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Transmedia Memory of Albanian Migration in Italy: Helidon Gjergji's, Adrian Paci's, and Anri Sala's Moving-Image Installations

Marco Purpura

Beyond The Cinema: The Museum as a Media Site of Migrant Narratives

In *Il Cinema Italiano Contemporaneo*, Giampiero Brunetta looks back at the past twenty years and claims that contemporary Italian cinema, as a system of production, distribution and reception, is by and large in crisis. With an eloquent image, he defines the current scenario as "una situazione da terra desolata" (2007, 673). Despite outstanding exceptions, he states that, broadly speaking, the material and cultural conditions that made Italian cinema famous worldwide have significantly changed.

In terms of creativity, Brunetta laments that televisuality influences young filmmakers, through their assimilation of its fast and flat visual culture deriving from music videoclips, advertising, and shows. Thus, television erases the specificity of the Italian cinematographic tradition: "come se all'atto del concepimento le storie fossero già destinate a un parto cesareo ritardato in video" (ibid., 623). Additionally at the production level, the situation has been further worsened by the increasing budget cuts to the *Fondo Unico per lo Spettacolo,* the public fund to support films acknowledged as works of national and cultural interest, *film di interesse culturale nazionale*. Without addressing even more recent budget cuts, Brunetta observes how the "decreto Urbani" of 2004 already aimed at reducing the state's support of the cinematographic industry: "nello spirito e nelle intenzioni del legislatore…si dichiara il modesto interesse governativo per il comparto cinematografico e per la sua capacità di rappresentare la creatività italiana" (ibid., 613).

Besides the dominance of television and the cuts to public funds necessary to support cinematographic creativity, Brunetta acknowledges that the diffusion of new media is a third major element of change. He recognizes that, worldwide, digital technology has added new modalities of production, distribution, and reception, that is, how and where people make and watch movies. In his analysis of the present situation, he places more emphasis on the effects of new media's distribution and reception over production, noting how today moving images circulate through a variety of extremely heterogeneous – at once new and old, private and public – circuits: the Internet, cellphones, cable and satellite TV channels, DVDs, theatrical releases, film festivals, and art biennales, among others. As a result of these changes, Brunetta suggests that the hybrid future of the moving image, especially for independent, alternative, and socially committed filmmaking, largely lies outside the realms of the traditional movie theater: "Un piccolo film autoprodotto può vivere a lungo e raggiungere pubblici di tutto rispetto, se accetta il dato che la sua vera vita è ormai quasi sicuramente possibile al di fuori della sala" (ibid., 679).

This necessity of relying on new and alternative modes of production and distribution is even more urgent for a growing number of migrant artists and filmmakers,

working in Italy and interested in producing counter-narratives about the present and the future conditions of Italian society, as well as about its recent demographic and cultural changes. Migrant filmmakers, willing to critically engage with dominant media's construction of homogenous and exclusive representations of Italian national identity, face almost insurmountable difficulties in accessing the traditional apparatus of cinematographic production and distribution. The small number of films produced by migrant filmmakers and the even smaller number nationally distributed through movie theaters confirm this trend. Film critic Roberto Silvestri denounces this situation in his preface to Sonia Cincinelli's mapping of Italian migrant cinema, *I migranti nel cinema italiano* (2009). Silvestri observes how out of twenty five films Cincinelli analyzes – including both feature films and documentaries – only two are by migrant filmmakers, Mohsen Melliti's feature film *Io, l'altro* (2007), and Dagmawi Yimer's co-authored documentary *Come un uomo sulla terra* (2008).[1] As Silvestri keenly notes, a critical 'countershot' is missing: "manca il controcampo. Pochi i filmmaker italiani nati in Africa o in paesi arabi o o asiatici, o qui residenti, cui è stato consentito di radiografare ciò che succede qui, o di prendere la parola sulle tragedie e le commedie della transculturalità negata" (2009, 11).

The heterogeneous scenario Brunetta depicts for the future of the moving image in Italy does open new possibilities for migrant artists and filmmakers, however, as it resonates with the larger phenomenon American media scholar Henry Jenkins defines as convergence culture (2006). Convergence culture promises individuals the freedom and power to actively participate in the production and sharing of personal and collective narratives circulating across a variety of screens and media platforms. On the one hand, Jenkins relies on Lisa Gitelman's distinction between media's particular technological systems and their associated cultural "protocols" (Gitelman 2006, 7), which, while gathering around a specific technology, can adapt and move from one technology to another. Jenkins claims that the digital, similar to but more effective than other technologies, reveals to what extent media are cultural practices that are informed by, but also exceed, the specific delivery systems attached to them: "Delivery systems are simply and only technologies. Media are also cultural systems. Delivery technologies come and go all the time, but media persist as layers within ever more complicated information and entertainment stratum" (2006, 14). On the other hand, Jenkins puts the notion of convergence culture into historical perspective, by recalling Ithiel de Sola Pool's discussion of "the convergence of modes" (1983, 23), which Pool claims was already blurring the lines between different American media in the early 1980s. By doing so, Jenkins notes how, despite its association with the digital, convergence culture did not occur suddenly, but rather as the result of "a period of prolonged transition, during which the various media systems competed and collaborated, searching for the stability that would always elude them" (2006, 11). Thus, convergence culture is also the history of a complex and multi-sited struggle between different technologies and cultural practices, according to a dialectics of acceptance and resistance.

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[1] It is worth noting that, among others, the films by Turkish-Italian director Ferzan Ozpetek are significantly absent from Cincinelli's mapping of migrant cinema. Ozpetek's films, such as *Hamam* (1997) and *Le fate ignoranti* (2001), are among the most successful cases of migrant and queer cinema in Italy today.

Between the epitaph for the death of Italian cinema and any facile enthusiasm for the digital panacea, there is room for further critical inquiry of Italian hybrid visual cultures. Thus, in order to explore this multi-sited struggle revolving around convergence culture for migrant filmmaking in Italy I offer an analysis of the museum as an 'impure' media site where migrant filmmakers simultaneously interweave past and future modes of production (film, analog video, and digital video), recollect images and sounds from other main media institutions (television and cinema), and re-articulate them simultaneously through private and public narrative modes – what Giuliana Bruno calls the "public intimacy" of the museum (2007, 35).

