliferation of images of violence enhance torture narratives.” Like Butler, Liz Philipose claims that the images are part of a technology that produces a “racialized body” of the Muslim terrorist in custody, using (and reproducing) race as a “practice of visibility” and of looking at

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62 Butler argues that the torture must be understood as a projection, “as the actions of a homophobic institution [i.e. the U.S. army] against a population that is both constructed and targeted for its own shame [meaning, presumably, the U.S. army’s shame] about homosexuality.” Butler sees the torture as part of a larger “civilizing mission” of the U.S. army, which “consists of unbridled homophobic and misogynist practices.” Ironically, in SOP, it is the rather less lucidly reflective Lynndie England, who makes the most direct indictment of the U.S. military as a misogynist institution. Butler, *Frames of War*, p. 129; cf. Hernandez, ‘The Tortured Body’, p. 179.


64 Jasbir Puar in Zimmer, ‘Caught on Tape?’, p. 92.

65 Zimmer makes this claim in relation to the Saw sequels. Zimmer, ‘Caught on Tape?’. 
bodies. Philipose finds that the circulation of the images continues ideological and supremacist positions, “[r]egardless of the reasons for their circulation.”

The images’ combination of orientalism with racism certainly evidence imperial attitudes. Nevertheless, Philipose’s disregard for intent is problematic, especially as she assumes that their specific target audience is that of a Western onlooker. Philipose alleges that these images were aimed at a home front population in need of reasserting the racialized Other, distinguishing them from lynching images, which functioned as threat and deterrence towards African-Americans. However, the fact that these images were not intended for public circulation complicates her argument (they were not meant for public release in the traditional sense, but neither were they produced in stealth or particularly hidden); and the images’ capacities are neither limited to an inscribed “normative” viewing position nor to the effect of their initial circulation.

Cultural and critical race scholars argue that a history of misogynist, racist and colonial belief systems and the disavowed guilt over U.S. history of slavery enter in the selection of bodies that are forced to fuel these ideology systems.

For instance, Hazel Carby draws a “direct, but hidden, line connecting Abu Ghraib, the Rodney King video, and the photographs and “postcards” of

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66 The circulation of the images are “as part of a violent and brutal attempt to re-establish and continue Western rule. Regardless of the reasons for their circulation, the visual regime of domination constructed by the global circulation of the torture photographs is deeply imbricated in modes of racialization that affirm the superiority of the torturers by producing the servile, compliant, raced bodies of Muslim men.” Philipose, ‘The Politics of Pain and the Uses of Torture’, pp. 4-5 emphasis added.

67 For instance, Mirzoeff links gender politics and the defence of a “proper” masculinity, to the surge in antigay marriage laws; Sontag points to pornography; Mirzoeff, ‘Invisible Empire’; Faludi, The Terror Dream.
lynchings.” Carby operates with the notion of a collective white American imaginary, the partially unconscious “racialised anxiety … of white America … [which leads] repeatedly to the debasement of the black and brown body in symbolic spectacle.”68 Beyond the unconscious of “white America,” the system, in fact, self-perpetuates in even more pervasive and complex ways. As sketched in the appendix, there is a continuum between U.S. military prisons abroad and territorial U.S. civilian prisons, which “integrates” race in its “normalcy of exceptional brutality.”69 The overlap in personnel and the similarity in the abuse in Iraq and in civilian prisons are far from arbitrary connections.70

While the immediate impact and “instant memory” of the Abu Ghraib images may have been short-lived, Mitchell suggests that their legacy could lie in their “memorative potency.”71 This is especially true as they continue to circulate online. The “Abu Ghraib effect” – the transformative power of these images – might still be coming.72 As we can always only grasp the historical past through subsequent representation, Bronfen suggests reading iconic images “preposterously”:

68 Carby, ‘A Strange and Bitter Crop’.
70 Charles Graner, ringleader of the Abu Ghraib scandal, was a state prison guard before going to Iraq, and the maximum security prison where he worked was rife with accusations of brutal abuse. See appendix for more recent examples of this disturbing pervasive system of violence as it extends into the military and federal prison system.
71 Mitchell, Cloning Terror, pp. 148-149. Regarding the 9/11 attacks, it has been argued that the media contained the narrative and transformed “the events surrounding 9/11 into ‘instant history.’” Edgerton and Edgerton, ‘Pathologizing Post-9/11 America in Homeland’, p. 90.
72 Mitchell, Cloning Terror, pp. 148-149.
the resilient afterlife of images and narratives is conditioned on the fact that our critical reading of past representations can never be severed from the refigurations they have [subsequently] encountered.\textsuperscript{73}

This dialectical relationship between image and viewer is expanded by the seemingly endless possibilities of proliferation online. Moreover, Garrett Stewart comments on the influence that the Abu Ghraib prison photos have had “on the ethics of record” in Middle East war films and their “decided media-historical dimension.”\textsuperscript{74} Thus, the significance of the images lies also in their reworking in film and visual art, in Mitchell’s “Abu Ghraib Archive.” Such a collection of images may gain “significance beyond the sum of its parts:”\textsuperscript{75} Bruzzi suggests that iconic film or piece of archive begin to function differently over time, with repeated exposure, and with our awareness of what followed. If the significance of the images is further related to how they have become enmeshed with the discourses on torture that accompanied and followed their release, the ethical focus should neither be narrowed to the initial shock response nor to the textual codes of the image in the formalism of close reading. Historical context, dialectical and preposterous readings complement

\textsuperscript{73} Bronfen, Specters of war, p. 2. Bronfen suggests putting what comes chronologically first (pre) as an after-effect behind (post) its later recycling. The description as “preposterously” is borrowed from Mieke Bal. Bronfen argues that iconic images extend into the past and the future, evoke “a haunting apparition and a threatening possibility,” p. 2.

\textsuperscript{74} Garrett Stewart, ‘Digital Fatigue: Imaging War in Recent American Film’, Film Quarterly, 62 (2009), pp. 111-2.

\textsuperscript{75} Bruzzi, New Documentary p. 22. In the context of the Zapruder footage, Bruzzi wonders whether we still see the Kennedy assassination footage in the same way, knowing the end(ing); she also emphasises that the “narrativisability” of such iconic film or piece of archive “does not engulf or entirely obscure their veracity” – it is not the event that is “up for grabs,” as claimed by Bill Nichols, but its interpretation.
each other, and help shift the public lens, what Butler had called “perceptual frames.” The question is how do we frame and define the event “Abu Ghraib.”

In the analysis of *Standard Operating Procedure* (SOP), I will address how this film unpacks the framings of the scandal and the images. I will intersect this analysis with a later film by Morris, *The Unknown Knowns*, as example of a preposterous and dialectical reading in practice. For the perpetrators in *SOP* stand in a long line of guilty subjects interviewed by Morris, one of the best-known contemporary U.S. documentary filmmakers, from his first-ever taped interview (when he was a postgraduate philosophy student at Berkeley) with a serial killer,76 to his breakthrough movie *The Thin Blue Line* (1988), which cinematically re-investigated a murder case and led to the exoneration of a man falsely convicted of murder. Williams argues that all of Morris’s films concern judicial processes, trials or “the process of bearing witness to disputed facts,” disputed evidence and subjective testimony.77

Morris tends to interview his subjects with the help of the “Interrotron,” a device specifically invented by Morris, or its follow-up, the “Megatron.” The Interrotron is essentially a chain of modified teleprompters that allows interviewer and interviewee to address each other; it creates the impression of direct eye contact. Introduced in 2001, the Megatron can use up to twenty cameras, allowing a wider range of angles and shots for the editing process, without loosing the impression of eye contact with and for the subject.78 On his

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76 The “Ed Gein Project” was never completed.
77 Williams, ‘Cluster Fuck.’
website, Morris compares these devices to the telephone and other modern technologies, which create “greater distance and greater intimacy.”

Some critics have attacked this as “false” intimacy. For Morris, the device creates the “true first person” cinema. The spectatorial gaze becomes congruent with Morris’s own; the viewer enters a position of virtual proximity, mirrored by Morris’s own physical (and allegedly emotional) closeness. Moreover, the Interrotron creates a form of direct address, offering “a potentially rich metaphor for the problems of vision.” The viewer is encouraged to struggle not only with the emotional responses created by the direct address but also to not “mistake direct eye contact for direct access to the truth.”

Both SOP and Unknown explore how representation in language, central in the political battle over the events’ meaning and definition, has been turned into a battlefield. Morris addresses where language is “tortured” (in the original

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80 Irina Leimbacher, ‘Facetime’, Film Comment, XLV (2009), pp. 52-57.
81 Morris, ‘Eye Contact’, emphasis in the original.
82 Morris and critics continue to speak rather of the Interrotron than the Megatron (compare Morris, ‘Eye Contact,’ an interview conducted in 2004, when the Megatron was introduced in 2001) – perhaps for the catchier name, which allegedly combines, tongue-in-cheek, interview and terror. I will follow their lead when referring to the structural effects of the device, although SOP clearly also uses the Megatron.
83 Brown, Breaking the fourth wall, pp. 14-16.
sense of the word\(^\text{86}\)), distorted to obscure what is being described, to gaslight\(^\text{87}\) the public. The infamous re-definitions under the second Bush administration and their judicial consequences have incensed critics;\(^\text{88}\) regretfully, they are neither original nor singular. Linking the semiological strategies of the war on terror, “at its core, a magnified case of state terrorism,” to the state terror of Latin American dictators, Ernesto Semán points out

> [the dehumanization of the opponent] starts with language ... the very idea that it was legal to torture detainees because they were not criminals or POWs is a proxy for the desaparecido.\(^\text{89}\)

In *Unknown*, Morris, as is his trademark, offers again several intertwined stories. On the one hand, the film offers a portrait and a self-portrait of Donald Rumsfeld, former Secretary of State and key figure in the Iraq war. On the other hand, by exploring the rationale behind the war, Morris delves deeply into the role of language in the creation of historical events. The film’s title is taken from the infamous response that Rumsfeld gave a question regarding the lack of evidence that Iraq is supplying terrorists with weapons of mass destruction. In

\(^{86}\) The word torture comes from the Latin *torquere*, to twist; it is etymologically related to the verbs to spin, to whirl, to bend awry, to distort, and to torment. Cf. Scarry’s analysis of the appropriation of everyday language in torture; in the nomenclature of torture, the names for techniques “claim civilization.” Scarry, *The body in pain*, p. 45.

\(^{87}\) “Gaslighting” is a form of mental abuse in which information is twisted or spun, selectively omitted to favour the abuser, or false information is presented with the intent of making victims doubt their own memory, perception, and sanity.

\(^{88}\) Torturers became interrogation experts, torture a set of “alternative measures”, “enhanced” or “harsh interrogations,” prisoners are “softened up” or “stressed out;” even the terms used in the Senate Report, such as “rectal rehydration” remain euphemistic.

what seemed like a philosophical, contemplative, and hence inappropriate meditation, Rumsfeld responded:

There are known knowns. These are things we know that we know. There are known unknowns. That is to say, there are things that we know we don’t know. But there are also unknown unknowns. There are things we don’t know we don’t know.\(^90\)

As with other Rumsfeldian statements,\(^91\) it is less the normative abstraction itself than its application to concrete atrocity that is offensive and infuriating. The diagnosis that “absence of evidence is not evidence of absence” is true when we think of the case of the desaparecidos. It is not true as a justification to allow pre-emptive wars on the basis of imaginary scenarios. These quips are seductive because they are reductive; like an iconic image, they seem to be somehow easily true, self-explanatory and simple in spite of the rhetorical convolution.

During a Press Briefing about the Abu Ghraib scandal on May 4, 2004, Rumsfeld argued:

I’m not a lawyer. My impression is that what has been charged thus far is abuse, which I believe technically is different from torture. I don’t know if it is correct to say what you just said, that torture has taken place, or that there’s been a conviction for torture. And therefore I’m not going to address the ‘torture’ word.”\(^92\)

\(^90\) This exchange took place at a news briefing on February 12, 2001. Rumsfeld liked the quote enough to have re-appropriated it for the title of his memoir, Knowns and Unknowns

\(^91\) Other examples featured in Unknown include “Pearl Harbor was a failure of the imagination;” “Weakness is provocative.”

\(^92\) The Pentagon Press Briefing was aired 4 May 2004. It is no longer available on the website of the U.S. Department of Defense. CNN provides a transcript: CNN, “Pentagon Press Briefing aired May 4, 2004”,

As with the statement above, Rumsfeld uses rhetorical tools in order to refuse to answer the question, from qualifying language (“my impression is”), pedantry as diversion (“technically different”), a performance of modesty which conveniently clears him from being held accountable (“I’m not a lawyer”), and he ends by distancing himself and locating the acts with his questioner (“what you just said, that torture has taken place”).

Through its redundant construction, his formulation of the “torture word” creates a doubled withdrawal and dispersive doubt: is a “torture word” a word? Is it a dirty word? Dirty words, on which his phrasing is modelled (the T-, F-, S-word), are expressions of affect. They are considered gross because they refer to objects, and practices or even people who are considered abject for a certain population, moving from factual dirt to moral pollution, and moving from the actual practices, objects and people to the words naming them. Dirty words are contaminating, infectious – taking them in one’s mouth taints the person who uses the word: by “consuming” the word, it becomes part of oneself, of one’s body. Rumsfeld’s political defence – shunning accountability or responsibility – is also a protective linguistic operation: by creating distance to the word/thing, he positions his body as impermeable to the abject practice.

As these distortions of language have long-term social and direct judicial implications,93 it was important that President Obama finally used the word


93 By describing what happened in Abu Ghraib as “abuse,” and by designating those captured as “unlawful” combatants, the government could claim to be unaccountable to national and international law. “Abuse” signals a casual exercise of power,
“torture” at a televised news conference at the White House in 2014, ten years after the images broke.\textsuperscript{94} The acknowledgment was minimized however by adding the term “folks,” connoting colloquial, unpretentious informality.\textsuperscript{95} Obama’s most persistent quote on torture is the phrase “this is not who we are,” seems both puzzling and paradoxical, and echoes Rumsfeld’s description of the torture as “fundamentally un-American.”\textsuperscript{96} Mark Danner brilliantly deconstructs this line of defence:

What does it even mean? I guess it means, ‘This is not what we would do, if we were who we said we are.’ But we seem not to be who we said we are because this is what we have done.\textsuperscript{97}

\textsuperscript{94} Previous acknowledgments had sidestepped the “t-word,” including a 2009 speech in which he condemned “so-called enhanced interrogation techniques,” and “brutal methods,” but did not flatly say the U.S. has engaged in torture. The full quote: “We tortured some folks. We did some things that were contrary to our values. I understand why it happened. I think it’s important when we look back to recall how afraid people were … people did not know whether more attacks were imminent and there was enormous pressure on our law enforcement and our national security teams to try to deal with this.”

\textsuperscript{95} Ben Dreyfuss reads the term “folks” differently, as “far more humanizing than “detainees” or “enemy combatants” Ben Dreyfuss, ‘Obama: “We Tortured Some Folks” (1 August 2014) <http://www.motherjones.com/mojo/2014/08/obama-we-tortured-some-folks> [accessed 22 February 2016].

\textsuperscript{96} Rumsfeld seemed persistently worried that the “other” side might refuse to grant him power of definition and control over and of the information. On 7 May 2004, Rumsfeld apologised to Congress for what he called “fundamentally un-American” scenes at Abu Ghraib. However, even in his apology, Rumsfeld remained “strikingly focused on the perception of the abuse rather than the substance as though, absent the photos, the incidents did not warrant the highest priority.” Lila Rajiva quoted in Bond, Frames of memory, p. 153.

\textsuperscript{97} Danner and Eakin, ‘Our New Politics of Torture’. The phrase “This is not who we are” is also used in Homeland. It also underlies Senator John McCain’s famous and effective criticism of torture (McCain co-sponsored the so-called Anti-torture amendment). Cavanaugh points out that McCain’s “defense of American virtue … strips the enemy of normal human sensibilities … McCain’s version of exceptionalism is dangerous because it perpetuates a collective amnesia about our own history with torture.” pp. 317-8.
In light of Rumsfeld’s proven mastery at spinning information and narratives, director Morris is uncharacteristically present as interviewer in *Unknown*: we hear many of Morris’s questions, follow-ups and contestations. Yet as a result of this presence, Morris appears to become much more vulnerable as a subject of his own film. In their final verbal wrestling match, Morris and Rumsfeld clash about the meaning of the *unknown knowns* and the *known unknowns*, particularly whether the expression implies that we know more or less than we believe we know. Eventually, Rumsfeld disengages from the attempt to fixate any literal meaning to the line while Morris appears to have walked into his interlocutor’s trap, getting lost in arguments over semiotics and definitions, which transform the picture and its facts into slippery perceptions and opinions.

In his famous *The Fog of War* (2003), Morris interviews former U.S. Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, who wrestles on tape with his historical legacy regarding the Vietnam War. After much obfuscation and self-justification, Morris famously “catches” McNamara, key figure in the Vietnam war, in a moment of repentance. Robert McNamara’s face expressing regret is perhaps the most famous moment of the film. Visual and sonic close-ups pick up minute changes in McNamara’s facial expression, his hesitations and tonal shifts. The same structure of facial close-ups in *Unknown*, however, leads to no indication of an

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98 Compare, for instance, that in *Blue Line*, Morris’s voice is heard only once, and in *SOP*, there are only three such moments.
“inner” Rumsfeld. His performance remains seamless, determinedly high-spirited, and to all appearances untroubled by bad conscience.99

Countering the wrestling over language, Unknown uses montage and intervisual commentary to generate associative meaning. As is typical of Morris’s style, other visual material appears on the screen as his interviewees talk, often illustrating, undermining, or ironically commenting on something the interviewee has said.100 In Unknown, this visual material consists chiefly of words taken from Rumsfeld’s ample output of memos. Written on screen, these words create a peculiar kind of visualized voice. They flash or endure or replicate. This aesthetic organization takes the images into the figural realm, and they become more broadly and symbolically resonant of the role of language in these events. Turned into a visual device, they are twirling around Rumsfeld’s head like blinding dust. Rumsfeld called these thousands of memos “snowflakes.” Their blinding, elusive nature expresses visually the difficulty of holding him accountable, and they define him; yet as words they belong to all of us and express also the viewer’s responsibility and power.

99 The closest to a response that Morris extracts to his initiating question, “Why did we go to war in Iraq?” is “Some things work out, some things don’t. That one didn’t.” The other highlight comes at the end of the film, when Morris, in uncharacteristically emotional voice, asks Rumsfeld, “Why are you talking to me?” and Rumsfeld grins and says, “I’ll be damned if I know.”
Reframing: Standard Operating Procedure

In his films and blog, Morris obsesses about how easy it is to misread a picture: “photographs attract false beliefs ... photography can make us think we know more than we really know.”\(^{101}\) While the photos are “clear representational evidence of war crimes,”\(^{102}\) they are not necessarily crimes committed by the people posed in the photos or by those that took them. In SOP, Morris explores the creation, intelligibility, and reception of the images that emerged from Abu Ghraib. The struggle over the meaning and interpretation of these pictures is extended to an exploration of digital images, factoring in the role of the media that disseminate them, of filmmaker and audience.

In the context of Abu Ghraib, this challenge to what images can actually tell us, may feel uncomfortably close to exoneration. As a result, SOP was criticized for a strategic approach to “the truth of the past,”\(^{103}\) or even a lack of “moral perspective.”\(^{104}\) Nichols has generally criticized Morris’s interest in unreliable narration as relativist;\(^{105}\) he charges that SOP encouraged controversy “through

\(^{101}\) Along with Butler and phenomenologists, Morris argues that “what we see is determined by our beliefs. We see not what is there, but rather what we want to see or expect to see.” Errol Morris, ‘Will the Real Hooded Man Please Stand Up’, The New York Times Online (15 August 2007).

\(^{102}\) Butler in Williams, ‘Cluster Fuck’.

\(^{103}\) Williams, ‘Cluster Fuck’.

\(^{104}\) Quoted in Chaudhuri, ‘Documenting The Dark Side’. Comparing shows like 24, and films like Zero Dark Thirty unfavourably to SOP, Chaudhuri herself argues that the latter achieves a “critical image that might implicate the audience, allow them to absorb the painful experience.”

the deliberate promotion of ambivalence;” Paul Arthur found the film’s rhetoric “conventional” and therefore obscene, providing “titillation through horror” and “familiar aesthetic thrills as a substitute for specificity of meaning.” A particular concern, then, is the style of Morris’s films. By contrast, I want to follow those who argue that the film expands its subject matter to an exploration of the medium that produces and communicates the horrors. Given that “digital image capture changes what we can learn from a photograph,” SOP is “as much about digital ontology as it is about (photographed) detainee abuse.” Bronfen finds that SOP makes us “rethink photographs that, by virtue of their excessive and diverse media deployment, have been all but depleted of their meaning.” While the film does indeed do that, Bronfen’s argument implicitly frames only the initial response as legitimate. Rather, Morris calls upon us to assess the accuracy of our initial affective responses to the images. What the film does is to separate layer by layer what can be gauged of the original event, its initial and subsequent representations, and how these were received by the public, adding its own layers of refractions, reenactments and interviews. The film’s texture is carefully

Presumably Nichols would extend these claims to SOP as well, a film he criticized in an open letter, Bill Nichols, ‘Feelings of Revulsion and the Limits of Academic Discourse’, Jump Cut, 52 (2010).

108 Morris is criticized for “for exploiting an ‘insinuating score’ by Hollywood composer Danny Elfman and employing “a costume designer, a wardrobe stylist, six hair and make-up people, an action consultant, an ammorger, five set dressers, seven animal handlers, ten prop masters, [and] thirty-three cast members.” Turan and Hoberman in Benson-Allott, ‘Mediating Torture’.
110 Bronfen, Specters of war, p. 165.
111 Williams, ‘Cluster Fuck’, p. 21.
constructed from the original digital images of Abu Ghraib, interviews with investigators, and (some of) the soldiers involved;\textsuperscript{112} re-enacted scenes of some of the events as told in the interviews; home-movies, intervisual commentary as well as visualizations of abstract ideas. The voice of the film, and its moral compass, is to be found in the montage of these layers, in the testimony gained through the (mostly unheard) questions asked in the interview, and in the re-enactments.\textsuperscript{113}

News media, cinema and television participate in the creation of historical events – such as the terror attacks of 9/11, the ensuing war in Iraq, or the Abu Ghraib scandal – by writing them into easily digestible stories, into narrative “emplotments.”\textsuperscript{114} The media also shape the event by creating a particular aesthetic look through their technical and material properties. Such images often become inseparable from the event.\textsuperscript{115} SOP investigates the creation, transmission and reception of this event, “torture at Abu Ghraib,” through these images. On the one hand, the Abu Ghraib images are a type of found objects – not in the sense of being useless and discarded, but found

\textsuperscript{112}Not all the soldiers who were punished are present in the images or interviewed for the film. Most notably, Morris did not gain permission to interview Charles Graner, who had emerged as one of the main culprits and instigators. As a result, Graner is an invisible presence in SOP.

\textsuperscript{113}The voice of the film, as an organizing agency behind the film, not necessarily identified with or limited to actual human voice or commentary, can be described as the political perspective of the narrative agency.


\textsuperscript{115}The “look” of 9/11 was shaped by its recording medium: “Highly portable imaging technology, from professional camera portapacks and personal camcorders to digital camera and mobile phones, gave 9/11 ‘a shape, an identity, and a texture’ creating “a kind of electronic vérité.” Elsaesser in McCabe et al, ‘Remembering 9/11’, p. 81.
nevertheless. As leaving traces, finding, and discarding objects functions differently in an online world, it is more a matter of finding the proverbial needle in a haystack of visual digital information. On the other hand the images were produced by their mediation – selected among different versions, cropped and embedded which turned some hyper-visible and others invisible. SOP questions the iconic autonomy the images have developed. Especially in the re-enactments, effects of de-familiarisation are employed, in order to counter the over-familiarity of certain narratives, “the ways in which [those pictures] are remembered and imagined.”\footnote{Oyvind Vagnes cited in David Andrews, ‘Conference Report: Reframing Standard Operating Procedure: Errol Morris and the Creative Treatment of Abu Ghraib’, Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media 52 (2010).}

As with his intertextual commentary, Morris uses non-indexical approximations to animate abstract ideas and processes, such as the decoding of metadata. This theme is set up already in the title sequence and recurs at several moments in the film. The sequence visualizes the images’ journey in a spatially dynamic, combinatory structure: they appear as little squares, increase in scale as they approach, create formations, and disappear, emphasizing their fragmentary, lost-and-found character, floating in what seems a three-dimensional black screen space resonant of the universe. [image 4.4, p. 302] At later moments in the film, the images from various cameras glide horizontally until a double is found, an image from the same event but taken by a different camera and from a different angle. As if in a computer game, the images stop moving, a clicking sound indicates the double, and as a “reward,” their
metadata is superimposed. [image 4.5, p. 302] By mining the metadata, the photographs’ digital footprint, to reconstruct the timeline and by juxtaposing pictures taken from several cameras present at the scenes, it was possible to partly reverse the media’s selective editing process and to determine who else was present at the scene. Fittingly for an exploration of digital epistemology, the style of the title sequence also evokes The Matrix (The Wachowskis, 1999), which visualized (not only) in its title sequence computer codes as graphic formations. [image 4.6, p. 302] Taken together, the images of SOP’s title sequence create an image for the hidden “digital-genetic” code, which enabled the detective work that led to the identity of the photographers yet also “literally dissolve the Abu Ghraib photos into streams of binary code that finally render their contents invisible.”

But Morris also emphasizes the inherent restrictions that come with each medium by frequently pairing new and old media. In the title sequence, for instance, the photographs appear in a foursquare white frame, evoking pre-digital (printed) photography. Home movies appear, de-familiarized as all other devices, the home movies that are used in the film are de-familiarized. Only a small window opens on these videos in an otherwise black screen, and the films are manipulated to resemble aged Super-8 films. As home videos frequently serve to create a “warm, fuzzy feeling,” Odorico reads their use in the film as part of a strategy to increase emotional impact, to humanize the soldiers by providing alternative information on them, to naturalize violence with this use of

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117 Benson-Allott, ‘Mediating Torture’, p. 44.
“normalcy footage.” One of these moments is a home video of a hand playing with a kitten. The montage suggests the hand belongs to Charles Graner, ringleader of the abusers at Abu Ghraib. Odorico reads this kitten scene as a reminder “that Graner was a human being, a man capable of moments of tenderness.” However, in this clip, we see Grainer “threatening” the kitten with his hand, before grabbing it in play, and it follows on Private England’s sobering account of her infatuation with her love interest Graner, a staff sergeant more than 15 years her senior, and his manipulative behavior towards her. England of course became the key face of the abusers: she is present in some of the most iconic pictures, she is the one who seems to hold a prisoner on a leash [image 4.7, p. 302], who points to a hooded prisoner’s genitals. England’s account of their relationship is illustrated by amateur pornographic images featuring her in objectified, humiliating positions. Rather than proof of Graner’s humanity (reminiscent of the problem of Hitler’s irritating kindness towards dogs), the kitten scene associates England with the

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118 Odorico, ‘That Would Be Wrong’, p. 170. Of course, this is partly what is so striking about these images, namely the interspersion of porn and banal souvenir footage with horrible violence. Odorico assigns an essential place to these home movies in SOP, in what he describes as “a process of collaborative reconstruction of public history through the recontextualization of amateur footage,” p. 170.

119 Odorico, ‘That Would Be Wrong’, p. 172. Odorico also suggests that these home videos were not shown on public media because their normalcy would have a strong emotional impact on the audience. But such movies might also appear plain boring and banal; their normalcy disrupts the “bad apple” narrative, encouraging an uncomfortable human commonality with the torturers: it is precisely the tension between brutality and “familiarity of spirit” that is disturbing.

cat and Graner as someone who is using and employing his strength against weaker, vulnerable beings.

In another incriminating image of England, she points at a prisoner’s genital. A cigarette is dangling from her mouth, the prisoner is hooded, naked, and made to simulate masturbation. Morris asks “Was this your birthday?” and then “Which birthday?” to which England replies, “Twenty-One.” As Morris’s questions are typically edited out, those that we do hear accordingly gain significance. In this case, the question emphasises the rapport between Morris and England, as well as her youth, naiveté and pliability at the hands of Graner. As the interchange positions her uncomfortably close to being a victim, it shifts the focus away from the Iraqi victim and pushes the viewer towards a different perspective, a different story alongside the dominant narrative.

Another example of combining media formats is found in the privileged place given to the letters Harman wrote to her partner. Read out loud by Harman, they grant an emotional access to the senders’ interiority. In this they function similar to the Interrotron device and its simulation of eye contact. They also highlight the idea of reading media and media interaction, in the sense of conscious, active participation of the reader. The letters in particular are curiously similar to the digital photographs; both are precisely dated, both need to be read. The audience’s part in the process of perceptual re-framing is also visible in the interactive website for the film, whose dynamic interface “supports multiple modes of accessing the content … Rolling the cursor over individual photos trigger[s] each photo to scale larger in turn and encourage[s]
the interactant to click on a given photo, causing the images to reorient with that photo as the now central image.”¹²¹ Here, it is the spectator who decides which image to privilege while the structure reflects unmistakably that this decision is transient and subjective.

The strategy of dilution through linguistic or visual dissection which Morris’s films engage with, can be seen as problematic in its intellectual relation to a self-absorbed hermeneutics that has sometimes emerged from the poststructuralist postulations of the contemporary world as filled with simulacra, where history disappears in an endless web of discourses and mediations.¹²²

The 1992 Rodney King trial became a favoured example to demonstrate and reject such a tendency towards “intratextual narcissism.”¹²³ In the trial, George Holliday’s video of the beating was dissected beyond recognition in a blow-by-blow freeze frame analysis, resulting an initial acquittal of the attackers.¹²⁴ In a similar way, the initial military investigation into the Abu Ghraib “prison abuse scandal,” as it became known, “enlisted the intricacies of digital analysis in

¹²¹ The site has been discussed as an example of how webdocs become more immersive “when the interface design is aesthetically and thematically linked to the content.” Siobhan O’Flynn, ‘Documentary’s metamorphic Form: Webdoc, Interactive, Transmedia, Participatory and Beyond’, Studies in Documentary Film: Special Issue, 6 (2012), pp. 141-57 (p. 147).


¹²³ Tomasulo, ‘I’ll see it when I believe it’.

¹²⁴ In the initial trial, all police officers involved were acquitted. Seth Mydans, ‘Sympathetic Judge Gives Officers 2 ½ Years in Rodney King Beating’, The New York Times Online (5 August 1993).
order to close down political interpretation: by reducing torture to metadata, it attempted to redirect the thorny question of culpability.”

While SOP foregrounds “the new problems digital media pose for photographic epistemology,” Morris’s epistemological scepticism does not succumb to relativism. Instead, Morris aims the digital lens in the reverse direction; his examination becomes a form of hack. Morris asks how the nature of the real in these images is made available. Digital metadata are added to the irrefutable presence of bodies in the picture (the real) in “picture poses” (the semantic/iconographic), and the corporeal presence of the one taking the picture (the presence of absence).

Where the stop-frame analysis is premised on the idea that each individual image frame is telling an absolute truth, re-enactments definitely communicate their subjective and performative nature. They are clearly a version, they always perform – or re-perform – one history among several and thus reflect a different view on the nature of history.

While the link between evidence in photographs and verbal accounts and their re-enactments in SOP is firmly established, Morris uses re-enactments specifically to make the spectator engage with the slipperiness of factual evidence. Unlike images, re-enactments are not coded as transparently intelligible; they are defined by a “fantasmatic element,” partly fictional and imagined in nature. This inherent artificiality of re-enactments emphasises that

125 Benson-Allott, ‘Mediating Torture’, p. 43.
126 Benson-Allott, ‘Mediating Torture’, p. 43.
all “attempts to recover [the events] – via photography, narration or re-enactment – are imperfect, removed from the so-called original moment.”

There is no pre-text at objectivity or neutrality, no invitation to passive immersion here. Morris’s aestheticized re-stagings are a reminder “that we were not there.”

While the photograph appears to be tied closely to the subject it depicts, a re-enactment foregrounds the role of film as teller and audience as consumer of these images. Still images capture a perceptual past tense for the viewer, while the moment captured is of the future past; moving images are “always present tense,” they create a sense of “now-ness” that extends into the future. Moving and still images also demand or allow for different levels of active or passive participation from an audience who needs to work to make sense of diverging accounts. Morris defines re-enactments as “the process through which we imagine and re-imagine the world around us.” It is important to emphasise that these re-enactments are a conscious activity of the narrative agency: where Mulvey’s notion of a cinematic “punctum” belongs to

129 Bronfen, Specters of war, p. 165.
130 Roland Barthes’s futur antérieur, “this will have been there.”
the viewer, the dreamy, temporally elongated re-enactments in SOP visualize a punctum that springs from the director. Whereas documentary re-enactments generally explore the original enactment, the re-enactments in SOP add a particularly subjective flavour. By selecting the shots and determining their duration, Morris manifests his authorial voice. He is the first “reader” of his re-enactments; he is the one selecting the focus on the element to re-enact from the testimony. Devin and Marsha Orgeron call these moments first-person images or “breakaway metaphoric moments” which “often support but occasionally undermine the utterances of the speaking characters.”

Aesthetically, the re-enactments interrupt the clean mise-en-scène and constructed objectiveness of the interviews. They focus on distinctive memorable, “sticky” aspects within the verbal account. The superficiality of these re-enactments signals also that the testimony might be unreliable, pointing to the “elasticity” of memory and remembering. Highly aware of linguistic structures and visual vocabulary of memory narration, testimony is

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135 In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes describes the “punctum” as an aspect that jumps out at the viewer within the study (“studium”) of a photograph. Building on Barthes’s idea, Mulvey proposes that delayed cinema and interactive spectatorship enable a cinematic punctum, which belongs to viewer. Usually concealed by the film’s movement, by “delaying the image, returning to and repeating certain moments,” the spectator creates a “pensive’ spectatorship” which can reflect on the nature and epistemological claims of cinema, on time and death. Mulvey, *Death 24x*, p. 187

136 Bruzzi distinguishes between three stages: the act or action; the enactment (an initial documentary representation in, for instance, the form of an interview or an archival fragment); and its subsequent re-enactment, involving a performative rendition if not always a dramatization of the enacted event.


138 Bruzzi, ‘Restaging History’. Compare Orgeron: “Morris’s insistence on ... creating reproductions of the real in order to point out the degree to which we rely upon the fictional, suggest that remembering is, indeed, a process of re-creation” Orgeron and Orgeron, ‘Megatronic Memories’, p. 251.
“Morris’s perpetual subject”, and as he examines people through language, when we watch his films, “we become witnesses to the process of witnessing.”

Morris privileges “the performativity and temporality of speaking, questioning, writing, witnessing,” as Laura Parks writes about Citizenfour (Laura Poitras, 2014); in both films, the express desire is to turn abstract notions – such as the processes of memory, encoded metadata, or the NSA’s mass surveillance programme – into the story.

While re-enactments are often defined by their emotional and engaging pull, the richly stylised re-stagings of the photographs in SOP rather seek to disengage the audience from their initial affective reactions. Their beautification has been reproached for their “gratuitous” nature, for blurring the emotional impact and thus interfering with a more straightforward identification with the victims’ pain. Therefore, to determine the function of the re-enactments in SOP, it will be helpful to look at some of the scenes in detail.

In one re-enactment, Morris “spectralizes” the agents, described as intangible “ghosts” by the interviewees, of “Other Government Agencies (OGA),” who did the “real” interrogation and torture work and who were never prosecuted, whether in public or in the courtroom. The OGA scene offers an example of Morris’s argument that re-enactments can help to “burrow underneath the

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139 Orgeron and Orgeron, ‘Megatronic Memories’, p. 238.
140 Lisa Parks, ‘Cover Your webcam: Unencrypting Laura Poitras’s Citizenfour’, Film Quarterly, 68 (2015), pp. 11-16 (p. 14). Poitras and Snowden want to turn the NSA’s mass surveillance program into the story – but arguably fail at least in part, as Snowden and whistleblowing remain the main story.
141 Leimbacher, ‘Facetime’.
surface of reality in an attempt to uncover some hidden truth”.

There are no images of these agents, yet they were clearly there. These phantom figures are made visible as transparent superimpositions. [image 4.8, p. 302] Rather than mimetic realism, these recreations strive for a conceptual and emotional approach to the feelings and memories that are described. The impact of such spooky sequences is greatly enhanced by Philip Glass’s musical score, which cues the mood of viewing into eerie territory.

In another example, writing to her partner, Harman describes a situation she witnessed of a 16-year old prisoner trying to fend off an ant attack. The screen is plunged in (the cell’s) darkness, then a small circle of illumination, like Harman’s flashlight, glides the pages of letter, over images of sandals smacking [image 4.9, p. 302], cut to frantic movements of limbs to wipe off of the ants, and in particular, again and again, seemingly giant ants, in close-up, crawling over the prisoner’s skin. Their exaggerated size and scale of the close-up calls attention to the size of the screen, the image, and aspect ratio and thus, again, of the frame of the images.

The scene is accompanied by an auditive close-

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143 Harman’s letter reads: “the lights went out in the prison. So here we are in the dark. (dark screen). I hear missus, missus. I go downstairs and flash my light on a 16-year old sitting down smacking ants. Now these ants are Iraqi ants. Large. So large they could carry the family dog while giving you the finger. All the ants in the prison came to this one boy’s cell and decided to take over. All I could do was spray Lysol. The ants laughed at me and kept going. So here we were in the dark with one small flashlight, beating ants with their shoes”
up, the haunting sound of smacking at the ants, clearly rendered¹⁴⁵ and exaggerated in volume.

While not all re-enactments are beautiful, they are all clearly artificial – featuring upside-down moments, overexposure, superimpositions and the like. Their aesthetics shock; they can feel irritating, repellent, even offensive, precisely because there is a historical lineage to the collision of beauty and horror. Their stylization thus also comments on the content. In one scene, an interviewee recounts that a “dog-and-pony-show” was put on when inspectors had been announced to visit the facilities; now, the re-enactments ironically create an artificial “show” to the movie audience, demonstrating that it is impossible to watch such images without engaging with the question of possible complicity.

A return to the distinctive qualities of still and moving images helps to determine the use of re-enactment. The very stillness of a photograph allows for a more distanced level of contemplation, while “moving images have the ability to move” the viewer.¹⁴⁶ While not as detached as still image, the re-enactments in SOP suggest and allow contemplation; there is relatively little narrative movement. These re-enactments seem, then, to offer a great metaphor for the workings of our brain when we are told a story – a memory – and visualize images to what we are being told – illustrating the inherent

¹⁴⁵ Chion defines as “rendered sound” when in post-production, the type of sound added to the image leads to a re-association. Sometimes this happens out of necessity (the sound of a head/watermelon being crushed), sometimes in the interest of making a sound appear more “real” or of conveying sensations or feelings in auditory terms (the sounds accompanying a fall). Michel Chion, Film, a Sound Art (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p. 11.

¹⁴⁶ Bruzzi, ‘Restaging History’.
doubleness or fracturing that always already exists between our own initial perception or memories and other people’s. A re-enactment, at least of this kind, is perhaps a better metaphor for (narrated) memory than Sontag’s claim that we remember in images, that memory “freeze-frames” moments into (single) images. As with memory’s plasticity, there is a sense of déjà-vu, of the already known in the reference to the image, while the narrative aspect, or the fictional part acknowledges the selective and subjective aspect and the present moment of remembering.

SOP is criticized for its focus on American soldiers, a space devoted to the perpetrators of violence, considered in exclusion of the unvoiced suffering of their victims. Several critics argue that the statements of the grunts, absent a qualifying narrative voice, result to be exemplary cases of confessions that function as excuse. Certainly Morris listens seriously to the soldiers’

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147 Sontag, Regarding the Pain, p. 19.
148 This focus is also criticised in the spate of recent Iraq war films which return to a version of what Thomas Schatz called “Hollywood’s military Ur-narrative” in the form of a “New American Militarism”, Westwell, ‘In Country’. I understand the resentment of the depiction of American soldiers as victims and the lack of more historical context, which unfortunately often collapses with a rejection of a focus on perpetrators per se. For instance, Westwell pace Žižek: “the focus on the perpetrator’s traumatic experience enables us to obliterate the entire ethico-political background of the conflict. … [it] enables a redemptive narrative a therapeutic healing.” Westwell, ‘Mapping Contemporary Cinema’ (2011) <http://www.mcc.sllf.qmul.ac.uk/?p=446> (accessed 9 March 2015).
149 The grunts tell an apologetic narrative, in which they are the pawns, sacrificed while those truly responsible go free. “By merely amplifying, exaggerating or aestheticizing [and not mocking, or undermining as in some of Morris’s earlier films] the positions expressed in the testimony become statements that “have the effect not of confessions but of excuses.” Leimbacher, ‘Facetime’.
justifications and self-exonerations and asks his audience to do the same. The marginalization or absence of representations of this suffering in mainstream American cinema is deplorable and justifiably criticized. Nevertheless, attention to one side is not by definition mutually exclusive with empathy for the other side. The re-negotiation of hegemonic images and narratives is at least as politically relevant as recovering space for the victims and as interesting as generating new and other images.\(^{151}\)

While the military personnel are given screen space and time to tell their part in the story, this does not automatically result in their favour. Some of them self-incriminate and attempt to dissociate themselves emotionally from their own responsibility; in so doing, they reveal a lack of perspective, a distinct and rather shocking lack of self-awareness and empathy. They are clearly not members of the intelligence community and are struggling to comprehend what is happening to them. Their limited display of moral and intellectual capacity is an important argument to indict a chain of command that charged these soldiers with tasks that they were not trained and qualified for, while defending such tasks as critically important in the public debate. In difference to his previous films, Morris does not focus on one guilty individual here, which suggests that he sees systemic guilt or the implication of the chain of command. Having worked as a Private Investigator in a previous life, Morris acts again as detective in SOP, juxtaposing pictures taken from several cameras and

\(^{151}\) Moreover, one might argue that true healing requires space for the perspectives of both perpetrators and survivors, that testifying as the only way by which perpetrators can regain their own humanity. Giving voice also to the perpetrators is a necessary part of asking for accountability, of countering denial and amnesia.
thus reversing the media’s selective editing process, and mining the photographs’ digital footprint to reconstruct the timeline.