In recent years the museum and the art gallery have become increasingly important sites of official recognition for migrant filmmakers. As this case study of the Albanian Helidon Gjergji, Adrian Paci, and Anri Sala shows, migrant filmmakers have been successfully and regularly displaying their moving-image installations at the most prestigious Italian art venues, such as the Venice Biennale, and other international venues. Nonetheless, despite their international notoriety within the circuits of contemporary art, Gjergji's, Paci's and Sala's works have yet to be fully analyzed in light of their cultural critique of Italian media and society. Indeed, the interaction between the virtual space onscreen and the material space off-screen, as well as their staging of public and private narratives, allow them to rethink critically the ways in which different Italian media represent national identity vis-à-vis the migrant other.

The relationship between off-screen and on-screen space can be modulated according to a range of different combinations, yet the specificity of media installations in the gallery space typically arises from the hybridization of the 'white cube/black box' dichotomy. The white cube is the space of the museum as it has been arranged since the early 20th century, a "sacred" well-lit empty space with candid white walls and ceilings. Upon entering this space the spectator suddenly becomes aware of the physical distance that separates him/her from the object.[2] The black box refers instead to the spectator's experience at the movie theater, with its darkness and the temporary erasure of the material space that surrounds the screen as well as the spectator's corporeality. While scholars like Catherine Fowler claim that the media installation in the white cube "does away with the illusionist confines of the cinema auditorium to invite a variety of reactions to its moving images" (2004, 331), others, like Charlotte Klonk, think that moving images within the museum space simply reintroduce the model of the black box inside the white cube, thus interrupting the spectator's self-awareness.[3] This disagreement among scholars is meaningful as it points to the experience of interruption the museum spectator encounters in his/her constant shifting between immersion into virtual enchantment and return to bodily awareness.

Furthermore, questions about the arrangement of the museum space also include the transportability of the art installation itself, as James Meyer suggests in his discussion of the literal and the functional site (2000). As a literal site, the art installation emerges from the encounter between the artist and a specific place, in which the artist attunes his/her work to the particularity of the location. However, the literal site is not able to account for

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[2] For a discussion of the museum space as a white cube see O'Doherty (1976).
[3] Klonk claims that "the introduction of the bodiless, lost-to-the-world cinema spectator in the art gallery does away with the last public space in which cultural reception can take place as an engaged process together with others" (2009, 223).

the multiple locations of itinerant works and exhibits, as they are experienced at the crossroads between the particularity of place and the abstraction of space. Thus, the notion of functional site expands the physical location of the work into a network of sites that raises the level of critique to the normative and institutional discourses, defining the museum vis-à-vis other societal institutions and allowing for an analysis of the site-oriented installation within itinerant locations. Meyer claims that the installation becomes "a function occurring between these [multiple] locations and points of view, a series of exposition, of information and [of] place" (2000, 27).

The intermittently self-reflexive and mobile spectatorship that emerges from the theoretical models described so far is particularly relevant for Gjergji, Paci, and Sala, who stage a critical recollection of heterogeneous media narratives about migration in Italy. The re-presentation of media narratives within the museum allows the spectator to reposition him/herself in relation to the migrant protagonists of those narratives. In particular, the critical recollection contests two sets of media representations. On the one hand, it criticizes the immediacy of the televisual reality effect, and on the other hand, it offers an alternative to the progressive narrative strategies that familiarize the Italian audience with the migrant at the cost of turning the latter into a screen onto which the former can rewrite their own history of emigration.

Helidon Gjergji's Banco d'Albania (2006)

I begin my inquiry with Helidon Gjergji's Banco D'Albania (2006), an installation that was shown as part of the art exhibit Doppio Legame/Double Bind, held at the *Center of Contemporary Arts* Casa Masaccio in San Giovanni Valdarno, Tuscany, from November 13, 2010 to January 09, 2011, and curated by Valerio Dehò and Andi Tepelena, in collaboration with *Galleria Carini & Donatini*. The theme of the exhibit was the representation of the multiple and critical ways in which Albanian and Italian cultures relate to one another in light of the waves of migration that have significantly tied together the countries over the past two decades. The works selected for the exhibit are all by contemporary Albanian artists who live and work between Albania and Italy. The choice of the place, San Giovanni Valdarno, is not coincidental, for, as many other provincial towns in Tuscany, it is home to a significant Albanian community that migrated there in the 1990s in the aftermath of the collapse of the communist regime. As the mayor of San Giovanni Valdarno explains in the preface to the exhibit catalogue, the artistic initiative is part of a larger project of cultural integration to foster reciprocal knowledge between Albanians and Italians in Tuscany.[4]

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[4] The Major of San Giovanni Valdarno, Maurizio Viligiardi, writes in the preface of the exhibit catalogue: "La mostra *Doppio Legame/Double Bind,* fortemente voluta dall'amministrazione comunale, rappresenta un evento dal carattere particolare che bene si inserisce nel contesto di un ampio scambio tra la civiltà italiana e quella albanese come momento di incontro e di arricchimento reciproco tra culture differenti. Per la nostra città ciò assume una valenza ulteriore e maggiore nell'ottica del rafforzamento dell'integrazione tra le due comunità. L'iniziativa si aggiunge a quelle volte a promuovere il tema dell'immigrazione e ideate dalla Conferenza dei Sindaci del Valdarno Superiore per le quali San Giovanni Valdarno ha il ruolo di comune capofila all'interno del progetto" (2010, 4).

On the one hand, the Doppio Legame exhibit is site-oriented in the sense that it documents the cultural bond that has developed over two decades, since the Albanian migrant's arrival in the early 1990s. On the other hand, local institutions and administrators supported the initiative with the specific intent of further legitimizing Albanian culture, not only in the eyes of the Italian but also of the Albanian viewer. According to the director of *Casa Masaccio*, Fausto Forte, the Albanian attendance at the *Doppio Legame* exhibit was particularly conspicuous (personal interview January 8, 2011), in part due to the collaboration of Albanian institutions such as the *Ambasciata della Repubblica d'Albania in Italia* and the *Ministria e Turizmit Kultures Rinise Dhe Sporteve,* as well as to the reviews of the exhibit that appeared in Italian and Albanian websites, including *Albania News* (2010) and *Shqiptari I Italisë – L'Albanese d'Italia* (2010), popular among Albanians in Italy.