A clear counter-weight to the idea that proximity to the soldiers results in “imposed” identification\(^{152}\) is seen in the re-enactment of torture by waterboarding. As with the visualization of metadata, the sequence is also an example of how the film strives to find a format to render visible a certain type of experience, by recreating

a point of view that by definition never existed. Waterboarding requires placing a bag or hood over the victim’s head, thus obscuring his or her vision of the descending water. Yet this is the same obscured perspective SOP adopts during its waterboarding scene. The scene literalizes a purely empathic point of view to demonstrate what we imagine or what we think we can surmise about one particular torture the U.S. military inflicts on its detainees.\(^{153}\)

During the testimonies, the Interrotron disrupts the possibility of a distancing, objectifying gaze. The viewers’ “enforced proximity”\(^{154}\) to the interviewees disables the “rotten apples” narrative, and creates a human picture of the soldiers. This common humanity might feel uncomfortable, even offensive. Nichols’s scathing open letter to Morris must be read in this context. Nichols writes of his “revulsion” at Morris’s decision to, as he perceives it, decontextualize and fetishize the documentary’s “terrible images,”\(^{155}\) this revulsion is better understood not as a failure of the film but as one logical – and anticipated – reaction to the unavoidable complicity of watching.

\(^{152}\) Quoted in Bruzzi, ‘Restaging History’.

\(^{153}\) Benson-Allott, ‘Mediating Torture’, p. 43.

\(^{154}\) Bruzzi, ‘Restaging History’.

\(^{155}\) Nichols, ‘Feelings of revulsion’.
Initially we study the soldiers present in the images, and those put on trial, but increasingly the film’s subject matter expands to include the act of (watching the) watching, a self-reflexivity of the film that is in turn thrown back at the viewer. Thus, along with voices, SOP multiplies and interrogates the layered gazes that spread from the event. At several moments in the film, interviewees describe and comment directly on the images from Abu Ghraib. There is then the gaze of the soldiers looking at the pictures in hindsight, of Morris and his cameras, of the investigators looking at the images as evidence; as discussed above, the implied gaze of the Abu Ghraib pictures, which reflects or represents “the context of its production and a very specific embodied gaze of a photographer;”\textsuperscript{156} via the Interrotron, there is the gaze of the soldiers looking at Morris and at us, the audience, who are looking back.

Watching the images again and again in the attempt to wrestle meaning from them is an activity shared between audience, Morris and the soldiers, linking us to them. It also makes clear who is involved in constructing (meaning out of) the film. The spectator is watching characters who are themselves assiduously watching, contemplating the images, and performing this watching, conscious that they will be or are being observed.\textsuperscript{157} The film thus folds its audience into the concentric circles of rippling gazes from the event Abu Ghraib. The


\textsuperscript{157} Leimbacher considered this consciousness as “ever greater posturing,” encouraged by the Interrotron which strikes me as a rather ill-disposed and foreclosed conclusion. Leimbacher, ‘Facetime’.

More nuanced, Williams argues in reference to Morris’s \textit{Thin Blue Line} that the film is “is acutely aware that the individuals whose lives are caught up in events are not so much self-coherent and consistent identities as they are actors in competing narratives. Williams, ‘Mirrors without Memories’, p. 3.
“general confusion as to who is acting and who is watching,” as well as who is performing and for whom, makes viewers “part of the invading army.”\textsuperscript{158} The spectator is included in what Williams referred to as the “cluster fuck”\textsuperscript{159} of accountability, responsibility, and blame.

Through reframing and metadata analysis, it is possible to determine who else was present at the scene, how some soldiers were caught unaware in the images, taking pictures themselves, often later cropped from the frame. SOP demonstrates that there is overlap as well as disconnection between the photographers, those present in the images, and the actual abusers. In many of these images, the guards made their prisoners perform; sometimes they were also themselves performing, and their voluntary performing for and to the camera marks a crucial difference between prisoners and guards, but also complicates the question of objectification.

Complex lighting and make-up, and an unnaturally bland background, artificial in its unobtrusiveness are used in all interviews. Within this highly controlled environment, the focus is entirely on the interviewees, what they say as well as their manner of speaking and mimetic behaviour. Both this interview setting and the dreamy re-enactments create a contemplative space, an effect enhanced by the fact that we generally do not hear the questions asked, while being involved in an intimate dialogue. In other words, as the question of

\textsuperscript{158} Sarah Boxer in Kaplan, Trauma Culture, p. 99. Writing about this confusion in the context of journalism and Iraq war, Kaplan continues: “Are the television cameras witnesses to war, or are they part of the weaponry? Or both?”.

\textsuperscript{159} Andrews, ‘Reframing Standard Operating Procedure’; Williams, ‘Cluster Fuck’. Williams defines cluster fuck as a “hopeless entanglement of rudderless forces, caused by stupidity and/or ineptitude”.

agency is a key topic both within the film and within the making of the film, we may ask not only how much agency, responsibility, and knowledge did the films’ subjects have of the torture, but also, how much agency does Morris grant his subjects in the making of the film\(^{160}\) – and finally, how much agency does he grant the audience? Jump cuts within the interviews – the digital repositioning of people within the frame so the talking heads appear to “jump” from the right to the left side and reverse – acknowledge the presence of the filmmaker and his camera; they also disrupt any tendency to imagine the interviewees talking “naturally” and serve as a reminder of authorial mediation.

Often, the film lingers on a scene, long past the moments when it feels comfortable. Morris has made it one of the trademarks of his style to stay with the interviewee after they stopped speaking, with an absolute focus on the face, and it is here that we often find moments of facial and gestural revelation.\(^{161}\) These moments where “nothing happens,” are usually cut in the editing process, akin to those stories and images that are left out of the public discourse and perception.

\(^{160}\) Compare the completely oppositional reading by Stjepan Mestrovic who diagnoses “postemotional sadism” in the film, as participants did not have input or control over editing and inclusion (a preposterous claim; as evidence of sadism, most films and filmmakers, would be found guilty of that condition). He accuses the film(maker) of a lack of empathy, even a secondary victimization of the soldiers, emphasizing correctly that the torture and abuse had been orchestrated by and travelled down the chain of command, but eliding the question of responsibility of the soldiers, scapegoats or not. Stjepan Mestrovic, ‘Documenting the Documentaries on Abu Ghraib: Facts versus Distortion’, in Screening Torture: Media Representations of State Terror and Political Domination, ed. by Flynn, Michael and Salek, Fabiola F. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), pp. 273-91.

\(^{161}\) Interesting here is also Morris’s so-called 20-minute rule, “if you let people talk for 20 minutes without interrupting them, they will start spilling the beans whether they want to or not.” Paraphrased by Ebert, ‘Megatron.’
Writing about Morris’s seminal *Thin Blue Line*, Williams suggests that “the loss of faith in the objectivity of the image” is so hurtful because we once placed so much faith in it.\(^{162}\) *Blue Line* was interpreted as a prime example of the postmodern documentary.\(^{163}\) Nevertheless, the film, which led to the exoneration of a wrongful conviction and thus had a direct impact on reality, had a resolution and offered what seems like a piece of absolute truth. Two decades later, in *SOP*, the question is rather to insist on the existence of truth—not in absolute terms, but truth nonetheless.

By reframing the images and by offering additional contextual information, *SOP* does formally what it asks its viewers to do, namely to expand their view on the events in which the images originated. The film demonstrates how a shifted visual angle or additional information can completely change the narrative. The layered interplay of media creates the polyphonic, relative truth of *SOP* for the acknowledgment of the limits inherent in any representation and the performative construction of truth does not suggest that all re-framings are equally valid. Not coincidentally, *SOP* begins with Rumsfeld’s visit to Abu Ghraib. The exclusion of such information in the dominant public narrative and the responsibility of the chain of command are explored in depth in the later *Unknown*. Through the use of “strategies of fiction,” Morris finds “relative

\(^{162}\) Williams, ‘Mirrors without Memories’, p. 10.
\(^{163}\) According to Williams, *Blue Line* is “a prime example of [a self-reflexive] postmodern documentary approach to the trauma of an inaccessible past.” The film stages competing narratives, the director “intervene[s] in the construction of truths whose totality is ultimately unfathomable.” Williams, ‘Mirrors without Memories’, p. 14.
truths," as Linda Williams writes about *Blue Line*. This estimate fits even more for *SOP*. It is important to emphasise that these emerging truths are *relative* – which distinguishes them from the absolute truth of images postulated by the defence in the Rodney King trial.

The result is a performative documentary. As defined by Bruzzi, performative tactics in nonfiction cinema acknowledge the “inevitable intrusion” of the filmmakers – as well as the anticipated, future audience and their role in the construction of historical narratives –, and present an “alternative realness” and “alternative honesty." *SOP*’s performative strategies remind viewers of their own role in the construction of historical narratives, and of the fact that all attempts to recover past events (photography, narration or re-enactment) are mediated.

**Redacted: Simulating the Real?**

Where the “crisis of vision” in *Zero* can be read in the tradition of the puzzle film, an illustration of Murray Pomerance’s characterization of contemporary cinema as “indicative,” obsessed with signs and counting, in *SOP*, the focus on digitality acknowledges an “anxiety about the reliability of computer data” and its impact on our perception and belief in visual evidence. This

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164 Quoted in Chaudhuri, ‘Documenting The Dark Side’.
165 Bruzzi, New Documentary, p. 155.
166 Pomerance suggests that what Bordwell had called “intensified continuity” had intensified “indicativeness,” an obsession with keeping score, which assigns to the spectator the task of a detective, which he contrasts with a “subjunctive,” more subjective mode of filmmaking. Pomerance, ‘Talking Space’; Bordwell, ‘Intensified Continuity’.
167 Benson-Allott, ‘Mediating Torture’, p. 43.
contemporary “crisis of vision” as conveyor of historical truth as well as the “creation through mediation” of atrocity is also explored in *Redacted* (Brian de Palma, 2007). *Redacted* is centred on a small group of American soldiers stationed at a checkpoint in Iraq, narrating various events leading up to the rape of a young girl and the subsequent murder of her and her family, as well as the reactions of media, army, terrorists and soldiers that followed.\(^{168}\) As in *SOP*, *Redacted* engages with epistemological questions both on the level of content and form. The film does not overcome so much as problematize its representational difficulties through its form, showcasing how today’s media landscape filters what we know and believe, the struggle over the meaning of concrete, evidentiary images (and their absence); its central claim is the impossibility of authentic (visual) representation.\(^{169}\)

*Redacted*, like *SOP*, works against the “naturalization” of code. The film methodically evokes our war film “genre memory”\(^ {170}\) only to disrupt and subvert these codes. The Iraq war in particular has been discussed in terms of its disembodied technological and censored images, which established “an important precedent” in the sanitizing and censoring of the images of

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\(^{168}\) Parts of the plot follow a seemingly causal link: A group soldiers manning a checkpoint open fire at a speeding car, killing a pregnant woman. Perhaps in retribution, their sergeant is killed by an IUD. In a night-time raid, the soldiers rape a teenage girl and murder the girl and her family.

\(^{169}\) Cf. Gooch, ‘Beyond Panopticism’.

\(^{170}\) Originally set forth by Bakhtin, the concept of “genre memory” defines genre as an “organ of memory”, a way of seeing the world that carries experience from one generation to another. “War films and war photography provide a particularly vivid example of the way the past can shape new potentials in the present.” Burgoyne and Rositzka, ‘Goya on his Shoulder’. 
contemporary warfare.” This fog of absent and redacted media war coverage coincided with a barrage – or “clutter” – of embedded media reporting. The first Gulf War created “the fantasy of a war made bloodless through scientific and technological expertise,” and films on that war reframed the traditional war film’s tendency towards spectacle. These wars and their films were discussed as instigators of a different kind of visual aesthetics.

In *Redacted*, the cinematic dispositif becomes more than a mode representation. As “new” wars are fought with new media, the films about these wars represent these shifts in warfare through approximating their technology. In particular, these fiction films about the war in Iraq have picked up the aesthetics of those pictures of war that were circulated online, and which promised to show what is missing in the TV news, what the military attempted to control in order to establish a “presentable” image of war. These contemporary war films “double as media studies, dealing with ‘a regime change in media as well as military control,’ a shift to a computerized system of ‘total visual transcription’.” From the beginning, *Redacted* establishes itself as a meta-commentary on the kind of Iraq war films which “displace the failed

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171 Meek, *Trauma and Media*, p. 193.
172 Aksoy and Robins, ‘Exterminating Angels’, pp. 204-205. This implies of course the specific angle perspective, the notion of a hypermediated reality that disappears into simulation has always been limited to that of a privileged, digitally connected audience.
173 For instance, Burgoyne looks at the correspondences between ‘decorporealized’ warfare and a ‘battle of the screens.’ Modern wars of resistance and (counter-)insurgency are expressed through “new imagery”, which contrasts the suicide bomber who uses his body as a weapon, with the armoured or “bodiless body” of external targeting. Burgoyne, ‘Embodiment in the War Film’, p. 11. “Battle fatigue has grown stylistic” argues Garrett Stewart who considers this “digital fatigue” the demise of the war film genre. Stewart, ‘Digital Fatigue’, p. 47.
174 White, ‘Heaven Knows We’re Digital Now’, p. 5.
resolutions of plot onto an electronic mediation." As a result, in these films, the genre is crashing "from electronic overload at the plot level itself." 175

A media-collage, Redacted assembles a video diary being made by one soldier who hopes to get into film school; a documentary made by French film-makers; CCTV footage; Arab Television; various blogs; footage of soldiers being killed uploaded on sinister websites. All of these types of images are aesthetic reconstructions, "source material" specifically created for the film, based on material that is available online. Thus, in contrast to the scenes that Morris's film re-enacts, de Palma "has" original images – which he could not use (should he have wanted to) for legal and copyright reasons. 176 An epigraph explains that the film "visually documents imagined events." 177 This epigraph is then visually redacted, beginning with the blotting out of the words fictional, then erasing more words in increasing pace until only eight letters remain and rearrange themselves to form the title. As in previous analyses, the aesthetics of the title sequence formally announce the film's foremost preoccupation.

Redacted makes unmistakably clear how much our expectations of, associations with and trust in images changes with the medium in which they are

175 Stewart, ‘Digital Fatigue’, p. 47.
176 Pisters, ‘Logistics of Perception 2.0’. Lübecker takes legitimate issue with de Palma’s claim that he was “only collecting” the images. Nikolaj Lübecker, Feel-Bad Film (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015).
177 The entire epigraph reads: “This film is entirely fictional, inspired by an incident widely reported to have occurred in Iraq. While some of the events depicted here may resemble those of the reported incident, the characters are entirely fictional, and their words and actions should not be confused with those of real persons.” De Palma’s strategy was to fictionalize and re-enact existing material that he found online, news stories, documentaries, pictures, blogs, video diaries of soldiers posted on YouTube. Pisters, ‘Logistics of Perception 2.0’.
transmitted. The idiosyncrasies of different media, genres and styles become apparent as the aesthetic quality of the images, the tone and focus of the narratives shift with each format, and the perspectives are so vastly different that they might appear like different stories altogether: amateur documentary, a plush French TV documentary, U.S. and Arabic news channels, videos and websites of terrorist organizations, surveillance footage, online testimonials and video diaries. This “hypermediation” is a form of representation that draws constant attention to itself, making its presence felt. There is no way of mistaking these images for authentic footage, even though Redacted uses the same media forms, and constantly evokes the aesthetic codes of each format. On the level of content, the film’s performative and self-referential mode of presenting is further exhibited in the typecast figures of the squad, the almost mocking evocation of traditional war film motifs, such as “pathos scenes,” or what seems a wildly inappropriate soundtrack to the faux French television docudrama and its images of an Iraqi sundown in soft sepia tones. As a result, all forms of genre are “crashing” in Redacted.

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179 These stock figures are: the educated family man who signs up because he believes, two “white trash” figures (one cruel and one stupid), an immigrant, an African-American sergeant, and the intellectual gay.

180 Cultural historian Aby Warburg coined the “pathos formulas,” as indexing universal images of emotional expression and gesture that form a consistent language of art, such as for instance male bonding, “young men in war.” Agamben defines the formula as the “indissoluble intertwining of an emotional charge and an iconographic formula in which it is impossible to distinguish between form and content,” quoted in Burgoyne and Rositzka, ‘Goya on his Shoulder’.
Exaggeratedly artificial, these images deconstruct techniques to establish authenticity and authentication, such as “accidental witnessing” often attributed to amateur style, to the soldier-as-cameraman, the honesty and intimacy associated with direct address, or the embodied perception of the filming body. Like the deliberate mess that is made of the staging, De Palma’s conscious decision to use prohibitively bad amateur acting undermines these promises of authenticity and the sometimes cringe-worthy amateurism inhibits spectatorial immersion. On the other hand, from the perspective of the amateur actors, one might read this acting as camp – a failed seriousness – which results in what Roger Ebert described as a clash of two forms of “real:” it is so fake it feels real, these are ‘real’ people acting badly.

Redacted is a chaotic viewing experience of seemingly haphazard, “cobbled together” images, seemingly devoid of any overarching point of view, an montage of types of images, woven together as an onslaught of screens, none of which are given “primary” status: surveillance videos and news reports are stitched together with other screens and displays, without providing a reading hierarchy: images from infrared and helmet cameras, from handheld digital video camera, laptop video, cell phone cameras, iChat, new report camera, and

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181 Bruzzi, New Documentary, p. 2.
182 In his nuanced analysis of direct address in fiction film, Tom Brown suggests among the most common effects a sense of intimacy, agency, honesty (“often used ironically”) as well as superior epistemic position of the protagonist, a sense of present-ness; in fiction film, direct address is therefore inherently reflexive. Tom Brown, Breaking the Fourth Wall: Direct Address in the Cinema (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp. 14-16.
183 Cf. Bégien, ‘Ceci est mon image’.
184 Roger Ebert describes how the actor’s “edge of inauthentic performance paradoxically increase the effect. Moments seem more real because they are not acted flawlessly.” Quoted in Lübecker, Feel-bad, p. 50.
YouTube videos. These contemporary technologies are evoked to signal our “habituated faith in the filmic testimonial.” The film body thus becomes a battlefield in the war of images.

At work in Redacted, then, is an engagement with the discourse on the objectivity of the machine. Redacted seems to position all media material as corrupted (moving beyond SOP, which merely demonstrated limitations); at the same time, the film expresses this critique through the very same audiovisual means. Its texture and cinematic body resembles precisely the endless remediation in an image culture of depthless simulacra, the hypervirtuality even of and in war, Guy Debord’s society of spectacle, which leaves “no apparent means of escape” and struggles to find “a position from which to assess and criticise a system that cannibalises and integrates everything, including the critical and subversive discourses and modes of expression that could threaten it.” In performing these postmodern gestures of layering various texts, voices, media formats, versions of the same story, Redacted disengages its aesthetic strategies from the terrain of certainty. If every gesture is a priori corrupted, all stories unreliable, all aesthetic and political strategies predictable and no image truthful, how can we still tell stories, take a position or believe in

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185 LaRocca, ‘Introduction’, p. 44.
186 Lübecker argues against reading the film, with Boris Groys, as avant-garde, attacking the image itself, on the grounds that Redacted’s affective dimension precludes “the distance that Groys (like Rancière) clearly see ... as precondition for critique.” Lübecker, Feel-bad, p. 53.
187 The first words of Private Salazar’s video diary, at the beginning of the film, address the shortcomings of – his and all – film: he cannot convey the heat and smell of the place, the affective dimension.
something? The film acknowledges this dilemma but does not capitulate in relativism. Even Debord’s spectacle needs curating, and in *Redacted* the presence of a narrative agency is felt throughout, which selects, orders and flags images as biased, constructed, and perspectival — and which simultaneously insists on its own capacity to provide such judgment. This narrative agency manifests palpable outrage, disdain for the excuses that are made, and also ventures a clear accusation towards the images themselves, an icy comment on the idea of the “disappearance” of reality.

In *Redacted*, there seems to be no reality left to be punctured by extradiegetic material; to distinguish between intra- and meta-diegetic levels, of a story-within-a-story, does no longer make sense without a primal reference point. The images just seem to metastasize like a fast-growing cancer, layering screens-within-screens – the rape and murder are caught on surveillance camera, replicated on a computer screen, projected onto our screens. The hypervisibility of these replications does not lead to more clarity; *Redacted* exposes the search for knowledge through vision as futile. References to factual torture, including to Abu Ghraib, remain verbal.\(^{190}\) Especially in comparison to the crass, fictional video images of private Salazaar’s beheading, the rape scene, which is based on factual events, is not visually graphic. Filmed in a continuous take in night-vision, it is the disturbing soundscape of the scene which conveys an authentic mode of anxiety. While the narrative is about the

\(^{190}\) One of the rapists and killers complains, “I’m just one of those bad apples now”; the father of one soldier tries to stop him from disclosing: “We don’t need another Abu Ghraib.” Salazaar is beheaded, and his body is said to “show signs of torture.”
hidden absence of images of Iraqi victims, the film’s images of the film show American victims – for instance, at the beginning of the film, we see how an explosion kills an American sergeant\textsuperscript{191} – but these images are remediated to emptiness.

Does \textit{Redacted} offer a critique of postmodernism and infinite deconstructions, or “only” a critique of media coverage? While the film highlights the killing of Iraqi civilians as one of the U.S. media’s key elisions in its war coverage, its formal characteristics can be seen as perpetuating “the passive distant gazes which bring the spectator ‘into the guilt zone.”\textsuperscript{192} Yet such a reading is based on the problematic assumption of watching as passive activity, which the film itself criticises when a character says: “Just because you’re watching doesn’t mean you’re not part of it. That’s what people do, they just watch.”\textsuperscript{193}

For despite its postmodern aesthetics, \textit{Redacted} insists on the existence of a real. Ultimately, all the layers of the film lead to the crime at its core, the rape and murder of an Iraqi girl, the murder of her family. The film ends on a sequence titled \textit{Collateral Damage}, a collage of photographs of maimed and killed bodies. In this sequence, the film switches gear in tone and mode. This

\textsuperscript{191} The attack on the sergeant ostensibly triggers the revenge quest but it is clearly framed as a pretext.
\textsuperscript{192} Mark Straw, ‘The Guilt Zone: Trauma, Masochism and the Ethics of Spectatorship in Brian De Palma’s \textit{Redacted} (2007), \textit{Continuum}, 24 (2010), p. 101. Straw reads \textit{Redacted} as an example of trauma cinema and traumatic male subjectivity, ultimately resulting in unethical spectatorship. It seems to me that Straw exaggerates the potential for identification with the American characters and the inherent fetishization of subject matter by the camera.
\textsuperscript{193} The context for this statement is Private Salazaar’s interview, ostensibly about his trauma of witnessing his sergeant being blown up; yet his self-disgust and Freudian slip in gender pronouns (he cannot forget “her” body burning) convey that he is thinking of his role in the rape and murder.
part of the film seems to be least self-consciously performative and artificial. It is a two-minute montage, announced by a title card as “actual photos from the Iraq war,” following on a teary faux confession of a grunt in reality TV style. The montage shows horrific images of Iraqi casualties, mostly children. Black bars over these victims’ eyes recall the “redactions” at the film’s beginning, the visual conceit of blanking out passages in army reports. “To redact” is a technical euphemism meaning to censor or to edit; it refers to the deletions made to an official document before its public release. The device heightens the effect of the last image of a dead girl, whose eyes are not blackened. This is a staged photograph depicting the girl who was killed in the real incident. The film lingers on this photograph. Its presence within a film that largely consisted of a hyperventilating onslaught of images introduces a “moment of stillness.”

The combination of the title card announcing “real images,” a slowly progressing montage of gruesome graphic images, accompanied by the sound from Tosca, and this final image result in what LaRocca described as an intentional “cognitive dissonance.” In this sequence of images that claim or appear to be (all) real, two are not, including the last image, which shows a wax doll carefully made to look like the actress who depicts the raped girl. Nikolaj Lübecker takes issue with precisely this strategy, arguing that this epistemological uncertainty, paired with the emotional appeal of the preceding images, resonates as too manipulative, and creates an “epistemological feel-

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194 Mulvey, Death 24x, p. 186.
bad.” However, even though the staged images’ contextual claim to authenticity is indeed problematic, the last image did become “evidence of a new reality” when the Iraqi actress was persecuted because she posed for that image.  

This final photograph can be read as an example for the images that may appear – or the context of these images – as a result of the need for “new frameworks for representing new existential realities.” In her analysis of Redacted, Pisters finds that the notion of a “spectacularisation” of war, its “aesthetics of disappearance” maintains critical validity but should be revised to “become part of a radically changed logistics of perception that includes many more types of images.” Perhaps the hypermediated images of Redacted and other Iraq War films are the new real, or rather, they are one new real type of image.

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196 Lübecker, *Feel-bad*, p. 50. Lübecker comes to this film from a different angle, examining its affective impact on the spectator and questioning whether de Palma’s provocation goes too far, by violating an essential distinction of what is “allowed” inside and outside the movie theatre/stage/art.

197 “The photograph began as a fictionalized rendering of a real event. The resulting image of Zahra, an Iraqi actress, playing the role of this young girl … the response to Zahra’s portrayal – the death threats form family members; the criticism from friends and neighbors, who considered her participation in the film to be pornography. The photograph was completely recontextualized by these accusations. It became evidence of a new reality.” Taryn Simon and Brian de Palma, ‘Blow Up: Taryn Simon & Brian De Palma in Conversation’, *Artforum* (1 June 2012).


199 Pisters, ‘Logistics of Perception 2.0’, p. 237. Pisters expands and adapts Virilio’s and Baudrillard’s concepts to the modern media environment, where images of chaos and confusion reflect the prevalent aesthetics of remediated modern warfare.

200 Other types include, perhaps, Farocki’s “operational images” mentioned in the previous chapter.
image 4.1 – 4.3: Abu Ghraib Archive

images 4.4-4.9: Standard Operating Procedure

image 4.10. Rendition
The hypothesis that follows is that it is not reality but a mode of realist style that is exposed as failing, not the events that are unreal or unrepresentable, but they are “unrepresentable in the [traditional] realist mode.” On the other hand, this claim relies on a definition of realism that assumes a direct evidential relationship between viewers and the world; modes of realism which political modernism and postmodernism have subjected to intense questioning.

As the use of terminology can be confusing, one must distinguish between at least three forms commonly described as cinematic realism: the narrative realism of Hollywood cinema; historical Italian neorealism and waves of (often national) cinemas that have been called (neo-)neorealist; and realism as ontological category – the indexical trace of reality captured on celluloid – that is precisely the source of power for much documentary: because the images captured are real, and because they affect us differently if we know they are real, the realism in the “standard version” of documentary is the basis for any quest for truth and social justice through documentary film.

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201 Hayden White quoted in Walker, Trauma cinema, p. 21. This might account for the difference to de Palma’s earlier Casualties of War, about a similar war crime, which was told in an aesthetically more conventional way, channelled spectatorial allegiance via the character of Michael J. Fox, and sketched the perpetrators to varying degrees, with depth and complexity.

202 Corner, ‘Documenting the political’, p. 126. A historical and transnational look shows that resemblance can be a legitimate epistemological strategy.


204 This leads to the thorny question whether “the invocation of reality destabilizes or rather “more firmly install[s]” reality: “Why pick up a tool used as much for social control as for radical change?” Rabinowitz in Corner, Theorising Media, p. 13; Cf. Gaines, ‘Political Mimesis’.
New Realism in Chilean Cinema

Another approach is to look not only at the type of image but at the historical moment and context in which they appear. *Redacted*’s claim to the impossibility of authentic representation circles around a central traumatic lack of evidence for the atrocity at its core, but the film also offers final images that seem to belong to a different category of authenticity. The second part of this chapter moves from films that explore the truth of contemporary images from a technological angle towards films that, faced with a similar set of questions, choose different approaches to create conditions of belief in the historical truth of their cinematic worlds. Instead of an aesthetic look that replicates the rhetoric it criticizes, as in *Redacted*, or that fractures the images and voices, staging an interplay of devices to let a polyphonic truth emerge, as in *SOP*, the films examined in the second part of this chapter activate the specific aesthetic (and, arguably, ethical\(^\text{205}\)) trend of neorealism.

As if incarnating Benjamin’s angel of history, these films turn to the past (in subject matter, and in critical attention to preceding trends of cinema theory and history) while moving forwards: by returning to the aesthetics of neorealism, they also evoke also that movements’ political-ethical agenda, and rework these aesthetics to speak to the present moment.

Cinema critic A. O. Scott suggests looking at the “remarkably mobile and adaptable” realist impulse “less as a style or genre than as an ethic that finds

\(^{205}\) Bazin framed neorealist aesthetics also in moral terms. In accordance with my project, I will continue to say “political” in the following discussion where often “ethical” or “moral” could also fit.
expression in various places at critical times.” Following this idea of realism as an ethic that comes in waves across the globe, in various places at critical times, the question emerges, *Why realism here, and why now?* Following Bazin and the notion of a (non-causal) relation and influence between a particular historical instance and a particular aesthetics, the contemporary renewal of realism is also again the product of a distinct cultural moment.

Research on realist trends in (trans)national cinemas suggest that the tendency is more pronounced in non-Hollywood productions. Lucia Nagib points to a close relation between the realist mode and new cinema movements in the “cyclical re-emergence of realist approaches to cinema around the world,” and Elsaesser even distinguishes “world cinema” “of all times by its higher degree of realism, as opposed to Hollywood.” Thus, the Chilean films examined here can be read as part of what has been discussed under this heading of “realist trends in contemporary world cinema.” Certain socio-cultural and industrial parameters that favour realist aesthetics are specific to

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206 Scott enumerates “Bengal in the ’50s and early ’60s ... Brazil in the ’60s, Senegal in the ’70s and ’80s and Iran in the ’90s ... recent waves of post-Soviet cinema from Romania to Kazakhstan” and at the fringes of U.S. independent cinema. A.O. Scott, ‘Neo-Neo Realism’, *The New York Times Online* (17 March 2009).


208 Quoted in Nagib and Mello, *Realism*, p. xiv. If this “new realism”, as Elsaesser argues, is response to the dilemmas of constructivism, he does not explain why these dilemmas would affect “world cinema” in particular. The term itself is obviously problematic. If world cinema is defined as non-Hollywood cinema, it lumps together a vast array of different films and styles.

the contemporary global cinema landscape: the festival circuit on the production end, the historically grown and a transculturally nourished crossover appeal of realism on the reception end.

But there might also exist particularities to Chilean cinema that invite these aesthetics, such as transnational influences within Latin American cinema. Groundbreaking Latin American films on taboo subjects of respective national pasts have been formative for the aesthetic quest of the Chilean films examined in this section. Especially the Argentine films *La historia oficial* (Luis Puenzo, 1985), and *Garage Olimpo* (Marco Bechis, 1999) come to mind. *Garage Olimpo*, for instance, offers a form of representation that “gives way to representativity,” enabling it to “speak to similar events in other countries.” Its realist strategies included shooting sequentially, and on location and the appearance of relatives of disappeared persons. Ian Christie urges us to be “alert to the transnational potential of film constantly being appropriated for purposes of local self-definition,” as films can “become ‘national’ in the sense of speaking for and to the nation.”

I suggest that both institutional constraints of the current film industry landscape and an engagement with neorealism’s political aspirations play a role

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209 Kaminsky, ‘Marco Bechis’ *Garage Olimpo*’. 
210 Tabanelli, ‘Bechis’s Argentina’, p. 133. 
211 Ian Christie, ‘Where Is National Cinema Today (and Do We Still Need It)?’, *Film History: An International Journal*, 25 (2013), p. 28. The notion of “national cinema” (or worse, “national cinemas”) is of course contentious, and always relational (dependent on who and where the observer is and on the institutions involved. As any general concept, the national can be variously defined in terms of production, reception, cultural discourses, in economic terms, in terms of aesthetic style or content. Andrew Higson, ‘The Concept of National Cinema’, *Screen*, 30 (1989).
in explaining the tendency towards “realism.” Until the recent (moderate) “surge,” the dictatorship past had all but disappeared from Chilean fiction film, while continuing to be dominant in the documentary format. The reasons given for this schism between fiction and documentary range from real and internalized censorship, the historical experience of mediatic betrayal, the (perceived) lack of audience\textsuperscript{212} to the discrepancy in economic risk, restraints in production, distribution, infrastructure and state support. It is necessary to consider such extra-textual influences on the selection process of topics and their stylistic treatment. Antonio Martínez pointedly remarks: “Chilean cinema does not appear when it wants to but whenever it can.”\textsuperscript{213}

The notion of “virtual transnationality”\textsuperscript{214} in spectatorship, of an international cinema marketplace characterized by the “international ownership and circulation of images and sounds”\textsuperscript{215} neglects that it is still only a few who own most of these, and that large parts of the world are not included in this global interconnectedness. Some “national cinemas” participate in this “global economy of images” only insofar as they are permitted to enter the global film festival circuit. Changes in the international festival landscape,\textsuperscript{216} often

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{212} Mouesca and Orellana, \textit{Breve Historia}, p. 214. As mentioned in the Literature Review, there is only a relatively small output of Chilean films distributed to and shown in Chilean cinema. Considering this limited niche, the pressure to choose a “sellable” topic is even higher.
\item \textsuperscript{213} “El cine chileno no aparece cuando quiere, sino cuando puede,” quoted in Mouesca and Orellana, \textit{Breve Historia}, p. 213.
\item \textsuperscript{214} Mouesca and Orellana, \textit{Breve Historia}, p. 25.
\item \textsuperscript{215} Higson, ‘National Cinema’, p. 38.
\item \textsuperscript{216} International festivals increasingly function as producers and as a distribution circuit in their own right, which may help films to gain exposure and potentially (international) distribution. The spread of the festival circuit has coincided with the resurgence, or in some cases emergence, of several small national cinemas. Dina Iordanova in María
\end{enumerate}
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concomitant with changes in national funding policies, might particularly affect
what David Martin-Jones calls small national cinemas. Martin-Jones suggests
that filmmakers in these “small nations” often employ strategies to render their
films globally accessible, deliberately “erasing” the nation from films in order to
appeal to audiences globally and especially at film festivals. The festival
circuit can have an effect of creating films “made to order.” This international
film festival scene offers a space, but also promotes and sustains universalized
ideas of “world cinema” and the national.

Soledad Montañez and David Martin-Jones, ‘Uruguay Disappears: Small Cinemas,
(2013).

217 “Small nations” and its derivatives are evidently problematic terms, and I limit my
usage to where the cited critics employ such terms. Clearly, these processes affect not
only “small” national cinemas or niche cinemas. There is a trend towards transnational
audiences and “changes in the content of Hollywood film toward deculturized,
transnational films,” according to Diana Crane, ‘Cultural Globalization and the
Dominance of the American Film Industry: Cultural Policies, National Film Industries,
might also be a critical tendency to read only films made outside of Hollywood through
the paradigm of the national – a problem which begs for textual analysis as a method.

218 They may also have a negative impact. Montañez and Martin-Jones develop the
notion of “auto-erasure” in Uruguayan cinema, as a small national cinema “without a
readily recognizable national iconography,” or a distinctive “cultural odor.” While the
authors admit that the foreign location shoot is also typical for U.S. cinema, with
Canada doubling for “various places in Europe,” and that cost is “the major motivating
factor,” they conclude that the effect is much the same: the disappearance of the
nation,” p. 49. This conclusion does not respond to the problem of U.S. films and
television filmed elsewhere – surely, the U.S. is not “disappearing”? – nor to the
question of the studio sets, which always replaces “real” with fictional specificity.


220 Villarroel, La voz, pp. 167-8; cf. Peirano, ‘Towards a “cosmopolitan” national film
industry’. The fact that “international co-production can often be seen to erase cultural
specificity” was already noted in 1985 about Last Tango in Paris (Bernardo Bertolucci,
For Chile, Maria Peirano suggests that the influence of international festivals results in a “Chilean-cosmopolitan aesthetic,”\textsuperscript{221} made to appeal to a specific set of transnational film community who share a “global cinephilia.”\textsuperscript{222} While the precise way in which funding procedures influence the type of film proposed and selected for (national or international) funding, is extremely difficult to measure,\textsuperscript{223} what can be empirically demonstrated, is that an internationalized circuit of dissemination has become the established routine in Chile: films are first screened abroad at international festivals and only then (if at all) exhibited and potentially distributed in Chile.\textsuperscript{224}

The solution is to create films that are layered and complex enough to appeal to at least two different constituencies, a transnational audience that shares a particular type of cinéphilia, and the national home audience.\textsuperscript{225} For, notwithstanding the conception of modern nations as “cultural hybrids,” the intuitively logical notion of a national or social imaginary still makes sense;\textsuperscript{226} in the Chilean case at least, the nation does not disappear. While not

\textsuperscript{221} Peirano, ‘Towards a “cosmopolitan” national film industry’.
\textsuperscript{222} Peirano argues that the growing importance of festivals encourages the strategic use of national identity, and the increasing production of a particular type of film, able to adapt to the standards and expectations of the festival and their public.
\textsuperscript{223} It is not clear for instance whether foreign funds and international festivals’ influence is stronger, undue or significantly different than the influence from national types of funding. Deborah Shaw, ‘Transnational Latin American Film and the Languages of Art Cinema’ (Warwick University, 5 March 2014).
\textsuperscript{224} Stock, Framing Latin American Cinema; Peirano, ‘Towards a “cosmopolitan” national film industry’.
\textsuperscript{225} One might argue that such a double or transnational address has also a tradition, albeit for different reasons, in Chilean cinema. Films made in exile as well as the cinema of solidarity and against the dictatorship presumably sought to speak to both their host/financing countries and to native Chileans, for instance \textit{La Spirale} (Armand Mattelart et al, 1976), Missing (Costa-Gavras, 1982), \textit{Der Krieg der Mumien} (Walter Heynowski and Gerhard Scheumann, 1974).
\textsuperscript{226} Canclini, \textit{Culturas híbridas}; Hill \textit{et al}, \textit{World Cinema}. 
homogeneous, such interpretative communities share some common frameworks of jokes, references, stereotypes, “everyday games of hide-and-seek that only ‘natives’ play, unwritten rules of behaviour, jokes understood from half a word, a sense of complicity.”

Poblete’s notion of *supplementarity*, Haddu and Page’s work on hybrid aesthetics, Peirano’s “Chilean-cosmopolitan” aesthetic, and Kantaris and O’Bryan’s “savage hybridity” are all models that point to this process in aesthetic terms. Characteristic of this cinema is an aesthetic and stylistic multiplicity, accessible for Canclini’s “glocal” publics, those citizens global in consumption and local in “languages, memory, and national sensibility.” And the realist mode in particular offers a transnational pull that appeals to filmmakers “in a post-national era, when attempting to produce a ‘crossover’ that will successfully address a national audience as well as one beyond geographical boundaries and maximize profits.”

Thus, Chilean cinema’s “new realism” is operating within a paradigm that is on the one hand familiar to “global” cinéphile festival audiences. On the other hand, the use of “new realism” is also reflective of the strong influence of

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The notion of transnational audiences is undertheorized, argues Adrian Athique who urges to let go of a “long-standing dominance of a national paradigm in media analysis, corresponding with the heyday of the nation-state system and terrestrial broadcast technologies.” But Athique also admits that the nation state has of course not completely disappeared: “we live in a world which is increasingly transnational, rather than post-national.” Adrian Athique, ‘Transnational Audiences: Geocultural Approaches’, *Continuum*, 28 (2013), p. 6.


229 Canclini, *Culturas híbridas*.

Italian neorealism in Latin American cinema,\textsuperscript{231} in particular the New Chilean cinema of the 1960s and 1970s. Once the hurdles of the festival circuits are successfully jumped, this mode then also encompasses references that would presumably appeal to its home audience, perhaps even to their historical (cinematic) consciousness.

The highly influential film theorist André Bazin, champion of (historical Italian) neorealism, considered the mode in phenomenological or ontological terms: he presupposes the existence of a “reality” to be depicted, and the capacity of cinema to document this reality in a way that was later termed an “indexical” connection, in which the causal connection between image and object in photography, and then film, bestows upon the image an evidentiary status.\textsuperscript{232} This is why Bazin saw realism as ultimately the nature of film itself.\textsuperscript{233} Realism as cinematic style allows reality in all its ambiguity to present itself. Instead of pre-constructing a meaning through (tight) framing and montage, the long take and the deep focus shot in particular capture an element of chance inherent in reality, its uncontrollable element. A neo-realist film gains meaning \textit{a posteriori},


\textsuperscript{232} Bazin offers the image of a fingerprint.

\textsuperscript{233} Built on an evolutionary notion of cinema, Bazin famously argued that “realism” is the holy grail cinema ought to aspire to as realism was part of the nature of film itself, of cinema’s essence. André Bazin, \textit{What Is Cinema?} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. 23.
by the audience’s work in constructing this meaning.\footnote{In Bazin’s metaphor, the audience turns an accidental assemblage of stones into a bridge through their reading of the layout, whereas in a classical artistic composition, meaning is given a priori; the bricks would be already shaping the bridge.} For Bazin, neorealism’s aesthetics were inextricably interwoven with its political agenda: “Neorealism has a canonical status in Bazin’s thought because it is more than a style; it directly engages social history.”\footnote{Richard Allen, “‘There Is Not One Realism, but Several Realisms’: A Review of Opening Bazin’, October (2014), p. 77.}

Following this lead, Nagib and Tiago de Luca discuss the renewals of realist commitments in world cinemas in terms of their political and ethical intent. Nagib claims world cinema’s new realism is informed by a political ethics: “to choose reality instead of simulation is a moral question.”\footnote{Nagib, World Cinema, p. 10.} Her “ethics of realism” hinges on indexicality, “what Rancière termed ‘the inherent honesty of the film medium’ … that is to say, the film’s indexical property,”\footnote{Nagib, World Cinema, p. 235.} and the element of chance which generates “the truth of the unpredictable event.” Nagib defines realism by its reliance on exclusive, not simulated pro-filmic events, real physical activity, and “real time” shots. However, whether chasing contingency or using long-takes, none of these techniques carries intrinsic meaning.\footnote{Cf. Perkins, Film as Film, p. 120.} Precisely because aesthetic devices do not have a fixed meaning, Schoonover argues, it is possible to “appropriate a logic of the image” of neorealism while rejecting its political, humanist project.\footnote{Schoonover, Brutal Vision, p. 230.} Schoonover is therefore critical of the understanding of neorealism as introducing a type of

\footnote{234 In Bazin’s metaphor, the audience turns an accidental assemblage of stones into a bridge through their reading of the layout, whereas in a classical artistic composition, meaning is given a priori; the bricks would be already shaping the bridge.}
\footnote{236 Nagib, World Cinema, p. 10.}
\footnote{237 Nagib, World Cinema, p. 235.}
\footnote{238 Cf. Perkins, Film as Film, p. 120.}
\footnote{239 Schoonover, Brutal Vision, p. 230.}
aesthetics as political act. Certain stylistic commonalities, a shared aesthetic may suggest shared concerns – or might well hide very different agendas.

Notwithstanding the limitations on free selection and presentation of subject matter outlined above, and bearing in mind Schoonover’s intervention, I suggest that the Chilean films on the past examined here engage with neorealist aesthetics as a conceptual matter. Through their engagement with the (cinematic) past, the films invoke neorealism’s politics and its approach towards history. Historical neorealism strove to eschew “Grand History” in favour of small stories; to enable a different kind of emotional engagement with the past; to contribute to a distinctively national cinema.240 Neorealism’s notion of the real, argues Brewer, is about “larger verities … about conflicting temporalities, about the complex dialectic between big history and small everyday lives, and about the way in which the forces of history are constantly led to deviate or change as result of chance.”241

Margulies and Elsaesser frame world cinema’s new realism as questioning the old form and the capacity of its techniques to convey reality.242 Following their

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lead, the engagement with and expansion of neorealist discourse in Chilean cinema can be discussed as a problematization of epistemology through the visual means. The Chilean films analysed here both invoke characteristics with their predecessors and also diverge in crucial ways. They employ aesthetic strategies considered typical for neorealism, such as a preference for location shooting, the use of nonprofessional actors, techniques such as the long take and deep focus. Other characteristics are not shared: realism here does not strive towards a Bazinian "‘self-effacement before reality’, a “styleless style;" 243 nor is it based on an aesthetic of the contingent, 244 the accidental, on the idea of a transparent phenomenal world that can be revealed by cinema.

Schoonover points out how neorealism’s political-ethical appeal to a broadened international audience had already been an important aspect of historical neorealism. The parallel of a transnational address back then and now is appealing; and I suggest that where the parallel ends, the modified aesthetics mirror the modified (perhaps more moderate) ethical-political demands. In other words, I propose that the films offer a conceptual reworking and engagement with neorealism’s political agenda – at least as read through proponents such as Bazin 245 – through its aesthetics. 246

243 de Luca, Realism of the Senses, p. 300.
244 Contingency is not a dominant characteristic in the films examined here. There are however examples within contemporary Chilean fiction films grouped under New New Chilean Cinema, which fit the “world cinema realism” idea, and which use, for instance, improvised acting and “real time;” for instance, Sábado, una película en tiempo real (Matías Bize, 2003) or La sagrada familia (Sebastián Lelio, 2005).
245 Schoonover points out that Bazin’s writing is temptingly inconclusive and malleable enough to support various ideas.
In the following, I will examine the privileged position of the long take and of corporeality, expressed in different shapes and dimensions, as examples of this engagement with neorealist aesthetics. Both of these strategies, which often intersect, feature prominently in these films. Already long takes manifest

... a corporeal dimension: insisting on and amplifying the referential aspect of representation, they constantly remind the viewer of physical, material presences – of cinema, of the actor/performer, of the spectator.\textsuperscript{247}

Schoonover discusses the central role of corporeality in historical neorealism; Elsaesser, Margulies and de Luca emphasise that “hyperbolic”\textsuperscript{248} strategies, such as long takes and close-ups, also increase the viewers’ awareness of their own bodies, their own physical presence as spectators.\textsuperscript{249}

By analysing the remarkable long takes in Santiago ‘73, Post Mortem (Mortem), the corporeal metaphor in Tony Manero (Manero), the use of star bodies in NO, and the particular forms of realism used in La Danza de la Realidad (Danza), I propose that these strategies help the films to create a sense of authenticity and offer an alternative metaphor anchored in the corporeal, while questioning visual evidence and highlighting the mediation in our reception of history.

\textsuperscript{246} The epistemological question as well is already dormant in historical neorealism. It is important to pause and affirm that this questioning is already present (or dormant) in historical neorealism. According to Schoonover, neorealism’s long shots turn the image into a “visual field” that “invites us to watch while telling us that we are just watching” and therefore “confronts the viewer with the profound ambiguity of the real.” Schoonover, Brutal Vision, p. 27.

\textsuperscript{247} Ivone Margulies, Nothing Happens, p. 47.

\textsuperscript{248} de Luca argues that the “hyperbolic” dimension of the long take and also the close-up promote “a contemplative viewing experience anchored in phenomenological presence and duration,” provoking “an aesthetic gaze which itself restructures the sensory and perceptual experience.” de Luca, Realism of the Senses, p. 9 and p. 302.

\textsuperscript{249} Elsaesser, ‘World cinema’, p. 10.
The Body as Metaphor: Tony Manero, Post Mortem, and NO

Mortem opens with an “impossible” view of history. Introducing the film, a long take shot from beneath the undercarriage of a military tank passing over a street littered with debris announces a self-confident camera, and a cinema that offers the audience a point of view literally inaccessible to the normal human perception, as the position and perspective of the shot create an image that is inaccessible to the human eye. [image 4.11, p. 326] It is a slow exposure shot almost completely devoid of human movement. Space seems reduced on the screen and in the frame, as if pressed under a tank, suggestive of “something blind, mechanic, advancing, unstoppable, ready to crush everything in its way.”

As a result, at the same time that this long take actively renders visible an otherwise inaccessible view, it also, despite its length, shows very little. What is not shown, what is crushed under the tank, emerges into the foreground as visible absence, a metaphor of history. Often associated with “natural” human perception – in avoiding the cut, the viewer remains in the present, free to roam the image, subjected neither to Hollywood’s illusionism nor to intellectual montage –, the long take also always flaunts its artifice in its intentionality. In Mortem, its perspective is unequivocally associated with the machine.

Mortem tells the story of Chile as experienced by one of those who History has forgotten: the third person present at the autopsy of Salvador Allende, a

250 “el sentido que reviste para nosotros; algo así como una cosa ciega, mecánica y compacta que avanza ... imparable ... irrefrenable, dispuesta a arrasar con todo o destinada a estrellarse.” Corro, Retóricas del cine chileno, pp. 239-40.
coroner’s assistant named Mario Cornejo. Set in the weeks shortly before until shortly after the coup, protagonist Mario pursues his plans to win the heart of his neighbour Nancy Puelma, when the coup d’état interrupts his cocooned little world. An obsessive, occasionally voyeuristic observer of his love object, Mario seems largely uninterested in the political events unfolding around him. The military takeover and Allende’s death are psychologically central to the audience, yet visually and dramatically deprioritized. The decision to tell a momentous moment in Chilean history through the eyes of “very ordinary people, people who are invisible in society” evokes neorealist classics.

While History is unfolding in the background and politics are an invisible presence, increasingly threatening to devour the protagonists, such films follow the daily worries of the protagonists.

The film’s first long take fractures diegetic time. The opening shot seems situated in the days of or right after the military takeover. When the narrative trajectory begins, diegetic time is pushed back to before the coup: Mario seeks to conquer his neighbour Nancy, dancer at the *Bim Bam Bum* (a variety theatre famous at the time), and only few corpses arrive at the morgue. Politics take place literally in the background, for instance when Mario’s employer is heard –

251 As Larraín explained, this figure was the starting point for his film: “The [autopsy] report [published by the Allende Foundation] is signed by three people. Two of them are very well-known doctors, but the third, a guy called Mario Cornejo, was unknown. ... [w]e found out that he was the coroner’s assistant. He’s dead now, but we got in touch with his family, and I met his son, who actually does the same job as his father. Demetrios Matheou, ‘The Body politic: Pablo Larraín on *Post Mortem*’ (29 January 2013). <http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/interviews/body-politic-pablo-larra-on-post-mortem> [accessed 21 March 2016].

252 Matheou, ‘The Body Politic’.

253 One may recall the premise of *Bicycle Thief* (Vittorio de Sica, 1948), and its “mundane” quest to recover a stolen bike.
not seen – pontificating over lunch; another time, Mario cannot continue
driving because a Unidad Popular demonstration is blocking the road. The
camera remains focused on Mario, we barely see the demonstrators whose
chants sound menacing and aggressive.

The chronological trajectory is punctured again fifteen minutes later when the
autopsy of a woman is carried out in the morgue, identified by an examiner
(whose head remains outside the frame) as Nancy Puelma. A seemingly unfazed
Mario types up the cause of death, determined as starvation and dehydration,
and helps to carry away the naked corpse. This premonitory scene is preceded
and followed by scenes of Nancy alive. As she is introduced as an anorexic, the
implications of this shot are not immediately clear. Only at the end of the film,
where we see Mario effectively incarcerating Nancy, can the audience
understand this scene of Nancy’s autopsy and charge it with political
significance. Nancy, a fictional figure, will be forgotten, yet she is linked to the
historical figure of Allende through the figure of repetition in the autopsy.

By breaking the temporal unity of the film, these jumps rework neorealist’
aesthetics. Instead of following an unpredictable, contingent reality as it
unfolds, there is clearly an organizing agency that finds it necessary to order the
narrative differently, to begin with an image that stands for the presence of the
coup as already happened, and to present the audience with a scene mid-film
that presages Nancy’s death. In these instances, the film exits most clearly the
selective perception of the protagonist.
The coup itself takes place halfway through the film, off-screen, invisible but sonically present and temporally encoded for a knowledgeable audience: the bombardment took place in the early morning; the image shows the protagonist showering. We hear the sound of low-flying jets, barking dogs, glass smashing, shouting, objects being destroyed. And then, only eerie silence, as Mario steps out into a deserted street full of debris and into his neighbour’s demolished house. Here, there is finally the visual evidence of the coup in the form of its aftermath. In the following scenes, the morgue is now inundated with corpses, and then there is the pivotal scene of President Allende’s autopsy (again, pivotal for the audience but deprioritized in the film in terms of climactic position). [image 4.12 and 4.13, p. 326]

While the camera remains with the protagonist in the shower, it also records what he does not yet hear. It again alerts us to the presence of an extra-diegetic consciousness. Where the protagonist misses the moment of the coup, or does not understand the enormity of the historical moment, the machine is aware. Looking at the events depicted in the film from the vantage point of the present moment, the narrative agency knows, yet it chooses to document Mario missing the coup.

The final scene of Mortem is another long take during which we see Mario piling up furniture destroyed in the raid in front of a shed in his neighbour’s garden. In the shed Nancy is hiding with her lover, an active member of the Unidad Popular. Taken with a static camera, disconnected from human movement, this extremely long take lasts over three minutes. The fixed stare of
the machine cuts off Mario’s upper body mid-chest, as he exits and re-enters the frame. His movements connect onscreen with off-screen space, or at least draws attention to the existence of off-screen – metaphorically, the invisible, that which falls through the cracks – through the physical action of disappearing and re-entering. The odd frame makes us aware that it is a machine’s choice: People tend to focus on human figures, especially the face, and they do not remain entirely static for a long time easily or without support.

The camera’s gaze remains fixed on the shed, on the “invisible” humans inside, hidden from view. A beheaded (and de-hearted) Mario is imprisoning the bodies of the moribund, those that, in the film, will be dying. In a sense, the entire film is an enacted futur antérieur, on a “This will have been” basis, beginning with its title which anticipates the hauntings of already past events. As the image is being filled with trash, it transforms into a flat, somewhat abstractedly patterned surface in visual analogy to the scenes of the dead piling up at the morgue. This connects the disappeared and the past that is being covered up as it is happening. At the end of Mortem, we understand that for Mario, life after the coup returned largely to how it was before.254 As a character in denial, it is easy to interpret him as a figure representative of an amnesiac and blind(ed) Chile. There is no major tonal change in the film after

254 After Nancy’s autopsy, there is a brief scene with a child who help Mario type up the notes, after which they embrace. This child is later introduced to the audience as Nancy’s nephew; by dispensing narrative information in this order, the audience cannot immediately attach emotional significance to this scene.
the coup: the cinematography remains in the palette of pale discolorations, “echo[ing] with hollow, distant sounds as if we’re in an aquarium.”

Mario is an involuntary and largely passive witness – and yet, eventually, he does watch. Reminding us that we know more than the protagonist, the film asks us to watch as well. And yet, in all of Larraín’s films, the visual is deprioritized as a means of verification; it is not primarily via vision that we come closer to understanding. We never see clearly in these films; our vision is blocked by objects, cut into odd frames, thrown back as reflections. The final take’s brutal framing is only the last in a long line of images that show the characters of Mortem trapped, compressed in frames, positioned in stage-like spaces, or with parts of their bodies ruthlessly cut off. For instance, during Nancy’s autopsy, the head of her examiner is outside the frame; when Mario searches his neighbour’s house, his torso is cut off; and during Mario’s and Nancy’s brief sexual encounter, the image of Nancy comes from a point of view that cannot be Mario’s, a strangely angled close-up on her face and parts of her torso, as if extrapolated from the rest of her body.

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255 This persistent “aesthetic of death” is one of the reasons why the film was attacked as coming from the ideological right. “It is not clear precisely what Larraín is saying about 1973 Chile. The suggestion perhaps is that the nation was already in a state of somnambulistic denial – of the kind depicted in Tony Manero – even before the coup.” Jonathan Romney, ‘Staying alive’, Sight and Sound 19.5 (2009), pp. 46-47.

256 Romney, ‘Staying alive’.

257 The film does not condemn this passivity. Mario is certainly a strange character, and there are signs that he is shifting towards the right. But we see also the danger Mario finds himself in: at one point, Mario tries to smuggle a survivor in the piles of corpses into the adjacent clinic - only to find him among the pile of dead of the next day, together with the nurse who took him in.
The “global economy of images” has national resonances, but is also read by transnational audiences. In this context, we may recall that President Allende’s death was also a global event, devastating to a transnational socialist dream that had many people captivated at the time. People remembered where they were when they heard of his death or when they heard the iconic radio speech. As some audiences will clearly recognize, the first long take in Mortem is built on the same symbolism as the opening (and closing) shots of the seminal Argentine film Garage Olimpo. Both films strive to make visible a “militarized gaze”, in order to work against its “naturalizing frame of unpunished crimes,” (the death flights in Garage Olimpo), and to “problematize the afterlife of the dictatorship by showing how it involves a kind of framing that works to imprison the gaze.” The theme is framing itself, making the audience aware of the different actors involved in creating the gaze(s): the camera, the narrative agency, the perspectives adopted from the protagonists, the machine itself. In difference to historical neorealism, the historical reality is not the historical present, or a past that has only just passed,

258 Larrain describes the diverging reactions of audiences to his film in an interview with Filmmaker Magazine: “International audiences laugh at different moments ... In Chile, nobody laughed at any point in the entire film. ... [in Chile], nobody considered it a black comedy, either.” Filmmaker Magazine, ‘Pablo Larrain, Post Mortem’ (11 April 2012) <http://filmmaker-magazine.com/43874-pablo-larrain-post-mortem/VlePhGThBcw> [26 November 2015].
259 Gómez-Barris, Where memory dwells, p. 181.
260 Olimpo begins with an aerial view, shot from a plane, of the Río de la Plata in Argentina. This symbolism, “symptomatic of the film’s examination of the militarized gaze” provides a “link between disappearance, the economy, the political climate [the shot is accompanied by the sound of a weather forecast on the radio and economic climate], and the river (mass grave) [that] is open to interpretation by the audience.” Susana Draper, Afterlives of Confinement: Spatial Transitions in Postdictatorship Latin America (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012), pp. 189-190.
but a historical reality conveyed through mechanical means. This “mechanical view” on history is clearly limited, it fractures, and leaves most of the human (cost) of history outside the image of history. As in SOP or Redacted, the central issue concerns again the framing gazes through which we learn about history, the mediation of the machine. Given that strategies of visual epistemology and visual evidence are constructed as deeply problematic, how then to learn about historical reality? How to pursue this epistemological quest, if not through vision? As in neorealism, the corporeal dimension plays a prominent role in these films; in fact, one might suggest that in a sense, the “corporeal metaphor” almost replaces the visual metaphor when it comes to matters of authentication and authenticity.

Here, one may return to Schoonover’s analysis of how historical neorealism used “scenarios of physical suffering to dramatize the political stakes of vision,” in particular to an “outside extranational eyewitness”: “an imperiled body is offered to a bystander’s gaze as an opportunity to exercise ethical judgement.”261 In Mortem, the audiences are presented with similar bodies, not “imperiled” but already dead. The parallel between a transnational address then and now ends here, where the film emphasises the limitations of vision to convey and authenticate historical reality and thereby to activate a political-ethical agenda.

Both the corpse of president Allende and the bodies of those killed in the first months after the coup appear in Mortem, manifesting the ghostly figures that

261 Schoonover, Brutal Vision, pp. xiv - xvi.
possess and haunt the country with their traumatic absence. When the morgue team is taken by military men to examine the dead body of former president Allende and to determine the cause of death, a row of soldiers is standing behind them. [image 4.14, p. 326] The setting of the autopsy comes to resemble a stage, with the military men in the background lined up as witnesses, guards, and audience. We watch the military watching the morgue team watching Allende. The permanent presence of the military in the background of the image suggests a less than free decision in determining the cause of death and visually implies the unreliability of the emerging account.

When the principal doctor concludes that it was suicide, an ominous smile flits over Mario’s face. After the autopsy, a stony-faced Mario encounters his colleague Sandra; she insists that the president has been killed, while Mario repeats, almost pleadingly, that it was suicide. Mario and Sandra embody the two (medical) positions that have historically transpired, as the cause and circumstances of the former president’s death have been subject to much debate and long been contested in Chile. The characters not only see the dead body but they watch and touch, surrogates for the Chilean public. Yet, despite a literal dissection of Allende’s body, the ultimate cause remains unconfirmed.

The parallel “small” story, Mario’s struggle with the unknown typewriter and his humiliation of being replaced by a more capable – also younger and more handsome – cadet appears to have equal impact on him as the historical event he is witnessing. This typewriter, as a record-keeping device, is also a highly evocative symbolic object. Larraín said in an interview with Filmmaker Magazine
that the only concrete historical file available to the filmmakers was a record of Allende’s autopsy, as the military destroyed almost all existing records.\textsuperscript{262}

The brutal violence of the golpe is expressed indirectly, by showing its fallout. Where in the first part of the film there was the occasional autopsy every other day, after the coup, the morgue is inundated with corpses. The bodies of those killed in the first months after the coup, unknown and unnamed, are piling up in corridors, on stairwells; they fill the morgue, and the screen, testifying to the violence committed, both evidence and mute accusation. As the number of victims far exceeds their capacity, the small morgue team is told by the military to resort to a fast-track version of their trade. [image 4.13, p. 326]

As with Nancy’s autopsy, the juxtaposition of one particular death of a mythical figure and the many deaths of the unnamed point to a parallel in the uncanniness of the sudden, traumatic disappearances – be it of a close loved one, a publicly visible historical figure or even the sudden disappearance of one’s world in the form of the current democratic nation-state, and the dream of a socialist Chile. Along with political opponents and those caught in the crossfire, this political dream was violently shattered. Giving the dead president a body can also be read as an attempt to humanize this idealized, monumentalized, petrified and haunting figure. Instead of reanimating Allende, Mortem resurrects his corpse, re-embodiment the traumatic loss of this singular publicly visible body as well as the bodies of the many disappeared.

\textsuperscript{262} Filmmaker Magazine, ‘Larraín, Post Mortem’.
These bodies are infused with a symbolic meaning that surpasses their physical reality. Similar to the re-enactments in Los Archivos or in SOP, and the “fictional archive” I will discuss in the next chapter, such a referential presence of onscreen bodies may counter invisibilities, without erasing the history of their disappearance – we do not learn their names, for instance. This fictional reappearance of the first victims of the coup creates a metaphorical, alternate truth, a kind of restorative corporeality for those bodies that went missing, or that were perfunctorily quantified and discarded into mass graves. In the Chilean context of a violated social body, imaginarily having, visually possessing the missing bodies can be considered a powerful gesture.

images 4.11 – 4.14: Post Mortem

images 4.15 – 4.16 NO
All the Chilean films examined here feature bodies that show indexical traces of having lived through the dictatorship period and thus carry potential for metalepsis, the transgression of the boundary between diegetic and non-diegetic. Larraín argues that the era of the plebiscite is “just printed in my body, and in everybody else in Chile too.” In NO, this metaleptic possibility is enhanced by the central presence of Gael García Bernal’s well-known star body, which points to its material existence outside of the film and to Bernal’s popular star persona, his record in acting and producing politically liberal and Latin-American-focused productions.

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264 Bernal’s casting thus deviates from Italian neorealism, which, according to Bazin, sought to “avoid casting the professional in the role for which he is known.” André Bazin, ‘The Ontology of the Photographic Image’, Film Quarterly, 13 (1960), p. 23.
The use of corporeality to anchor the real was already employed in historical neorealism: Bazin writes that non-professionals in neorealist films are chosen “either because they fit it physically or because there is some parallel between the role and their lives.”

Their presence results in an “osmotic” effect on the professional cast as well, creating a “general atmosphere of authenticity.”

In NO, some of the historical figures who literally embody the historical experience, were cast to re-perform their roles, to re-enact themselves. This play with not-quite-the-same repetition bluntly interrupts any suspension of disbelief: an elderly Patricio Aylwin waddles in, shakes Bernal’s hand and sits in front of the diegetic camera. Then the camera tilts downward to a diegetic television screen that shows Aylwin’s younger self announcing the importance of the vote. [images 4.15 – 4.16, p. 326] These profilmic bodies establish the link to “the real”, precisely because they have aged. It is through their aged bodies that these historical figures affirm change, the passing of time. The point of engaging these bodies is to draw attention to the perception of the

Certainly, Bernal’s character in the film plays against what seems to be his real private personality but not against the kind of double-tongued personae he tends to portray. Considering that the film was accused of being reactionary, selling out to Hollywood aesthetic and narrative structure, the star persona of Bernal provides an interesting counterbalance. Bernal is not only internationally known and recognized but shares progressive credentials both in his private life and his choice of roles, which put forward alternative models of masculinity, sexual behaviour and include various nationalities (cf. http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/gael-garcia-bernal-journeys-of-the-soul-477253.html,

de la Garza, “Realism and National Identity.”

267 Patricio Aylwin, first post-dictatorship president, portrays Patricio Aylwin, Patricio Bañados, presenter of the NO-campaign, appears as Patricio Bañados, the sociologist Eugenio Tironi appears as Eugenio Tironi. The Spanish Wikipedia site cites 21 public persons appearing as themselves: http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/No_(pel%C3%ADcula).
real, again, the frames through which we receive history, our view on the past from the present. These human bodies of historical players complement what the film does technically, meshing the original and the re-enactment on the “authentically old” cinematic body. The lenses and the real bodies anchor the real, while the narrative agency clearly signals the telling of these stories from a later vantage point. Rather than having old vintage stock and cameras working as unquestioning tools for the authentication of the narrative, archive footage is juxtaposed with the re-enacted genesis of this material. The combination of genuinely old film stock with real archive material effectively sutures two kinds of documentary formats. The result is an authenticity that acknowledges its artificiality, both evoking and deconstructing the concept of the real, a “double realness“ that alerts the viewer to the cultural nature of inherited claims regarding the (transparent) truth of footage material generally. Again, historical bodies and the body of the film are activated to speak about epistemological issues and our view on history.

While the use of vintage video cameras, lenses and film stock in the fictionalized parts in NO allows for a softened, often imperceptible suture between archive material and fictional re-enactment, the idea is never to “trick” the audience; the star presence of Gael García Bernal in almost every one of

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268 In a sense, one can consider Larraín’s use of lenses of the period in his entire trilogy an adaptation of realism’s “coincidental factor,” translated onto a formal level. If the programmatic strategy was to “do nothing” and letting the coincidences of reality unroll, these lenses create “the deathly pallor of fading wallpaper” in the look of the film all on their own. Larraín boasts: “People think we spent ages in post-production to get that pale image, but our whole ‘technique’ was not to do anything.” Matheou, ‘Body Politic’, emphasis added.
the new scenes ensures that we never lose sight of which part is re-enacted – even for those unfamiliar with Chilean history. Compare the case of a 1928 Brechtian short story, in which the diegetic audience prefers an actor to the (unrecognized) historical personality, resulting in “a fictional narrative about the difficulty of filming a historically inspired scene realistically” and begging the question “what is the value of authenticity for representing reality?”

To phrase the question in reverse, we might ask, what is the value of reality to anchor authenticity? In NO, some audiences can only read the bodies of historical figures as more authentic once they are told about it.

In Manero, the figure of a psychopath functions to “represent the unrepresentable” of the military dictatorship. Protagonist Raúl Perralta wants to win a Chilean television look-alike contest, specifically the round calling for the star of Saturday Night Fever (John Badham, 1977), John Travolta’s Tony Manero. This central titular quest can be read as an allegory of the Chilean nation at that point in its history. Just as the protagonist mimics his Hollywood idol, the Chilean country was emulating the glittery appearance of another nation. What Carlos Flores defined as Chile’s “mania of the copy,” a sociocultural tic, is certainly not an exclusively Chilean obsession, but it lends itself easily to the interpretation of Raúl rejecting his national identity: In one scene, Raúl’s lover tells him he is Chilean and he responds: “No, not me … not

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270 Cited in Mouesca, Plano secuencia, p. 167.
any more.” Raúl’s delusion is that he does not want to be “the Chilean Tony Manero,” he wants to be Tony Manero – not only a different person or nationality, but an entirely fictional character. (The additional sly joke is that Raúl does not resemble Travolta/Manero in any way.) [image 4.17-4.18, p. 327]

Elsaesser and Buckland suggest that “[t]he line between the criminal (the extreme embodiment of the system itself, which takes the system at its word) and the resister/contester of the system … becomes a fine one indeed.” As the extreme embodiment of this system, Raúl is walking this very same line: he is a psychopathic criminal, and yet he has internalized the promises of neoliberal capitalism to the point of delusion. Raúl murders an old woman to steal her television set, and he murders a projectionist to steal the film reels of *Saturday Night Fever*. His desire to be free to choose his identity is completely self-centred, and this very absence of any larger social or political inclination or a socially inclusive vision, precisely his indifference to politics is what makes his character political.

The psychopathic Raúl is the result of and a way to “represent the unrepresentable” of the military dictatorship, which appears mainly as a “major, monstrous presence” or perhaps, rather, a present absence.

Life under the dictatorship provides the conditions and breeding ground for

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271 “Yo nopo … yo, no más”
273 These points are suggested by Urrutia in her sensitive reading of the film. Urrutia argues that Manero’s Raúl “represents the unrepresentable – the era of the dictatorship”; he is psychopathic because he lives in a psychopathic moment. Carolina Urrutia, ‘Hacia una política en tránsito’.
disturbed subjects. “Ostensibly apolitical, Raúl is a true creature of totalitarianism; oppressive circumstances enable him to brutalize and exploit others with apparent impunity, his own crimes fading into the background in a society that is itself institutionally homicidal.” Raúl’s impunity reflects how the neoliberal economic system was instigated by and how social inequalities are perpetuated through violence. In an insane world, the psychopathic Raúl is presented as the logical culmination of the system. His is a rational response under the circumstances, the necessity to develop selective schizophrenia, in order to become habituated to constant fear. His Darwinian survival instinct and escape into the dream world of cinema appears as a rather rational response to a society in which public space and social bonds have been dissolved. The dictatorial state obfuscates what Butler identified as the precariousness of all human life and that we are all bound to and dependent on each other, precisely through our vulnerable, irrevocably material bodies. This fact is negated by the dictatorship, which installs a mercantile calculation in the social body in which whatever benefits another is taken from me.

Raúl’s obsession also resonates with Butler’s notion of the relationship between grief and unacknowledged lives. Butler argues that a life must first be perceived as living in order to be grievable. In Manero, the old lady Raúl killed and stole

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275 Romney, ‘Staying alive’.
276 The implementation of this economic system, many have argued, has only been possible under the conditions of the dictatorship, which annihilated oppositional voices and institutions.
277 Butler, Frames of War.
278 Butler, Frames of War.
from will not be grieved for. Raúl does not grieve for the members of his dancing troupe, who are taken by the DINA while he is hiding, who will be imprisoned, hurt or killed. Most likely, if Raúl died, no one would grieve for him, and he would be one more erased existence. From this vantage point, his desire to be someone whose existence is acknowledged, a public figure and a star, and consequently to be grievable, seems almost logical.

To conclude, I will offer a brief analysis of the realism shown in La Danza de la Realidad (Danza), as an example of the “poetic truth” explored in world cinema’s “new realism,” expressed particularly through the corporeal dimension. The film is an adaptation of two memoirs about Jodorowsky’s childhood, but also clearly references both the dictatorship under Carlos Ibañez del Campo (1927-1931, 1952-1958, thus long before Jodorowsky’s lifetime), and the Pinochet dictatorship (during which Jodorowsky was in exile), occasionally in overlapping form. Promotional material on the film’s official website describe Danza as an exercise “in imaginary autobiography” but “not in the sense of fiction, because all the characters, places and events are real.”

Danza interrogates the capacity of film to create a reality; its self-proclaimed goal is to expand and deconstruct conventional forms of representing and narrating autobiography, institutionally recognized as nonfictional. This exercise of stretching reality, entails, somewhat logically, a rejection of usual form. The film pairs a seemingly fanatical attention to historical faithfulness – to objects,

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actors, and mise-en-scène – with the conspicuous absence of archive footage and with techniques echoing both magical realism and modernist strategies.\textsuperscript{280}

The corporeal dimension is activated in order to visualize invisible processes, and also to anchor reality through the “hyperbolisation of bodily functioning.”\textsuperscript{281} Both Nagib and Margulies reflect on such moments when the literal overwhelming physicality of the actors’ body is foregrounded, even “taking over.”\textsuperscript{282} Nagib unspools her concept of ethical realism with the notion of ‘bodily enactment’ through the example of the cinematic runner. The physical activity of running exemplifies a “physical engagement with the profilmic event”\textsuperscript{283} and a commitment to the truth of the event. In Danza, the body and its physical functions are similarly engaged. In a central scene, the mother heals her pest-infected husband by urinating on him, calling out to the universe to heal through her body. The audience is presented with the full visual view to rest assured that the actress was really urinating (similar to Nagib’s example of the sweating runner, the scene also takes some time).

Thus, the body becomes the metaphorical space upon which Jodorowsky makes invisibilities visible. The production of bodily liquids, similar to breathing and making sound, involves activities that connect inside and outside, and expulse something previously or partly invisible, including phenomena coded as disgusting, grotesque or monstrous. Such embodiments as visualizations of

\textsuperscript{280} For instance, director Jodorowsky keeps appearing in the film, as a sort of guardian angel, explaining himself to the audience and to the diegetic young Jodorowsky.
\textsuperscript{281} de Luca, \textit{Realism of the Senses} , p. 301. de Luca refers here to the cinema of Tsai.
\textsuperscript{282} Margulies, \textit{Nothing Happens}, p. 18.
\textsuperscript{283} Nagib, \textit{World Cinema}, p. 12.
interiority, of memory and forgetting, are constant presence in the film. For example, a man’s amnesia is expressed through his crippled hands, which regain movement when he remembers.

In a film which constantly strives to refute and collapse binaries – the inside-outside of bodies, the extra-diegetic and profilmic worlds, the figure of father, son and family in spiritual, cultural and biographical terms, the figures of author/creator and actor – the torture scenes of Danza stand out. These scenes are aesthetically blunt, un-embellished except for a reddish filter. In contrast to other scenes of violence in the film, the torture scenes are not subjected to modernist devices. The particular torture shown is specific to Chile in the choice of techniques, for instance the protagonist is bound spread-eagled onto a metal “bed” and electroshocked, a technique called La Parilla.285

Zivin points out that even the seminal Battle of Algiers, while aesthetically and ethically denouncing the horror of torture, does not deconstruct the link

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284 For instance, there is a scene where fist blows are carried out meters apart from their victims, who fall immediately and cry, to the soundtrack of real whining babies. In another scene, the director’s hand appears ex machina, to offer the protagonist a much-needed gun.

285 The scenes are modelled on techniques as documented in the Museo de la Memoria y de los Derechos Humanos (MMDDHH); according to an interview with producer Xavier Guerrero in October 2013. Guerrero described to me that Jodorowsky picked a number of techniques shown in the MMDDHH and returned to his team to determine which of these were possible to recreate.
between torture and truth: “the idea of torture itself remains intact because it is still believed to extract the truth.” Contrarily, in Danza, the logics of interrogation are revealed to be an utterly pointless: the tortured protagonist is constantly asked a senseless question: “Who is Don José?” Not only does the protagonist not possess any information the torturers might be after – but we do not know anything about them or their quest. The question is irrelevant; and the prisoner attempts to find an answer that will satisfy his tormentors: “[Don José] is your father/your son/you/me.” In the film, the character of Don José – already dead at this point – evoked some aspects of Jesus Christ. The protagonist’s answers “your father” and “your son” can be read in this Christian context as his attempts at a truthful answer of who Don José was. All the answers can also be read, via Butler, as affirming our interconnectedness. But such answers do not fit the torturers’ mould. While the realist aesthetic of the images underscores the realness of the torture, its unforgivable nature and its pain, the narrative disrupts the link between torture and intelligence gathering or truth: no information can be extracted from this operation.

The one exception to the coldly realistic and quite long torture sequence comes near its end, when black blood spouts from the protagonist’s mouth.

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286 Zivin analyses scenes of interrogation in literature – also revolving around the visual metaphor of seeing/nonseeing, Saramago’s 2004 novel Ensaio sobre a Lucidez (translated as Seeing), a sequel to his 1995 Ensaio sobre a Ceguera (Blindness) – to consider “the possibility of deconstructing interrogation through the literary … how literature might interrupt or sabotage the act of torture.” Erin Graff Zivin, ‘Seeing and Saying: Towards an Ethics of Truth in José Saramago’s Ensaio Sobre a Lucidez’, SubStance (Project Muse), 41 (2012), p. 111.

287 In the film, Don José appears as a holy man, a carpenter who heals the protagonist of his forgetting, gives him food and a job and who has, at this point, died.
read this as the *inside* of the body remaining metaphorically unfathomable. The body remains physical, precisely not transforming into the “truth” that the fiction of torture claims resides here. The body enacts a form of realism – the real of the pain, of the interior, and the hidden, not the real of any intelligence, an information or result obtained through torture. Thus, Jodorowsky disrupts the “standard narrative” of torture, the central fiction of the interrogation as relevant, and the notion that the inside of the body offers a way to reify conceptual truth. The corporeal dimension links the central position of the body in torture, as the (alleged) conveyer of truth, to the search for authenticity, knowledge or truth, expressed in the cinematic mode of realism and the prominent place taken by corporeality in this mode.

Notwithstanding the limiting socio-industrial parameters and caveats I have sketched, the question remains whether these films’ realist aesthetics lend themselves particularly well to the films’ engagement with the hidden, disappearing or inaccessible aspects of the past. Moreover, the link to the international festival scene, the festival-oriented framework of production and distribution, also invite realist conventions, which have been part of “the tradition of international art cinema ... [and] central to the creation of the global literacy’ of an incipient ‘cosmopolitan citizenship’.”

These films can be understood as exemplars of such art cinema, understood as a hybrid form that

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“allows realism and modernism to co-exist within one text.” Art cinema, Galt and Schoonover point out, has historically been closely associated with (specific) realist movements as well as with modernist aesthetics, resulting in a hybrid form, “impure” in Galt’s and Schoonover’s terms, “ambiguous” in Bordwell’s. Beyond the institutional framework of the festival and the tastes and growing influence of cinephile transnational audiences, there might be something in the aesthetic thrust of (an “impure”) realism that lends itself to the treatment of topics dealing with issues of visibility, meshed in the art cinema category invited by film festivals:

“Realism’s claim to make visible what otherwise goes unseen meshes with art cinema’s attempt to represent the forbidden or unspeakable.”

I suggested that both sets of films respond to a similar crisis of gaining knowledge through vision. Exploring the frames of the images and employing a cinematic realism strongly anchored in the body can be conceived of as a response to a crisis of meaning or a crisis of faith in epistemological systems. Postmodernism cannot account for the persistence of the need and the repeated “return(s) of the real,” to modify Jane Gaines’s introduction to Visual

290 In an influential essay, Bordwell defines art cinema as an aesthetic practice, which resonates with the idea of realism as an ethics. Bordwell suggested that the category is aesthetically situated between or including both realism and modernist tropes, such as self-awareness and authorial presence, which he considers to be in a conflict that is solved by ambiguity. David Bordwell, ‘The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice’, in Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings, ed. by Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford UP, 1999), pp. 716-24.
291 Galt and Schoonover, Global Art Cinema, p. 15.
Evidence; the desire for authenticity continues to persist “in a universe dominated by simulation and information saturation.” Nevertheless, I do not wish to exaggerate the similarity between these two cinemas and what I see as their common epistemological quest to go “beyond the visible,” nor their engagement with the visual metaphor – which is after all central for cinema.

The distrust of visual evidence and the scrutiny of epistemological strategies based on a visual metaphor inevitably lend a self-reflexive dimension to all of these films. They interrogate the frames through which we receive, speak of and show history. Images are refracted in SOP, mockingly circled in Redacted; peculiarly framed in Mortem; and visual confirmation is only “present by absence” in Mortem and Manero. Instead, the films anchor their reference to the real through a variously shaped corporeal metaphor. In Manero, the body translates the schizophrenia of the system, the erosion of social trust and annihilation of a public sphere. In NO, historical bodies and the body of the film are taken as markers of authenticity – they exhibit a physically inscribed lived-in history; in Danza, the body defies its instrumentalisation. If Redacted can be read as an example of “new frameworks for representing new existential realities,” the next chapter will continue exploring this metaphor of corporeality, and how the films employ various strategies to authenticate their realities, often beyond visible categories and in a framework that is perhaps not new but very specific to this moment.

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292 Gaines, Collecting Visible Evidence. Is – or was – the postmodern crisis of the real perhaps better seen as the “crisis” of certain kinds of theory?

293 Rodowick, The Virtual Life of Film, p. 158.

5. Chapter Five: The Presence of Absence

This chapter moves towards the invisible pole in the dynamics of torture. Here I look at contemporary Chilean films that use a variety of strategies to render invisibilities perceptible to the viewer and bring them into the present time of viewing. As these strategies, to varying degrees, overlap in the films discussed here, the chapter begins by setting out the premises for the main theoretical ideas, offering some context for the fields of invisibility and erasure of past crimes in which the films are situated. Discrete examples of key scenes illustrate how processes of erasure, of being-made-invisible can be given shape, without negating the erasure, and through specifically cinematic means.