Such a direct connection between the contents of the art exhibit and the place where the exhibit is held falls under Meyer's definition of literal site. Elaborating on Meyer's scholarship, Miwon Kwon's theory allows us to interpret art exhibits like Doppio Legame not just in terms of representing a specific theme, but also in terms of providing a cultural "service" to the local community, in order to promote integration and mutual acknowledgement amongst groups. This social aspect also allows the artist to redefine his/her role as "a facilitator and educator" (2004, 50-51).

However, in order to better understand the service nature of the works by the artists who participated in Doppio Legame, one has to broaden the interpretation of the art exhibit to include Meyer's notion of functional site. The dimension of the functional site is relevant in understanding how Gjergji's *Banco* D'Albania interacts with the materials it recycles from other fields of knowledge. Gjergji's installation, located in one of the main spaces of Casa Masaccio, consists of a series of TV sets lying on the floor at the center of the room. The TV screens show a miscellaneous selection of Italian TV news reports covering Albanian migration to Italy over the past two decades. The reports are recorded and played in loop by several DVD players, each connected to a different screen. These reports mostly convey stories about the Albanian migrant as stereotypically associated with violence and crime. However, the spectator cannot properly see the images on the screens, for each screen is partially painted with glass paint composing a sign which reads Banco d'Albania. Additionally, all the TV sets are covered with a large blank canvas that allows for just the tenuous fluorescence of the cathode rays to filter out. The multilayered vision incorporates at the same time the recollected televisual images of the Albanian migrant (which work mainly as a source of light), the Banco d'Albania sign painted on the screens themselves, and the blank canvas that covers the whole installation [**Figure 1**].

The polysemy of the sign refers ambiguously to the economic causes of the Albanian migration throughout the 1990s: the collapse of the communist regime and the advent of capitalism dominated by hazardous investment banking operations, which led the country to bankruptcy in 1997. Nonetheless, the sign also evokes the world of quotidian commerce in street markets and open-air fairs, for the word *banco* means "kiosk" as well as "bank." According to this latter meaning, Gjergji ironically reinterprets Italian television as nothing more than a street kiosk selling attractive images about exotic cultures and peoples, in this case Albanian. He re-frames the flow of supposedly objective TV news reports about the Albanian migrant as a trade in images much like

advertising. Gjergji's appropriation takes the form of a metonym, in which the supposedly objective knowledge of TV news is defined by means of its narrative and conceptual contiguity with publicity. Yet, I want to argue that Gjergji's installation does not provide just a predictable and bland critique of the televisual medium per se, for it points to the specificity of the Italian television as an institution which has historically lacked both independent news outlets and regulation over commercial broadcasting. These two conditions would ultimately result in the broad overlap between private interests and public information fostered and furthered by Silvio Berlusconi's media power in Italy from the 1980s up to the present.

Figure 1. Helidon Gjergji, *Banco d'Albania*. 2006. *Doppio Legame/Double Bind* exhibit, Casa Masaccio Arte Contemporanea, San Giovanni Valdarno, November 13, 2010 – January 9, 2011. Courtesy of Giampaolo Abbondio.

With regard to the first condition, Paul Ginsborg observes that for decades Italy distributed the control of its public TV channels, *RAI 1*, *RAI 2*, and *RAI 3*, among the major national political parties – *Democrazia Cristiana*, *Partito Socialista Italiano*, and *Partito Comunista Italiano* – so that pluralism and objectivity of information in public service were paradoxically guaranteed by an informal system of patronage: "there was no public television to fly the flag of editorially independent news, civic responsibility, well-researched documentaries and quality programmes which could appeal at different times to both majorities and special interests" (2004, 49). One of the consequences of this patron-client system for Italian public television is that, when the First Republic and its party system collapsed in the early 1990s, the mutual political pressure among different parties also ceased, along with the precarious balance upon which the impartiality of TV news relied. In regards to the second condition, Ginsborg states that, in the course of the 1980s and the 1990s, no serious "regulatory body was set up to oversee standards" (ibid.) for commercial television channels and broadcasting, a political move strategically promoted by the *PSI* leader Bettino Craxi to favor the rise of Berlusconi's private television channels, *Rete 4*, *Canale 5*, and *Italia 1*. In the span of a decade, Berlusconi was thus able to build a televisual monopoly based on an aggressive strategy of publicity pursued through his advertising company *Publitalia* and his media company *Mediaset*. More specifically, Ginsborg notes David Forgacs' calculation that in 1984 alone "circa 1,500 television advertisements per day were being shown in Italy, more than in all the

other European countries put together" (ibid., 47). This double condition, characterized by the lack of civic responsibility in public television and inadequate regulation of publicity-driven commercial television, further worsened with Berlusconi's election and re-election as President of the Council of Ministers in 1994, 2001, 2005, and again in 2008.

Seen in this light, Gjergji's ironic sign delegitimizes Italian television as a mere dispenser of publicity by implicitly referring to its historical and material conditions of production. The thin texture of canvas covering the TV screens evocatively reinforces such a museographic operation of displacement and recollection of Italian televisual discourse. The canvas transforms the installation into what Meyer would call a functional site and connects the museum with other institutional and discursive sites "to decode and/or recode the institutional conventions so as to expose their hidden operations" (Kwon 2004, 14).

Gjergji's installation certainly reveals the "hidden operations" of Italian television as it criticizes the supposed immediacy of its reality effect, yet there is also a visual discretion in his subversive gesture of appropriation. The Banco d'Albania sign covers the televisual images of the Albanian migrant and makes them unrecognizable, almost rescuing them from the realm of immediate visibility, which TV broadcasts had previously subjected them to. While recollecting the moving images of the Albanian migrant and showing them again in loop in the space of the museum, Gjergji also denies the spectator the pleasure of their vision, that is, he prevents the images from becoming a spectacle. The artist accomplishes that by adding multiple layers of text and texture stratifying the image and rendering it opaque.[5]

The Other on Screen/The Other as Screen

It is worth considering Gjergji's "antivisual" strategy (Kwon 2004, 24) as a reaction to the excessive exposure of the Albanian migrant figure circulating in a variety of other Italian media. Indeed, Gjergji's installation, along with Paci's and Sala's, opens up space for an audiovisual discourse about migration which criticizes dominant media narratives circulating in Italian television, but also other narratives by Italian progressive artists and directors, such as Oliviero Toscani and Gianni Amelio, who represented the Albanian migrant as a screen onto which Italians could project their anxieties about their past and present backwardness.

In the 1990s photographer Oliviero Toscani launched a series of advertisement campaigns for the clothing brand United Colors of Benetton, displaying shocking photographs about humanitarian issues on billboards in a variety of Italian public spaces, from urban squares to highways. The goal of the campaigns was to awaken Italian public

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[5] If the moving images do not help the spectator decipher the visual details of the narratives recounted by the TV news as s/he enters the space of Gjergji's installation, one might think that the soundtrack would provide decisive narrative information. Even the soundtrack, however, escapes any immediate reality effect because of its redundancy, produced by the multiple and simultaneous voices coming from different TV sets, which blur in an indistinguishable buzzing. Thus, the multiplication of layers of sound also induces a partial loss of meaning.

opinion on burning social issues – such as migration, AIDS, the Gulf and the Balkan War, the death penalty, and the Mafia – while positively associating responsible attention and sensitivity toward these issues with the United Colors of Benetton brand. One of the campaigns, launched in the spring of 1992, shows a photograph of an anonymous mass of Albanian migrants, fleeing their country in 1991 on a boat while leaving the port of Durrës. The boat is overloaded with migrants, as even more struggle to get on board, either by swimming or by climbing ropes that tie the boat to the dock. The image is one of a massive invasion, in which an exhausted, faceless crowd threatens Italians' safety [**Figure 2**].

Figure 2. Concept by Oliviero Toscani, *Boat.* 1992. United Colors of Benetton.
Courtesy of United Colors of Benetton.

The photograph's shocking effect was not caused by the supposed newness of its contents, that is, by the fact that through that image Italians would have first discovered the harsh realities of the life and struggle of the migrant entering their country. Given the fact that a news agency originally took the photograph Toscani then utilized for this campaign, the advertisement is just a replica of the many images of Albanian boats Italian newspapers and TV news had extensively circulated while covering the two major migration flows of 40,000 Albanians in the previous year: in March and then again in August 1991. Therefore, the crudity of those Adriatic crossings had already reached Italians, through TV screens and newspapers, in the safety and comfort of their homes, by the time Toscani launched his campaign.

The shocking effect of Toscani's advertisement in spring of 1992 was based instead on the exploitation of a humanitarian emergency for commercial purposes. Similar to Gjergji's ironic operation, Toscani's campaign signals a shift between two contiguous and proximate realms in the Italian media: information and publicity. Also, Toscani's

repositioning of the image from one epistemological framework to another forces the Italian audience to recognize their complicity in this interpretive process. As Albanian scholars Ardan Vebhiu and Rando Devole claim in their keen analysis of Italian media's representation of the Albanian migrant:

> Il manifesto [Toscani's Boat] si rivolge comprensibilmente ad un pubblico che sa, vale a dire ad un pubblico che ha perso la sua innocenza ed è già in possesso dei codici elaborati nell'ambito della circolazione del mito nei media. L'immagine trae gran parte della sua suggestività da un'evocazione immediata di un'altra immagine, o meglio di un'archi-immagine, versione distillata e virtuale di ciò che che i media hanno proposto nell'epoca dell'esodo pugliese. (1996, 122)

Vebhiu and Devole recognize that the image's relocation contributes to problematizing Italian media's reality effect. Since Italian public reaction to his campaign was confused at best and harshly critical at worst, Toscani's attempt to question the media's epistemological legitimacy could be perceived as successful. Some of the advertisement's locations – billboards placed in urban areas, which signal modern circulation and mobility – resonate significantly with the contents of the photograph. Vebhiu and Devole suggest that part of the criticism the advertisement provoked could be explained by the fact that, by relocating the image of the Albanian migrants along the routes of Italians' modern mobility, Toscani also allowed that image to reveal its function as a displacement of Italians' anxieties about their repressed past of migration as well as their uncertain political present in the 1990s, during the transition from the First to the Second Republic.

> L'impressione, rafforzata anche da alcune qualità intrinseche alla fotografia in genere, è che questa gente [gli albanesi sulla nave] sia rimasta là, monumento eterno non soltanto della propria disperazione e, per quanto riguarda gli italiani, anche di una minaccia oscura e agghiacciante, che risveglia una paura ancestrale: e se anche noi, gente ricca, civile e contenta, finissimo per diventare come loro? (Ibid., 121)

Nicola Mai and Russell King further confirm that the appropriation of the Albanian migrant figure as a cultural screen onto which Italians could displace their anxieties was motivated by Italians' desire to distance themselves from the political and social crisis that led to the end of the First Republic, which coincided with Albanian migration, at a critical time when they were also joining the European Union.[6] In that respect, the

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[6] Mai and King (2008) analyze the significance of the temporal coincidence between the critical shift from the First to the Second Republic in Italy and the arrival of the Albanian migrant, both events which occurred at the beginning of the 1990s. Among many factors that would determine Italians' anxiety about their modernity, Mai and King underline Italians' struggle to join the European Union. "The re-articulation

anonymous crowd in Toscani's campaign, which Vebhiu and Devole describe as highly impersonal, "una folla disperata e senza nome" (1996, 116), would further facilitate Italians' displacement.