The films *Nostalgia por la luz*, *NO* and *Pena de Muerte* were chosen for their narrative content but also because they problematize our access to history and historical narrative through their own cinematic body. The difficulty of seeing history clearly is reflected in and translated to the material level of the medium.

An important aspect of the “visible invisibility” of torture relates to its collective emotional and social costs. The next section of this chapter applies the concept of socially circulating emotions to the Chilean “cinema of mood,” in particular to the fiction film *Carne de Perro* (*Carne*). The fictional narrative of a former torturer in *Carne* provides an example of how the emotional tone of a film can be used to activate a different register of perception. A detailed analysis of *Carne* demonstrates how this film uses non-visual means, in particular sound, silence and breath, to create an affective encounter with the protagonist. This
encounter does not, however, result in a non-thinking identification, and perhaps not even in empathy. This strategy allows the film to exit a binary discourse on emotional identification with either victim or perpetrator. Such affective encounters, carried forth within an embodied viewer, have been considered, moreover, as an anchor to reality.

The second part of the chapter moves on to discuss other such anchors used in these films to create belief in their realities, in particular through the lens provided by the “material turn” in film studies. Discussed with the examples of NO and Nostalgia, the emphasis on the materiality of the “film body,” provides, firstly, a strategy to make the viewer see and experience in different ways. Secondly, as the research field of media archaeology helps to unlock, the materiality of the medium can be set to speak to various more abstract or metaphorical themes. Thirdly, through its own material “body,” fiction film itself can appear as an ex post facto witness, by providing fictional approximations for the absent images for a collective pool of memory images. In that sense, the focus on the material is a way of returning tortured bodies, filling in or making visible the missing images and absent bodies – but always in a way that acknowledges their having been made invisible, having been disappeared in the first place.

**Making Invisible, making visible**

Institutional and discursive structures link the spatial and linguistic “visible invisibility” of torture, from a preference for techniques that leave little visual,
physical traces on the hurt bodies, to the erasure or covering of evidence.¹ Both torture and disappearances, often overlapping in practice, involved a state apparatus that had perfected a concoction of demonstrative threat and a discursive wall of silence, alongside a web of deception, disinformation and misdirection. This is how the power of state-sanctioned torture and violence took on “mythic proportions, nourished by rumor and innuendo.”² Leakages about sites of torture³ were useful to the regime:

the mere threat of entering a place like [the infamous Chilean torture centre] Villa Grimaldi gave the state’s dirty work an omnipresence in the nation. Although archival documents declare Villa Grimaldi’s absence … its existence was the dictatorship’s most broadcast national secret.⁴

Torture’s unpredictable nature⁵ and the “visible invisibility” of this “publicized secret”⁶ created a pervasive sense of fear and terror. The ambivalence of this strategy of “open secrecy” is reflected in the visual metaphor: nothing is more

¹ See appendix for how this visible invisibility translates into spatial terms and on so-called “clean” torture.
³ Dorfman describes how such leakages could “reign in the whispers of the mind without the government having to openly admit to being the source of those whispers, of that terror.” Ariel Dorfman, ‘Globalizing Compassion, Photography, and the Challenge of Terror’, CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture, 9 (2007), p. 277. The idea of disappearance as a strategy to terrorize a population was formed by the Nazis, and is masterfully shown in Night and Fog (Alain Resnais, 1955).
⁴ Gordon, Ghostly Matters, p. 46.
⁵ Cortínez and Engelbert point out that 46% of victims exhibited no known political militancy. Cortínez and Engelbert, ‘El cine chileno de los sesenta’.
⁶ Gordon, Ghostly Matters, p. 78. In her chapter about disappearances and the dirty war in Argentina, Gordon emphasises the difference between torture, murder and disappearance despite similar structures and overlaps in practice.
present than a “disappeared,”\textsuperscript{7} and the “omnipotence of the state … is most powerful precisely when it is invisible”\textsuperscript{8} – or rather, when it is both visible and invisible: “A significant amount of the power of state terror comes from both its invisibility and its visibility.”\textsuperscript{9} Part of the challenge to speak “about” torture thus derives also from the way it is practiced and experienced.\textsuperscript{10}

Mapped on the dialectic of visibility and invisibility of torture in film, I argue that to break this grip on the imagination, the films’ strategies aim not only to make visible what is covered up but also to expand the parameters of seeing. Showing the process of hiding can be considered a political statement in itself. Rojas cites a number of artworks which are “invisible” in the sense that they are not legible as art – separate from before or from non-art – without additional information. He analyses this as a political statement in itself: the idea is not to combat forgetting but to show that the forgetting has already happened; it is part of the event now.\textsuperscript{11} The specific horror of erasing the evidence of murder has been eloquently defined with regards to the general absence or erasure of visual documentation of the Holocaust.

\textsuperscript{7} Disappearances are the prime examples of the presence of absence, or visible invisibility. For everyone who knew a disappeared, “there is nothing more visible, and more eloquent, than their disappearance.” Jocelyn-Holt, \textit{Espejo retrovisor}, p. 89.
\textsuperscript{9} MacDonald, ‘Film as Testimonial Literature’, 136.
\textsuperscript{10} Regarding linguistic representations (which could be extended to the visual field), Gómez-Barris suggests that as torture approaches the limits of representation, its incommunicability derives “not from the inability to narrate the experience … but the inability to represent the complexity and fullness of that which escapes narrative description.” Gómez-Barris, \textit{Where Memory Dwells}, p. 99.
\textsuperscript{11} Rojas, ‘Profunda superficie’.
To murder was not nearly enough, because the dead were never sufficiently ‘obliterated’ ... the Nazis concentrated ... on ‘leaving no single trace,’ and on obliterating every remnant ... [including] the obliteration of the tools of the obliteration.\textsuperscript{12}

What Rancière calls the crime of “double elimination: of the Jews and of their elimination”\textsuperscript{13} also happened in Chile, where “what was taken away from the victims of state terrorism is precisely their death – as legal narratives – while their families were dispossessed of the right of habeas corpus.”\textsuperscript{14} The unknown fate of the disappeared results in a specific form of psychological torture for the relatives, who are not allowed the eventual solace and closure that mourning may provide. And the victims of torture were facing a secondary erasure by post-dictatorial amnesia and pressure for reconciliation:

“torture fashioned and sealed a culture of silence ... During the transition to democracy in the 1990s, tens of thousands of torture survivors were all but forgotten by the Chilean state. ... torture survivors [became] the nation’s living ghosts.”\textsuperscript{15}

The crucial question that follows is, how to address this double erasure? How to show something that is not (only) “of the order of the visible”?\textsuperscript{16} The films analysed here address these multiple processes of erasure, countering, in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{12} Didi-Huberman, \textit{Images in Spite of All}, p. 21.
\item \textsuperscript{14} Bilbija and Payne, \textit{Accounting for Violence}, p. 20.
\item There is a special cruelty in this attempt to reverse-engineer a life into an ungrievable existence, or in Butler’s words, ‘a life that will never have been lived,’ sustained by no regard, no testimony, and ungrieved when lost.” Butler, \textit{Frames of War}. p. 15.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Gómez-Barris, \textit{Where Memory Dwells}, p. 77.
\item Especially important to mention is Patricia Verdugo, \textit{De la tortura no se habla: Agüero versus Meneses} (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Catalonia, 2004), about the case of Felipe Agüero, a university professor who recognized a colleague as his former torturer. The case became one of the key components prompting the creation of an Ethical Commission in 2001, which eventually led to the creation of a second Truth Commission that would finally address the previously excluded issue of torture.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Steven Connor, ‘Sounding out Film’ (2000) \<http://www.stevenconnor.com/soundingout/> [accessed 3 December 2013].
\end{itemize}
various ways, the process of “forgetting extermination [as] part of extermination.” 17 The delicate balance lies between making visible and simultaneously also showing the previous and ongoing being-made-invisible. Connor’s notion of “systematic unseeing” resonates with Rosenstone’s call that the primary task of the history film is “to make familiar events of the past strange, that is, to make one see them anew.” 18 Rosenstone focuses here on making history visible, turning it into a palpable, immersive experience. Expanding on his formulation of seeing anew, however, the expression can refer literally to the visual sense or encompass more broadly different ways of comprehending. Seeing anew may mean seeing differently or seeing again. Under the twin heading of “seeing anew” and “making the invisible visible,” this chapter looks at strategies offered in contemporary fiction films on the dictatorship that invite the viewer to return to a familiar terrain of the past, but looking at it from different angles, visualizing exclusions and erasures, offering non-visual points of access or sensual modes of visuality.

Two scenes from NO and Pena help to illustrate how the presence of absence can be evoked, in ways that recall Nichols’s idea of “absent signifiers:”

> These absent signifiers … occupy our minds but not the screen … [our] understanding … depends on an awareness of what is absent but nonetheless alluded to. 19

17 Godard quoted in Joram Ten Brink and Joshua Oppenheimer, Killer Images, p. 3.
18 Rosenstone, History on film/film on history, p. 86.
In NO, torture appears in a TV spot for the NO-campaign – doubly mediated and distanced from the spectator. This is in fact the only moment where torture is visually featured in the film, although characters refer to its existence several times. The first spot is a montage of the facts of human rights abuses, with graphic and accusing images, including torture. [image 5.1, p. 400] The spot is shown to René when he is hired. His emotionally cold reaction – “Is that all? Don’t we have something more, I don’t know … happy?”20 – marks René as an ambivalent character. Subsequently, the question whether or not to include such footage also ignites a heated discussion among the members of campaign regarding the goals and focus for the campaign. The side arguing for something strategically “happy” prevails, and in an obvious parallel to post-dictatorship Chile, the crimes of the dictatorship are side-lined in the NO-campaign. The spot is pulled and not shown to the Chilean population. However, as the diegetic members of the campaign see the spot, so does the spectator. In this way, the topic is raised within the diegesis, while pointing to its historical exclusion and marginalization. The addressee is clearly the contemporary audience. Moreover, in the spot, the numbers of the disappeared and of the tortured are printed on intertitles. It seems that such statistics would not have existed before the Chilean Truth Commissions of 1990 and 2004,21 which again implies that the intended audiences of the spot are contemporary spectators, rather than diegetic ones.

20 “¿No tenemos algo más … no sé… alegre?”
21 See appendix.
The second spot is historical footage in the form of a testimonial video of relatives of the disappeared, mainly mothers and sisters. The women wear similar dresses, they are framed in the same way in the image, and they present information in identical structure: they say their own name, and their relation to and the name of a disappeared, thereby tying their (living) identity to a disappeared one. This historically accurate, intentional repetitive formula is intended to emphasise quantity. The women then dance the cueca, which is a traditional Chilean couples’ dance, without their partners. [image 5.2, p. 400]

For a certain generation of Chileans, this scene would probably raise memories of President Aylwin’s inauguration ceremony in the National Stadium on March 11, 1990, where women from the Association of Family Members of the Disappeared-Detainees danced this national dance “to symbolize the human losses that had been caused by the authoritarian regime.”

A later generation might recall the original moment of being confronted with such images. Even though additional viewings, viewings over time might rarely arouse the same response, whether affectively or cognitively, this effect can also be used productively. Multiple viewings may soften the shock, but also expand perception and understanding. Re-viewing, as shown with this example of the videos in NO, may be a repetition that refines our perspective and

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22 I include this circumference under “torture” in the sense of the specific psychological torture for the relatives and pervasive social fear that torture generates in the society, as outlined above, as explained in the introduction.
23 Bilbija and Payne, Accounting for Violence, p. 20.
24 This aspect is neglected in Sontag’s and her heirs’ call for an ecology of images which implicitly demands to remain truthful to one’s “original” emotional response; but why should this initial response be the most valuable one? Who decides how what is being designated, archived and recreated as the original experience?
knowledge. Our own (private) history of viewing and the (public) history of the image intertwine.

The recent Chilean documentary *Pena de Muerte* (*Pena*) provides another example of a successful translation of an invisible constellation. *Pena* investigates a series of unsolved murders in Viña del Mar in the early 1980s. The film speaks about impunity for past crimes, and also about the difficulty to establish historical truth. For despite the deployment of all the methodology of objectivity – the “prospect history” \(^{25}\) of maps, clips, diagrams – the film is unable to entirely solve its central “whodunit” crime mystery.

The film combines original documentary footage – in the form of Super 8mm, 16mm, Betamax, U-matic archive material, in different stages of decay – and newspaper articles with modern technologies, happily mixing re-enactments, animation, interviews and testimony of various participants/historical witnesses – journalists, a surviving victim, and investigators. The interviews are conducted with an Interrotron or a similar device, in identical, highly stylized environments. Contrarily, the re-enactments switch between the grainy feel and low resolution of a purposefully aged look, made to resemble archive material, and hyperbolically artificial scenes, expressively lit and slathered with markers of cinematic genres such as *film noir* or the gangster movie. Through this self-

reflexive, performative construction, *Pena* emphasizes how much each kind of historical narratives is shaped by its transporter medium.²⁶

*Pena* begins with a Pinochet speech, set to grainy, black and white images of what appears to be original footage of people sleeping in a Valparaíso metro (a transit light train system). As the speech ends on a note of horror and hypocrisy, admonishing to “stay at home in order to avoid innocent victims,” the camera zooms in on the face of one figure. Suddenly, this man is opening his eyes, distorting his mouth to an ominous and menacing smile, and the image switches to colour. The juxtaposition insinuates that the character has heard the speech, that he is the “sleeping man [who] is, in fact, all ears.”²⁷ The montage confuses the viewer as to the rules of the films – which part is faux footage and which is real, if any? – which is part of the “particular appeal to films that begin with the awakening of a character ... it appears as though it’s the real world that is a dream.”²⁸

The following scene in *Pena* demonstrates in a subtle way the limits of vision to offer a complete image, a full understanding of the film’s narrative, and by extension, of the History it is telling. About twenty minutes into the film, two interviewees, a police investigator and a neuropsychiatrist, suddenly begin interacting. Until now, each interviewee had appeared alone in the image. Each

²⁶ Compare Page’s suggestion that it is through the mix of analogue and digital that Latin American films in particular “experiment with different regimes of representation” which on the one hand evoke their particular eras – speaking to issues of temporality, history, and modernity in the Latin American context – but “in a way that complicates any simple oppositions between the old and new in visual technologies or codes, more often than not emphasizing a continuity.” Page, ‘Digital Mimicry’, p. 198 and p. 213.

²⁷ Chion, *Film, a Sound Art*, p. 282.

²⁸ Chion, *Film, a Sound Art*, p. 283.
had been seated before the same background, facing the camera – looking at us, the audience – thus creating the impression that the interviews have taken place separately and consecutively, and that the interviewees are responding to the director. Now the two are revealed to be together in the room, as they suddenly begin reacting to each other. This switch is largely conveyed through sound; there is no visual change in the static composition. Each interviewee continues to be framed separately in the image, the camera remains stationary, and the two interviews are linked via montage. But there is change within the image as their faces reveal expressions and reactions of listeners. The audience sees an image of a listening person, and we listen along, to the words of the other interviewee, coming from the off-screen space. The interviews evolve into a dialogue between the interviewees, which is edited as an aural shot-reverse shot structure. Either character still seems to look at and speak to the audience, while their diegetic responses are aimed at each other, and the audience’s point of view remains identified with the look of the camera(s). The sound maintains spatiotemporal continuity; a little further on, there is also occasional overlap of the voices, when the listener, engaged, attempts to interrupt. Usually, camera movements convert off-screen space into screen space, but here it is the flow of sound that makes us aware of the existence of the off-screen as a space different from what we imagined it to be, according to our coded ways of reading images. What is made present is the off-screen as the space where we confront the limits of our knowledge and perception, the space where the diegesis extends into the invisible and imaginary field. The
viewers must reconfigure their mental idea of the space in which these interviews take place, to acknowledge the existence of several cameras, each filming one interviewee, as they respond to each other. The result is both a revelation and destabilization of information. The revelation remains partial – we are never actually given visual confirmation of the characters’ joint presence, only the sound united them in the frame. And at the same time that we know more, we feel as if (or realize that) we know less than we thought – are we being tricked? What (else) do we not see or wrongly assume?

The tendency of Chilean cinema to emphasise what is offscreen as much as or more than what is inside the frame, has led Carolina Urrutia to define contemporary Chilean cinema as “centrifugal,” that is as a cinema which tends to move away from the central conflict. In her reading of the same forces, Libby Saxton offers an alternative. Analysing Caché, Saxton argues that here, Bazin’s distinction between centripetal and centrifugal frames is “troubled” for not only does on-screen space explode violently outwards; off-screen space also begins to encroach, in turn, on the space framed ... Haneke brings us face to face with the ‘champ aveugle’ described by Bonitzer, reminding us that our look is always blinkered.

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29 Accordingly, the audience shifts between different camera “eyes,” and if one were to operate with the notion that the viewer identifies with the camera, there are shifts in identification, or a kind of doubling.

30 Urrutia builds her concept on Bazin’s definition of cinema as centrifugal in contrast to painting’s centripetal forces, as well as on Ruiz’s reading of the Central Conflict Theory in much Hollywood cinema. Carolina Urrutia, Un Cine Centrífugo: Ficciones Chilenas 2005-2010 (Santiago de Chile: Cuarto Propio, 2013).

Applied to the films analysed here, History – the authoritarian repression in Manero, the coup in Mortem, a history of torture in Carne – is not excluded but overbearingly present, encroaching, invisible yet distinctly felt. As in Saxton’s analysis of Caché, these films attend to our blind spots – not only to personal and collective traumas that have been silenced, forgotten or excluded by commercial cinema and the mass media, but also to the sites of non-seeing which structure cinema and spectatorship. In according priority to the hidden, the invisible, the unknown, [such] secretive fiction exposes the margins of blindness which frame and limit our look, but are also, it suggests, a condition of our seeing.32

Metaphorically, the off-screen spaces of official history and memory are not restored to visibility but their erasure is made present. Formal emphasis on what is visibly absent, palpably missing reflects our fragmented, contingent knowledge of history, and acknowledges the erasures, even the impossibility of obtaining a total vision, to truly penetrate the other’s interior, and history’s enigma. This aesthetic choice speaks to the incompleteness of our picture of history, its exclusions and overly narrow framings.

**Emotions in Torture**

Pena addresses social pathologies and insinuates the extension of impunity for crimes of the past beyond the dictatorship period. The next section of this chapter moves more closely in on the complex emotional fallout that follows torture. Torture survivor Jean Améry finds the feelings that result from torture are “as incomparable as they are indescribable. They mark the limit of the

32 Saxton, ‘Secrets and Revelations’ [emphasis mine].
capacity of language to communicate.” Something about real torture remains incommunicable; at the same time, some things can be told about it; Améry’s own impactful words do describe and communicate something. Likewise, the films discussed here do succeed at making something about torture emotionally available, without attempting to approximate the experience of the survivor, the perpetrator, or to represent the pain-event in total.

Informed by recent approaches in cinema theory which emphasise the medium’s sensual capacities, I suggest that these films employ various forms of sensual modes of vision to help to render palpable the emotional consequences in the social fabric of post-dictatorship societies. This move towards a more expansive model of affective spectatorship, rather than the empathic identification with characters, is built on phenomenological idea of the embodied spectator and the cognitivist notion that actual emotions, including empathy, need not be necessarily character- and narrative-driven, “goal-, action- or object-oriented.” A cognitivist approach examines the

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34 Cognitivist approaches, such as Greg Smith’s “mood-cue approach” disagree with the neoformalist construction of film as plot- and narrative-driven, represented by David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson. Smith, Film Structure and the Emotion System; Bordwell and Thompson, Film Art.

On the other hand, cognitivist approaches have been criticized for ignoring the “historical and sociocultural situatedness of feelings” and applying a “fairly static” model of emotions where “emotions [emerge] as the result of the cognitive assessment.” Podalsky, The Politics of Affect, p. 12.

I am not addressing whether emotions elicited by cinema are the same as those elicited by reality – compare the discussion whether motion perception in cinema is the same as motion perception in reality. Tom Gunning, ‘Moving Away from the Index: Cinema and the Impression of Reality’, Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies, 18 (2007), pp. 29-52.
I am also bypassing how these processes work differently for documentary and in fiction, assuming that emotion, cognition, and critical reception interact and are intertwined, whether we are watching a fictionalization of torture on film or engage with nonfiction formats.  

35 Stadler, ‘Affectless Empathy’.

36 The concept of a “structure of feeling” was coined by Raymond Williams to describe how life felt at a particular time and place, a common set of perceptions and values shared by a particular generation, as articulated in artistic forms and conventions. The concept is used, for instance, by Christine Sprengler on nostalgia, by Avery Gordon on social hauntings, and by Deirdre Pribram on positive selective compassion in the justice film genre. Gordon, Ghostly Matters; Pribram E. Deidre Pribram, Emotions, Genre, and Justice in Film and Television: Detecting Feeling (New York: Routledge, 2011); Christine Sprengler, Screening Nostalgia: Populuxe Props and Technicolor Aesthetics in Contemporary American Film (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009).

37 “un estado de ánimo que escapa a la representación directa, pero que es posible reconocer en la construcción formal.” Estévez, ‘Dolores Políticos’, p. 16. I adapt Estévez’s interpretation that the visual and formal constructions in many Chilean films strives to “narrate what cannot be named” (“narra aquello que no se puede nombrar”). Estévez operates with a different set of films – Play (Alicia Scherson, 2005); La sagrada familia (Sebastián Lelio, 2005); Y las vacas vuelan (Fernando Lavanderos, 2004); En la cama (Matías Bize, 2005), Rabia (Oscar Cárdenas, 2006) – and a different type of emotion (melancholy) and methodology (psychoanalysis).
diagnosed as “learned hopelessness.” In Larraín’s trilogy, for instance, we are invited to feel such “historical” structures of feeling: Manero recreates feelings of fear, paralysis, and gloom that permeated Chilean society under the dictatorship; Mortem evokes what the director called “the smell of a coup;” and NO translates the giddy tension between hope and fear around the plebiscite. Thus, the trilogy extends an invitation to feel collective states, socially pervasive moods, and to “empathise”, broadly speaking, with an era or history. The focus on opaque emotional fields such as depression and dread, here released from their attachment to particular characters, addresses the collective dimension of the social aftermath of a torture, and thus helps to reconfigure its parameters and non-visible dimensions, what remains invisible and what is considered unspeakable. On the other hand, this “structure of feeling” also relates to a malaise of the present: none of these films are only about the past, but rather about the continuation of the past in the present. By creating an emotional opening, transmitted and received via this structure of feeling, the communal and political effects of social hauntings are better understood.

38 Cf. Moulian, Chile Actual; Tironi appears with this phrase in NO.
39 In the DVD commentary, Larraín argues that the coup was in the air as a “smell” (“un olor al golpe”).
40 I side with Smith who emphasises the idea of an invitation, in distinction from more deterministic empathy critiques. Neither image nor framing nor exhibition context can determine the audience’s response, which is only encouraged or guided by form. Smith, Film Structure and the Emotion System, p. 38.
41 Estève for instance, discusses such as the link between past and present, in a different set of films, set in the present and without an overt political theme. Compare Shaviro’s project to develop an account of what it feels like to live in the early twenty-first century Stephen Shaviro, ‘What Is the Post-Cinematic?’ <http://www.shaviro.com/Blog/?p=992>. [accessed 5 February 2016]
Representation- and identification-based criticism tends to focus on characters and to assess a film’s political tendency. Time allocated to the experience of the perpetrator of violence, the torturer, would then almost automatically be reactionary. Yet any such paradigmatic rejection of perpetrator narratives resonates with the fear of “emotional contagion.”\(^\text{42}\) Contrarily, *Pena* and *Carne* offer an emotional space, played out within perpetrator stories, without inviting emotional identification with the perpetrators. These films render “socially circulating” emotions perceptible, inviting access to an emotional dimension that is not in opposition to rational thought. In *Carne*, the emotional tone is made palpable by a sensual mode of vision; in *Pena*, the dynamics of shame and terror are de-naturalized via aesthetic hyperbole and hypermediation.

Two examples help to illustrate the fact that emotions, like our bodies, perception, language and thought, are socially and culturally shaped and historically specific sensibilities.\(^\text{43}\) In *Nostalgia*, Violeta Berrios, the sister of a disappeared lucidly describes herself and her fellow searchers as “the lepers of Chile.” The comparison is powerful in its evocation how the horror of the past seems to *stick* to the bodies of these women who describe being shunned by society as if they carried a contagious disease. As long as their relatives remain

\(^\text{42}\) Murray Smith defines the process of emotional contagion as follows: “where in affective mimicry we have some awareness that the source of the mimicked emotion lies in another person with whom we engage, in contagion we lack any such awareness of the source of the ‘caught’ emotion.” Murray Smith, ‘Empathy, Expansionism, and the Extended Mind’, in Empathy: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives, ed. by Amy Coplan and Peter Goldie (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 99-117 (p. 101). Unfortunately, such anxieties are not limited to the fictional realm.

\(^\text{43}\) Social structures, as “the [productive] relationship of consciousness to its objects ... create the conditions of possibility for the emergence of an object of perception.” Shapiro, *Cinematic geopolitics*, p. 64.
disappeared, these women refuse to let go, thereby disrupting the narrative of reconciliation. They are thus “abject,” in the sense described by Kristeva, as “that which ‘disturbs identity, system and order … [that which] does not respect borders, positions, rules’” – here, the parameters of the official post-dictatorship discourse of a relatively smooth flow of transition. These women’s pain remains so raw and unappeased that it threatens to affect others, who might be led to empathise “against their will.” The women are isolated as if their pain were infectious. As in Rumsfeld’s refusal to take “the torture word” into his mouth, in Vicky’s indictment, torture appears as something contagious and transgressive which infects language and contaminates even those who only speak of it. Physical disgust frequently generates a distancing action, either to remove the physically disgusting object or to remove oneself from what is perceived and culturally constructed to be polluted, soiled or infectious. This physical disgust is here linked to certain subjects, “wedded to the sociomoral domain through metaphors of the body.”

Often described in personal terms, or in the case of affect, as simply a “hardware” part of human nature, emotions are in fact often harnessed to psychological, social, cultural and ideological concerns constructs. Feelings such as disgust, shame and compassion “derive from social training, emerge at historical moments [and] are shaped by aesthetic conventions.” Such “social feelings” circulate, and are attached to certain bodies; “certain people are

made to carry the affects of another.”  

Emotions circulate; they are relational and attach to people. Following Ahmed’s suggestion to focus not on what emotions are to but what they do, the attention shifts towards the processes that taint some bodies and leaves others free of the emotional mark of torture.

Another example, from Pena, demonstrates how this film encourages the spectator to deconstruct this link between a sensation – a body as the carrier of meaning – and the regulating political and social function it has acquired. Early in Pena, a neuropsychologist explains that the psychopathic behaviour demonstrated by the murderers did in fact mirror the conduct of the authorities. Taunting the police, these serial killers did not even bother to cover their traces; apparently they experienced a sense of inviolability. Pena connects this particular historical event to the larger issue of impunity and amnesty as it ricochets onward into the present. Such a sense of inviolability appears also with the perpetrators in Los Archivos and Manero, and in each case it is expressed through a consciously cinematic self-presentation as the killers stylise themselves in ways that mimic cinematic conventions. Recently, this issue was discussed in relation to the visually pleasing form of the previously mentioned Act of Killing, where former torturers and killers are filmed as they re-stage and re-enact their memories. In contrast to Act of Killing, the Chilean examples are careful to also aesthetically deconstruct the fear and awe that this highly performative presentation might have inspired historically. In Manero, Raúl is at

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49 Again, as with the Chilean television shows, there seems to be public interest for these stories; Pena won the audience choice award at FIDOCS 2013.
bottom a pathetic figure who cannot actually dance and does not look much like John Travolta; in Los Archivos, the perpetrators are shown also in moments of fright and confusion, and any impression of coolness on their part is topped by their opponents, the members of the Vicariate, who are portrayed by attractive, well-known Chilean actors. In Pena, the aesthetic hyperbole of the re-enactments of the killings aims to disrupt the smugness of impunity. As a central dimension of torture’s power dynamic is its emotional grip, the power to shame, to define who is ostracized and who escapes untainted, these aesthetic choices are also a deliberate political act. Over-lit and amateurishly over-acted, the re-enactments add a sense of ridicule, and highlight that the killers’ narrative of inviolability is not set in stone. [image 5.11, p. 408]

**On Sound, Breath, and Touch**

Carne shows a week in the life of former torturer and present-day taxi driver Alejandro. The marketing focus for Carne relied heavily on public knowledge centred on the body of its protagonist. Well-known actor Alejandro Goic, who portrays the former torturer, is in fact a torture survivor. Reinforced by extradiegetic promotion and continually insinuated on a narrative level, Alejandro’s violent past is never explicitly mentioned but it is made “feelable.” The film begins with Alejandro receiving a phone call and throwing a fit of rage. Next we see Alejandro attending the funeral of a former colleague who killed

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50 Director Guzzoni deliberately sought this “relation with the real.” The reversal of roles means that at least the actor Goic has to sense himself into the mind of the torturer. There has been speculation that the director sought to achieve sympathy or reconciliation through this representation, channelled through the representative actor.
himself, followed by days that seem haphazardly punctured by random encounters yet mostly spent in crushing isolation. At one point Alejandro severely wounds a dog; near the end of the film, he has to bury the animal. Similar to the seminal *La historia oficial*, torture appears in symbolic and displaced forms, so that it is “ever present, even though it is not directly presented. It is there by allusion, by suggestion rather than by direct representation” as the film “make[s] us feel the physical effects.”

In *Carne*, Alejandro’s buried past creates a claustrophobic present, in which he finds himself imprisoned, isolated and unable to redeem himself. All these glaring absences and silences palpably weigh down on Alejandro, encroaching on him. The film “makes us feel” these physical effects, as Hart put it, by restricting our range of perception: objects are tightly framed; and the camera focuses almost constantly on Alejandro’s face and torso; there is always a sense of tightness, a lack of (breathing) space. The soundscape, too, weighs down with silences, the absence of extradiegetic sounds, the pronounced silence of its protagonist, and the sounds that trigger Alejandro’s attacks.

*Carne* begins *in medias res*, and never resorts to explaining flashbacks. Viewer and protagonist are imprisoned in an artificially orphaned present, left without context, without narrative explanation, without familiar sense-making schemes.

The film translates Alejandro’s subjectivity in this spatial, temporal, sonic and

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51 Stephen M. Hart, *A Companion to Latin American Film* (Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2004), p. 123. Hart analyses how, in *La historia oficial*, torture appears in “the world of the children ... the use of noise and games ... the Dirty War is ever present,” p. 123. The film implies that the disappeared parents were tortured and the protagonist’s husband was a torturer when, in a shocking and unforgettable scene, he breaks his wife’s hand in the doorframe.
intellectual confinement. The viewer infers bits of a larger story through semantic codes that insinuate a violent past and Alejandro’s proclivity towards violence. [image 5.3, p. 400] Unable to deal with frustration, tension or fear in socially acceptable ways, Alejandro reacts even to minor incursions with violent and destructive behaviour. During his first panic attack, Alejandro smashes a mirror, hurting his own hand. When he speaks to his ex-wife, he insists that he wants to and can change but, repudiated by the haggard woman, he blows up at her. He smashes and burns the tape that he intended to give to his daughter (who he is not allowed to see, suggesting a history of domestic violence). In a scene which turns out to be pivotal, we watch Alejandro boil water, ostensibly calm, while a dog (that had apparently just trashed his washing line) is barking in the invisible off-screen. We are then shocked to see him throw the boiling water into that off-screen, and we hear yelping in pain.

Alejandro is completely isolated in a world of silence and unpleasant noises. At a clinic, a young, warm and soft-spoken doctor explains Alejandro’s panic attacks and feelings of “electricity” in the spine as post-traumatic stress. He suggests therapy, which Alejandro rejects, apparently unwilling to talk about his past. In that scene, a heaving Alejandro is framed alone in the image, as a bodiless voice gives him instructions to breathe. 52 In this case of de-acousmatization – splitting body and voice – Carne uses (the absence of) sound and language to create a sense for Alejandro’s subjectivity.

52 These metaphors – of electricity of the spine, Alejandro’s smashed hand, the dog’s burnt flesh, even the noise-drowning water in the swimming pool – evoke torture techniques. A later scene of Alejandro entering the ocean is suggestive of a suicide attempt and the fate of those disappeared who were thrown into the ocean.
Carne is almost exclusively filmed in close-ups or medium shots of Alejandro in shallow depth of field. The shallow focus excludes all extraneous information, blurring the background, and restricting the audience to a myopic vision. These formal constraints of Carne confine the audience’s point of view to a semantic-perceptual space shared with Alejandro. Nevertheless, the perspective of the narrative agency does not collapse into that of the protagonist. Spatial proximity in Carne seems to hinder rather than help other kinds of closeness, to intensify detachment rather than empathetic attachment, and there is no emotional contagion. The physical proximity, mimicked by framing, to a largely unlikeable subject, is sometimes rather uncomfortable. Even though mere exposure may create attachment – “we tend to react more positively to people we see repeatedly” — in Carne, the joint perceptual space does not lead to identification. Nor do we experience the same emotion as Alejandro: his actions suggest that he feels deep pain and a towering rage, neither of which we share and the precise reasons of which we can only attempt to put together.

Carne fictionalizes the result of a culture of silence for the perpetrators and for the society in which they live. In Chile, a dominant revisionist discourse made it easy to overlook that only few perpetrators or collaborators spoke out. Their perspective, Bilbija and Payne suggest, “remains novel, even if the information they provide is not … overexposure may prove less dangerous than its

53 Per Persson uses this term to describe the relations - such as between caretaker and infant - of joint visual attention, not precisely identical visual angle. Per Persson, Understanding Cinema: A Psychological Theory of Moving Imagery (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 70.
opposite, underexposure."\textsuperscript{55} The silence of the torturer means that something of the nature of torture is

lost to our understanding ... something of what ties the torturer to the ordinary citizen who shuts his or her eyes to the presence and persistence of systematic torture is then not understood.\textsuperscript{56}

Carne’s protagonist is a perpetrator who hardly speaks. Alejandro seems to suffer from a symbolic aphasia, defined as loss or impairment of the power to use or comprehend speech.\textsuperscript{57} Language fails Alejandro as a means of social interaction, bonding and self-expression. His aphasia – in the sense of impairment, not incapacity – also informs the film’s formal language. Filmed with no extra-diegetic sound, the film emphasises silences, “inner” or in-between sounds such as his breathing, and acousmètric forces. These formal constraints point to the existence of invisibilities, absences and losses to understanding that shape reality. Every verbal communication of Alejandro’s is problematic, characterized by misunderstandings, conflict and fights, and often prematurely aborted. His wife refuses to listen or speak to him (as her suffering demeanour speaks volumes, this rejection is not set up to arouse sympathy for Alejandro); the girl he meets on the street lies to him and disappears.

\textsuperscript{55} Bilbija and Payne, Accounting for Violence, p. 31.

In Chile, there are very famous cases of perpetrators speaking out, hybrid figures of torture survivor and informant. Among the most famous and widely discussed cases of these victims as perpetrators were Luz Arce’s memoir, The Inferno, and Marcia Merino’s case which became the subject of a film. La Flaca Alejandra (1994); Luz Arce, The Inferno: A Story of Terror and Survival in Chile (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004). Both Arce and Merino were severely tortured and became informants; Arce in particular has been judged quite harshly, for instance by Richard who found the unverifiable unauthenticated confession of Arce’s account morally perturbing, or Franco who argued that in Arce’s account, pain served as justification and redemption.

\textsuperscript{56} Gordon, Ghostly Matters, p. 74.

\textsuperscript{57} Aphasia, literally a result of brain damage, may be tied in a symbolic reading to Alejandro’s trauma.
Nevertheless, Alejandro seeks contact, to have his existence recognized through being addressed.\textsuperscript{58} In the Western society’s model of communication, “speech is the norm”\textsuperscript{59} and silence implies distance. Even outside of speech, our sounds always communicate something, even if simply that we exist. The breakdown of language is thus symbolic of Alejandro’s incapacity to redefine his existence and to find meaningful connection to his community.

Silence – as pauses in speech – can make the speaker sensuously, physically present: “Everyone has experienced how, when punctuated by long silences, words weigh more; they become almost palpable. Or how, when one talks less, one begins feeling more fully one’s physical presence in a given space.”\textsuperscript{60} In Carne, Alejandro’s silences as well as his inept speech foreground the presence of his somewhat unwieldy, resisting, aching, failing body. Even when he uses language, his body seems to overwhelm his voice, with sudden outbursts of anger, repetitions, stammering or shaking.

Whereas usually the visual impact is heightened by sound, giving a body to the flatness of the image, in Carne the absence of sound seems to “flatten” the image. Combining the absence of extradiegetic sound with a camera that seems glued to this isolated character, thus excluding more varied and stimulating visual information, the film intersects visual and aural paucity. Alejandro’s sonic surroundings are sparse and reach us in snippets: a television reportage, military music on the radio, white noise in public places, waiting


\textsuperscript{60} Sontag in de Luca, \textit{Realism of the Senses}, p. 97.
rooms, the nightly traffic of Santiago. Along with the sombre colour palette, the absence of recreational or pleasant sounds – music, sounds from nature or (amiable) human interaction – express aurally Alejandro’s depressed state. Withholding any musical score is part of a strategy to align us perceptually with Alejandro’s diminished radius of perception and his isolated world. Out of the silent world of the film, discursive forms outside of language gain prominence and express emotional and affective states. These sonic patterns and rhythms connect the spectator to the protagonist’s tumultuous inner world.

The sources of the sounds that disturb Alejandro are exclusively transmitted in *acousmêtre*, Michel Chion’s term to describe a voice we cannot connect to a voice or body.61 Chion describes the powers of the acousmatic being in terms of the holy, and its superior, uncanny, or even threatening powers.

The acousmêtre is everywhere, its voice comes from an immaterial and non-localized body, and it seems that no obstacle can stop it ... [it] is all-seeing, its word is like the word of God ... Seeing all, in the logic of magical thought ... implies knowing all.62

Such voices or sounds retain their “aura of invulnerability and magical power”63 until one is able to connect voice to body, to link mouth and face to voice. In *Carne*, acousmêtic voices and sounds trigger Alejandro’s attacks: shouts of a fight that seems to come from his neighbours are never attached to the image of a body; the barking and howling of his dog comes from off-screen; the invisible (and to the audience, also inaudible) voice on the phone that, as we

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63 Chion, *Voice in Cinema*, p. 28.
deduce later, informs him about a colleague’s suicide. According to Chion, both body without voice – the mute – and its opposite, the voice without a body, are “presumed to have virtually unlimited knowledge and vision, and maybe even unlimited power.”

At the funeral, a stone-faced Alejandro does not pray along to the priest’s words, which do sound verbose and saccharine. His silence acknowledges the inadequacy of language for certain experiences. Oyarzún proposes that the silence in mourning seems closer to truth than the “impotent” lament, the most “undifferentiated” and “impotent” aspect of language. Initially, Alejandro’s silence is indeed framed rather as a powerful option on its own, not in binary opposition to words, as just an absence of speech. But increasingly Alejandro’s silence suffocates him, imprisons him in an interior world that is not a sanctuary but a torment. Later in the narrative, Alejandro visits a friend or former colleague in a mental hospital, who prattles on compulsively, seemingly oblivious to Alejandro’s presence. Alejandro’s silence is the counterpart to his friend’s babbling, equally helpless and inadequate.

It is not only Alejandro’s own inability to communicate, his failure to read his surroundings, but also his social set-up that inhibits speaking. He lives alone in

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64 Chion, Voice in Cinema, p. 97.
66 It would be interesting to read this Benjamin’s description of this kind of speech, in German “Geschwätz,” frequently translated as “prattle” or “idle gossip,” as linked to the fall of mankind, where thirst for knowledge brought evil into the world. Alejandro’s crazed friend tells a particularly telling story, in which a Chilean afraid of flying tells his doctor, “I’m sure you could cure me of the fear but the plane would still crash.” It’s a variation of what Joseph Heller described in Catch 22 as “Just because you’re paranoid doesn’t mean they aren’t after you”; in the friend’s telling, the joke is coded as something particular to Chileans.
an isolated area; during his regular trips to the pool he enters a completely silent world that cuts him off sonically from his environment. Alejandro works as a taxi driver, and when his cab breaks down, his social isolation seems to reach a breaking point. He is also literally silenced: at the meeting of former colleagues or comrades, Alejandro is threatened to keep with their pact of silence. Here, the meaning of Alejandro’s silence changes from being a form of agency, as well as resistance and most likely also an obstruction to justice, to a passive being silenced. Thus, both the absence and the conflictive presence of language reflect on Alejandro’s voluntary and enforced silences, and also comment on the society that emerged from the dictatorship.

Alejandro’s trigger sounds are not very well defined. It is often impossible for the audience to distinguish voices and non-verbal sounds or to isolate concrete words within the soundscape. As the sources of these sounds mostly remain off-screen, they could also be located in Alejandro’s interior, and come to us as an aural flashback. Thus, Alejandro’s sonic triggers oscillate between off-screen sound and what Chion calls son off: “nondiegetic sound that belongs to a time and/or place different from the space-time of the action shown in the image.”