After Toscani's campaign, the Albanian migrant figure as a screen of Italian memory was also appropriated by Italian director Gianni Amelio, who devoted his feature film Lamerica (1994) to this theme. The film represents Albania in the aftermath of communism as a pretext to delve into the complex and multilayered history of Italians' relationship to their past of emigration to the Americas and of colonialism in Albania. Luca Caminati describes this representation as "a palimpsest, calling the audience to reevaluate its historical and cinematic memory" (2006, 598). Such a palimpsest composes an archive of Italian memories and identities, by referencing multiple cinematographic traditions and genres. The film starts with LUCE footage of fascist propaganda about the Italian invasion of Albania in 1939, which is incorporated within the main story as a prologue during the opening credits. Furthermore, Amelio draws extensively on Neorealism, as Lamerica is characterized by the combination of both professional and non-professional actors for primary roles, on-site shooting, and the use of the long take, among other stylistic features. Yet, these documentary-like and neorealist references to the Italian cinematographic tradition are also framed within an epic cinematographic gaze – Amelio employed widescreen Cinemascope to shoot his film – as he confirmed in an interview with Piera Detassis, in which he states that "è per questo che ho voluto il Cinemascope, un formato 'epico' che di reale ha ben poco e di innocente ancora meno" (Detassis 1994, 40). Such a sophisticated approach to cinema justifies Aine O'Healy's analysis of the film in terms of its "self-reflexivity" (2004, 246).

While the self-reflexive palimpsest is inherent in Lamerica's whole narrative, it is in the finale that the most powerful self-reflexive sequence about Italian identity and memory is staged. In this scene the Adriatic crossings of the Albanian migrants are re-enacted in a way that evokes the Italian emigrant's similar crossing to the Americas. Amelio crosscuts aerial shots of the boat Partizani, much in the way of Italian media's images from TV news reports, with close-ups of both the film's two protagonists, the Italian Gino and the Italian-Albanian Michele, as well as of other Albanian passengers on the boat. As O'Healy notes, the self-reflexivity of the scene emerges as the Albanian men, women, elderly, and children, framed in close-up, look back at the camera, returning their gaze to the spectator, thus infringing upon a cardinal rule of feature filmmaking in which characters should avoid looking at the camera.[7] By doing so, the

of an Italian identity and national self-esteem was deeply influenced by the economic conditions posed by the ongoing process of integration of Italy into the European Union. In particular, Italy's ability to cope both with the Maastricht Treaty's financial parameters and with the implementation of the immigration control measures set down by the Schengen Agreement became a site of political struggle between Italy and other EU member states" (2008, 121). Within such a context Mai and King read the Albanian migrant's representation in Italian media as a scapegoat for Italians' fears of backwardness: "The mass arrival of Albanians on the Italian coasts and into Italian television sets and newspapers in the 1990s triggered within the Italian imaginary a process of projective dis-identification with a part of Italian history, society and culture that had been strategically separated and rejected" (ibid., 124).

[7] O'Healy writes: "The shots that follow are close-ups of Albanian children, all facing the camera, muting and immobile. The arresting individuality of these shots is countered by the impersonal perspective of two subsequent aerial shots of the decks with its undifferentiated mass of human cargo, flanked by the churning sea. Intercut between these aerial shots is a close-up of Gino in profile, with Michele, who may be dead or simply asleep, slumped against his shoulder. There are nine additional close-ups of Albanian passengers,

Albanian characters' gaze reciprocates that of the Italian spectator and conveys the transhistorical mirroring between Albanians and Italians which lies at the heart of *Lamerica*'s narrative.

On the one hand, this crosscutting between the aerial shots of the mass on the Partizani and the close-ups of individual faces, Italian and Albanian together, express Amelio's attempt at moving away from the impersonal representation of the anonymous mass and towards recognizing the uniqueness of each migrant's story. On the other, however, such an attempt also reveals the limit of Amelio's vision, for identification with the Albanian only comes at the price of appropriating the Albanian migrant's condition and using it as a signifier to evoke nostalgia for the Italian emigration of the past. Indeed, in the course of this spectacular scene, the mirroring between the two groups is finally made explicit through words, as the old Italian-Albanian Michele confesses to Gino that he believes the boat they are on, supposedly directed to Apulia, is actually sailing toward Lamerica, thus oneirically conflating the Italian past of emigration with the Albanian present of immigration.

Both Toscani and Amelio produce culturally progressive representations in their effort to familiarize the Italian spectator with the Albanian migrant. However, in both cases, the strategies they pursue partially erase the specificity of the migrant's history in order to evoke the memory of Italian emigration. Albanian artists like Gjergji, Paci, and Sala intervene in this arena by interrupting any further reproduction of this model. In Gjergji's installation, the interruption is materially staged through excess of visual, and aural, layering that ultimately frustrates the spectator and results in a loss of meaning. In Paci and Sala the interruption is accomplished through the adoption of a specifically Albanian perspective, along with a strong identification with the Albanian protagonists on screen.

Adrian Paci's Albanian Stories (1997)

In 1997 Adrian Paci produced his first moving-image installation, Albanian Stories, a seven minutes single-channel film converted to DVD. Paci's installation was shown in various art venues, including his solo exhibits Raccontare (2007) at the Galleria Civica di Modena, curated by Angela Vettese, and Motion Pictures (2010) at the Kunsthaus Museum in Zurich. His installation was also featured in collective exhibits, including the 48th edition of the Biennale di Venezia (1999) and The Storyteller (2010) at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto. Given the international range of the installation's exposure, I am going to privilege an analysis of the installation's functional site over its literal site, by focusing on its critical engagement with other media narratives at the discursive and institutional level, rather than on the history of its numerous curatorial *mises-en-scène*.