Privileging sound also privileges time; as Chion points out, “the eye is more spatially adept, and the ear more temporally adept.” The temporal mode in Carne is a permanent present: while the origin of the sound might be in the past, the sound itself, unstoppable, always keeps us in the present. This of

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course is suggestive of trauma, where the victim is locked into a temporal loop. The trigger sounds are perfectly believable within the diegesis, but because we do not see them, they could also be a figment of Alejandro’s imagination, an auditory expression of his interior stress, a feedback loop, like the electricity he feels on his spine.

Edward Munch’s famous Scream series of paintings demonstrate how visible even absent sound can be. Munch’s faces are marked indexically by the (unheard, missing) sound, which functions as a highly perceptible visual anchor. Their continuation in the masks of the Scream trilogy demonstrates how terrifying such an inscribed absence of sound can be, a silence where there should be sound. Conveying Alejandro’s posttraumatic state to the audience via sound captures the state of being “locked in” or frozen, as in The Scream. The audience, like the PTSD victim, cannot escape the perception and experience; we cannot shut our ears to sound. This is the sensation to the image which ends the film, with a subtle hint of redemption for Alejandro, when the camera is locked into a room that Alejandro has just left, and the camera “eye” remains focused on the doorknob.

After deliberately scalding his dog, Alejandro exhibits an unprecedented kindness towards the wounded creature. He bandages, nurses and pets the animal, speaks in a soothing voice, and mimics the dog’s breath. Only after Alejandro has wounded the dog do we see, for the first time, an image to accompany the sounds of the animal – as if, for Alejandro, the dog only now appears as a physical, embodied being. These images of the animal’s bloody
insides, visible in a large wound, are rather graphic.\textsuperscript{69} As interface between inside and outside, the dog’s wounded skin crosses the inside-outside boundary which demarcates the abject. Alejandro rips the skin to cross the intersection between self and other, individual and social, that skin demarcates. Now that, to Alejandro, the dog has entered into existence, he responds by aligning his own breath – his voice and body – to that of the animal.\textsuperscript{70} Through synchronous breathing he gains a form of interconnectedness, through pain, which he fails to obtain with people. Between Alejandro and the dog, a form of communication independent of language seems to evolve, a moving and breathing together in time, similar to dance or certain group exercises, where an expansive synchrony links the bodies that make up the group in a connection that is not dependent on actual touch.\textsuperscript{71} The spectator is invited to become part of this “affective encounter” of “kinesthetic empathy” rather than emotional identification,\textsuperscript{72} partly through haptic images, images which are

\textsuperscript{69} The images are so graphic that one reviewer complained about the „late“ information that no animal was actually hurt in the making of this film.
\textsuperscript{70} Alejandro and the dog have been previously linked in the montage, as they move in similar ways in their sleep; in his ineptitude at verbal communication, Alejandro is a bit like an animal, reacting to trigger sounds as if on autopilot.
\textsuperscript{71} Deborah Reynolds makes this argument about the “body” of dance, based on Bennett’s idea of an “affective encounter” and Sobchack’s notion of embodied spectatorship; Lisa Blackman also uses Sobchack and the idea of “being ‘touched’ by a film compare Lisa Blackman, \textit{Immaterial Bodies: Affect, Embodiment, Mediation} (London: SAGE, 2012); Dee Reynolds and Matthew Reason, \textit{Kinesthetic Empathy in Creative and Cultural Practices} (Bristol: Intellect, 2012).
\textsuperscript{72} Breathing tends to incite mimicry: conscious, strong breathing has the potential to cross and connect inner and outer spaces, to hear the panting both inside and outside the body. Like sound and skin, breath is an interface between body and non-body, both internal and external, produced, felt and heard both inside and outside the body. It becomes visible through its supporting medium, and thus refers back to the material presence of the body that produces and supports it.
“beyond language” or “made up of language,” fitting for the aural dispersion outlined above.

Davina Quinlivan extends Marks’s concept of ‘haptic visuality’ to the aural dimension; the tactile dimension here relates more closely to sound, textures of noise; breathing is intrinsically something more felt than heard, and more heard than seen. The “act of hearing breath ... relate[s] to a kind of aural form of haptics.” In Quinlivan’s examples, breath is used as a connector between audience and protagonist, a “breathing encounter between filmic bodies and the bodies of the viewer.” As the viewer responds to the protagonist’s diegetic breathing, breath offers a potentially inter-subjective nature of viewing and hearing and shifts attention to the “aural implications” of this mode of perception.

Based on Quinlivan’s model of intersubjectivity through breath, Sarah Wright suggested viewing the scene of the maltreated/abused dog as staging a “crisis of (mimetic) identification” between spectator and perpetrator in which the element of breath binds past and present intersubjectively. While I agree on the importance of breath, I cannot go as far as Wright in terms of

74 Compare Quinlivan’s insightful analysis of the various dimensions of breath in a scene from *Breaking the Waves*: “the static framing of the image is affected by Bess’s breathing: it slips slightly out of focus and then recovers composure ... this perceptible instability conveyed through the film’s form is rather more of a deliberate gesture by the filmmaker to provoke in the viewer similar feelings of disorientation that are felt by Bess and, given the timing of this formal affect, it appears to relate directly to Bess’s breathing corporeality.” Davina Quinlivan, ‘Breath Control: The Sound and Sight of Respiration as Hyperrealist Corporeality in *Breaking the Waves*’, in *Realism and the Audiovisual Media*, ed. by Lúcia Nagib and Cecília Mello (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 152-63 (p. 156).
75 Quinlivan, ‘Breath Control’, p. 159.
76 Quinlivan relates her ideas on sharing breath to Irigaray’s notion of the caress and how the touched and touching are linked – the one being touched also touches.
identification. According to Wright, the film raises sympathy for Alejandro and the hurt dog symbolises both the “spectral manifestation of past torture victims”, as well as an “intersubjective manifestation of Alejandro himself;” victim and perpetrator are intersubjectively bound in pain. 77

Breath indicates life – a thing that breathes is a living thing, and breathing indicates also some form of authenticity, as breath can never be “fully articulate artifice.” 78 Just like we cannot “shut our ears,” we cannot not breathe; neither sound nor breath can be stopped without it being destroyed. At other moments in the film as well, the breathing connects the audience with Alejandro’s experience: Carne opens with a panic attack that is mainly aurally transmitted – watching a dark screen, we hear the breathing of someone who is gasping for air, then the sound of water running. Brief images of an open water tap, a motionless Alejandro staring straight ahead into a bathroom mirror are followed by a longer shot, which begins as a close frame of Alejandro’s back as he is on the phone, heavily breathing. He hangs up, smashes first the phone down, then his body against the wall, then the door. The camera remains motionless and as Alejandro moves away, he merges with the unfocussed

Regarding the film’s symbolism, the central metaphor is of course the dog and his eponymous flesh. The expression “carne de perro” signifies “thick skin,” resilience. The hurt and tortured flesh of the dog could of course be read as a metaphor on the torture victims. The dog can also be read as a metaphor of the nation, in a nod to seminal Latin American films such as Venceremos (Rios/Chaskel, 1970) featuring a metaphoric image of a dog which in turn recalls the bull metaphor in La hora de los horneros (Getino/Solanas, 1968), or more recently Amores Perros (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2000).

78 Quinlivan, ‘Breath Control’, p. 159. What Quinlivan does not address is the difference between “recorded” breath and “real” breath.
background. The whole image becomes blurry at this point, as if no longer able to “see clearly.” [image 5.4, p. 400] In combination with Alejandro’s tortured breath, these initial moments of the film seem a cinematic approximation of Alejandro’s inner state, a way to make his pain perceptible.

On the other hand, contrary to this reading direction, which suggests that the image performs, even embodies Alejandro’s loss of control and perceptual acuity, such images can also be read as a programmatic statement of the camera’s futile pursuit of Alejandro throughout the film, where the unbridgeable physical distance to Alejandro’s body occludes understanding.79

The camera in Carne contains an element of intrusion, of scientific probing, of indecency and even violence in its relentless persecution. [image 5.5, p. 400] It is as if the camera wishes to dissect their subjects, to enter a dimension it is excluded from, to invade the characters’ interior or minds by eliminating distance. This camera does not look, it touches – not with Marks’s soft touch but in an attempted penetration, of excessive physical contact. [image 5.6, p. 400] The spatial vicinity between camera and object in Carne emphasize the surface of the image and its haptic dimension. Sometimes, this “penetration”

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79 Following Quinlivan’s suggestion that “film’s formal attributes can become suggestive of breathing, especially the rhythms of editing techniques, composition, colour and camera movement,” the scene can also be conceived of as visualized breathing, as the shifting out of and attempted refocusing of the lenses translate the rhythmic heaving visually. Quinlivan, Place of Breath in Cinema, p. 19. In the manifestly blurry out-of-focus surface of the image at this moment, the image’s haptic and sonic-epidermic dimension is highlighted. The image resembles a skin or even a heaving lung, whose alveoli membranes are polluted. This is combined with the heavy breathing of the soundtrack which overwhelms all other sonic space: we do not hear ambient sound in the sequence. The blurred surface and the sound of compressed breathing produce an affective congruence between aural, haptic and visual dimension.
translates (for the spectator) into an optic “entering” of the “flesh and blood” of the body of the film itself. Here, the “excessiveness” of this proximity does not promote clarity but destabilizes a sense of space and proportion, dissolving even known shapes, fragmenting the human body, and threatening to disfigure the legibility of the image. Especially the prolonged close-ups feel excessive, and create feelings of claustrophobia. The close-up threatens with “a certain monstrosity, a face or object filling the screen and annihilating all sense of scale.” Human bodies and faces are isolated within the frame, as their surroundings dissolve into blurred backgrounds. Such a compression of space – which features prominently in Carne, as well as Mortem and Manero – suggests the characters’ isolation, thereby speaking to the destruction of community sphere, and expresses feelings of unease and dread.

As with Mortem’s mechanical images, there is a brutality to this fragmentation and penetration of the human body. When the dog is hurt in Carne, this inquisitive camera shows us its wounds in close-up, linking spatial proximity and pain. Neither the snout of the panting dog nor his entire body are ever

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80 Doane, ‘Scale’.
81 Doane, ‘Scale’, p. 73. The “inherent despatialization” of the close-up in general interferes with a homogenized, streamlined sense of space, preserved by continuity editing against the “spatial violence that filmic abstraction entails”, and a sense of proportionality. Doane discusses similar phenomena of scale and space in two films where “a dangerous over-closeness to the camera, hence the viewer, [makes] it difficult to interpret the spatial field. It is an excessive proximity that produces at least a transitory illegibility and disorientation.” Doane, ‘Scale’, p. 78.
82 In some cases, such images can be related to the protagonists’ diminished perceptual capacity, in other cases they seem to express a larger framework of emotionality, the perceptual width and distortions of life under dictatorship. For instance, Manero obliterates the sensation of sky and horizon, as suggested by Fernando Blanco, Deviants, Dissidents, Perverts: Chile Post Pinochet (The Ohio State University, 2009).
completely visible in the frame. For all its irreverent lack of detachment, the
image remains always myopic. If perspective stabilizes and offers the spectator
a position of mastery, the close-up tends to flatten the image, to dissolve a
sense of three-dimensional space. In Carne, the spectator and the camera are
always too close to its object to see it properly, to apprehend it as an entity.

Usually, the body and especially face of an actor offer the potential to channel a
mimetic encounter. The face invites intersubjective encounter between the
profilmic character and the audience, in a way that, it has been argued, only
cinema can provide: “isolated from its surroundings, [the face] seemed to
penetrate to a strange new dimension of the soul. It revealed to us a new world –
the world of microphysiognomy which could not otherwise be seen with the
naked eye of everyday life.” 83 Faces tend to give us mimetic clues and
encourage a mimetic-emotional responses. Close-ups in particular, primarily
associated with the human face, exploit that we are hard-wired to respond
strongly to the language of facial expressions, that eye contact is important to
evoke empathy. Yet the protagonists of Carne and Manero, Mortem, and even
NO, are all rather inexpressive, or rather, their expressiveness resides in a
strained facial blankness, the very present absence of stronger expressions. 84

Alejandro tells his doctor he has “perfect vision.” If seeing signifies knowing,
this is an ironic metaphor on Alejandro’s delusion, or pretence, regarding his

83 Béla Balázs, Early Film Theory: Visible Man and the Spirit of Film (New York: Berghahn, 2011).
84 A reviewer of Carne complained about the opacity of the character (“uninformative”,
“elliptical, enigmatic subtlety.” Neil Young, ‘Dog Flesh (Carne De Perro)’ (10 February
actual lack of perspective. Conversely, it could also be read as a hint that Alejandro’s “far-sightedness” is locked inside him, impenetrable and inaccessible to camera and spectator. After a physically enacted renaissance experience, in the last scene, Alejandro leaves the church, the place of his rebirth; he turns off the lights and leaves camera and spectator imprisoned inside the church. There are the sounds of being locked in, and the camera remains completely static, immobile, focused on the doorknob as if staring at the locked door. This last image can be read as a metaphor on the locked door to the past and also as a declaration of independence or escape on the part of Alejandro, his liberation from the camera’s scrutinizing gaze.

Yet despite this brutality, Alejandro’s existence is acknowledged by this camera. He – and by extensions others like him – remain essentially an enigma. We are so distanced from Alejandro’s inner world that we cannot anticipate what he will do with the boiling water or his motives for entering the ocean. Alejandro’s inexpressive mimic barely allow access to his emotional state of mind even as he is seeking what Elsaesser calls “embodied self-perception ... made possible through the perception of another,”\(^85\) taking possession of oneself through the look – or touch – of another. Alejandro seems to desire acknowledgment, recognition, and human connection, often via touch.\(^86\)

The need for a “good touch” also appears at prominent places in the other films discussed in this chapter; for instance, Nostalgia features a woman who

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\(^{86}\) On visiting a prostitute, all Alejandro wishes to do is to cuddle in her lap. Larraín uses similar strategies to characterize his problematic protagonists. Compare how the protagonists of Mortem and Manero seek but fail to create satisfying sexual encounters.
helps survivors heal through physical touch. Skin knowledge is part of an intelligent body memory, which can evolve and help the mind heal. Jill Bennett writes, “To reflect on sense memory is not to move into the domain of representation ... but to move into contact with it.”

A haptic approach seems fitting then, to reflect on or even evoke such a sentient activity in the spectator. Especially in Carne and Mortem the characters are looked at, visually “touched” by the camera, especially if we think of the gaze as an active, possessive activity. Yet this gaze is unmistakably marked as a complicit machine in Mortem, distinctly mechanical and cold, and as an obsessive, relentless hunter in Carne. As in Larrain’s trilogy, the limitations of the visual image derive from its presumably objective mechanical basis. In fact, the relentlessness of this persecution destabilizes the perpetrator-victim boundary: what right do we have to force our entry into Alejandro’s world, to demand explanation of History? This machine gaze does not offer a compassionate and empathic perspective – this is a reaction reserved as a possibility for the spectator. The audience may decide what their gaze onto Alejandro, their seeing and thereby acknowledging Alejandro’s existence adds up to, whether judgement, pity, condemnation, or indifference.

**Tethering the Real**

The next part of this chapter addresses how technological developments affect the authority of the medium, as our belief in the truth of the image as evidence

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87 Bennett, *Empathic Vision*, p. 44.
and documentation is critical for the subject matter of torture. The questions of indexicality and archival authority intertwine here. To begin with indexicality: the paradox of the cinematic image has been defined as an indexical presence of the photographed body pointing to the absence of the actual body, yet bestowing upon the image an evidentiary status. Confronted “with the threat and/or promise of the digital,” the category of indexicality has attained “a new centrality.” The digital image evokes anxieties for its seemingly unprecedented ease of manipulation, and the revelatory automatism of the (indexical) filmic trace is set against the loss of truth value in digital manipulation. Yet this binary between the untrustworthiness of digital manipulation and the direct link to truth in photochemical film is not fair to either side. Firstly, in some ways, the digital promises more truth, containing more information than the analogue image. CGI has increased the possibilities of perceptual realism (defined as a correspondence-based approach to cinematic representation) by allowing data visualization to move from the conceptual to perceptual realm. Mark Wolf offers the useful example of the “enigma of the X-ray” where “we are faced with a ‘document of the unseen but

88 The terminology follows Peter Wollen’s application of C. S. Peirce’s vocabulary.
Elsaesser also mentions Manovich’s solution, namely to declare both the digital and the photographic as “graphic” modes which carry (amongst others) the possibility of the photographic effect, thereby “elegantly dispos[ing] of the philosophical conundrum of the ‘indexical’,” p. 311.
90 Rodowick, The Virtual Life of Film
not unreal” to point out that “computer simulations are routinely given the same status as real events, and are relied upon as such.” 92 Secondly, manipulation has always been a matter of magnitude and of degree. “Digital media does not bring any conceptually new techniques” to “fake reality”, they just expand the possibilities.93

Due to the alleged lack of distinction of an original from a computer-based image, which seems to weaken link between the representation and the originating event, CGI and simulation technology challenge the definition of cinema as indexical medium,94 or, to shift the emphasis slightly, the definition of what constitutes indexicality.95 The digital turn also complicates other notions about cinema that were created for the analogue world, such as the idea of cinema as ghostly art, or the connection between representation in cinema and mourning.96 Finally, the creation of (seemingly) flawless and identical copies, unblemished from ruin or degradation, destabilizes the idea of an original and carries obvious repercussions for the archive. Yet digital images only appear

93 Manovich, ‘To Lie and to Act’, p. 193. Bruzzi also emphasizes that there has always been the possibility of creating faux documentaries. Bruzzi, New Documentary.
94 The digital turn generated a historicization of previous definitions for cinema as scholars contest either a definition of indexicality that focuses on the (still) image as surface, or of indexicality as defining feature of cinema (as with Gunning’s idea on animation mentioned above). Media archaeology also historicizes changes to the definitions of cinema provoked by the advent of the digital. According to Hediger “the current ubiquity of digitized moving images [appears to put] ... film theory at a loss as to what its object really is.”
95 Farocki describes this difference thus: “In cinema, there is real wind and wind from the wind-machine. In CGI, there is only one kind of wind.” Elsaesser, ‘Simulation and the Labour of Invisibility’.
96 According to Bronfen, we mourn for an original lost object. Repetition destabilises the link between representation and mourning, as it “radically calls into question the notion of origins. For it emphasizes that there is no original” Bronfen, Over Her Dead Body, p. 121.
freakishly untouched by time; taking metadata into account, it becomes clear that there are no identical copies; data is always lost in copying; not even duplicates have ever had the same history; and even the material base of the digital also deteriorates – only all of this is happening in different ways, slower and not necessarily visible to the unaided human eye.\footnote{Sean Cubitt, ‘Archive Ethics’, presentation at Symposium Turn to the Archive! Ethics and the Making, Encountering, Imagining and Missing of the Archive (London: Goldsmiths, 23 April 2015).}

Regarding the question of archive, the ephemeral character of the digital archive, thought of as an “archive in motion,”\footnote{The “digital archive” is conceptualized less as a storage place than as a dynamic network of more fluid, malleable forms; it is described as a constant process of instant archiving and permanent erasure.} is used to explain the appeal of and nostalgia for the old form, which, paradoxically, seems more stable due to a materiality that would guarantee decay.\footnote{As discussed in the previous chapter, the emphasis on the material world in the contemporary realist trend in world cinema can therefore be considered “a reaction to simulation processes enabled and disseminated by digital technology.” de Luca, Realism of the Senses, p. xxix. Likewise, Rodowick emphasises the yearning for a “sensuous connection to physical reality in a universe dominated by simulation and information saturation.” Rodowick, The Virtual Life of Film, p. 158.} Once considered the destroyers of aura, cinema and other modern techniques of image reproduction, have moved towards acquiring a patina, something resembling an aura of their own.

Indexicality also reflects directly on cinema’s capacity. Historically, cinema’s indexicality promised that anything, including the ephemeral and contingent,
could be filmed, but scholars point out that “trust in the moving image as an index of truth is of fairly recent standing.” Doane is careful to emphasise how despite “its essentialist connotations, medium specificity is a resolutely historical notion, its definition incessantly mutating in various sociohistorical contexts.” I will follow this direction to venture that the crisis of indexicality is rather the crisis of a particular way of theorizing cinema and of a particular kind of referentiality. This leads to the question of how the films will invite belief in the truth of their images – whether as archival authority or as indexical prowess.

As discussed throughout this thesis, contested or absent documentation poses a challenge to vision-based epistemological approaches to history. The next section links the sensuous visualities discussed above to the question of how the films establish their credibility in such a situation. As discussed throughout this thesis, contested or absent documentation poses a challenge to vision-based epistemological approaches to history. The next section links the sensuous visualities discussed above to the question of how the films establish their credibility in such a situation. 

This expansion of the visual metaphor is not to be seen in opposition to traditional archive. Instead the films can be read, I suggest, as a supplementary form, a “cine-poetic archive,” which renders transparent its fictional dimension as well as its rootedness in the historical real. Built on an affective dimension and conversely, on an emphatic materiality, these films offer alternatives to an ocularcentric indexical link. I use the term “indexicality” to signal the convergence between

100 “Indexicality has acted historically not solely as the assurance of realism but as the guarantee that anything and everything – any moment whatever – is representable, cinematographic.” Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 31.
101 Kay Hoffmann in Manovich, ‘To Lie and to Act’, p. 166. “With digitization we may have to adjust to a new magnitude of constructedness of the image, when it comes to how ‘reality’ is presented to us in film and television, but the principle and the problem are as old as the cinema itself.” Manovich, ‘To Lie and to Act’, p. 166.
102 Doane, ‘The Indexical and the Concept of Medium Specificity’, p. 129.
this specific subject matter and current theoretical discussions on the ontology of film and media theory, as these are, I find, reflected in the films.

The idea of a “cine-poetic archive” continues the notion of a new (or, slightly less grandiose, modified) regime of images, the altered “poetics of the real,” discussed in the previous chapter. These theoretical points will be activated with textual analysis of Nostalgia and NO, two recent, transnationally successful films, made by probably the two most internationally famous Chilean directors. Both films make emphatic use of their own material “bodies.”

Informed by theoretical ideas from media archaeology, the analysis of these films shows how they use their own medium as a poly-semantic metaphor, to render tangible invisible processes of memory or the passing of time.

**Nostalgia por la luz: Archival Spaces and Objects**

In Nostalgia, director Guzmán follows, documents and interviews three groups performing historical excavations in the Atacama desert in the North of Chile: women combing the sand for corporeal remains of their disappeared family members, archaeologists studying pre-Columbian mummies conserved by the aridity of the desert, and astronomers examining distant galaxies in search of the origin of the universe. The film thus speaks about various histories, their losses, traces, and disappearances. Particular focus is put on Chile’s own distant and more recent history, and the losses caused by the dictatorship, from the

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103 Sobchack speaks of “the film’s material body” as the corpus of the apparatus; Marks, in an exploration of her haptic visuality, takes the grainy images as the bodies of the films she explores. Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).
crushing of Chile’s dream of Socialism, to the attempted erasure even of the memory of this mass social movement, and the physical absence of the people who were disappeared. To approach these topics, Guzmán uses traditional documentary methods such as testimony and voiceover narration, as well as the technology of time-lapse photography, and he sets up profilmic space and various objects in such a way that they come to function as archive, non-human witnesses and as metaphors for these intangible conceptual themes.

Guzmán interviews survivors, those directly affected, as well as members of a post-memory generation whose family members were disappeared. One such “keeper of memory” is Luis Henríquez, survivor of the Chacabuco concentration camp, the largest concentration camp under the Pinochet dictatorship. Luis Henríquez deciphers the names prisoners have scratched into the wall. Guzmán’s voice-over describes that “Luis dignity lies in his memory. He wasn’t able to escape [the camp], but by communicating with the stars, he was able to preserve his inner freedom. He remembers traces that have been erased, electric cables, watch towers. Luis is a transmitter of history” / “La nobleza de Luis descansa en su memoria. No se pudo escapar pero al comunicarse con los estrellas, logró conservar su libertad interna. Él recuerda las huellas que se han borrado. los calles electrificados, las torres de vigilancia. Luis es un transmisor de la memoria.”

As discussed in the previous chapter with the use of historical figures as characters in the more fictionally-identified NO and harnessed in the fictional Carne, the human body is inscribed with memory.
have “been there,” they can acquire a “testifying presence”\textsuperscript{107} – even when they do not speak. These witnesses appear as a living, embodied archive – some articulate their memory as testimony, but in fact not all of them speak. One example concerns a couple faced with the horrible option of having their granddaughter be taken away unless they revealed their daughter and son-in-law’s hiding place. They are present, sitting side by side in the image, but in silence as their story is being told by their granddaughter.

The notion that places, too, somehow store memory is familiar from site-specific memorials and museums. The place then functions similar to an archive that preserves an activity, mood, or emotion, instances of experience.\textsuperscript{108}

Navigating across various times, Nostalgia remains faithful to the space of the Atacama Desert. Today the most arid desert on earth, Atacama used to be an ocean. By this very quality, the desert poetically evokes its absent counterpart water – the ocean, tears or the lack thereof. The sea and the desert have both been used as graveyard for disappearing people, and Guzmán returns to the ocean as complementary space in his follow-up film, \textit{El botón de nácasar} (Patricio Guzmán, 2015). Both spaces are examples of a “woundscape,” a space where the scene of a crime is destroyed, forgotten, reconstructed and erased at the

\textsuperscript{107} ‘Moving Image & the Global Media Spectacle’ (13 July 2014) <http://www.movingimagenetwork.co.uk/research-resources/extracts-seminar-2/%3E [accessed 16 March 2016].

\textsuperscript{108} Places such as the “guilty landscape” (Stijn Reijnders in Pribram, \textit{Emotions, Genre, and Justice}, p. 113) of concentration camps. Compare Bennett on space and trauma in the context of postcolonial studies: “There is ... an abundance of work that deals with affectively charged space and with an evocation of place in the aftermath of conflict.” Bennett, \textit{Empathic Vision}, p. 151.
same time. This desert in particular, on account of its aridity, conserves the past well, often in palimpsestic layers: the new road is built on the old one; the barracks of 19th-century mining towns, premised on indigenous slave labour, are repurposed as concentration camps, now a graveyard [image 5.8, p. 400]. Within the film, the desert is described as archive.

The Chilean Atacama desert is depicted as auratic, in the sense of being a place imaginatively endowed with the capacity to return our gaze. There are literally faces in the desert, which seem to be looking back at us. Firstly, we are shown sketched figures, carved in stone by pre-Colombian shepherds. Guzmán adds the photograph of Jose Saavedra to these, as well as the speaking faces of his witnesses. Vicky Saavedra and Violeta Berrios “tonally” fit in with the desert. The colours of Berrios’s dusky shirt and her tanned face are also found in the rocks behind her. The desert “speaks through” Berrios, argues Martin-Jones, in a long take that lingers on her evocative face. This is how the desert becomes an “affective landscape.”

If mimesis is the capacity to detect, and to produce in return, patterns of similarity or correspondence in nature, the capacity to perceive “magical correspondences” between humans and the spiritual or natural world,

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110 Martin-Jones describes this as the “evocation of landscape as archive (‘page after page’)” Martin-Jones, ‘Archival Landscapes’, p. 711.
111 “There is a strong sense here that the landscape speaks through Berrios, whose emotional strength is apparent, the affective landscape appearing as a face talking of the occluded past whose secret it keeps.” Martin-Jones, ‘Archival Landscapes’, p. 718.
112 This is Buck-Morss’s reading of Benjamin’s notion of mimesis: mimesis is initially the “drive to make oneself similar”; the perception of similarities emerges as a secondary,
Nostalgia proposes such mimetic-magical correspondences between object, place and person through the metaphor of cinema.\textsuperscript{113} Not unlike the desert, cinema is “a time machine” and “the camera resembles a telescope”\textsuperscript{114}, like (analogue) cinema itself, the light of the stars is a spectre, hovering in a space between there – the materiality of the stardust – and not there – the indexical trace of something that does not exist anymore. As with the disappeared loved ones, the origin of the light and trace has been extinguished (the star is dead), yet their effect on those touched by them continues to this day. According to Hansen, the concept of the aura reminds us of the forgotten human element in things and objects; conversely, Nostalgia also reminds us of the forgotten celestial element in living beings. Desert and cosmos point to “the material origin – and finality – that human beings share with non-human nature, the physical aspect of creation.”\textsuperscript{115} Thus, Nostalgia establishes an ontological correspondence between the disappeared, audiovisual imprints and the light of the stars. All are indexical traces of the past, and a kind of spectre. The dead are in us, metaphorically and also literally, as the material of our bones and of the cosmos are the same.

\textsuperscript{113} The film also evokes Bazinian metaphors on cinema in images of a mummy and petrified amber.
Among the archival objects explored in Nostalgia, the iconic images of the disappeared in the Southern Cone, and those protesting their disappearance take a central space. A single photograph appears [image 5.7, p. 400] and the images feature together, on the wall of memory in Santiago, and they are also seen in “embodied” form, within footage of demonstrations. These images evoke a number of moments in time: the historical moment of when the image was taken – many of them come with their own biography, historiography, even a narrative of genesis\textsuperscript{116} – and the moment when such images became iconic in a public and private time line,\textsuperscript{117} intertwining various temporalities, as well as official/public and private memory within the image.

For in becoming iconic, a photograph assumes a public function. Such images belong to everyone; they enter a shared pool of transgenerational and transcultural memory.\textsuperscript{118} Gordon’s claim that these images capture “the essence of the lost loved face and voice” is less convincing than her argument that their public display was “itself already an instance of an oppositional political imaginary at work, an act of sedition.”\textsuperscript{119} As a protest, they substantiated the “realness” of these lives and of the crime committed against them; now, they point to the event of the disappearance and the resistance against this practice. The photographs of the disappeared thus condense a

\textsuperscript{116} the Argentinian camera man Leonardo Henrichsen who filmed his own death.

\textsuperscript{117} This might be the moment when an audience member has seen the image first, within their own life span, or, if there was repeated exposure, how their response to them might have changed.

\textsuperscript{118} John Berger writes that “photography allows us to forget: what we do not conserve is forgotten” (“la fotografía nos permite olvidar: lo que no se conserva, se olvida”). John Berger in Jocelyn-Holt, Espejo retrovisor; Meek, Trauma and Media.

\textsuperscript{119} Gordon, Ghostly Matters, p. 110.
number of messages, not the least the practice of making the “pervasive tactic of invisibility” of state terror visible, which the protesting women disrupted by embodying the photographs, fortifying the original pointer to the disappeared, because “to put it bluntly, there was no corpus. No body. Dead or alive. The photo became a substitute for the body that the government officials contended had never been arrested, a way of bringing into visibility someone who was at that very moment being hidden from view.”  

In contrast to Hariman and Lucaites’s definition, the effect and iconic status of the photos of the disappeared in the Southern Cone derives less from their textual content and original function but has to do with their context, quantity and repetition.  

Taken from the mundane context of identity card and family pictures, the public and private spheres mesh in the images of the disappeared. Practical reasons, and the lack of other documentation, may have played a part in the selection of identity cards as one of the main sources for the images of the disappeared. As many of the victims came from poor communities, where photography was not widely available, the Vicariate had difficulties amassing images for all the disappeared. As a result the photographs were mostly faces, and these were pinned to chest of relatives who “embody” the missing, to avoid them become  

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121 Mentioned previously in relation to the Abu Ghraib images, Hariman and Lucaites seem to suggest that it is something in the photographs – an intrinsic quality of the image – that allows them to become iconic, that they represent moral contradictions or synthesize history in a seemingly universally legible shortcut. By contrast, the effect and iconic status of the photos of the disappeared does not derive from their textual content only but has to do with the context, situation, quantity and repetition. A textual analysis of the image does not find a particularly weighty moment in time eloquently captured on camera but nevertheless the content signifies.  
122 In Ciudad de fotógrafos (Sebastián Moreno, 2006), it is mentioned that there are 600 photographs in the Vicariate for 1200 disappeared.
a number or a statistic. As far as identity card images were used, this also connects to the de-singularizing push of a type of image whose purpose it is to make a person countable and hence similar and comparable to others, pushing the person a little away from being unique and a little further towards being a thing. Richard speaks of the double contradictory effect of such photographs, both individualizing and submerging in a mass. This is why the protesting Mothers in Argentina and Chile were able to use any photograph of their disappeared relative to shake awake consciousness, as the intrinsic ghostliness of the photographic image could be productively harnessed to this particular cause: “In this context [of disappearance] the photographs had hardly to be melodramatic, but they did need to conjure the ghosts and the haunting quality of disappearance.” Richard points out how the “ghostly” or ontologically spectral qualities and temporal ambiguities of photography are enhanced in the case of the disappeared.

123 Bossay, ‘Cineastas al rescate’.
125 “masificador y individualizador” Richard, Políticas y Estéticas de la Memoria, p. 167. She also argues that the photographs pinned to the chest mirror the de-individualization by the state.
126 Gordon, Ghostly Matters, p. 110.
127 Richard, Políticas y Estéticas de la Memoria, p. 166. The connection between the mechanically reproduced image (moving or still), its temporality and ontology to the ghostly has been extensively discussed. Sontag writes that a “link between photography and death haunts all photos of people” and that “all photographs are memento mori.” Sontag, On Photography, p. 15. Hirsch discusses photography as a privileged medium of postmemory as its indexical nature “brings the past back in the form of a ghostly revenant.” Hirsch, ‘Surviving Images’, p. 21. Cinema is the ideal medium of ghosts, as it can offer an emotional experience of feeling the presence of ghosts.
It is useful to remain for a moment with this notion of haunting. The figure of the ghost, spectre or phantom is one of potentiality, of what exists by "not quite existing," living on a paradoxical ontological status between visibility and invisibility. Notoriously body-less, the figure of the ghost hovers between visible and invisible. As a "presence of what no longer exists or does not yet exist," the ghost provides a paradigm for something that is outside borders of our knowledge systems. The malleable language of the ghostly is used to describe a number of phenomena, and the ghost as a figure can stand in for a variety of absences, embodying either that for which we lack communicative means, or that which we do not know but whose presence we can sense. For the collective social imagination, the ghost can be read as a "social figure" with a "political status and function;" and transitional societies have frequently been described as haunted by its not-yet-acknowledged past.

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130 The figure is used paradigmatically in Chilean art, a metaphor of traumatic memories, of a repressed yet present past, of the disappeared and the survivors. Burucúa and Kwiatkowski describe the doppelgänger, another variant of the ghost, as a paradigm in the representations of disappeared; the strength of this figure is derived the multiplication in combination with anonymity, “the contemporary formula for the representation of massacres and genocides.” José Emilio Burucúa and Nicolás Kwiatkowski, ‘The Absent Double: Representations of the Disappeared’, New Left Review, 87 (2014), p. 109. Burucúa and Kwiatkowski suggest that a new representational paradigms to depict new forms of contemporary massacres and genocides is emerging, as previous paradigms (the hunt, martyrdom and inferno) appear insufficient. This figure of the doppelgänger and the silhouette emerges as “a new type of representational formula … to represent the unrepresentable”, in response to something new about the nature of these new forms of violence.
131 Davis conceptualizes the ghost as “that which haunts any text” and points to what exceeds knowledge, what should be conversed with. Davis, ‘Hauntology’, p. 19.
132 Gordon, Ghostly Matters, p. 18.
which returns as a “reanimated corpse that comes back and scares us.” In Chile, those ghosts include the disappeared, bodies without a grave (their torture can only be conjectured) and the survivors of torture the “nation’s living ghosts, ... abandoned by the state,” who suffered the insult added to injury of being denied recognition and justice.

Photography’s power to haunt is crystallized in the images of the disappeared, which carry affective, evidentiary, and mnemonic functions. The protesters lent their bodies to the floating face or head, “doubling” their own bodies’ proprietary function. As photographs, the images of the disappeared insist both on its objects’ having-been-here (lived) as well as the attempted erasure of their existence, their having-been-disappeared. This effect derives from the (perceived) indexicality of the photograph combined with the particular history or biography of these images. The indexicality of the photograph is here harnessed not as futur antérieur but to evidence an existence in an as-yet-undetermined temporality (are they still living, are they already dead?).

In Nostalgia, images of the disappeared appear both in individual and collective forms. The specific photograph of Jose Saavedra Gonzalez – disappeared brother of Vicky Saavedra, one of the women searching the desert and interviewed by Guzmán – is laid down on the desert floor that his sister is combing for further remains. Near the end of the film, the camera lingers in an exploratory mode on the wall of images of the disappeared at the Museo de la

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134 Gómez-Barris, Where Memory Dwells, p. 77.
Memoria in Santiago, coming near and retracting again, panning along the faces. The photographs thus appear both in their collective memorial function, and in their specific, private dimension. The power of the crime of disappearance is amplified when its victims appear together, as a structural repetition, but the individual tragedy disappears in the numbers. The images of the protesting relatives, embodying their disappeared loved ones, became in turn iconic images in themselves; and Guzmán’s films arguably become yet another palimpsestic layer to this memorial landscape.

The “presence of the body,” Nichols argues, is central to our experience of documentary film which “exerts a relentless demand of habeas corpus.” Guzmán has only fragments of the bodies; faced with the absence both of (whole) bodies and of documented evidence of their disappearance – Guzmán turns to the ostensibly “empty” space of the desert as their tomb or shrine and to various kinds of objects as witnesses. Such real objects and places have authenticating function, they have “seen” blindly. This corresponds to Elsaesser’s notion on the “testifying presence” or to the forensic notion that truth lodges in matter, that everything remembers.

136 Nichols, Representing Reality, p. 232.
138 ‘Moving Image & the Global Media Spectacle’.
139 Rodríguez notes that already in El caso Pinochet (Patricio Guzmán, 2001), Guzmán had adopted “a new visual approach to the crime of human disappearance. In addition to using photographs of the disappeared, he relies on the full exhibition of skulls and bones, transforming the forensic lab into a pro-filmic space.” Juan Carlos Rodríguez, ‘Framing ruins. Patricio Guzmán’s Postdictatorial Documentaries’, Latin American
The photographic objects – the images of the disappeared, the iconic footage of the bombing of La Moneda – have been described as “the photographic ruins of Allende’s socialist democracy.” The metaphor of the ruin connects the visual image to its transporter medium, as ruins “bring an awareness of framing, the device of representation.” Already in his previous films, Guzmán expands the mnemonic function of photography to other “physical objects and places as memory anchors.” The presence of these fragments enhances the yearning for an impossible totality. The objects Guzmán investigates range from the deeply emotional and the mnemonic – what Franco called long-lasting memory traces, “buried books, faded photographs, fragmented testimonies, exhumed bodies, harvests of bones” – to technical objects, obsolete tools of astrology and cinema.

Ahmed’s notion of an “affective economy” provides a model to better theorise the affective attachment to certain objects. The cultural, social and personal meaning and value of things does not reside in themselves, but is “produced as an effect of its circulation,” contingent on social contexts. Things acquire affective values outside or in surplus of their worth in terms of labour and commodity, a worth that has to do with their relation to its position in time and place.

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Perspectives, Special Issue: Political Documentary Film and Video in the Southern Cone (1950s–2000s), 40 (January 2013).

140 Rodríguez, ‘Framing ruins’, p. 135.
141 Francine Masiello in Rodríguez, ‘Framing ruins’, p. 132.
142 Patrick Blaines notes a “stylistic commonality” in Guzmán’s oeuvre. Mnemonic objects also feature in Salvador Allende (Patricio Guzmán, 2004), where we are shown a piece of the eyeglass frames that belonged to Allende – along with a wallet, a ribbon, a watch, and a small notebook with socialist refrains, these are all that remain of his person. Quoted in Martin-Jones, ‘Archival Landscapes’, p. 716.
human desire. Inanimate objects move (the relation between) human subjects. This is especially pertinent when objects are connected to loss, when the context of life and death seems to bring inanimate objects to life, as if to balance the becoming lifeless of the lost person.

In Nostalgia as well, things become protagonists, humans become matter, precious fragments carry the weight of the whole. Carefully Vicky Saavedra enumerates the few parts that have been found of her brother: several teeth, some bits of his head, a foot with the shoe and sock still on it. Heartbreakingly, she recounts how she caressed the foot, how she sat in mourning with this foot, observing every detail and, she says, realising only then the fact of the death of her brother. What is this thing which authorities claim is the foot of her brother – a thing, a body part, as something that once lived? [image 5.9, p. 400]

The way we look or gaze at things – unseeing, seeing anew, differently, again – changes the questions that we ask, and changes what they mean.

145 D’Aloia even argues that we can feel “empathy” towards objects: “empathy can also concern relationship to objects rather than exclusively intersubjective relationships with other people.” Adriano D’Aloia, ‘Cinematic Empathy: Spectator Involvement in the Film Experience’, in Kinesthetic Empathy in Creative and Cultural Practices, ed. by Dee Reynolds and Matthew Reason (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), p. 19.

146 The known and politicized mistakes in identification add to the ordeal and anguish, as discussed with Caiozzi’s Fernando films.

147 Guzmán expressly says he wants to make visible “nonvisible reality,” to see and listen to things that are invisible, inaudible, or to “record what cannot be seen,” as he entitled one of his books: Patricio Guzmán, Filmar lo que no se ve (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Fidocs, 2013). Guzmán argues that for today’s documentary film “it is not enough to collect data and facts. Those who move in this space will never be able to show us the nonvisible reality that Cervantes or Kafka saw. We have to go beyond: we have to show (or teach) what we do not know, we have to show what we cannot see.” Quoted in Rodríguez, ‘Framing ruins’.
Nostalgia, an image that resembles a close-up of the surface of the moon, preceded by images of galaxies, is revealed to be a close-up of a human skull, again pointing to the mimetic, structural similarities Guzmán continuously uncovers. As with the changed speed of the time-lapse and the photographs, an attending and attentive gaze threads throughout Nostalgia, which approaches its objects from various angles, often askance – from dusty spoons and self-made telescopes to Chacabuco, which is explored through archive aerial footage and present-day recordings of its ruins, including a close-up shot of a wall scratched with names of the prisoners held here, partly disappeared.

Ahmed also emphasises the necessity of an affective encounter with these charged signs. This affective encounter is created in Nostalgia on various levels: the spectator sees, or witnesses, such encounters on a diegetic level, and the film is saturated with a general attention to the material base of objects that helps the spectator look differently at them; finally the film also offers itself to the spectator as an affective encounter through the cinematic experience. As in the previously explored films, Nostalgia may then also be read as a thesis on cinema: what cinema can do and what kind of images and experiences it can offer. Many Southern Cone documentaries, prominently Guzmán’s films, are self-consciously planned to be and have become part of their country’s archive. Guzmán’s documentation is partly a rescue of memories and their bearers from

148 The more a sign – such as an iconic image – circulates, the more affective it becomes, Ahmed argues, drawing upon hidden histories of affective encounters.
suppression and displacement, partly the creation of poetic archive, through the profilmic spaces and objects, and the existence of the film itself.\footnote{Guzmán’s acute sense of his own films as archive can be seen in Chile, Obstinate Memory (1997), in which he remediates his own trilogy La Batalla de Chile (1975-1979) by staging, and documenting, an encounter between the archive (his film) and the present (a contemporary audience). Klubock describes this encounter as one that is in a social context of “visual amnesia” in which “the military and the democratic opposition” have colluded; but he complains that the film fails to put memory in relation to contemporary questions, instead producing “a sense of memory that is restricted to the individual and defined by nostalgia.” Klubock, ‘History and Memory in Neoliberal Chile’, p. 276. In this context, it is interesting how Guzmán, in the world outside the diegesis, participates in the commodification of memory. Nostalgia was in Chile only shown on Sky, hence available to those who can pay for satellite dishes. Guzmán did not consent to give his Batalla de Chile to Chile’s Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos (MMDDHH) for free – to the dismay of other members of the film team. The museum has established a – certainly questionable – bottom line of not paying for any film, on the grounds that they cannot pay everyone and that it would be impossible to establish a price for other ceded objects, often of inestimable personal value, such as last remnants or clothes of a disappeared. Cf. interviews with former and current audiovisual director at the MMDDHH, José Manuel Rodríguez Leal and Maria Teresa Viera-Gallo in Santiago, Chile; June/July 2013. Gúzman claims to take a stance against the devaluation of the documentary, for instance at the FIDOCs Festival 2013. By withholding the film from the public sphere, however, he also contributes to the privatization and limitation of memory to those who are able to pay for it.}\footnote{Aguilar, New Argentine Film, p. 156. Aguilar emphasizes the role of “haptic and tactile images in such documentaries, “as though this visual space were insufficient to touch that which is ineluctably extinct.” The concept of touch frequently recurs in the discussion of art works, where the inscription of a material trace coincides with, or touches upon an evanescent sense.}

Centrally built around the surviving images and their use by the resistance, such films construct “a testimonial space” that includes “an entire visual and auditory arsenal for mourning work.”\footnote{Aguilar, New Argentine Film, p. 156. Aguilar emphasizes the role of “haptic and tactile images in such documentaries, “as though this visual space were insufficient to touch that which is ineluctably extinct.” The concept of touch frequently recurs in the discussion of art works, where the inscription of a material trace coincides with, or touches upon an evanescent sense.} In addition to being such a conscious addition to Chile’s archive, Nostalgia creates specifically cinematic images for intangible concepts, such as memory and time.

The previous section explored how an object evidences time. Bazin used the term “presence” to indicate how, on the one hand, the object in cinema makes time visible through movement, and on the other hand, time (and space) confer
presence on the object.\textsuperscript{151} This object then evidences its biography; it exhibits indexical traces of its history, which is why it can serve as mnemonic device or as historical document.\textsuperscript{152} Nostalgia also seeks to make time itself perceptible through specifically cinematic means.

Structured like a cinematic fugue, Nostalgia moves back and forth between near and far, public and private, from the cosmos to a bone fragment, enlarging its scale to cosmological dimensions and zooming in on the miniscule. This montage of the distant, the small and the grand history manifests the film’s “historical consciousness” \textsuperscript{153} and seems to lend cosmological importance to both Guzmán’s personal memories and Chile’s troubled history.\textsuperscript{154}

Yet such alignments need be neither grandiose nor minimizing. At several moments in Nostalgia, human loss and mourning are put into a “cosmic” and philosophical perspective. As the prisoners in a Chilean concentration camp contemplated the night sky, its unfathomable vastness offered psychological liberation from their desolate position of helplessness. In their testimonies, they

\textsuperscript{151} Schoonover, Brutal Vision, pp. 36-7.
\textsuperscript{152} But even when there are no visible traces, by their sheer existence in time, such objects are witnesses to historical reality.
\textsuperscript{153} Compare Garrett’s analysis of the unconventional temporalities - cyclical and slow - in El Violin (Francisco Vargas, 2005) which, she argues, help to “position the viewer ethically with regard to ... historic struggle.” Victoria L. Garrett, ‘Mythic Time and Slow Time: The Construction of the Viewer in El Violín’, Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies, 16 (2012), 278.
speak of finding comfort in the recognition of their own life’s relative insignificance. By offering various histories within their various temporalities – cosmological, archaeological, subjective-personal, and national notions of time – Nostalgia “liquefies” time and creates space for unofficial narratives on and experiences of the past. Here, the film opens a gateway for the audience to engage in an affective and experiential “conversation” with history, as the “dramatic quality of the movement itself” enhances spectatorial involvement.

This effect is largely created by the slowed-down temporality of several time-lapse sequences (combined with the movement of a slowly tilting camera in the last of these). [image 5.10, p. 400] These sequences allow room for contemplation of events that occurred over long periods of time whose visual record is compressed by changing the frames-per-second rate. The second movement creating a temporal-spatial change in perception are the “moment[s] of stillness” introduced by the presence of photographs in the film, discussed below. With the changing speed we also change the gaze: we are looking again, looking more closely.

Moreover, time-lapse photography offers a means to translate “invisible entities (beyond the range of human vision)” into a visible analogue. The technology offers metaphorical, poetic forms to render conceptual concepts visible (such as the origin of the universe). The revelations of time-lapse photography are “technologically enhanced visions of temporal realities,” opening “the sudden

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156 Mulvey, Death 24x, p. 186.
concreteness of an invisibility to which [the viewer has] become an eye-witness.”¹⁵⁷ Time-lapse photography allows “the conceptual world to enter the perceptual one.”¹⁵⁸

Nostalgia uses the technical capacities of the cinematic apparatus to offer potentialities of perception that lie beyond unaided human capacity. Like the telescopes as elongations of the human vision, the time-lapse offers a non-anthropocentric perception of time. We construct time spatially, contrasting the recent with the distant past. The time-lapse sequences reveal the arbitrariness of the human-centred counting of time. In the film, the astronomer Gaspar Galaz explains how our subjective present, our “objective” reality is the illusion, and a fictional construct, for the speed of light, which determines and circumvents human perception, always causes a (miniscule) delay between an event taking place and our perception of the event. In fact, the past is all there is. The time-lapse seems to reveal relativity as a central quality of time, just as slow motion reveals the essence of movement, as suggested by Sobchack.¹⁵⁹ The demonstration that events do not actually “recede” into temporal distance

¹⁵⁸ Wolf suggests as much with regards to computer simulation. Wolf, ‘Subjunctive Documentary’, p. 274.
is an argument against the narratives of amnesia and of enforced looking forward, of a gradual disappearance of history.\textsuperscript{160}

Akin to astronomy,\textsuperscript{161} cinema can offer comfort, a distant or at least enlarged perspective on (the catastrophes of) the past. Both use their technological mediation to understand something about time and about our present reality: Much as we look to distant galaxies in order to understand our distant past, we look with and through the camera and the cinematic apparatus to understand our present reality. (And time-lapse photography, as both a technology and a representation of speed, can be considered a meta-metaphor for cinema.)

\textsuperscript{160} One of the absurdities in thinking about pain of the past is that, because our image of time is spatial, there is a notion that when something happened a long time ago, this event moves away, becomes smaller, and becomes emotionally less urgent.

\textsuperscript{161} The film found its starting point in the title of a 1987 book by the French scientist Michel Cassé, \textit{Nostalgia for the Light: Mountains and Wonders of Astrophysics}. 
image 5.1. and 5.2. NO

image 5.3 – 5.6: Carne de Perro

images 5.7 – 5.10 Nostalgia de la luz
Re-thinking Indexicality

In relation to the Charlie Hebdo shooting in January 2015, Adam Gopnik argued that the attacks demonstrated the delusion of claims that the quantity and availability of images benumb and alienate the spectator. What is interesting about the Hebdo case, however, is that here it was a cartoon – “a simple, graffiti-like scrawl” that trespassed a pictorial prohibition, to show a deity that offended a certain group – “the living sign of an ornery human intention, rearing up against a piety.” Rather than dilute the indexical connection, this case may support an argument about the power of the image that is not based on indexicality. While I cannot attend here to the differences between such images and their relation to the intricacies of religious sacrilege, the example does seem to show that there is clearly a possibility of power in the image that is not based on either index or perceptual realism.

What this example shows then is that what is considered indexical – in the sense of 

authentic or derived from, tied to the real – is really an agreement of perception. This is why Elsaesser suggests that the current “theoretical fix” may have preceded the digital: “[What] if the status of authenticity and proof of a photograph or moving image had never resided in its indexical relation to the

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162 Gopnik writes: “In the era of the Internet, when images proliferate, merge, and alter in an Adobe second, one would think that the power of a simple, graffiti-like scrawl was minimal. Indeed, analysts of images and their life have been telling us for years that this sort of reaction couldn’t happen anymore—that the omnipresence of images meant they could not offend, that their meanings and their capacity to shock were enfeebled by repetition and availability. Even as the Islamist murderers struck in Paris, some media-studies maven in a liberal-arts college was doubtless explaining that the difference between our time and times past is that the ubiquity of images benumbs us and their proliferation makes us indifferent. Well, not quite.” Adam Gopnik, ‘Satire Lives’, The New Yorker Online (19 January 2015).

163 Gopnik, ‘Satire Lives’. 
real at all, but had always been a function of the institutions in charge of its verification and dissemination?"\textsuperscript{164} In other words, what is considered authentic has always been agreed upon, shaped by convention, as a "‘trust’ spectators, as well as theorists, are prepared to invest in a given mode of representation.”\textsuperscript{165}

Yet the technical and aesthetic properties of the image are two different things, and in spite of the scholarly debate, it seems that the reception of the image, of that which “counts intuitively as an image’ has changed very little for Western cultures.”\textsuperscript{166} One corrective to this “indexical fallacy” would then suggest we focus on the spectator’s experience of the image rather than thinking about indexicality, as the “heuristic sterility” of the term is unable to “provide a means of distinguishing between analogue, electronic, and digital images.”\textsuperscript{167} The loss engendered by the digital is not a problem for common sense and the image continues (for the time being) to be perceived and culturally coded as indexical, in the sense of authorized to make evidentiary claims. Against the implied capitulation before the manipulability of digital images, Doane argues that “images [of pain, death, and suffering] ... point to the persistence and

\textsuperscript{164} According to Elsaesser, “it would seem that any threat to the ‘authentic,’ to the truth status of the moving image ... does not come from digitization ... but ... primarily economic and political factors such as deregulation and ‘market forces.’” Elsaesser, ‘Digital Hollywood’, p. 317.


\textsuperscript{166} Rodowick, The Virtual Life of Film, p. 11.

\textsuperscript{167} Belton in Philippe Gauthier, ‘What Will Film Studies Be? Film Caught between the Television Revolution and the Digital Revolution’, New Review of Film and Television Studies, 12 (2014), p. 230. Compare Bruzzi: “It can legitimately be argued that filmmakers themselves (and their audiences) have, much more readily than theorists, accepted documentary’s inability to give an undistorted, purely reflective picture of reality” Bruzzi, New Documentary, p. 6.
strength of an indexical imaginary even in the realm of digital photography.”  
Her term “indexical imaginary” explicitly anchors this relation within the spectator. What this means is that indexicality may be established by different means and may reside in different aspects of the film itself.

Elsaesser notes that cinematic indexicality, kept within the filmic or photographic ontology, has been considered in a limited fashion:

> we associate the cinema with trace, index, imprint and so on but it’s important to remember that these are terms that are not necessarily pictorial or indeed ocular. They can be temporal, they can be activated through sound etc.

In the following section, I will give some such examples for how the films establish alternatives to visual indexical links and suggest that in their fictional supplements to the cinematic archive, the indexical weight is shifted towards other aspects; here, sound or place anchors and opens an emotional point of access, a space to interlink private and public memories.

The first example illustrates how sound can be used as an indexical anchor.  
Pena opens with the historical radio transmission of Pinochet’s declaration of military takeover. With this speech, which points to its lesser-known doppelgänger and counterpart, President Allende’s last speech, the film announces its exploration of the discourse of the perpetrators: large portions of the film feature historical footage from a media which had been largely under the regime’s control. As a radio transmission, Pinochet’s speech evokes

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168 Doane, ‘The Indexical and the Concept of Medium Specificity’, p. 129.
170 ‘Moving Image & the Global Media Spectacle’. 
pastness in its speaker’s stilted way of talking in this previously dominant medium, in the crackling and interferences, which evidence the decay of age. At the same time, the recorded tape combines an immediacy that is divorced from presence and offers the “surrogate proximity” usually applied to cinematic presence, where the camera compensates for viewer’s absence when the profilmic reality was documented.\textsuperscript{171} Heard now, the speech is not communicating information regarding its familiar content but in the texture of the voice itself and its transporting device. Its warmer, hence more “haptic” sound, its granular texture lends a \textit{particular} body and character to voice and medium, thus heightening its authenticity. Here, “the materiality of the body [is] speaking its mother tongue,” akin to Barthes’s “grain of the voice”\textsuperscript{172} Through this grain of the “voice” of the recording medium, the aged body of the medium speaking its tongue, the sound is used to create authenticity and to establish the real as referent, as index of reality.\textsuperscript{173} Sound material seems to connote the truth of contingency, even though sounds that were present in “reality” may be lost on or edited out of the recording, and in this case, the performance of the original Pinochet speech and its montage in the film mean

\textsuperscript{171} Schoonover, \textit{Brutal Vision}, pp. 32-42.
\textsuperscript{172} Cited in Quinlivan, ‘Breath Control’, p. 160.
\textsuperscript{173} An interesting case to compare are digital documentaries, usefully defined as containing “recognized documentary value, due to the fact that they are about our world, rather than an imaginary world”: While based on testimony (a written real), the referential body in digital documentaries here replaced by animation – and the sound mostly becomes the referent. Cristina Formenti, ‘A Body Too Many’: Animated Documentary’s Dis-Embodiment and Re-Embodiment of Factual Interviews’, in XII MAGIS - International Film Studies Spring School (Gorizia, 7 April 2014).
that the sound is clearly mediated and therefore “a representation of sound, not an ‘innocent’ reproduction.”

Unlike the image, audio material has been viewed less in terms of suffering a loss of perceived indexical qualities, as the processes of selection and manipulation have appeared less problematic here than with the photographic image. Recorded sound is more closely identified with and perhaps even more identical to its own original than a recorded two-dimensional visual image, which lacks the three-dimensionality of the original body. Recorded or live, digital or analogue, sound is always three-dimensional.

Where an image can appear to freeze a moment in time, sound stretches on a spatio-temporal distance: sound always only exists in duration. The “projective” temporal movement of the recordings can be looked at in terms similar to Tom Gunning’s discussion of animation of images: “Motion always has ... a progressive movement in a direction, and therefore invokes possibility and a future.” Similar to Gunning, Mulvey argues that “through movement, cinema is able to preserve a sense of “now-ness” into future, namely into the time of our viewing – or hearing – the material.” Even though Gunning and Mulvey refer primarily to moving images, their ideas can be extended to sound. The recordings combine pastness, presentness, and a projection towards the future;

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175 Gunning, ‘Moving Away from the Index’, p. 42. Gunning proposes that movement – animation, as in motion in time – is the defining essence of cinema, rather than its indexical relation to photography.
176 Gunning, ‘Moving Away from the Index’; Mulvey, *Death 24x*, p. 188.
177 In a different article, Gunning remarks that “the debates [on the ontology and phenomenology of modern media of reproduction] can be extended to both moving image and sound recording.” Gunning, ‘To Scan a Ghost’, p. 100.
their duration takes the audience into a prolonged present moment that projects towards the future, even as the transmitting medium connotes pastness.

The perception of sound’s indexical and temporal nature intertwines with the primary function of sound in film, that is, to guide and provide emotional access, and to trigger memories.\(^\text{178}\) Along with smell and taste, sound is a primary instigator of memory recall, able to induce a reflex or mémoire involontaire.\(^\text{179}\) For instance, while the ghostly qualities of photographs have been observed by many scholars,\(^\text{180}\) recordings of the voices of people known to be dead might be even more haunting. Such sounds are “double ghostly” because their synaesthetic capacity makes them even more evocative of involuntary “body memories.” In spite of the dominance of “ocularcentric” models and modes of hearing,\(^\text{181}\) sound in fact possesses spatial, haptic, and


\(^{179}\) Proust’s recall prompted by a madeleine in A la Recherche du temps perdu has been productively activated by a large number of scholars. To give but one example, Rodowick writes that “Kracauer suggests that the sensuous examination of the surface of things in film produces simultaneously an interior examination of the self in memory. The perceptual density and indeterminacy of things in their native duration, when framed and reproduced in the alienated form of the photographic image, provoke a nonchronological investigation of memory in the form of mémoire involontaire.” Rodowick, The Virtual Life of Film, p. 76.

\(^{180}\) For instance Mulvey, Death 24x; Sontag, On Photography. Gunning includes audio material in his discussion of the ghostly: “all virtual images and recorded sound also invoke the ghostly ontology of phantasms rather than a simple triumph over death. ... If the virtual escapes death, it is simply because, as a phantom, it also escapes life.” Gunning, ‘To Scan a Ghost’, p. 117.

\(^{181}\) It is an interesting question whether or not sound can be considered truly “indexical” (my argument rests on the perception of indexicality). Elsaesser writes that
temporal qualities; it is associated with the synaesthetic and located in “the realm of metamorphosis.”

The sound in Pena presents a way to bypass the visual index, as the credibility of the visual dimension is clearly problematic, as shown by the film’s visual texture and its montage. The sound however anchors authenticity and carries potential to evoke emotional states which belong to the subjectivity, memory and imagination of the audience. Pena begins with the sound of a bullhorn, and then, accompanied by maritime sounds, the recorded speech sets in. Threading in and out of its various sections, this non-diegetic marine soundscape identifies the film as a whole. The backside of a deck of cards appears repeatedly, showing, most likely, the (in)famous training and torture ship La Esmeralda, whose home harbour lays in the municipality of Viña and Valparaíso. [image 5.12, below] “Rendered sounds” evoke the washing of


The influence of the ocularcentric models might be such that the focus remains with an image-centered mode of hearing that focuses mainly on sound’s relation with the image. For instance, Chion’s model – in which sound directs our attention through the point-of-audition – is criticized for its problematic “dependence on the visuals and visually-oriented theory.” Sven Høier, ‘The Relevance of Point of Audition in Television Sound: Rethinking a Problematic Term’, Journal of Sonic Studies, 3 (2012). Compare Quinlivan’s characterization of Marks’s haptics as mainly related to the visual field.

182 Connor, ‘Sounding out Film’. Sound creates a tactile contact, making objects “closer to touch and even to smell than to sight.” Being in motion, sound penetrates and describes space, even though it seems shapeless and encompassing without a point of audition. As there is no total silence, sound is omnipresent, and we cannot refuse it, even a “sleeping man is, in fact, all ears.” Chion, Film, a Sound Art, p. 282.

183 La Esmeralda has become a stark symbol of ongoing impunity. For example, the ongoing attempts by torture survivors and relatives of deceased victims, such as the sister of Michael Woodward, a priest who was tortured to death on the Esmeralda are depicted in The Dark Side of the White Lady (Patricio Henríquez, 2006).

184 Chion, Film, a Sound Art, p. 11. See Chapter 4, footnote 145. Chion defines as “rendered sound” when in post-production, the type of sound added to the image
waves at sea, the creaking of sails and so on, describing the film’s seaport location and also its topic, as the locale is linked to past atrocity and impunity. 185

images 5.11 and 5.12: Pena de Muerte

A “Cine-Poetic Archive”

Specific aesthetics always evoke particular sensibilities and invite a certain reading. A.O. Scott speaks of “video truthiness,” as “default setting” in representations to evoke the real; Chun suggests that “grainy moving images have become a marker of the real; 186 and Jaimie Baron expanded Sobchack’s notion of a “documentary consciousness” 187 to the idea of an “archival consciousness.” What Baron called the “archive effect” produces an affective leads to a re-association. Sometimes this happens out of necessity (the sound of a head/watermelon being crushed), sometimes in the interest of making a sound appear more “real” or of conveying sensations or feelings in auditory terms (the sounds accompanying a fall). Chion, Film, a Sound Art, p. 11

185 In this way sound affirms again the primacy of place, especially for a Chilean audience.

186 Compare how Chun discusses how “real time” evokes the idea or “illusion – the feel or sensation - of liveness, rather than the fact of liveness.” This “notion of real time is bleeding into all electronic moving images” not because all recordings are live, but because of this “illusionary marker of liveness”; she adds wisely “although one might ask: What is the difference between the feel of choice and choice itself?” Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, Programmed Visions: Software and Memory (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011), p. 68. Gunning poses the same philosophical question regarding screened and “real” movement perception.

187 Sobchack, Carnal Thoughts, p. 261. Sobchack’s point is that documentary is defined neither by object nor style but by a viewer’s attitude towards the screen, which is informed by generic codes and the rules and conventions of a social body.
experience of “historical presence” for the spectator. By “retaining the aesthetic cues that identify their media type,” such an aesthetic both announces its authority and alerts to its status as representation.

A fictional, poetic archive offers a way to address a lack of material, and perhaps also a way around the tension or rupture between the “authority of the archive” and its subsequent use. As begun with the analysis of the recreations in Los Archivos, the idea of a “cine-poetic archive” resonates particularly in a context where the authority of the archive is being challenged, whether on ontological grounds or as material praxis. The term of a “cine-poetic” or “fictional” archive is not meant in opposition to more traditional forms of (cinematic) documentation but to describe a pool of images that exceeds the (filming of) actual artefacts, and of the film itself as a document and mediator of public memory, to include fictional additions for the parts that are

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188 Similar to Bruzzi, Baron describes the archive as a dialectics, a collaboration between viewer and text. Given that the increased availability of still and video cameras has led to a proliferation of indexical documents outside of official archives, Baron calls to reframe archival footage and other archival documents” not as objects with inherent qualities but as a spectatorial experience or a relationship between viewer and text.” Baron, ‘Archive Effect’, p. 102. Baron argues that these new archives gain authority through a certain kind of encounter with the spectator, which she calls the “archive effect,” and which endows these documents with a particular kind of authority as “evidence.”

189 Sprengler, Screening Nostalgia, p. 79.

190 Jacobsen and Lorenzo, La imagen quebrada.

191 The state of the archive in Chile remains politically charged, while new technologies motivating cinema theory overall to re-examine the ontological paradigms of the moving images. Some have suggested that the digital turn may have forced us, precisely because of its seemingly endless capacities for storage, to acknowledge the failure or give up the illusion of complete storage and also to question what it is that we are trying to store and to preserve.
missing. In these re-enactments or re-imaginings of resonant events, the indexical weight is shifted towards another aspects. Such images are self-consciously performative representations. These films’ reflexive and openly performative dimension – simultaneously telling and performing the action of creating what I call “fictional” or “poetic” cinematic archive – results not in inauthenticity but an “alternative ‘realness.’”!

While the idea of a cine-poetic archive is indebted to Rosenstone who pondered the legitimacy of film as document – “Can a metaphoric or symbolic truth, a poetic truth, similar to that of oral history ... take precedence over specific items of data and documentation?” – the suggestion that these images expand the archive is indebted to Baron’s notion of the “archival effect,” and Mitchell’s work on the “Abu Ghraib archive.” But I want to be careful to emphasise that the cine-poetic archive is in dialogue with and does not aim to replace the traditional archive, and it signals its own construction.

Another example of such “magical” connections is the frequent faithfulness to historical locale. For Mortem, Larraín embarked with his collaborators on

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192 These events are the Viña killings in Pena, infamous human rights' abuses in Los Archivos, the plebiscite and creation of the NO-campaign in NO and the dissection of Allende’s body in Mortem.

A different example for the visual manifestation of an unrecorded collective archive, can be found in the macabre advertisements for Diesel and Ripley in South America, which used a torture iconography that provided “[i]n a paradoxical way, ... the kind of historical evidence of the crimes that haunt Argentine and Chilean society and that were never visually recorded.” Ksenija Bilbija, ‘Tortured by Fashion: Making Memory through Corporate Advertising’, in Accounting for Violence: Marketing Memory in Latin America, ed. by Ksenija Bilbija and Leigh A. Payne (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 307.

193 Bruzzi, New Documentary, p. 164.

194 Rosenstone asks if films can be considered forms of historical inquiry and ponders its legitimacy as document. Rosenstone, History on Film/Film on History, p. 4.

195 This unorthodox notion of “archive” can of course be contested.
research which led them to the point of shooting in the actual mortuary where Allende’s autopsy took place. Similarly, Bigelow re-constructed the bin-Laden compound for Zero; Jodorowsky rebuilt his childhood home, and used the real saddle of dictator Carlos Ibañez del Campo in La Danza. To some extent, this seems to be the equivalent of re-enactment of factual history in spatial terms. Yet how are we to recognise such efforts as authenticating effects, if they are not marked as such?

I wonder how much this need for additional information truly constitutes a conundrum in today’s landscape of image consumption. The fact that there is a contract or collaboration between viewer and text has been well developed for documentary film. Documentary or at least certain tendencies in documentary cinema have been (re-)framed as “a negotiation between filmmaker and reality and performance,” “a mode of subjectivity,” defined by the questions we

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196 The filmmakers describe how they “used the same room. The same table. They are untouched.” Matheou, ‘The Body politic’. As Larrain explained in an interview with Filmmaker Magazine: “For some reason, that hospital, which belonged to the military, was returned to the state. The building is in midtown and was going to be destroyed for another hospital. They decided not to touch it and the rooms were still there – the lights, the beds, the instruments – everything used in those days at the hospital. But that's a place, not a record. The military destroyed almost all existing records. Filmmaker Magazine, ‘Larrain, Post Mortem’.

197 The film is shot in and peopled with extras from Tocopilla, the town where Jodorowsky grew up, his birthplace was rebuilt for shooting purposes, the saccharine music of the torture scene is a recording of Rosita Serrano, an opera singer who had her biggest success in Nazi Germany, and the granddaughter of dictator Carlos Ibañez del Campo lent Ibañez’ real saddle to the filmmakers. This information is only conveyed – if at all – via extradiegetic material; I learned about it through interviews with the producer Xavier Guerrero (October 2013).


199 ‘Moving Image & the Global Media Spectacle’.
ask of the text, as a “relation between viewer and text.” This agreement on how a certain materiality suggests itself to be perceived matters also in more fiction-identified cinema. The film suggests modes of consciousness accessed through learned aesthetic codes and historically situated viewing habits. Why should these not also include promotion, cinephile or “insider knowledge,” and directorial foresight that a film will be dissected for goofs and anachronisms on the internet? Perhaps these somewhat more mundane aspects are useful to explain a “historical faithfulness” that is not always marked within the text, instead of or in addition to its relation to the rupture in traditional epistemological discourses and the renewal of realism previously discussed.

The Medium as Metaphor

The “indexical place,” as the corporealities discussed in the previous chapter, insists on its material presence, which leads to the next section. The emphasis on the material as a method differs from the visual dominance of traditional strategies. In this section, the field of media archaeology is activated to show how the films use their own medium as a poly-semantic metaphor, to render tangible invisible processes of memory or the passing of time, to offer a

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202 Bruzzi, New Documentary, p. 164. Compare the use of this effect in contemporary films such as the aforementioned Miguel San Miguel.
political comment on progress, perhaps, and to induce a transnational and nationally specific affective relation.

Modelled on Foucault’s archaeology of knowledge and rules of discourse, media archaeology investigates how media formats and its processes of data storage shape the conditions of creating knowledge in the present. By setting older and newer media in a dialogue, both NO and Nostalgia put the battle cry of media archaeology – to understand the old via the new and vice versa – into practice. To understand present media, media archaeologists argue, we must examine their (alternative) history/-ies, as obsolete, failed and even imaginary media technologies are relevant to the history of media. Extrapolated from “media history” to “history,” this approach helps to develop an awareness of alternative temporalities, instead of a “hegemonic linearity” and the “dictates of progress” which see “time and history as straight lines.”

Nostalgia nudges us to question inherited notions of the receding of memory and the progress of time. With its emphasis on obsolete media and its fugue-like structure, the film visualizes the idea that it could have been otherwise – less to mourn the paths not taken than to break the hegemony of the new, the present, and the winners of history. Zielinski’s “archaeology of hearing and

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204 Media are conceptualized as the equivalent of the Foucauldian rules of discourse, i.e. Foucault’s concept of the archive as that which gives the series of rules that make discourse possible and govern its limits in a given culture. Cf. Baron on how the technical structure determines the archivable content, and how the archive therefore (co-)creates the past rather than simply preserving it. Baron, ‘The Archive Effect’.

205 Parikka, What Is Media Archaeology, pp. 11-3.


207 Parikka describes media archaeology as a method “to analyse the regimes of memory” and “thinking cyclically” as a “media-archaeological strategy for critiquing
seeing by technical means" resonates with the way in which Nostalgia links literal archaeology with various technical ways of listening to and looking at time. Looking at how home movies document technological evolution, Roger Odin suggested that this documentation allows an expansion "into a palimpsest of readings." In Nostalgia, such documentation also expands our understanding of time. Nostalgia not only performs different ways of representing time, in the striking use of time-lapse discussed above, but the film also shows the technical tools we use to access time, history, and memory: the high-tech telescopes in Atacama, the "old German telescope [that] is still working," and the self-made (but functional) telescopes constructed by the prisoners in Chacabuco.

**NO: Surface Messages**

In NO, it is the materiality of the medium itself, along with archival footage, which provides a point of access to historical reality. The material base of the image is used to establish a kind of authenticity that is aware of its own

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208 Zielinski proposes what he calls an "an-archaeology" of media history. He borrows the metaphor of "deep time" from a late 18th century scientific treatise, James Hutton's *Theory of the Earth* (1778). Hutton understood geological time as a dynamic process of accumulation and erosion, cyclical rather than linear in development and the earth to be a self-renewing mass without beginning or end; and Zielinski wishes to look at media genealogy in a similar way, favouring individual variation over the search for lineage, emphasising a provisional understanding. Siegfried Zielinski, *Deep Time of the Media: Toward an Archaeology of Hearing and Seeing by Technical Means* (Cambridge: MIT, 2006).

limitations. New scenes are shot with a 1983 U-matic video camera and meshed with footage of the actual ads from the 1988 plebiscite and other archive material, such as Pinochet being embraced by Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher and Pope John Paul II. This footage amounts to 30 per cent of the film. The film flaunts the shortcomings of this particular medium: overexposure, discolouring or bright but bleeding colours, narrow depth of field, flickers and flares, low resolution. The clips faithfully reproduce aesthetic mannerisms and the style of the era, such as a tendency to frame single figures and small groups recorded in close-ups and medium shots. [image 5.13 and 5.14, p. 428]

Thus, NO performs the excavation that media archaeology calls for – less a literal digging out than “both a method and an aesthetics of practicing media criticism, a kind of epistemological reverse engineering, and an awareness of moments when media themselves, not exclusively humans anymore, become active ‘archaeologists’ of knowledge.” In NO, an older media technology itself is mobilized to speak to such techno-epistemological questions. By making its machinery visible, NO reflects on how our epistemological systems are bound up with the technology used to mediate representations. These technologies have often been imagined as superior – cleansed from human subjectivity, more objective and with greater capacity than the human brain to

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211 Wolfgang Ernst and Jussi Parikka, Digital Memory and the Archive (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), p. 55.
store information, which translates into memory. Foregrounding the medium disrupts the illusion that content is all there is and refocuses our attention on the transporter medium. Hence, NO’s use of material may be interpreted as a statement against exaggerated belief in progress, from technological determinism to political advances. This scepticism is part of the film’s message. NO does not seek to be read as carrier of unequivocal historical truth.

At the same time, as with the sound recordings in Pena, the footage material in NO, left in damaged state, authenticates. Having aged, it is coded as a material that has lived, that has been part of the real. If we consider the cinematic apparatus as the cinematic narrator, then foregrounding the cinematic body is a way of foregrounding this authorial voice. Shifting registers between original and re-staged draws attention to this construction; archival and faux footage both question and affirm. On the one hand, the result is an unreliable cinematic narrator; on the other, the footage material is coded as material with a biography, as having lived, hence having been part of the real. As its “body” has been damaged, it is not superior in the sense of being indestructible. The result is a double-bind, an “alternative realness” which signals the construction of its making. Here, the very material becomes part of the argument.

In interviews, Larraín described how he did not want the historical footage to “interrupt” and break the illusion of the film, and Benson-Allott suggests that Larraín creates a “cohesive experience of a media moment rather than an

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212 Today, of course, this discourse has shifted towards the digital and the superior “brain” of computers.
historical truth... By making his fiction look archival, he underscores the fictive quality of the archive and of politics in general.” 213 Both the film and the original NO campaign are constructions, media creations. Expanding on Benson-Allott’s argument, the film makes possible an experience of a historical moment that seems real precisely because it is so consciously fictional.

Together with its obsolescent delivery medium of video, the damaged material helps us to experience its “thingness.” 214 Brown suggests that we experience this “thingness of things” when they break: the interruption causes us to look not through but at the object in its opacity. Likewise, media archaeology suggests that when a medium becomes obsolete or when it seems particularly new, its qualities come into sharp relief. Certain objects, Elsaesser writes, attain a “particular kind of presence or agency,” 215 a signifying dimension beyond their presence as a thing “to be looked at.” Such objects carry an embodied heft or “auratic” presence. The obsolete media featured in Nostalgia are objects in this sense, estranged, yet affectively saturated and evidence of a historical reality. [image 5.15, p. 428] In NO, the cinematic medium itself becomes such an object. As used in this film, the medium testifies in its own material right: it has a general history and a culturally specific biography. 216 But

213 Caetlin Benson-Allott, ‘An Illusion Appropriate to the Conditions NO (Pablo Larraín, 2012)’, Film Quarterly, 66.3 (Spring 2013), pp. 61-63 (p. 62).
214 Brown, ‘Thing Theory’.
215 Elsaesser, ‘World Cinema’, p. 9. Elsaesser’s examples are from the horror genre; he writes about a “post-epistemological concept of realism,” in which accepts “the groundless ground of representation” based on “conditions of visibility and presence that include invisibility and virtual presence”, p. 19.
216 In difference to films like JFK (Oliver Stone, 1991), which layers authentic and restaged archive, the archive look is extended to the whole film in NO, but the
a medium is also an object that does something. In NO, we can watch the medium showing something as it is set to act out this performative function. We can, as proposed by media archaeology, listen to the noise of the transmitting system itself. Video is included not only as an obsolete object inside the film but active as the film itself. The medium carries a triple dimension: as an object in itself and as the performing agent of the film, as a diegetic object onscreen, and as a key metaphor about (media) history.

The Cultural History of Photography and Video in Chile

The object qua object tells its part of the (hi)story, which includes here also the specific role that photography and video have played historically in Chile. Southern Cone political documentary filmmakers have often played an active role in counterhegemonic struggles, political debate, investigations of human rights violations, and the creation of public audiovisual archives. Together with photography’s power to haunt, harnessed by the resistance, this function was carried forth into later political documentary and video, formats which served as

boundedness of the clips clearly delineate which parts are archival and which form part of the diegesis. But I am also suggesting that this differs from other “fake archives” because of the historically-culturally specific “identity” of the medium of video in Chile, its “social imaginary.” I will discuss this point further below.

217 This, according to Ernst and Parikka, allows it to be examined “in its medium state.” Ernst and Parikka, Digital Memory and the Archive, pp. 184-5.

218 Apart from the infamous burning of films, books, and film stock, Ciudad de los Fotógrafos documents how the photographers as well as the photographs themselves taken were attacked, culminating in a brief spell where photographs in magazines were forbidden altogether. Another film that emphasizes the role of photography in the resistance is the aforementioned Imagen latente. This film operates with photographs and testimony, for example of those who took the famous pictures of the corpses in the abandoned mine of Lonquén which are re-enacted in Los Archivos. In Imagen, these photographs are held up against the place where they were taken, at a later time, accompanied by archival sounds and effects such as shutter clicking noise.
cultural resistance against dictatorship. Video in particular shaped an alternative “imaginary” of Chilean society, developing a language for the NO campaign and defined the way in which documentaries were made in Chile during the 1980s and most of 1990s.219 Considering this collective social imaginary, the use of these diverse media formats – such as U-matic, VHS-C, Hi-8, Super VHS and Betacam, today considered of museal presence – resonates differently in a Chilean viewing context. [image 5.16 and 5.17, p. 428]

At the same time, the historical experience of deception, hoax, and absence of images defines the context of and the challenges to visual media’s truth claims in Chilean productions. Recognizing media power, the junta at different points in time either prohibited images completely, in classic anti-pictorial fashion, or used them for spectacular social deceit.220 This historical experience of mediatic betrayal and collaboration may have shaped a culturally specific attitude

219 See Germán Liñero’s work on the role of video as cultural resistance to the dictatorship, for the development of an alternative visual language for the NO-campaign, and the collective and social use of video to develop an alternative imaginary. Liñero, Germán, Apuntes para una historia del video en Chile (Santiago de Chile: Ocho libros, 2010). The goal was to show “the real” country, give voice to the oppressed and marginalized, reconstruct the self-esteem of the Chilean people, in particular the oppressed and marginalized, which resulted in a certain focus of subject matter and a preference or, according to Liñero “incessant use” of testimony (“incessante utilización”). Liñero, Apuntes, p. 193.
Flores argues that the material – digital and video – influences even contemporary film not only in the style but also the subject matter. Chosen for availability and economic reasons (and in this regard, not unlike the “new cinemas” with their an ‘idea in the head and a camera in hand’ (Glauber Rocha in King, Magical Reels, p. 69), video offers freedom of location and movement but also expanded liberty regarding subject matter and its methodological treatment (Flores, Excéntricos, p. 12).

220 The peak of the mediatic involvement in public deceit might well be the so-called Operación Colombo, an international, DINA-orchestrated campaign to conceal the disappearance of 119 political prisoners. El Diario de Agustín (Ignacio Agüero, 2008) shows the level of involvement by the official media in these processes of strategic disinformation, and more importantly, the state of impunity and power, which centrally involved authority figures continue to enjoy.
towards or distrust regarding conventional narrative structures, representation and epistemological systems used in Chilean productions on certain topics. Both Pena and NO draw attention to such historical cover-ups and disinformation, to media complicity in history writing.

Speaking about movies made for television and “movie movies” within a British context, Charlotte Brunsdon “explore[s] the possibility that medium specificity may be more nationally specific than much contemporary theorisation suggests.” Moreover, the definition of photography as indexical, often perceived as a property of the medium, is in fact a “socially accepted definition.” Transplanted into different national contexts and media formats Brunsdon’s argument remains interesting. Considering the outrage that some images produce in certain populations and fail to produce in others, a purely ontological, media-specific approach is not satisfying. These are then not absolute or “hard” ontological statements but rather potentialities, and the way

221 As lighter subject matter and Hollywood productions continue to be well received Estévez, ‘Cine Contemporáneo Chileno’; Estévez, Luz, Cámara, Transición; Mouesca and Orellana, Breve Historia.

222 Charlotte Brunsdon, “It’s a Film’: Medium Specificity as Textual Gesture in Red Road and The Unloved’, Journal of British Cinema and Television, 9 (2012), pp. 457-79 (p. 457). In her case studies, Brunsdon lets the reception context dominate as she speaks of “an instance of medium specificity as a textual gesture, when it is not the material support, or a set of conventions or protocols, or the institutional context which defines medium specificity, but the mode of attention invoked,” p. 473.