Albanian Stories is set at Paci's house in Milan, where Paci's camera frames Jolanda, his three-year old daughter, in close-ups with minimal variations, while she tells four different versions of a fairytale in Albanian. Each take of Jolanda's fairytale is a one-shot

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looking directly at the camera, concluding with a tight shot of a young Albanian on whose radiant smile the screen fades to white" (2004, 249).

scene, with each shot corresponding to a narrative unit. Jolanda's fairytale has several animals as the protagonists – a cock, a cat, a cow, and "its daughters" – and recounts the animals' struggle against a big flame and their eventual escape to Italy after some "dark forces" and "international forces" arrive in Albania. According to the English subtitles, the last take of Jolanda's story reads as follow:

> Once upon a time there was a cock and a cat, and then one day came the forces. The cock and the cat were playing like this, when the dark forces came and made a flame near the wall. The cock was frightened and the cat said to him "Don't be afraid because the international forces will come." When the international forces came, the cock and the cat said: "Hi international forces" and they said "Hi cock and cat." One day the international forces came again and the cock and the cat said "Hi" and they said "Hi cock and cat." And they did not kill them because the cock and the cat and the cow with the daughters and the husband went to Italy. They didn't stay in Albania. They had a cow mother that was sad because they went away, because there were the dark forces and they wanted to come to Italy. (Paci 1997)

As Jolanda relays her narrative it becomes clear that the fairytale disguises the story of her family's migration from Shkoder to Milan in the aftermath of the second period of social turmoil that upset Albania in March of 1997. This further social unrest led to the UN military intervention – the "international forces" of Jolanda's account – to reestablish peace on Albanian soil through a mission called Operation Alba, in April of the same year. According to Alessandro Dal Lago, the new Albanian migration wave toward Italy totaled 15,000 people in March alone (2004, 194). Furthermore, to make a difficult situation even worse, on March 27 the Italian coast guard hit one of the migrant boats, the Kater I Rades, which shipwrecked in the Canal of Otranto, resulting in the death of eighty-nine Albanians. The tragedy of the Kater I Rades significantly shaped both the Albanian and Italian public opinions of the 1997 migration wave.

Jolanda's fairytale is to be understood within the context of this series of historical events, even if it does not refer directly to the Kater I Rades episode. Her story simultaneously reveals and hides the dangers Albanians, particularly her family, experienced, through the guise of the animal figures and their adventures [**Figure 3**].
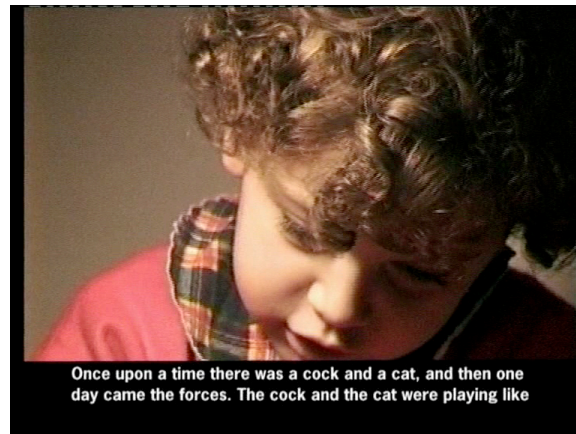
Figure 3. Adrian Paci, *Albanian Stories*. 1997. Courtesy of the artist and kaufmann repetto, Milan.

At a basic level, it is worth noting that in Paci's installation the media narratives of the anonymous mass of Albanians have been replaced by an intimate story, a personal fairytale about dear ones left behind in the home country. So much for Italian fear of the Albanian migrant's invasion. This perspective is visually conveyed through Paci's close-ups softly and delicately framing Jolanda's face and her usage of the Albanian language as opposed to Italian. In this respect, the installation can be considered as an audiovisual instance of the strategies of talking back Graziella Parati describes when discussing migrant literature in Italy, that is, as one of "the fragmented voices that question today the hegemonic construction of an imagined Italian community" (2005, 29), a construction which also entails a culturally unified and anonymous image of the migrant.

The narrative genre of the fairytale already indicates Paci's commitment to a perspective at odds with dominant media narratives. The fantastic pitch of Jolanda's story is a stylistic choice that engages with the reality effect produced by TV news and newspapers, yet without simplifying the complexity of the reality it is recounting. Rather than simplifying the real, the fairytale incorporates it within the complex affective relations the subject establishes with it. On the one hand, if one considers Jolanda's story as a proper fairytale, it might be understood in light of Bruno Bettelheim's observation that fairytales play a fundamental role in the development of the child's psyche by helping him/her master existential anxieties and fears that cannot be faced directly. By hearing and telling fairytales, children playfully work through the most fearsome aspects of their lives.[8]

On the other hand, Jolanda's story can also be considered in broader terms as a child's game, along the lines of Freud's investigation of the Fort/Da game in Beyond the Pleasure Principle. In this essay Freud describes the behavior of his grandson, a fifteen-month-old child, who plays with a wooden reel attached to a piece of string. While

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[8] Bettelheim remarks that "A particular story may indeed make some children anxious, but once they become better acquainted with fairy stories, the fearsome aspects seem to disappear, while the reassuring features become ever more dominant. The original displeasure of anxiety then turns into the great pleasure of anxiety successfully faced and mastered" (1975, 122).

holding the string, the child throws the wooden reel over the edge of his curtained cot, thus making it disappear, and says "o-o-o-o," which according to his mother, and Freud, means Fort, "gone." The child then pulls on the string, thus making the reel appear again, to which he replies Da, meaning "there." As the child repeats this game of disappearance and return, Freud proposes various interpretations, some of which are of interest in this context. Freud notes that generally "in their play children repeat everything that has made a great impression on them in real life, and that in doing so they abreact the strength of the impression and, as one might put it, make themselves master of the situation" (1968, 17), that is, children learn through playful repetition. Yet, he is also convinced that the repetition of the game is more specifically "related to the child's great cultural achievement – the instinctual renunciation (that is, the renunciation of instinctual satisfaction) which he had made in allowing his mother to go away without protesting" (ibid., 15). Playful repetition is a strategy the child develops to overcome the negative feelings associated with separating from the mother.

Reflecting on the last version of Jolanda's fairytale, in which the animal family "had a cow mother that was sad because they went away, because there were the dark forces and they wanted to come to Italy" (Paci 1997, italics mine), one might find parallels to Freud's *Fort/Da* game. The repeated tale about her family's migration also entails a separation from an unspecified maternal figure associated with Albania while the rest of the animal family moves to Italy. Jolanda's fairytale focuses on her family's migration to Italy as much as it focuses on her attempt to work through, by means of repetition, the disappearance of this maternal figure. Her coping mechanism to overcome the experience of loss informs her iterated tale about her family's migration.

Paci's installation shows this crossroads of private and collective memory through a narrative embedded in one of the fundamental display principles organizing the relationship between on-screen and off-screen space in the museum: the loop. According to the loop principle, the spectator can access the iterative flow of information at any time and point of the diegesis. As Elizabeth Cowie notes, the gallery visitor

> might commence her spectatorship halfway through a looped work. Or she might see the end before the beginning; or, having sampled a few seconds, may move on to another work and then return to view again, by producing a montage of spectating which exceeds the single work. (2009, 127)

According to Cowie, the gallery visitor expects to experience the artwork in the loop form, since its display apparatus already predisposes the material conditions of an iterated and fragmented reception. Such an iterative structure finds a correspondence in the narrative architecture of Albanian Stories, with its four different variants of Jolanda's fairytale seamlessly sewn together. This correspondence reveals a further relationship between the spectator's looped reception and the performative aspect of Jolanda's stories. The four versions of Jolanda's account produce a paratactical and juxtapositional editing that mimics the fragmentation and the imperfection of oral storytelling. Some fundamental features of orality, the additive, aggregative, and redundant traits of the account, as defined by Walter J. Ong, (1982, 37-49), are transposed onto the editing of

Albanian Stories. Paci's camera documents Jolanda's voice by adapting and modulating his editing according to her modus narrandi. Although none of the four different versions Jolanda accounts is definitive, their fragmented totality points to the authenticity of her oral testimony while problematizing it. Jolanda's voice on screen at once expresses and denies her own authenticity.

On the one hand, according to Ong, the human voice manifests "a unique relationship of sound to interiority when sound is compared to the rest of the senses" (1982, 71), that is, the voce manifests the truest essence of one's being as authentic and legitimizes one's presence. As Kaja Silverman notes, in Hollywood cinema this primacy of the voice has been employed extensively to produce the reality effect through the synchronization of sound and image, in particular, in the case of lip-synching, through the association and synchronization of voice and face.[9]

On the other hand, the voice constantly implies a supplement of meaning that cannot be fully grasped, because of its temporal duration, that is, its evanescence. As Ong states, "sound exists only when it is going to be out of existence" (1982, 71). Silverman seems to confirm that evanescence within the context of cinema as well, when she writes that the occurrence of the voice, as an intertwining of sound and meaning, reveals an absence: "the sounds the voice makes always exceed signification to some degree, both before the entry into language and after" (1988, 44).

If the human voice exceeds the meaning we attribute to it, then Paci's paratactical and juxtapositional editing bears witness precisely to that excess, the excess of Jolanda's voice vis-à-vis any conclusive meaning of her story. Paratactical editing becomes an ethical gesture that restores the complexity of the spectator's relationship with reality. It fosters the spectator's awareness of his/her active role in the process of suturing images and sounds into an imagined wholeness. As Giuliana Bruno writes, "in film, montage is located in the viewing process: that is, it is created in our own psychic space, in the imaginative process of spectatorship" (2007, 16).

Anri Sala's Intervista: Finding the Words (1998)

In his piece Intervista (1998), a twenty-six minute video converted to DVD projection in color and stereo sound on screens of variable dimensions, Anri Sala also recounts the 1997 Albanian crisis and migration as an overlapping of intimate and public memory. Sala's Intervista is his best-known early work and situates itself at the intersection between different media platforms, as it embodies the cultural convergence between documentary filmmaking and installation art within the gallery and museum. The amphibious nature of Sala's installation is confirmed by its double circulation within documentary festivals as well as art museums. In the cinematographic circuit, the

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[9] Silverman writes: "Hollywood sonic *vraisemblable* stresses unity and anthropomorphism. It subordinates the auditory to the visual track, non human sounds to the human voice, and noise to speech. It also contains the human voice within the fiction or diegesis. Dominant cinema smoothly effects all four of these ideal projects through synchronization, which anchors sounds to an immediately visible source, and which focuses attention upon the human voice and its discursive capabilities. This emphasis upon diegetic speech acts helps suture the viewer/listener" (1988, 45).

installation won the Best Short Film Award at the Amascultura Festival in Portugal (1998), the Best Documentary Film Award at the Entreveues Festival in France, the North American Premiere Prize at the Vancouver Film Festival (1999), the Grand Prize at the Estavar Festival in France (1999), and the Best Documentary Prize at the Williamsburg Film Festival in New York (2000). Within art museums, it has been shown at the 48th Venice Biennale of Contemporary Arts (1999), at the Galerie Rudiger Schottle in Munich (2000), and at the Dallas Art Museum (2002) as part of Sala's solo exhibit *Concentrations*, among other venues. Finally, Icarus Films currently distributes *Intervista* on DVD for purchase and rental.

In 1997, while a student at the École Nationale Superiore des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, Sala visited his family in Tirana and found in their home a 16mm film reel from Albanian national television dating back to 1977. The film shows his mother Valdet, a former communist leader, at a party members' congress along with the dictator Enver Hoxha, among others, and, later, in an interview with a journalist. Since the film was soundless, its soundtrack lost (Albanian state television in the 1970s would record image and sound on separate tracks, as it could not afford to buy the technological equipment for synchronized recording), Sala decided to restore his mother's missing words and to document that restoration in the work Intervista. There, by re-enacting the 1977 interview in the personalized setting of the Salas' home nearly thirty years later, he and his mother explore the complex imbrications between his family's private memories and the collective history of communism, as well as between Albania's past and its present conditions due to the social unrest in 1997.[10]

The postcommunist present intrudes upon the staging of the past by means of Sala's editing. If in Albanian Stories the architecture of Paci's editing engages with the space and time of its reception (the looped display of the museum), in Intervista the architecture of Sala's editing engages with the time of its shooting and production – the social unrest of Albania in 1997. Indeed, both the 1977 footage and Sala's remaking of it in 1997 are crosscut with other footage taken from Italian and French TV news reports around the March 1997 turmoil. As a result, Sala's Intevista provides its spectator with a complex multilayered textuality that intertwines and conflates documents produced at different times and by means of different technologies, similar to the palimpsestic modality Amelio utilized in Lamerica.