223 André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion, ‘A Medium Is Always Born Twice …’, Early Popular Visual Culture, 3 (2005). Gaudreault and Marion offer a historical, anthropologically informed and intermedial approach to the “learned property” of the arché photographique. Not natural but cultural, it works only if we know the technological apparatus behind it; and media theorists remind us of cinema’s genesis out of various media (not just photography).

224 Apart from the Hebdo case mentioned above, one might also think of the case of Mohammed caricatures in the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten.
in which the material support is culturally embedded inflects on the mode of attention these media invoke.

As visual media thus played a specific role in the historical context of Chile, both as a tool of deception by the regime and as a weapon of resistance, the pre-existing expectations towards the capacity of the image, and derived from that, the attitude towards documentary and fiction, might be more culturally determined than is often acknowledged. Despite the identical material-technical level, the perception of visual media’s properties is coded in culturally and historically specific ways.

Apart from the more conventional forms of encoding diegetic time – by means of production design and mise-en-scène – costume, sound, lighting, location shoots in settings left in pristine “historical” condition – the “visual dating” of NO, Manero, and Mortem is expanded to the format of the material itself.\footnote{All three films of the trilogy have been shot with such vintage cameras, lenses and film stock, but in NO, this use of the medium is most elaborate.} The montage of historical and faux footage suggests continuity between or the continuation of the past into the present. This strategy of going backwards in time counterbalances the dominant trend towards ever-increasing immersion and immediacy of digital technologies. In NO, repetitions and leitmotifs seem rather to suggest a cyclical time: René watching his food turning in the microwave, or playing with his son’s toy train going in circles, to create the impression of time as circular, elliptical, and flattened.\footnote{These descriptions of time are taken from Urrutia’s analysis. The following analysis builds on her perceptive reading of NO. Carolina N. Urrutia, ’NO, la película. Más}
aesthetic tension between surface and depth in video, this loop introduces a 
reflective quality and expresses one of the central questions of the film: what 
has really changed? Has there been (lasting) progress? The old medium allows 
us to see anew, to look askance at the past: what else is left out of hegemonic 
discourses, public and private memory; what else was maybe not told?

These shifting, undetermined temporalities and forms of realness are coupled 
with an affective and psychological dimension. As conversations spill over from 
one scene to the next, they call attention to such absences in the plot, and by 
extension, to comparable absences in narratives on history. The scenery – the 
image – changes, but the discourse continues. As these ellipses do not match 
expectations according to rules of genre or continuity editing, they demand an 
active reading position. They function as the space into which the audience 
may insert what they imagine to transpire between the scenes, which can only 
loosely be based on the available visual and narrative information, perhaps 
what they remember themselves. In this way, “what is being seen is in excess of 
what is being shown,” allowing for a different, subjective experience of 
mediated historical time.

September 2013].
The train symbolically evokes modernity, and its belief in progress within a linear 
conception of time; the arrival of cinema; the themes of change, travel, transit, being in-
between states, and even disappearance. 

Many commentators read NO as a conservative ideological distortion, as a superficial, trivializing, sentimentally infused nostalgia piece.\textsuperscript{228} Such criticism, I think, misreads the level of self-reflexivity regarding the film’s aesthetic and formal strategies. While there are omissions and condensations,\textsuperscript{229} the film does depict competing discourses and points of view, even within political fractions. One need only compare the juxtaposition of the various ways of experiencing and (not) celebrating the result of the plebiscite at the end of the film: joyful celebrations, genuine tears and hugs among the NO camp; a stupefied Saavedra who separates himself, an empty, wary expression on his face; the loneliness of the Si-campaign’s chief ad man, who is, ironically, excluded from

\textsuperscript{228} In Chile, it has been suggested that Larraín’s films carry a conscious or unconscious right-wing point of view due to the fact that he is the son of prominent politicians of the right-wing UDI party. The most incriminating allegation concerns historical revisionism: critics objected to a “classical Hollywood cinema” paradigm as allegedly suggesting that the campaign was designed by – and won by – a single heroic individual. In leaving out the many forces that united in the NO campaign, the argument goes, the film oversimplifies and distorts the collective nature of the campaign, as misrepresenting by failing to convey the whole story. Eminent critics include Manuel Antonio Garretón, who called NO “ideological trash” and Raquel Olea who detected a “perversion of the truth.” ‘NO según M.A. Garretón: Es la basura ideológica más grande que he visto’ (2012) <http://www.emol.com/noticias/magazine/2012/08/23/557085/manuel-antonio-garreton-contra-la-pelicula-no.html> [accessed September 2013]. Raquel Olea, ‘NO... La perversión de la verdad en la película’ (13 August 2012) <http://www.radiotierra.cl/node/4741> [accessed 13 August 2012]. Part of the virulence in NO’s reception is owed to the historical moment of its release, which coincided with the election of a right-wing government of Sebastián Piñera, after decades of ruling by the Concertación, the coalition government of the transition. While such critical tendencies dominated in Chilean reception, in Western reviews, the ironic, bleak and serious tones of the film were often missed. Especially Western critics describe NO’s style symptomatically in terms of postmodern self-absorption, as using historical footage only “to lend historical context” (presumably to North Americans). These critics claimed the film was made “deliberately ... as ugly and tacky as possible.” Mike D’Angelo, ‘Cannes 2012, Day 10’ <http://www.avclub.com/article/cannes-2012-day-10-cronenberg-meets-delillo-matthe-75718> [accessed 9 March, 2015].

\textsuperscript{229} The film does not depict the anti-Pinochet forces’ grass-roots efforts to bring out the vote which were pivotal to the referendum’s success, cf. Rohter, ‘One Prism’.
the planned victory party of his superiors on classist grounds. It is precisely its poly-vocality that is the film’s strength.\textsuperscript{230}

In NO, the surface is indeed the message but it is not empty, for the *materiality* of the medium is linked narratively to the commercials at its thematic core. The film offers a political argument on history through its own medium. Rather than a success story, NO shows how the NO victory was also “a little bit of a yes vote,”\textsuperscript{231} won through the very means installed by the system it was rejecting.

Narratively, the world of sales speaks to the particular way in which the transition to democracy was *negotiated* in Chile. The melting of market, publicity and politics creates a clever and apt metaphor for contemporary Chile, where “the official discourse is one of advertising.”\textsuperscript{232} René is able to use the same tag line – “What you will now see is deeply embedded in the contemporary social context of Chile … Today Chile thinks of her future”\textsuperscript{233} – at three different occasions: to sell a soft drink, to present the NO campaign, and at the end of the film, to sell a new TV show. Each time the pitch works, and its vague grandeur also serves as a caption, introduction, or advertisement for the

\textsuperscript{230} Besides the eclectic members of the campaign, there is René’s politically activist wife, who is routinely detained and badly beaten by the police and who rejects the “copied” discourse of advertisement, and a cameraman and competitor to René, who wants to shoot images in which the people can recognize themselves. Here, NO picks up the discourse and ideological attitude of shooting with an ‘idea in the head and a camera in hand’ Glauber Rocha in King, *Magical Reels*, p. 69.

\textsuperscript{231} Director Larrain observes that “we said no to Pinochet but yes to his system. There’s a piece of the Yes that won.” Palacios, ‘The Problems of Fiction’.


\textsuperscript{233} “Lo que van a ver a continuación está enmarcado en el contexto social del Chile actual … Hoy Chile piensa en su futuro.”
film itself, for the “contemporary social context of Chile” can refer both to the
diegetic time, or to the time of viewing for the film’s audience.\footnote{Today, there is also a biographical fluidity between film and television industries and
directors, which may influence and shape an aesthetic fluidity.}

The film’s focus on the power of illusion and suspended belief speaks also to
the appeal of cinema itself. Thus, the critique of neoliberalism is intertwined
with its relation to spectacle and audiovisual media. Media and cinema history
are used to speak about history in general, a method evidenced in other
moments of the trilogy as well. Each film raises the spectre of spectacle inside
the spectacle: Mortem conjures aspects of melodrama and reminisces about
the Bim Bam Bum Club in Santiago; in Manero, the protagonist kills to steal a
television and film reels; in NO, the ad men want their latest commercial to be
shot in “James Bond Style.” The manic desire for imitation\footnote{Mouesca calls this “mania de la copia.” Mouesca, Plano secuencia, p. 167. Cf.
Verena Schmöller, Kino in Chile.} in Manero (whose
protagonist strives to emulate an American icon and movie star) ends with NO,
where one character chastises the campaign as “the copy of the copy of the
copy,”\footnote{“Es la copia de la copia de la copia.”} mobilizing the postmodernist simulacra and modernist Gertrude
Stein’s \textit{A rose is a rose is a rose}. Literally, this sentence condemns repetitive
structures in media and advertisement, reminding viewers that Pinochet was
ousted by the very commercialism he brought to Chile. NO recognizes that
historical memory can be turned into a product: the same medium (or a close
relative) that helped the historical advertising campaign to “sell” democracy, is
now selling this film. Thus, Larraín creates “an aesthetic appropriate to the
conditions” – an aesthetic appropriate for critiquing the removal of Pinochet through the same capitalist principles he helped introduce to Chile. A story about media manipulation is told in media manipulated images.

The film uses this surface to make us look at the object in itself, but the medium is also used as a metaphor on history. NO tells the story of a historical transformation and event, but also of a media transition and the disappearance of a previous medium: NO is a film shot in video largely about the impact of a television campaign. In NO, such self-referential aesthetics rather point to media’s ideological function and their very real but not necessarily truthful effects. NO suggests that René wins the campaign by creating images of how people would like to see themselves – happy but also taller and more European, eating baguette instead of Chilean bread, marraquetas or hallullas. The film highlights the construction and sale of this ideal image. The now apparent limitations of video – failures, glitches, overexposure – make us aware of the constructed nature of the image and the claim to a (transparent) truth attached to it. The pronounced mistakes highlight the artificial use of this medium, reminding us that this is a representation, a mediation of history.

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237 Paula Massood quoted in Benson-Allott, ‘Appropriate to the Conditions’. Benson-Allott’s interpretation of the film’s aesthetics tends to be rather symbolic or metaphorical. She interprets the bleeding colours literally as a “critique [of] the blurred principles of the campaign, its capitulation to the empty promises of 1980s advertising. … Against a white background the bold, black letters smear into green, red, and yellow shadows, suggesting that neither the campaign nor the movie’s politics will ever be black and white” (pp. 61-2).

238 The censorship of the dictatorship is also embedded within a media context, when the contestants are told that “you can’t make dirty jokes, talk about the government.”

239 Using the example of photomontage as challenge to photography, Bolter and Grusin argue that this strategy makes the spectator hyperconscious of the medium,
Emphasising the properties of the now obsolete, older medium enhances the medium-ness or thing-ness of the transporting medium. Thus, in opposition to the logics of immediacy which “dictates that the medium itself should disappear,” the medium in NO is determinedly present. This hypermediacy stands in tradition of modernist strategies of ‘defamiliarization’, the making strange of the familiar in order to increase the perceptual awareness of the viewer. Enmeshing old and new footage foregrounds the materiality of the film’s own celluloid “body”. And precisely this hypermediacy makes us “aware of the artificiality of the original” even while it continues to authenticate the film text. The replication is never meant to be exact, never attempts to suffuse with the original form. As in a palimpsest, in the remediation of analogue aesthetics in NO, the past shimmers through into the present.

Reading media history in dialogue with history, the form(at) in NO allows a different, less naturalized perspective on the presumed normalcy of the present and on the exclusions of history. The records exist, but in a different and largely obsolete media format, replete with distortions. As in Nostalgia, the old medium points to the future obsolescence of contemporary media, while the unmasked imitation of the historical material acknowledges the historicity of the film’s present moment of production.

“precisely because conventional photography is a medium with such loud historical claims to transparency.” Bolter and Grusin, Remediation, p. 38.


The link between a specific medium identity and specific audiences can be further refined with the insights from scholarship on what has been called a “nostalgic turn.” The concept of nostalgia is still often used derisively, accused of effacing history by transforming it into mythology, rejected as sentimental and unthinking. More recent reassessments of nostalgia emphasize how its

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image 5.13 and 5.14: NO 1

image 5.15: Nostalgia de la luz

image 5.16 and 5.17: NO

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243 Jameson’s influential critique of postmodernism’s “cultural schizophrenia” and its toolbox to “empty history” via nostalgia, parody and pastiche, has been reassessed, for instance, by Richard Dyer, Pastiche (London: Routledge, 2007); Linda Hutcheon, A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000).
affective powers contain critical and even transformative potential to challenge hegemonic historical narratives or notions of progress. Such nostalgia provides a “space of shameless emotion and longing,” not “a freedom from memory but a freedom to remember, to choose the narratives of the past and remake them.” Remaking, of course, implies an element of fiction, while it is the excess of emotion, its shamelessness, which can provide a valuable critical tool. Nostalgia never pretends to be objective, and using nostalgia as method is a corrective to the devaluation of emotion, as separate from and inferior to the faculties of thought and reason where “to be emotional is to have one’s judgment affected.” In the context examined here, nostalgia bears out a critical potential to account for cultural variation in affective response and attitude towards a medium, to establish generational and perhaps even

The rejection of nostalgia as sentimental and necessarily uncritical is of the same order as the devaluation of emotions as embarrassing(ly feminine). Compare Pribram’s argument on emotions in genre reconfigurations, Pribram, Emotions, Genre, and Justice in Film and Television: Detecting Feeling.

244 For scholarship on nostalgia see Boym, The Future of Nostalgia; Pam Cook, Screening the Past: Memory and Nostalgia in Cinema (London: Routledge, 2005); Katharina Niemeyer, Media and Nostalgia: Yearning for the Past, Present and Future (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2014); and Sprengler, Screening Nostalgia.

In a first instance, Boym distinguishes between restorative and reflective nostalgia. Put in simplified terms, restorative nostalgia is conservationist and conservative, reflective nostalgia may be humorous, and may foster understanding, if we take responsibility for our nostalgic desires. Actually “a yearning for a different time,” such self-reflexive nostalgia rejects the status quo, and rebels “against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress.” Boym, The Future of Nostalgia, p. 55.

245 Boym, The Future of Nostalgia, p. 54, emphasis added.


247 Conceived as an inverted utopia, the redefined notion of nostalgia shares with media archaeology the drive to look back at the lost potential of past or alternative futures. From this insistence that it could have been different follows that it could be different again. Etymologically the longing for a particular space, often associated with home, one may read nostalgia as a pain for a space. Thus, this kind of nostalgia intimates also a capacity to imagine an alternative world, or at least an insistence to imagine the possibility of an elsewhere, a different place; herein lies its critical potential.
transcultural and transnational bonds, and to bridge approaches from cultural studies and media archaeology.

In NO, the archive material and the medium – the historically and culturally specific identity potential of video – are used strategically to evoke a nostalgic mode across generations and uneven memory landscapes. The sheer materiality of video may trigger subjective memories, a form of affective “identification” for a larger circle of different cultural reception contexts, as such footage is associated with home movies, family memories and the emotional and sensual experience triggered by feelings of intimacy: “it is the material and aesthetic characteristics of the medium [of video] itself that endow its images with a specific corporeal and synesthetic appeal.”

The format is also able to create nostalgic effects even for those who have not experienced the medium before it was relegated to dinosaur technology. Such affective processes might function in similar ways to those created by one’s own home movie – even when we are not in the image. For Roger Odin, home movies’ particular emotional appeal lies in the “ordinariness” of those filmed: “these images are a little like me and they speak to me of people like me.”

However, Odin criticizes this “affective trend,” setting affective responses in opposition to a cognitive “documentarist” mode of “reading” the cinematic text: “when I see a document that I know [or perhaps rather, that we recognize]

to be excerpted from a home movie, I have a tendency not to ask the truth question.”

What I argue is that the medium itself can be asked perhaps not the, but a “truth question,” and that nostalgic effects may also be an element of differentiation. As an historical emotion, both in the sense of an emotion with its proper history and one that is acquired and learned, much like other sensibilities, nostalgia reads differently across different audiences. As in Dyer’s pastiche films, NO’s aesthetic quotes imitate and cite the films of the era as a style to make it possible for the audience “to feel what it was possible to feel [then],” as Dyer suggests regarding pastiche. But it would be wrong to read NO only as a pastiche film. The film’s nostalgic mode succeeds in bringing the spectator closer to history, and relates the film categorically to the present.

Rather than towards identification with the characters or the camera, the film guides and invites the viewer to “feel close” to the iconic 1988 documentary footage and to the medium itself. The medium elicits a feeling, an affective emotion.

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249 Odin, ‘Reflections on the Family Home movie as Document: A Semio-Pragmatic Approach’, p. 264. Odin finds that these productions can mask conflict by emptying out “the truth question, which benefits authenticity and affective emotion” (p. 267).

Similarly, Sprengler describes certain forms of nostalgic evocations (in her example, the use of “iconic” pop songs in Forrest Gump) as “tantamount to requesting that spectators suspend their critical faculties” Sprengler, Screening Nostalgia, p. 77.

250 See nostalgia’s conception or invention and travel from a treatable condition to an incurable disease, from a provincial to a national ailment and finally a mal du siècle, cf. Boym, The Future of Nostalgia.

251 In his analysis of Far from Heaven (Todd Haynes, 2002), Dyer suggests that the film’s strategy “to tell a story of the 1950s in a style of the 1950s” makes it possible for the audience “to feel what it was possible to feel [in the 1950s],” p. 176. Pastiche “suggests that we can enter into the feelings of our forbears through immersion in their art” p. 178. Therefore, pastiche involves the recognition of the historicity of emotions, how they are produced, evoked, and remembered. Dyer also suggests there may be more pastiche work at times when new media emerge and enable new means of (re)producing and expressing things.
relationship to the past that is both personal and potentially communal, enabling an emotional connection to both our own place in history and to our forbearers. This feeling does not seek to and does not necessarily overpower rational capacities. The past is “liberated” from the vicissitudes of narrative immersion and an anthropocentric discourse.

NO’s protagonist is a blank, not entirely sympathetic character – a mediocre father, indifferent to politics, a careerist, who embraces capitalism and consumer culture. Bernal’s anti-hero star persona (pivoting towards roles of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde-characters, or handsome, rotten-cored Dorian Grays) works well here. As NO is loosely based on Antonio Skármeta’s play “The Plebiscite,” where the protagonist, by contrast is 50ish, politically engaged, idealistic and happily married, these changes to the main character’s qualities seem rather deliberate; as a result our emotional field is relatively disengaged from the characters.

The notion of kinaesthetic empathy – learning through feeling – suggests that we may have strong feelings towards material objects. This may be a particular, materially present object, as well as the metaphorical “body” of a film. Barker’s suggestion of an affective relationship between the audience and the film, Marks’s phrase of loving a disappearing image, and Nagib’s formulation of an

252 A Salon critique describes René as “phlegmatic, apolitical, and depressed ... an anti-hero on his way to a divorce. The disenchanted and uninformed character of René could also be read as a mirror for the viewer: As the son of exiled Chileans and trained in Mexico (presumably used to explain Bernal’s accent), the profilmic character seems a kind of everyman.

“identification through cinéphilia, rather than through manipulation and illusionistic catharsis”\textsuperscript{254} point to this general idea of a strong emotional relation to the film.\textsuperscript{255} Beyond a general or personal emotional relation to cinema, something in the film enables specific identificatory moments – the deterioration of the image for Marks, the chase scenes for Barker, the slow motion for Nagib.

In \textit{NO}, this affective coupling is evoked by the cultural identity of the medium in nostalgic mode, which appeals to the viewer’s body, the memories, modes of perception and ways of knowing that are “stored” in the body and that have the potential to change and develop: the body can make us think.\textsuperscript{256} Bypassing or transcending predetermined notions of identification with historical personnel, this strategy therefore invites us instead to relate sensually and affectively to the (materiality of the) images, and thereby, the past. For the capacity of fiction to appeal on an emotional level is essential to incite the recognition and empathic viewing necessary for the kind of memory work that produces the distinction between past and present, (current) self and others, and the recognition “that another’s loss is not my own.”\textsuperscript{257}

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\textsuperscript{255} Cf. Deborah Reynolds’s idea of kinesthetic empathy with regards to dance, already mentioned in relation to Carne. Barker suggests kinesthetic empathy as an affective relationship between the audience and the film, rather than the audience and screen characters. Barker uses chase scenes in films to illustrate what she calls “empathizing with the film’s body.”
\textsuperscript{256} In \textit{How Emotions Work}, sociologist Jack Katz argues that emotions provide a kind of corporeal knowledge, in Stadler, \textit{Affectless Empathy}.
\textsuperscript{257} LaCapra, \textit{Writing History, Writing Trauma}, p. 78; Cf. Pam Cook on such an emotional connection to the past in the present: “In the process of looking back, the past is
The examples in the first part of this chapter illustrated the approaches taken to visualize erasures and absences. The next section showed the limitations of the visual metaphor for understanding. The camera in Carne – as the bearer of the image – cannot enter the history hidden in Alejandro, in spite of its almost violent attempts. We cannot understand through the visual image, or rather, the image offers only an incomplete view; the only way to come closer to understanding another human being is through the emotional world.

Both Nostalgia and NO use media history to look askance at general history and historiography, thereby employing a media archaeological approach. By letting the medium “speak,” they help the viewer become aware of naturalized assumptions, for instance, regarding “historical progress.” In Nostalgia, the cinematic medium helps render tangible invisible processes of memory or the passing of time; NO uses its own medium as a poly-semantic metaphor.

Sound, silence and breath help to create an affective encounter with Carne’s protagonist; in Nostalgia, objects and space are affectively imbued. Turning to both affective and to material registers can be considered responses to a situation with contested documentation, which in turn relates to the “visible disappearance” of torture, its discursive confinement and the marginalization of its legacy in the public sphere. This approach expands what we can “see,” or perceive as “existing.”

explored, mourned, and exorcised to enable characters (and audience members) to come to terms with the present.” Cook, Screening the Past: Memory and Nostalgia in Cinema, p. 12.
Conclusion

My research began with questions that emerged from torture’s ontologically uncertain position between visible and invisible. While this semi-invisibility of torture precedes the inherent bias of any representation, the films faced additional challenges: how to create authenticity and authority in a situation where evidence and information are censored, obscured, and disputed; how to show the processes of erasure, censorship and being made invisible; how to show collective pain and how to speak about such a topic that is not only of the visible order, and, moreover, “unsavoury”? To put it differently, how can one bypass the immediate response of rejection. Torture – even hearing about, watching or imagining torture – may arouse a range of complicated and unpleasant emotional responses, from shame, guilt, anger, frustration, vindictiveness, humiliation, and fear, to disgust, nausea, revulsion, denial, detachment and disgust. Torture is ugly; and torture stories are taboo stories. Staying with this topic and these emotions, despite the impulse to turn away from ugliness can indeed be an important humanist gesture, to overcome the resistance against dealing with difficult, ugly, and hidden topics.

As the visual metaphor is central in torture, in cinema and in epistemological strategies, I set out to explore how these themes would intersect: how would the abundance or lack of visual documentation impact on the fictionalization of historical facts of torture; how would these fictionalizations relate to how torture is already documented; how would the presence or absence of documentation be reflected in the films; and how would the films refer to this intersection – would
they indict their own medium, or the spectator, for an inevitable complicity in seeing?

**The Visibilities of Torture**

The first part of this thesis researched what kinds of images were created within a situation of visual surplus – if not in diversity, then in quantity. While the films examined here showed visual images of the scene of torture, they also reflected the problematic dimensions of seeing torture. Far from assuming a straightforward procession from visual evidence to knowledge or truth, films such as Zero, SOP, and Redacted fractured ways of seeing torture and highlighted the ambivalences of watching. Here, the space opened between various gazes – the camera’s, the characters’ and the audience’s – sometimes felt uncomfortably uncommitted and ambivalent. Syriana, Body, and Rendition interrogated the relation between spectacle, torture, film and media, in an intensely self-referential manner. This self-referential dimension is linked to the question of witnessing, to the reliability of images as visual evidence and by extension, the camera or machine as “scientific witness”, which is explored in all of the films examined here.

The images of Zero and Pena depend on a human reader as counterpart who decodes the signs given in “indicative” mode; SOP openly interrogates the presumed objectivity of mechanical recording; and Redacted indicts all images as compromised. Other films offer images in need of decoding. For instance, in Carne, the camera shows us what we might not want to see (the hurt dog), in such a manner (extreme close-up) that the image threatens to become illegible, and Mortem’s long takes offer a view on history in need of human interpretation. The
machine can have a witnessing function, but it depends on a receiving, embodied reader, an expert necessary to read the blind output of the camera. Rather than an image that “invites us to watch while telling us that we are just watching,” such images tell us that something happened, and that it was recorded, but not what it means. Not only do these images highlight the discrepancy between the mechanical and the human eye, but they also highlight the brutality of the machine gaze, as in the fragmentation and penetration of the human body in Mortem, Carne or Redacted. It is for this reason that I suggested that these films ultimately affirm the power of the spectator, the human gaze and emotion.

The television shows Homeland and Los Archivos offer an emotional public space for the audience to negotiate and experience various subjectivities. This emotional response anchors the spectator in the present and thereby bridges the temporal gap between the experience of the representation in the present and the event in the past. Such an empowering gesture can also be detected in many of the films, on a less dynamic scale, through the construction of an indeterminate space. In this space of ambivalence or indeterminacy, cinema can be potentially emancipatory and “genuinely political – that is, as cinema.”¹

The Invisibilities of Torture

In the second part of the thesis, I examined films which expand or deprioritize the visual metaphor. I argued firstly that, these films make invisibilities visible and secondly, that they propose a poetics of the real that does not rely primarily on

¹ Aguilar cited in Barraza. Aguilar identifies this aesthetic approach of openness for 1990s Argentine cinema, which hands to the viewer the option to interpret politically or not. Aguilar, New Argentine Film. Cf. Rancière’s call for ambivalence, p.102
visual evidence. Beyond the notion of the unrepresentable, these films propose different images and metaphors to establish authenticity, by offering an affective dimension as alternative to the ocularcentric indexical link. They thereby “help sketch new configurations of what can be seen, what can be said and what can be thought and, consequently, a new landscape of the possible.”

Sound in Pena and breath in Carne – as embodied phenomena – bypass the idea of a visual index. The time-lapse in Nostalgia, and the “impossible,” mechanical view in Mortem enable and invite a different perspective on history and memory; Redacted communicates through its form frustrations about the confluence of censorship and a barrage of visual imagery; SOP renders visible how the digital nature of the Abu Ghraib images impacted on our perception of the events.

Informed by affect theory, my analysis suggested that films such as Nostalgia and Carne use these sensual forms of looking to make collective emotional fallout palpable, to give shape to diffuse or inchoate emotional dimensions, and thus to convey central aspects of torture and a traumatic and violent past invisible to the eye. These contemporary Chilean films sought to find new images about the past that spoke aptly to the present; as Rojas suggested, a past in which the present can recognize itself. Sensual or even synaesthetistic (haptic, breathing, auditory) modes of vision evoke body and sensory memory, inviting the audience into a personal connection with the past, to share the experience of an historical moment, or the exploration of the perceptually diminished world of its protagonists, without

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2 Rancière, The Emancipated Spectator, p. 103. Theses that propose a (permanently) shifted structure of perception attributable to the cinema experience are as old as the medium itself. I do not venture to side with any camp that proposes a new dispositif for current cinema, but I do suggest that the films reflect such discourses.
necessarily entering into empathetic identification. If Mortem “smelled” of the coup, Pena’s soundscape offered a marine taste, Nostalgia dissolved time in its musical-rhythmic structure, and Carne translated the sensations of touch.

The films’ emphasis on affectivity reconfigured what is invisible and what might be considered unspeakable, shifting the focus away from cognitive and vision-centric approaches and from the dualism built into the concept of representation. In its contestation of the notion that we gain knowledge of the world mainly through a gaze unanchored in the body, affect theory could already be considered political.

In her discussion of “empathic vision,” Bennett ended on a political outlook:

> the registration of affect is … a manner of doing politics … And it is certainly timely for art theory to review its approach to the political at a point where the old ‘communication’ models that rest on the assumption that content is transmitted via text and image begin to haunt discussions around imagery relating to war, violence, terror and trauma.⁴

Bennett contrasts art that works with affectively charged space with art that returns to the referential. As I hope to have demonstrated in the films analysed here, these aspects can be combined; Bennett’s “an imagery of affectively charged space” does not have to be read in opposition to a “return to the real.”

A second impetus for my research journey was to develop a political reading and to propose a political critique of the films that would go beyond representation and identification-centred approaches. Beyond the rare case of direct impact, could films function as a political actor? In some cases, films can become enmeshed with

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⁴ Hal Foster, indeed, suggests that the return to the real heralds a return to the referential. I am proposing that the preponderance of work conducting its politics through an imagery of affectively charged space signals, in itself, what amounts to a theoretical strategy in practice: a counter to the return to the real.” Bennett, Empathic Vision, pp. 152-3.
the event, with history-in-progress. For instance, Zero has contributed to the iconography of torture and 24 impacted on the language used in the real torture debates.

Other filmmaking projects disrupt how dominant, “loud” accounts of violent pasts function in the present. This disruption may change the rules or limits of the playing field, of what is included in historical accounts, and what counts as important in the aftermath of torture. Making such invisibilities perceptible is a political act against marginalization and erasure. This argument was forcefully made for the historical protests against the dictatorship:

Making [the regime’s] violence globally visible was a particularly apt response to disappearance because that extreme form of repression originates, in fact, in a strategy of a dictatorship that had a global component from the start.4

In light of the waning previous paradigms regarding the ontology and political capacity of cinema, Laura Mulvey recommended a “return to the past [the cinematic archive] as a source of renewed intellectual analysis and understanding.”5

Yet, I suggested that for this subject, we are departing from a situation where images are not circulated, censored, disputed, imperilled, or overshadowed. Here, the films create images that can be read as a poetic or fictional archive, images that are missing from the collective public pool of memory. As an artistic response to blank spots and erasures in public history and official memory, these images do not replace but supplement missing parts or differentiate existing official texts. The Chilean films in particular, but also the re-enactments of SOP and Redacted, and

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even Zero offered such additional images, which I have called “cine-poetic” archive to emphasise their mediated and fictionalized qualities. While the emerging poetic truths were not absolute, this plurality did not result in a capitulation to relativity. These films acknowledged their fictional dimension as well as their rootedness in the historical real. Their fictionalizations were tied to the documentary realm, to erased, censored, or otherwise “silent” signifiers. Often, the generically hybrid nature of the material provided different points of access for the audience, played with social codifications, and allowed to intersect private and public dimensions.

Even for the films that referred to events of which there exists a surplus of images, the result was not only or always deafening anesthetization and neutralization. Against the notion of repetition as expression of saturation and ideological reinforcement, these mediatic repetitions must be seen as a palimpsestic revisiting, not an erasure of previous versions. The figure of repetition as reworking, in serial television, in re-enactments and fictional archive, I suggested, allowed an immersive take on historical events, a potentially collective “emotional public space.”

Moreover, all of these films, in different ways, staged confrontations between ways of producing the real. Redacted, NO and Pena highlighted their mediation in their self-reflexive structure, announced from the title sequence and their “narrative image” onwards. The same performative effect was achieved through the interplay
of devices in SOP. These new forms of realism⁶ are perhaps especially fit for today’s media landscape and the contemporary moment of epistemological instability. Such images imply also that the ethical question should be reframed, as well as the tendency to discuss ethics in documentary and fiction on entirely different terms. Images affect us differently if we know they are real, but perhaps also if we know that they are based in fact. Is it possible to argue that, eventually, freed from traditional indexicality, but nevertheless credibly linked to the real, fiction films also bear the capacity to convey (poetic) truth and contribute to social justice? During this research, the films have led me to more and more theoretical and philosophical questions on the capacities of the medium. Far from hermeneutical abstraction, the history of real torture was at the heart of this self-reflexive wrestling with the capacities of the medium. The films mediated anxieties about the reliability of visual evidence, on a formal level, within the cinematic mode – generically hybrid, and therefore appealing to and playing with different audience expectations and social codifications – as well as within the diegesees, where issues of power and knowledge were expressed through visual metaphors. This gravitation towards media epistemological questions was perhaps fitting for the search for a political ethics of today. I proposed that these two sets of films in their very disparate forms appear to respond to an epistemological uncertainty that can be framed in similar ways – the question what images can tell us about the

⁶ Both Kara and Page focus on the merging of material – of analogue representations and digital imaginations – to create such new forms of realism. Kara describes such “speculative” or “seemingly disjunctive aesthetic realisms” as “an alternative to the photographic, digital, sutured, or post-humanist realisms in cinema in the digital age.” Kara, ‘Beasts of the Digital Wild’; cf. Page, ‘Digital mimicry’. I have tried to expand this model beyond the question of material basis.
truth of atrocity, of history, of the real world. In a comparable gesture, Grusin suggested that seemingly disparate trends (“post-cinematic atavism” and the concurrent contemporary turn to “slow cinema”) might originate from a similar moment, and he subsumed as “atavist” films that call attention to their hypermediacy and remediation, as well as films that are immersive, in an affective sense.⁷ As I attempted to do here, Grusin also linked the “return to the real” with an emphasis on the affective.

Extrapolating some of media theory’s most famous postulations – Wittgenstein on his typewriter as co-writing the text, McLuhan on the medium is the message⁸ – to the medium of film, I argued that these films offer themselves as primary agent and partner in “writing” supplementary archives in new forms of images. As LaRocca pointed out, “making war” is tied intimately to the making and consuming of images,⁹ which links back to the idea that the medium itself shapes and changes the message. As seen in the self-reflexivity in the U.S. films (primarily war films with embedded torture), this links to the fact that “our new media wars are themselves executed, not just disseminated, in new media.”¹⁰

As our media offer powerful metaphors, one may wonder whether the invisibility of code, the hidden workings behind interfaces, the visual cues and unseen forces in participatory computer games offer perhaps a direction of thought with regards to

⁸ One of the founding fathers of media archaeology/studies, Friedrich Kittler argued that on a fundamental level, we now longer write, through our word processors, computers are doing that. Chun, Programmed Visions, p. 92.
¹⁰ Stewart, ‘War Pictures’, p. 112.
the invisibilities of torture, complementary to its spectacle. Programmatically, Wendy Chun wrote,

By interrogating software and the visual knowledge it perpetuates, we can move beyond the so-called crisis in indexicality toward understanding the new ways in which visual knowledge – seeing/visible reading as knowing – is being transformed and perpetuated, not simply rendered obsolete or displaced. ... Software perpetuates certain notions of seeing as knowing, of reading and readability, which were supposed to have faded with the waning of indexicality.11

Digital data’s deterioration is not automatically or necessarily visible; the need for an “expert” reader connects such an image with Jodorowsky’s rebuilt childhood home or his use of the emperor’s original saddle: we need information beyond the surface to understand. And a film such as *Standard Operating Procedure*, which exhumes this invisible metadata, still needed the audience to trust its authority, to trust the (cinematic) devices that translated a conceptual idea into a visible one.12

In conclusion, I suggested that this problematization of visual regimes and of the role of the machine or camera and human audience in watching and witnessing resulted in a rather apt kind of image-metaphor for today’s media landscape. The emerging images affirmed both cinema and the spectator. But such “hybrid” images can be read as a way to expand our understanding of (events such as) torture as something that exceed, that exist in a state in-between visible, known, and hidden, exceeding comprehension. However, I did not wish to exaggerate the

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11 Chun, *Programmed Visions*, p. 92 and p. 18. Chun suggests the possibility to link software to abstract concepts, in her epilogue on its relation to race, as a visible but nebulous concept.

In this “code culture,” knowledge of the source code – in biogenetics, informatics or neo-liberal economics – should lead to the understanding of the complex visible reality.

12 Mitchell claims that images today come almost as a package deal with archive attached in their meta-data. But we still need to archive the devices to read these images.
novelty of these images, the similarity between these two cinemas and what I saw as their common epistemological quest to go “beyond the visible,” nor their engagement with the visual metaphor, which is, after all, central for cinema. Discerning these tendencies and attempting to categorize them was not meant to collapse all these heterogeneous aesthetic responses and disparate films into an overarching Theory. The transnational link helped understand what cinema can do to shape our imaginaries on torture, and, perhaps, to understand something fundamental about how we relate to our current reality through our images. In that sense, the films can be read as a proposition on the relevance of cinema.

The Spectator and the Torture of others

As all of the films analysed here featured real political torture as referential object, no matter how oblique, they had to address an ethical dimension. As discussed in the Literature Review, most models that engage with this political dimension are based on spectatorial complicity in a (usually insufficiently differentiated) gaze\(^\text{13}\) and simplify or neglect the role of emotions in the cinematic experience.

As with the emotional space in the television series, the “cine-poetic” recreations invite the spectator to encounter history in an emotional and, to an extent, inherently public space, as these products circulate in a collective sphere. The cine-poetic archive creates additional, alternative or palimpsestic images, narratives, and experiences to a global “liquid” pool of memory, which contains various other, local, familial, or public reservoirs of memory.

\(^{13}\) Hanich suggests that already the act of collectively watching a film, even as a silent audience, can be considered political, in the sense of a shared action. Cf. Julian Hanich, ‘Watching a Film with Others: Towards a Theory of Collective Spectator-ship’, Screen, 55 (Autumn 2014).
Cinema is exceptionally capable to evoke such emotional and affective responses, and it can deepen our emotional and cognitive understanding, thereby offering a way to circumscribe the linguistic incapacity defined by Scarry in relation to pain. At the same time, one needs to be wary of the “genetic tendency of film discourse ‘to over-endow the cinema with utopian possibilities’.” In today’s image landscape, questions of witnessing are reconfigured: images are more difficult to erase online, and claims to ignorance are harder to maintain – but what it all means is a different question. As torture (and cinema) needs an audience, the viewer is usually framed as inherently complicit. But this problem of complicity – we cannot claim ignorance as we have all seen by proxy – might also be the solution. If affect is “a manner of doing politics,” and the witnessing audience ultimately determines the meaning of torture through the certainty of bodily response, we are able to interrogate our emotional and physical responses, the invitations to feel as well as our instinctive reactions. The films challenged this spectatorial subjectivity – through ambivalence, through the work required to make sense of the narratives, or through the invitation to create affective bonds.

15 If the way in which we handle and consume images has changed so fundamentally, the question might be less than ever “to watch or not to watch;” for, even without watching for instance the beheading videos put online by ISIS, I know that they exist.
17 Bennett also finds a more hopeful potential space for cinema via its affective; she suggests that “we may, in some respects, have more in common with people on the other side of the world than with our neighbors” [American English in the original], and that “there is a role of art and other cultural forms in tracing connections in a way that can engender contact and actualize and expand the interpretative community, or ‘community of sentiment.’” Bennett Empathic Vision, p. 142
Sontag’s question of how to respond to the pain of others and Dorfman’s call to make (Chile’s) pain “globally visible” remain quintessential. Given that “visual media are the chief conveyor of public history in our culture,” Jerome de Groot asked whether there is “such a thing as transnational, global historical literacy or a global historical imagination?” Rather than a “global historical understanding,” it seems more apt to speak of clusters, bound through cultural discourses and selective perception, co-existing with other memories and forms of memory transmission. Modifying De Groot’s argument, this “historical imagination” is perhaps better understood as glocal rather than global. These films layer their content for different audiences and their “differentially cultivated competences for symbolic codes.” Beyond these layers, I suggested that the images described above are able to speak to a transnational audience. The spectator – any spectator – is positioned alongside with Chileans who were trying to understand, piece together, make sense of their history. Only the spectator can decide to acknowledge a core humanity of feelings (thinking along Butler’s concept of vulnerability); only the spectator is able to give a compassionate gaze on obscure characters, and on history itself.

I argued that all the films emphasise both their own nature as “spectacle,” involving various forms of gazes and images, as well as the performative action of watching and witnessing. The audience is frequently watching people watching other media – watch television in Los 80; watch surveillance cameras in Zero, images in SOP;

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19 Rosenstone, History on film/film on history, p. 12.
20 de Groot, ‘Illusions of History’, p. 271. While he does not answer conclusively, de Groot’s seems to verge towards the affirmative, insinuating the idea of a canon or core, even though he recognises linguistic and cultural barriers.
21 Hannerz cited in Bennett, Empathic Vision, p. 139.
various screens in *Redacted*. The implication is, perhaps, that there can be no such thing as an uninterested gaze.

For instance, in Larraín’s trilogy, the protagonists are initially passive, uncomprehending and positioned with a certain distance to the unfolding events. History intrudes into their lives, but parts are missing, they witness only fragments; the viewer, like these protagonists, receives only a partial story. At the end of each film, the protagonists have to take a stance. These protagonists are not major historical figures; if anything, they are representative of the bystander. I have argued that such figures, which also frequently appear in the analysed television shows, offer crucial subject positions to develop a sense of shared social pain.

Rather than as “an opportunity to exercise ethical judgement” for an extranational self-proclaimed “humanist audience,”²² these images and these figures asked all its viewers to take a stance. For today, the bystander to atrocity is also the international community. In this way cinema impacts on the imaginations of key bystanders who might intervene to reduce violence, including the ‘international community’ and the general public.²³

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Appendix

The following appendix summarizes some of the brutal facts in the reality behind the torture cases that are the basis of the films discussed in the main body of the thesis.

U.S. Black Sites and Other Practices of Hiding

According to human rights organizations, the interrogation and detention regime implemented by the U.S. has resulted in the deaths of at least 100 detainees in U.S. custody; more are missing or unaccounted for. There is evidence of institutional collusion and medical collaboration, such as the revival of prisoners for further torture, or the falsification of death certificates to cover up homicides.\(^\text{24}\) Red Cross reports come to the scathing conclusion that “the policy of brutalization was and is systematic, approved and justified all the way up to the highest levels of the administration.”\(^\text{25}\) In total, 54 countries, including EU Member States, participated in the CIA’s rendition and so-called “black sites” programme;\(^\text{26}\) and the events at Abu Ghraib prison seemed to be replicating themselves throughout the “coalition of the willing,”\(^\text{27}\) confirming the inevitable spread of torture.\(^\text{28}\)

\(^{24}\) Glenn Greenwald, ‘The Suppressed Fact: Deaths by U.S. Torture’, Salon (30 June 2009); ‘Doctors a Part of Iraq Abuse’, AP (20 August, 2004). According to Human Rights organisations, most of those who were and/or are being held cannot be linked to terrorist activity; many are still missing. Human Rights organisations complain about lack of access to facilities.


\(^{26}\) ‘About those blacksites’.

\(^{27}\) See the British torture photographs at the so-called Camp Bread Basket. Another example of how torture spreads and corrupts of other branches of society is the report on the American Psychological Association’s (APA) complicity with the White House and the Intelligence Community on the Interrogation Programme. James Risen, ‘American
In 2002 and 2003, lawyers in the Bush administration’s Department of Justice and the Pentagon drew up what came to be called “torture memos.” The memos sought to provide a legal basis for a sweeping break with precedent. The argument was that since al-Qaeda and its allies were not a state party to the Geneva Conventions, they were not covered by its ban on torture and other maltreatment; that the UN Convention against Torture applied only to acts carried out on U.S. soil; and that “severe pain or suffering” qualified as torture only when resulting in “permanent and serious physical injury, organ failure, or even death.” This definition excluded psychological abuse, such as the threat of torture or execution, as well as what was later called “clean torture.”

The 1984 UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, ratified by the U.S. in 1994, defines torture as “any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession.” This includes treatment intended to humiliate the

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28 Devji, ‘Torture at the Limits of Politics’.
29 Along with the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907, the Geneva Conventions of 1949 were among the first formal statements of the laws of war and war crimes in the body of secular international law. They established norms on the treatment of and rules for the protection of civilians and prisoners of war.
30 After being leaked in 2004, most of these memos were “withdrawn.” Cf. Farrell, The prohibition of torture.
31 Hutchings, ‘Spectacularizing Crime’.
victim. Article 3 does not allow the practice of rendition. The Convention does not allow for any exceptions and requires prosecution of any acts of torture.\textsuperscript{32}

Tracing the history of torture demonstrates that what happened at Abu Ghraib and other sites has its roots in colonial violence,\textsuperscript{33} from the use of torture against Native Americans, to U.S. intervention in Central America, the Caribbean, and the Philippines, where the technique of waterboarding was first developed against the Philippines’ resistance to U.S. colonization.\textsuperscript{34}

The genealogical strain of this particular torture has been traced to 1950s CIA practices, SERE, and documents of a dated, imperial worldview such as Kubark and “The Arab Mind.”\textsuperscript{35} Two psychologists without expertise in interrogation or with the cultural region were hired by the CIA to develop the interrogation programme.\textsuperscript{36} Their recommendations for coercive techniques were based on

\textsuperscript{32} ‘Convention against Torture’.
\textsuperscript{33} The British tortured in Kenya, the French in Algeria, the French and USA in Vietnam. Cf. Chaudhuri, ‘Documenting The Dark Side’.
\textsuperscript{34} Kleinhans, ‘Imagining Torture’, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{35} Regarding “The Arab Mind,” see Chapter 4, Images as Torture. Cf. Danner, Torture and Truth. In 1963, the CIA created the KUBARK Counterintelligence Interrogation manual (KUBARK), which codified secret research on mind control. Since drug research had been unsuccessful, the CIA explored other ways to manipulate human consciousness, such as sensory deprivation and stress positions.

The SERE – which stands for Survival, Evasion, Resistance, Escape – programme evolved after American G.I.’s captured during the Korean War made false confessions under torture. Each branch of the U.S. military offers a variant of the SERE training curriculum, which is designed for the event that U.S. soldiers are captured, with the goal to resist psychological torture.

\textsuperscript{36} The two psychologists, James Mitchell and Bruce Jessen, had ties to the CIA and the military but were inexperienced in fields related to interrogation techniques. Their company, formed specifically conduct work with the CIA, collected over US$80 million before the agreement was terminated in 2009. Bruck, ‘The Inside War’.

As they were both responsible for carrying out torture and for determining whether it was effective and safe, there appears to have been an obvious pecuniary conflicts of interest as well as a “built-in financial incentive to be brutal. The contractors who waterboarded detainees got $1,800 a day, four times the amount paid to interrogators who did not.” Heires in Robert Hennelly, ‘Evil Torturers Catch a Break: How America Got Distracted from a
“reverse-engineered SERE tactics,” 37 which a former section chief of the FBI’s International Terrorism Operations described as “voodoo science.” 38 There are then two origin stories to this torture: the “scientific” cover story 39 and the influence of (misplaced) ethnographic notions.40

The way in which the U.S. torture was run ties in with other cultural practices of concealment and of enforced fields of invisibility: from the semi-secret network of black sites; the practice of extraordinary, i.e. extra-legal, rendition;41 the open secret of outsourcing prisoners to “publicly invisible” zones of punishment. The “sanitization” of torture, warfare, and the censorship of images 42 might well originate in the same impulse.

As a modern way of disappearing people, Guantánamo Bay and black sites across the globe create a “legal black hole.” 43 By interpreting international treaties as only

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37 SERE tactics were “reverse-engineered” into a blueprint for abuse. Mayer in Hutchings, ‘Spectacularizing Crime’, p. 12; Jonathan H. Marks, ‘The Logic and Language of Torture’.
38 Katherine Eban, ‘Rorschach and Awe’ Vanity Fair Online (July 2007).
39 The concept of “learned helplessness” was developed in research with dogs on classical conditioning, cf. Eban, ‘Rorschach’.
40 Davidson, ‘Three Senators and Zero Dark Thirty’.
41 “Extraordinary rendition” is the practice of handing over prisoners to third countries in the knowledge or with the explicit intent that they will be tortured there. The rendition programme began under Clinton. With its enforced disappearances and black sites, which even the International Red Cross is not allowed to visit, it violates basic tenets of international law. The programme is textbook catch-22: those who were extracted to other countries are “unable to sue the U.S. government for either an apology or damages, because the courts consider the very existence of rendition a state secret — a position that the Obama Justice Department has so far supported.” Jane Mayer, ‘The Secret History: Can Leon Panetta move the C.I.A. forward without confronting its past?’, The New Yorker Online (22 June 2009).
42 This includes the semi-official ‘no body-bags’ on TV rule; blocking information for reasons of national security, or allowing excess only through embedded journalism.
applicable to U.S territory and by defining these “spaces of exception” as outside of any domestic or international legal protection, captives were effectively stripped of their human rights. This “legal exceptionalism” is enacted via “spatial exceptionalism.”

Another way to make torture “invisible” is by using so-called “torture lite” techniques, a promoted distinction which may have fostered increasing acceptance of the U.S. public. Rejali points out that these “clean” torture techniques, which make it harder for survivors to seek legal consequences, are generally becoming more common because of the spread of human rights monitoring.

What has driven torture technology [and modern, “clean”, traceless techniques] turns out to be something that would seem completely unrelated to torture, namely, international monitoring and democracy.

A Continuum of Cruelty

While imprisonment and torture are often thought of as qualitatively separate systems, they are more appropriately configured as points on a continuum, in their theoretical foundation, and their historical and factual implementation. The prison

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45 Both of these terms come from Marks, Logic and Language of Torture.
46 Such techniques include prolonged isolation, sleep deprivation, stress positions. Bächler cites an empirical study with torture survivors from the Balkans (2007) demonstrating that the long-term effects of physical and mental torture were indistinguishable. Bächler, Inszenierte Bedrohung, p. 253.
system, designed to keep the prisoners in and to keep the public out, institutionalizes isolation and secrecy.

The U.S. system of mass incarcerations has been discussed by Anne-Marie Cusac, Carby and Gordon. These prisons have begun to function like domestic black sites, spatially separate zones of impunity in which “the physical, mental and sexual abuse of prisoners perpetrated daily … is continually being erased from … the American imagination.” Cusac uncovers far-reaching similarities between prison brutality and torture cases, including implicit toleration, export of abuse and sadistic practices, “disappeared” prisoners and detainees, the role of race relations, and the construction of its population almost as a separate species. According to Gordon, the Abu Ghraib photographs “exposed the dehumanisation that is the modus operandi of the lawful, modern, state-of-the-art prison.” There is, firstly, a continuum between U.S. military prisons abroad and territorial U.S. civilian prisons, which tolerate or encourage what Gordon describes as a “normalcy of exceptional brutality.” The routine inhumanity of U.S. prisons ranges from solitary confinement to staggering numbers of sexual abuse to the most brutal physical abuse imaginable.

49 Carby, ‘A Strange and Bitter Crop’.
50 In 2002, the ICC for ex-Yugoslavia decided that prolonged solitary confinement, used in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Guantánamo as well as U.S. prisons, constituted torture.
51 Approximately one in five male inmates in the United States has faced pressured or forced sexual contact in custody, according to studies by researchers such as Cindy Struckman-Johnson at the University of South Dakota. One in 10 has been raped. For women, the rates of sexual assault are as high as one in four in the worst facilities. Maurice Chamman, ‘Rape in the American Prison’ (25 February, 2015) <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/02/rape-in-the-american-prison/385550/%3E12> [22 March 2016].
52 A 2014 report, “The Crisis of Violence in Georgia’s Prisons,” by the Southern Center for Human Rights in Atlanta documents dozens of similar cases, and emphasises an increase in
In early 2015 a cell phone photo surfaced on the internet, taken in a Georgia prison, of inmates torturing a fellow inmate. The image uncannily resembles the Abu Ghraib torture pictures in its iconography and brutality.53 What is remarkable about this picture is that it is fellow prisoners who torture “their own.” The system is upheld by all those present, including those who are also victimized by the same system. These systems produce the individuals they purportedly discipline, punish, or cure. The prison system does not serve to prevent or abolish crime but it “has succeeded extremely well in producing delinquency ... [and] in producing the delinquent as a pathologized subject.”54 Likewise, torture produces a torturable, guilty individual; the inscription as “terrorist” marks an individual as linguistically and socially contaminated, and performatively produces, pre-crime, the terrorist.55 It is this the same sovereign who has the power to describe people as “unlawful”, to spatially separate individuals in unmarked, dark zones produces detainees who are considered not legally entitled to be treated humanely.

Another point on this semi-invisible continuum of cruelty, the death penalty, is also built on this notion that certain subjects – terrorists, rapists, murderers – are humans

54 Foucault, Discipline and Punish, p. 277.
55 As de Zárate points out, the “use of the word terrorist by the military regime to refer to the supporters of the UP (socialists, communists, socialist Christians) has reinforced the blame of those parties in the public imagination.” de Zárate, ‘Terrorism and Political Violence During the Pinochet Years’, p. 184.
who have forfeited their civil rights through their actions. (Compare the iterant demands to abandon Miranda warnings for terrorists.) This is of course antithetical to the idea of human rights, as it suggests that such rights are conditional, that they can be lost, and not be rehabilitated.\textsuperscript{56} Just as torture and imprisonment are hidden and outsourced, executions are routinely camouflaged and most U.S. states have adopted secrecy laws and prohibit public observers. The practice of lethal injection itself is designed to \textit{look}, rather than to \textit{be} peaceful, so as not to fall in the category of “cruel and usual punishment,” prohibited by the U.S. Constitution.

\textbf{Attempts at judicial redress}

In total five investigations were conducted into the “prisoner abuse scandal” at Abu Ghraib, including an investigation into previous investigations. Already the first investigation in 2003, the report by Maj. Gen. Antonio Taguba, mentions the existence of “stunning evidence … [such as] detailed witness statements and the discovery of extremely graphic photographic evidence.”\textsuperscript{57}

After these investigations, the U.S. Senate launched a final report into the interrogation programme. The official name, “Committee Study of the Central Intelligence Agency’s Detention and Interrogation Program”, was translated into common parlance as the U.S. Senate’s “Torture Report.” The report was released in December 2014, after 11 months of prolonged discussions about redactions.

The report was focussed on documenting the programme’s ineffectiveness and wastefulness, not its illegal nature. The report made clear that torture was

\textsuperscript{56} In many states in the U.S., convicts have lost certain civil rights even after their release, such as the right to vote.

\textsuperscript{57} Cf. Hersh, ‘Torture at Abu Ghraib’.
unnecessary, often produced false information, and that information could have been or had been obtained otherwise.\textsuperscript{58} What the Senate Report also makes clear is that there is a disquieting pattern of misrepresentation\textsuperscript{59} and denial, of obstruction\textsuperscript{60} and even destruction of evidence: In 2005, the CIA destroyed 92 videotapes of “enhanced interrogation sessions,” documenting the interrogations of Abu Zubaydah and other detainees.

Among the shortcomings of the Senate report is the lack of recommendations, an acknowledgment of the fact that there was resistance within the agency, which would help counter the argument that CIA personnel who tortured were patriots.\textsuperscript{61} A further shortcoming is that the report covers only prisoners held by the CIA, excluding Guantánamo; there is still no official accounting of what happened to detainees handed over to foreign governments for torture. \textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{58} The experienced FBI interrogator Ali H. Soufan extracted the intelligence on Khalid Sheik Mohammed as the mastermind of 9/11 by using interrogation techniques that rely on rapport-building. When the CIA hired private contractors to continue interrogations, including “enhanced interrogation techniques”; the FBI director withdrew in protest. Zufan’s book \textit{(The black banners)} on the experience was redacted by the CIA. Fresh Air, \textit{NPR} (13 September 2011). Soufan also appears in \textit{The Oath} (Laura Poitras, 2010).

\textsuperscript{59} The agency offered false and misleading information to the Department of Justice, to Congress, which was supposed to oversee it, and to the executive branch to which it ostensibly reported, about the efficacy of their clandestine programmes.

\textsuperscript{60} Following outright denials, CIA director Brennan eventually apologized and admitted that CIA employees had covertly monitored computers used by congressional staff preparing the report, out of concern that Committee staff already had access to the Panetta review, a document they were fully cleared to see. An internal CIA document, the Panetta review conflicts with the CIA’s own official response.

\textsuperscript{61} This internal dissent is slowly coming to the fore. High-ranking officials objected on both moral and practical grounds. When the CIA hired private contractors to continue interrogations, including “enhanced interrogation techniques”; the FBI director withdrew in protest. Fresh Air, \textit{NPR} (13 September 2011); Mayer, ‘The Black Sites’.

\textsuperscript{62} In order to bring the Republican minority on board, the Democratic majority on the committee agreed to limit the report to the CIA, excluding the executive branch. This is why Guantánamo is not featured in the Senate torture report as torture orders against victims came from the Pentagon instead of the CIA. The Republican minority eventually refused to
On his second day in office, President Barack Obama banned “inhumane treatment” of prisoners and closed the CIA’s network of secret “black site” prisons by executive order (which therefore can be overturned at leisure by the next president). The order does not ban U.S. officials from sponsoring torture overseas, however, and the administration made clear that no investigation or indictment of higher-level personnel was going to be conducted. The Obama administration has continued its predecessor’s broad claims that lawsuits divulge state secrets. This call to “turn the page,” an approach which Amnesty International has characterised as “engaging in a de facto amnesty,” echoes the received wisdom of “looking forward and not backward” (“salir adelante”) in Chile’s post-dictatorship process. No criminal charges have ever been brought against any CIA officer involved in the torture program.

Moreover, the current drone war also takes a problematic position in this trend to shroud such violence in secrecy: the CIA has now the authority to unilaterally kill people according to criteria hidden from the public. While an internal cleansing participate anyway. In this light, the most common critique of the report as not being bipartisan rings particularly hollow.

63 The administration’s attempts to close the detention centre at Guantánamo Bay was stymied by political deadlock in Congress.
64 ‘About those blacksites’.
65 Richard acidly comments that in Chile, reconciliation became “another word for capitulation to the cynical cover-up of the Concertación.” p. 187
66 These politics of leaving officials untouched are met with similar strategies of resistance. Similar to the practice of public shaming by La Fuga in Latin America, Code Pink targets the homes of U.S. officials who were left unprosecuted.
Three low-ranking soldiers received sentences; the sentences for lawyers John Yoo and Jay Bybee were reduced from “professional misconduct” to merely “poor judgment”; not a single officer or civilian leader was held criminally responsible for the prisoner abuse, and five officers received administrative, non-criminal, punishment.
67 Among the most controversial cases rank the accidental killing of two hostages in April 2015 and the targeted killing of a U.S. citizen in a drone missile attack in Yemen, who was
process seemed to have reigned in some of the worst excesses in the CIA, most people remain in their positions.\textsuperscript{68} Considering the extent of lies to Congress uncovered by the Senate Intelligence Committee, the lack of accountability or recognition of fault on the part of the CIA, it is disturbing that it seems many of the same people who were in charge of the CIA’s torture programme now run the CIA drone program under the agency’s Counterterrorism Centre.\textsuperscript{69}

Several legal challenges to the CIA’s interrogation program are working their way through the U.S. court system but there is little chance of litigation in the United States. In 2004, 2006, and 2008, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that all detainees, wherever held, were entitled to the protections of the U.S. Constitution, and protected by the Geneva Conventions and that the military commissions in Guantánamo were in violation of those laws. Nevertheless, as late as 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear appeals by Guantanamo Bay detainees; lower courts have sided largely with the Justice Department’s claims of blanket state secrecy.

It is possible, legally speaking, to pursue prosecution inter alia, as torture and as war crimes before national courts in EU Member States. The International Criminal...
Court (ICC) is supposed to intervene (only) if the states do not follow their legal obligation to effectively, independently, and impartially investigate all cases of unlawful killing or torture, as well as arbitrary detention or enforced disappearance and to appropriately prosecute perpetrators – including high-level policymakers. As there is no statute of limitations on torture in the UN Convention; prosecution, even today, remains purely a question of political will.

The torture and murder of folk singer Victor Jara\(^70\) is a case in point, both for the difficulties of criminal persecution and for the way in which U.S. and Chilean histories are intertwined. The alleged killer of Victor Jara has been living in the U.S. since 1989; as did and do other officials charged with torture and human rights violations.\(^71\) If it is not possible to persecute even the murderer of such a highly popular public figure, of almost mythic standing in Chile, how can regular people hope for judiciary and political support to persecute their tormentors?\(^72\)

**Truth Commissions in Chile**

The first National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation (1990), called Rettig Report after its chairman,\(^73\) took place almost immediately after the return to democracy. The Commission was given a limited time frame and mandate for its

\(^70\) Butts of guns were used to smash Jara’s fingers until they were severed; allegedly, his killer played Russian roulette, before shooting Jara in the head. Killed in the National Stadium, Jara’s body, riddled with over 40 bullets, was dumped on the outskirts of Santiago.

\(^71\) Prupis, ‘Pinochet Officer’.

\(^72\) J. Patrice McSherry, ‘The Victor Jara Case and the Long Struggle against Impunity in Chile’, *Social Justice*, 41.3 (Fall 2015).

\(^73\) La Comisión Nacional sobre Verdad y Reconciliación (CNVR), or National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation, ran from April 1990 to public release March 1991, which demonstrates the limited time frame and necessary haste in execution. Some military officers testified confidentially.
investigation, for instance it could not name those responsible or initiate investigations. It acknowledged torture as a recurrent and institutionalised event, but explicitly excluded human rights violations that did not result in death from its investigation on the grounds that these were improvable. The names of the perpetrators were excluded but there is a list of names compiled by the Chilean commission which has never appeared in public: “In fact, most Chileans probably do not know there is such a list.” While Rettig debunked some myths, its narrow focus impeded a nuanced understanding of the dictatorship as a multifaceted repression. Few copies of the Rettig report were printed; and the assassination of a Pinochet confidante, which closely followed its publication, resulted in its quick disappearance. Hayner argues that as late as 1996, mentioning the Human Rights abuses was considered in “bad taste.”

Transforming Chile into the only country in Latin America to undertake a second official truth telling report, a second Truth Commission, “Valech” in common parlance, again after its chairman, Sergio Valech, addressed “political Imprisonment and Torture.” This framework allowed the creation of a second commission without recanting on the (false) claim that torture was improvable. According to Collins, the Commission was hastily set up; it ran from 2003 and published in 2004, under severe time pressure. Valech accepted the testimony from

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76 Cf. Stern, Reckoning with Pinochet.
77 Hayner, Unspeakable Truths; cf. Verdugo, De la tortura no se habla.
over 28,000 people as torture cases (the precise number of torture cases is contested); recognised victims were given a modest equal monthly payment.\textsuperscript{78} The Report concluded that the torture had been systematic, continuously advancing in its methods, supported by the judiciary, the army and the security apparatus. Torture was shown to have preceded most of the executions and ‘disappearances’ of victims. 94\% of all political detainees were tortured. Nearly all female victims reported that they had suffered sexual torture.\textsuperscript{79}

Valech concluded that there were 1,132 detention centres across Chile. Victims were also tortured in police stations, military installations, schools and hospitals. Torture was state policy and commonplace for political detainees. Torture and detention were used as a tool for political control by State authorities and perpetuated by decrees and laws that protected repressive behaviour, implicitly supported by the judiciary. Torture by members of the Armed Forces and Carabineros (paramilitary police) was a generalized practice on a national scale. The State resorted to torture during the entire period of the military regime.

Again, the commission was given a limited mandate, which in the case of Valech meant that the responsibility of evidence was located with the victims. The

\textsuperscript{78} This immediately created a narrative of fraud. A governmental plea to victims “to contribute their reparations to a special human rights fund, set up by the government also raises some consternation. The idea that a proposed National Human Rights Foundation might be funded by victims of torture, without asking perpetrating individuals and institutions to contribute to it, seems quite inappropriate. Let us remember that perpetrators have received well-paid salaries and pensions over the last 30 years while victims have had to wait to receive any symbolic reparation.” Roberta Bacic and Elizabeth Stanley, ‘Dealing with Torture in Chile Achievements and Shortcomings of the “Valech Report”’ (3 June 2005) <http://www.menschenrechte.org/lang/en/lateinamerika/dealing-with-torture-in-chile-achievements-and-shortcomings-of-the-valech-report> [20 March 2016], pp. 5-6.

\textsuperscript{79} Cf. Collins, Bacic and Stanley enumerate achievements and shortcomings of the Report.
commission was restricted to those cases of prisoners who could prove that their detention was politically motivated. The commission did not take an investigatory approach to its work. Indeed, interested parties – such as victims’ associations, human rights experts, religious and moral leaders – had to request meetings with the commission if they wanted their voices to be heard. Valech set out a number of odd rules for a testimony to be included in its report, excluding, for instance, detention in a country other than Chile, detention must have been in one of the 1,200 official detention or torture centres listed by the Commission and for longer than five days. (A third instalment, “Valech II” amended some of the most egregious omissions.80)

The testimonies of the Truth Commissions have been classified as confidential, ensuring that testimonies cannot be revealed in court procedures over the next fifty years.81 Unaddressed remains also the role of the judiciary during the dictatorship (and for some time even after the return to democracy),82 the combined failure of institutions to stop the propagation of narratives of denial, which often led often to re-victimization, an examination of the role played by civilian collaborators, as well

80 A second report has been set up to rectify some of the shortcomings, and to come up with a definite number of cases. The second commission is called “Valech II” in common parlance, and bears the official catchy title “Comisión Asesora Presidencial para la Calificación de Detenidos Desaparecidos, Ejecutados Políticos y Víctimas de Prisión, Política y Tortura.”

81 Therefore, they cannot be used in trials concerning human rights violations. Associations of ex-political prisoners have been denied access to the testimony.

82 See Collins on a judicial self-weakening which left victims defenceless, and how this debilitation of the justice system was anchored in the constitution. Cath Collins, ‘Human Rights Trials in Chile during and after the “Pinochet Years”’, International Journal of Transitional Justice, 4 (2010).
as the resistance within the military.\textsuperscript{83} There has not been a single condemnation for torture alone.\textsuperscript{84}

Impunity and amnesty have toxic consequences. Amnesty is a “caricature” of pardon, since it purports to erase the debt and the fact.\textsuperscript{85} As “institutionalized form of amnesia,”\textsuperscript{86} amnesty erases the distinction between forgiving and forgetting. Amnesty is therefore unethical towards society and the victims of crime, and also towards the perpetrator, argues Ricoeur. They must take responsibility for their actions, otherwise it dehumanises them as well, and it toxifies society at large. Bacic and Stanley conclude that what is lacking is restorative justice, carried out in a way that benefits society as a whole, the families of the victims, the survivors, as well as allowing the perpetrators to re-enter the community they have injured.\textsuperscript{87}

The failure to address past crimes has real social and legal implications and consequences in the present. In Chile, a terrorist law, repeatedly criticized by the United Nations Human Rights Council, is still routinely invoked used against urban protesters and land-rights activists from Chile’s indigenous Mapuche, resulting in much higher sentences and restricted due process rights. Other remnants of the dictatorship include the constitution designed by and installed under the

\textsuperscript{83} cf. Marco Fajardo, Contra Bachelet y otros: Los militares que se opusieron al golpe (Editorial Quimantú, 2006).

\textsuperscript{84} Former DINA director Manuel Contreras received sentences for crimes committed during the military dictatorship, including torture. As of 2013, courts have convicted around 260 people from the Pinochet era for human rights violations, 60 of whom are currently serving sentences.

\textsuperscript{85} While all justice requires a degree of pardon on the part of the victim of a crime (as the victim does not return the crime), with justice, this pardon cannot be expected and may sometimes be refused. This is precisely the difference between amnesty and pardon. “If pardon is a healing of memory, then memory is necessary to pardon, whereas amnesty is a kind of forgetting” Karl Simms, \textit{Paul Ricoeur}, (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 120.

\textsuperscript{86} Simms, \textit{Paul Ricoeur}.

\textsuperscript{87} Bacic and Stanley, ‘Dealing with Torture’. 
dictatorship, an absolute (not percentage-based) military état, and the privatized and unequal system of education.

Following Pinochet’s arrest in London, and under international pressure, Chilean courts became moderately more active. Judges began circumventing the 1978 amnesty law; recently Chile moved to symbolically repeal the law. In 2005, constitutional amendments abolished appointed senators, and prescribed that the Supreme Court would retain jurisprudence even in a state of war. To this day, police abuse is judged by military courts, resulting in acquittals or lenient rulings.

One may argue that, on a transnational and historical scale of comparison, Chile did not “do too badly” in terms of coming to terms with the past. Nevertheless, the continuity of political and social structures and mental attitudes is notable. The student protests that began in 2011 were met with a repressive and aggressive police response, from tear gas, mass arrests, harassment that was reminiscent of the police brutality against 1980s mass demonstrations. The visual parallel is highlighted in the documentary Interrupted Memory (dir. by Michael Chanan, 2013).

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88 Chile’s 1980 constitution was designed by and installed under the dictatorship. The constitution was “accepted” with 67% in a referendum which did not fulfill democratic criteria (there was no register, no alternative proposition and no free media, preceding were seven years of massive intimidation of the opposition).


90 Since 2002, police have been responsible for the deaths of at least three Mapuches. Such cases are investigated by military courts that do not meet international standards of independence and impartiality; sentences have either resulted in acquittals or been extremely lenient. The authorities have arrested several documentary makers who have spoken out about the conflict between lumber companies and the Mapuche people.

91 Cf. Richard and Arrate ‘Las Derrotas’; Ximena Zavala, director of Chile’s National Institute for Human Rights (INDH) suggested the same to me in conversation. The comparisons were made to the Franco regime in Spain and France during the Second World War.
Venturing to compare these vastly different and yet uncannily similar cases, it is possible to summarize the following:

1) the Invisibility of torture

Torture is conducted in spatially separate zones of impunity, such as Guantánamo. These spaces of spatial quarantine reject, literally, any shared ground. Extermination or expulsion is the logical conclusion of a discursive technique that frames the enemy as diseased, a terrorist “Marxist cancer” (in Chile), disavowing any human commonality. In terms of rhetoric, the infamous term “black site” evokes a black hole or a white spot on a map, where the voyager would fall off the earth, or enter a mythical no-man’s land. The prisoners held at these sites are outside of vision, and thereby outside of (spatial) knowledge. Following the same logic as the disappearances in Latin America, this mytho-magical terminology befits the uncanny ability to make people disappear, as if by magic, into spaces that does not officially exist. These practices are trained and normalized, half-visible, in our presence; not coincidentally, the UN Human Rights routinely criticizes the prison situation in both the U.S. and in Chile.92

The memory of these spaces, on the other hand, is privatized. In Chile, most torture centers were dismantled at the beginning of the 1990s, a destruction conducted in a manner almost as secret as their institutionalization, with little regard for public and private memory. Villa Grimaldi, as one of the most infamous torture centres

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92 Both in the U.S. and in Chile, prison conditions are routinely criticized by Human Rights’ organizations for severe overcrowding and inhumane conditions. In 2014, reviewing U.S. compliance with the Convention Against Torture, the United Nations simultaneously condemned both the U.S.’s failure to hold anyone responsible for CIA torture and the widespread use of solitary confinement in U.S. prisons.
was saved from destruction by private groups;\textsuperscript{93} the central torture center Londres is funded modestly and privately; the National Stadium was unsentimentally re-purposed (and only a little plaque reminds of its ignoble role during the dictatorship). The consumerist spaces in postmodern and post-totalitarian urban Latin America “foment [a] state of collective amnesia”, affirms Argentine cultural theorist Beatriz Sarlo,\textsuperscript{94} pre-empting the possibility to engage in “a continuing history of a real place.”\textsuperscript{95} For Susana Draper, the distortion of the exterior representation of spaces in the context of post-dictatorship torture sites and its “architecture of the transition […] express[es] post-dictatorship impunity.”\textsuperscript{96}

2) The Persistence of Revisionism in the absence of documentation

None of the official reports features clear recommendations for the future; the reports remain largely censored or obscured; the names of the perpetrators are redacted; and the roles of bystanders, moderates, and low-level dissenters, and the corruption of other branches of society and government remains to be more closely examined.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{94}Sarlo, Tiempo pasado, p. 287.
\item \textsuperscript{95}Kaminsky, ‘Marco Bechis’ Garage Olimpo’.
\item \textsuperscript{96}Draper discusses such spatial transformations with the examples of Montevideo and Buenos Aires. Draper, ‘The Business of Memory’, p. 128. Compare Bossay’s discussion of the primacy of space and spatial reappropriation in Chilean post-dictatorship documentaries. Bossay, ‘Cineastas al rescate’.
\end{itemize}
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Lack of accountability allows revisionist narratives to fester.\textsuperscript{97} Issues that should be grounded in fact instead become a matter of opinion, while documentation is censored or remains classified, such as the full Senate report or the release of visual material that would corroborate or undermine its findings.

The presence of antagonistic memories\textsuperscript{98} may persist in the face of historical documents, of course, but revisionist narratives\textsuperscript{99} are harder to maintain after official contradiction – see Brennan’s apology. In Chile, such myths were deflated by the Truth Commissions’ Reports and the subsequent Report of the Armed Forces and the army’s official recognition in 2004.\textsuperscript{100}

3) The “disruptive memory of torture”\textsuperscript{101} and the living presence of its survivors seems to play a significant role in the blockage and weakening of judicial consequences, from the unresolved issues of accountability to the inability to

\textsuperscript{97} The best example of this disastrous process is perhaps the so-called Dolchstosslegende in Germany post-World War I. This stab-in-the-back-legend has been considered as a factor contributing to the rise of fascist extremism in inter-war Germany. In the U.S., such myths include the al-Qaeda–Iraq connection, the persistent narrative that torture generated information that led to bin-Laden’s whereabouts, that (only) the “coercive tactics” worked.

\textsuperscript{98} Such oppositions are especially visible in the biographies of “monumental” historical figures. In the figure of Pinochet, a “with or against me” attitude is crystalized, resulting in what Cavallo called “a nation of enemies”. The emotional reactions to the figure of Pinochet were extreme, and by the end of the dictatorship, he was “the most loved and the most rejected personality in Chilean political history.” Cavallo, Douzet, and Rodriguez, Huérfanos, pp. 41-3.

\textsuperscript{99} The Chilean right and armed forces justified the coup, the violence of the dictatorship and the violation of human rights to the political violence allegedly initiated by the left during the 1960s.

\textsuperscript{100} On the verge of the release of the Valech torture report, the army’s commander-in-chief Emilio Cheyre army admitted to massive and systematic torture under the dictatorship and characterized the practice as unjustifiable, marking a position distinctly different from earlier negations. Juan Emilio Cheyre, ‘Ejército de Chile: El fin de una visión’, Estudios Públicos 97 (2005) <http://www.cepchile.cl/dms/lang_2/doc_3480.html#.UswgXeyCibU> [accessed 2 March 2013]. Winn suggests that this mea culpa was more significant for the dismantling of such narratives than the report itself. Winn, ‘El pasado’.

\textsuperscript{101} Bond, Frames of Memory, p. 145. Bond speaks about how torture impeded the ability to construct a coherent legal memory for 9/11.
prosecute any of the high-level detainees trapped in Guantánamo Bay, which seems impossible without allowing them to air all the information about their torture.\textsuperscript{102} Thus, torture plays a significant role in the limited scale of accountability. Looking at the social consequences of impunity, Bond calls for transcultural memory and comparative justice “in a rapidly globalizing age, [where] the work of justice assumes an international dimension.”\textsuperscript{103}

As I wrote this thesis, cases of police killings were reported on an almost weekly basis.\textsuperscript{104} Their sheer quantity speaks to the pervasive racism in social structures, but also of a larger, far-spread evil, a social brutalization and exclusion that links to Abu Ghraib and to Guantánamo. What has changed perhaps, beyond the momentarily increased media attention, is the fact that the story of the “dangerous black man” is now repeatedly recanted when visual (body camera or citizen cell phone) evidence demonstrates its falsity. This does not yet affect any behavioural change nor does the footage tell clear, easy, truthful stories. But fabricated narratives are harder to maintain, and it becomes harder to claim ignorance. These are examples of the power of the image as evidence of the real, against our allegedly, supposedly, image-saturated times.

\textsuperscript{102} Hutchings, ‘Spectacularizing Crime’, p. 13.
\textsuperscript{103} Bond, \textit{Frames of Memory}, p. 130.
\textsuperscript{104} Freddie Gray in Baltimore, Michael Brown in Missouri, Eric Garner in New York, Tamir Rice in Ohio, and Walter Scott in South Carolina.
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Chile: las imágenes prohibidas [Chile, the Forbidden Images] (dir. by Claudio Marchant, Chilevisión, 2013)
Contact (dir. by Robert Zemeckis, 1997)
Dear Nonna (dir. by Tiziana Panizza, 2005)

Death and the Maiden (dir. by Roman Polanski, 1994)

Der Krieg der Mumien / War of the Mummies (dir. by Walter Heynowski and Gerhard Scheumann, 1974)

El Baño / The Bathroom (dir. by Gregory Cohen, 2005)

El botón de nácar / The Pearl Button (dir. by Guzmán, 2015)

El chacal de Nahueltoro (Miguel Littin, 1969)

El chacotero sentimental / The Sentimental Teaser (dir. by Cristián Galaz, 1999)

El caso Pinochet / The Pinochet Case (dir. by Guzmán, 2001)

El diario de Agustín / Agustín’s Newspaper (dir. by Ignacio Agüero, 2008)

En la cama / In Bed (dir. by Matías Bize, 2005),

El lado oscuro de la dama blanca / The Dark Side of the White Lady (dir. by Patricio Henríquez, 2006)

Estadio Nacional / National Stadium (dir. by Carmen Luz Parot, 2001)


Fahrenheit 9/11 (dir. by Michael Moore, 2004)

Far from Heaven (dir. by Todd Haynes, 2002)

Fernando ha vuelto / Fernando is Back (dir. by Silvio Caiozzi, 1998)

¿Fernando ha vuelto a desaparecer? / Has Fernando Disappeared Again? (dir. by Silvio Caiozzi, 2006)

Fighting terror with Torture (2015, BBC)

Forrest Gump (dir. by Robert Zemeckis, 1994)

Garage Olimpo / Olympic Garage (dir. by Marco Bechis, 1999)

G.I. Joe: Retaliation (Jon M. Chu, 2013)

Historias de Fútbol / Soccer Stories (dir. by Andrés Wood, 1997)

Homeland (Showtime, 2011 -)

Imagen Latente / Latent Image (dir. by Pablo Perelman, 1987)

Interrupted Memory (dir. by Michael Chanan, 2013)

JFK (dir. by Oliver Stone, 1991)

La batalla de Chile / The Battle of Chile (dir. by Patricio Guzmán, 1975–1979)

La Danza de la Realidad / The Dance of Reality (dir. by Alejandro Jodorowsky, 2013)

La cueca sola [They Dance Alone] (dir. by Marilú Mallet, 2003)

La Flaca Alejandra (dir. by Carmen Castillo/Guy Girard, 1994)

La Frontera / The Frontier (dir. by Ricardo Larraín, 1991)
La historia oficial / The Official Story (dir. by Luis Puenzo, 1985)
La hora de los hornos / The Hour of the Furnaces (dir. by Getino/Solanas, 1968)
La Luna en el Espejo / The Moon in the Mirror (dir. by Silvio Caiozzi, 1990)
Largo viaje (Patricio Kaulen, 1967)
La sagrada familia / The Sacred Family (dir. by Sebastián Lelio, 2005)
La Spirale / The Spiral (dir. by Armand Mattelart, Valérie Mayoux, Jacqueline Meppiel, 1976)
Last Tango in Paris (dir. by Bernardo Bertolucci, 1972)
Los Archivos del Cardenal / [The Cardinal’s Archives] (2011-2014, TVN)
Los 80 / [The Eighties] (2008-2014, Canal 13)
Lost (ABC, 2004-2010)
Machuca (dir. by Andres Wood, 2004)
Melancholia (dir. by Lars Von Trier, 2011)
Miguel, San Miguel (dir. by Matías Cruz, 2013)
Missing (dir. by Costa-Gavras, 1982)
Night and Fog (dir. by Alain Resnais, 1955)
NO (dir. by Pablo Larraín, 2012)
Nostalgia de la luz / Nostalgia for the Light (dir. by Patricio Guzmán, 2010)
Peeping Tom (dir. by Michael Powell, 1960)
Pena de Muerte / [Death Penalty] (dir. by Tevo Diaz, 2012)
Play (dir. by Alicia Scherson, 2005)
Prófugos / [Fugitives] (2011 – present, HBO Latin America)
Rabia / [Rage] (dir. by Oscar Cárdenas, 2006)
Rain Man (dir. by Barry Levinson, 1988)
Redacted (dir. by Brian De Palma, 2007)
Rendition (dir. by Gavin Hood, 2007)
Sábado, una película en tiempo real / [Saturday, a movie in real time] (dir. by Matías Bize, 2003)
Salvador Allende (dir. by Guzmán, 2004)
Saturday Night Fever (dir. by John Badham, 1977),
Santiago ‘73, Post Mortem (dir. by Pablo Larraín, 2010)
Standard Operating Procedures (dir. by Errol Morris, 2008)
Syriana (dir. by Stephen Gaghan, 2005)
Taxi para tres (dir. by Orlando Lübbert, 2001)
Te amo, made in Chile / [I love you, made in Chile] (dir. by Carmen Castillo, 2001)
The Act of Killing (dir. by Joshua Oppenheimer, 2012)
The Americans (FX, 2013- today)
The Battle of Algiers (dir. by Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966)
The Deer Hunter (dir. by Michael Cimino, 1978)
The Kingdom (dir. by Peter Berg, 2007)
The Matrix (dir. by The Wachowskis, 1999)
The Oath (dir. by Laura Poitras, 2010)
The Thin Blue Line (dir. by Errol Morris, 1987)
The Unknown Knowns (dir. by Errol Morris, 2013)
Tony Manero (dir. by Pablo Larraín, 2008)
Tres tristes tigres (Raúl Ruiz, 1969)
United 93 (dir. by Paul Greengrass, 2006)
Valparaíso mi amor (Aldo Francia, 1969)
Venceremos / [We shall Overcome] (dir. by Rios/Chaskel, 1970)
V for Vendetta (dir. by James McTeigue, 2005)
Virtual History: The secret plot to kill Hitler (dir. by David McNab, 2004)
World Trade Center (dir. by Oliver Stone, 2006)
Y las vacas vuelan / [And the cows are flying] (dir. by Fernando Lavanderos, 2004)
Zero Dark Thirty (dir. by Kathryn Bigelow, 2012)