The footage from the *RAI TG1*, the Italian national TV news, shows a *RAI TV* journalist as she introduces a news report from Albania and defines the country's political situation as a state of civil war. This is further reinforced by the audiovisual contents of the report itself to include cars on fire, people taking to the street, gunshots, and military tanks patrolling urban areas. The *TG1* footage emphasizes the sensationalist approach that Italian TV news adopted in covering the Albanian political situation in March 1997 in order to explain the consequent migration wave. While images from an Albanian 'civil war' bear witness to the dramatic gravity of the political and social turmoil that led to the

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[10] As Mark Godfrey observes: "Sala approached public history through the private memories – and memory lapses – of his mother. By doing so he recognized the impossibility of an 'objective approach' to a historical subject and also admitted that everyone was implicated in Albania's troubled past. He suggested as well that historical confrontation in general is an ongoing process rather than a finite investigation, a process in which every new crisis bring with it as many new crises as resolutions" (Godfrey, Obrist, and Gillick 2006, 36).

migration, they also present Albanians in a negative light – their Balkan otherness – and suggests Albanians' incapability to govern themselves.

Sala appropriates this televisual narrative about the untamable violence of Albanians and weaves it in with Valdet's confessions about her preoccupations and concerns for the future of her family, of her son – Sala himself –, and of Albania's future as a country. Valdet's account is set in the privacy of her Tirana home, according to an intimate and lyrical *mise-en-scène* in which her positioning expresses completely open trust in Sala's camera, which frames Valdet in close-ups and extreme close-ups, thus suggesting the spectator's affective identification with her [**Figure 4**].

Sala's incorporation of TV news within his mother's private recollections can be compared to Paci's tranformation of the same historical events of March 1997 into a fairytale. Both provide a keen and subtle critique of the dominant media's narrative mode of producing the reality effect. While Paci replaces the stereotypical images from TV news and newspapers with a delicate depiction of his three-year old daughter, Sala incorporates the reality effect of the TV news and frames it within a different affective context, by repositioning the spectator in relation to those stereotypical images. Sala reverses an already established media relationhsip between text and context, subject and framework: if Italian TV news presents an anonymous and untameable Albanian mass as the framework within which each Albanian migrant's story is to be understood, Sala plants the Albanian insurgent and migrating mass of March 1997 within Valdet's private story. In Sala's work the viewpoint is no longer the mass group composition of Toscani's photograph nor Amelio's aerial shots of *Partizani*. Instead it isValdet's, whose maternal relationship to the filmmaker is thus transferred onto the spectator. The spectator, in turn, is invited to align him/herself with her world views and her voice.

Figure 4. Anri Sala, *Intervista.* 1998. Audience Idéale and Icarus Films. Courtesy of Icarus Films.

However, Valdet's account takes the form of the renactement of an interview, that is, of an account that not only *can*, but *must* be questioned, both because of its dialogical structure and because of its surrogate nature. Valdet's and Sala's 1997 remake is

inevitably a replica that cannot compensate for the loss of the original soundtrack and the meaning of her words.

Furthermore, Sala introduces an element of narrative complexity into his documentary, by including a sequence in which, after converting the 1977 film to videotape, Sala-the-character goes to the national institute for the hearing impaired to ask for an interpreter who could help him lipread Valdet's words from the original footage. The interpreter at the institute watches the videocassette on a VCR with Sala and helps him lipread Valdet's speech. After successfully obtaining a transcription and adding subtitles to the old footage, Sala-the-character returns to his mother's apartment to show her the new version. As they watch together the subtitled videocassette at her place, Valdet, in denial, refuses to take responsibility for her original words laden with communist ideology. Ultimately, Valdet seems to question at once the validity of the lipreading provided by the interpreter, as well as the convertibility of her narrative from one technology to another. In fact, Sala-the-character has to reassure her that he did not edit the videotape or the film reel in order to manipulate her speech. The linguistic and cultural resistance that prevents Sala from fully restoring the meaning of Valdet's words is inscribed – literally recorded – in the history of ruptures and continuities, changes and transitions, between different delivery technologies. Valdet's resistance implies that what can get lost in linguistic transcription and translation can also get lost in technological conversion and convergence. Such a risk is not limited to the diegetic world alone but also reaches out to the spectator, as is further reinforced by Sala's subsequent conversion of his video to DVD format to be displayed as a looped projection in the museum space.[11]

In Paci's Albanian Stories not only does Jolanda's compulsion to repeat make the mobile spectator aware of the analogy between the internally looped architecture of the editing and the externally looped architecture of the display apparatus, but it also stages her attempt to master her sense of maternal loss associated with the forced departure from Albania. Similarly, Sala's Intervista makes its spectator aware of the reality effect produced by the synchronization of sound and image, yet that awareness is not an end in itself, as it points to a series of ideological language breaks: the conclusion of the grand narrative of communism, as well as the impossibility of fully embracing the new grand narrative of capitalism, as proved by the bankruptcy of the major Albanian financial institutions in 1997. As Sala himself notes, "a gap of thirty years makes not just a rupture in content but it may bring a shift in syntax. What happens when a system changes, especially in the case of totalitarian regimes which exercise great control over language, is that the syntax of the language breaks" (Godfrey, Obrist, and Gillick 2006, 37).

Intervista includes four repetitions of the 1977 film reel, but never in its entirety, for the ruinous material conditions of the 1977 footage also signifies the ruinous history of the communist past it illustrates. The documentary returns more insistently to scenes that show the dictator Enver Hoxha at the congress and the audience applauding him. The repetition of these scenes produces an automaton-like and mechanical quality to both the leader's body and its audience. By the same token, the looped rendition of Hoxha and the

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[11] *Intervista* was shown as a video converted to DVD projection with sound for the itinerant exhibition *Memorials of Identity: New Media from the Rubell Family Collection* (Coetzee and Lagos 2006).

audience produces a double effect: as the scene is repeated, the vision becomes more attentive and analytical, yet its reality effect quickly disappears.[12]

The crisis of political representation caused by the collapse of the communist regime and the jarring transition to capitalism is disclosed through the crisis of the image and its uncertain conversion through different formats. There is a twofold loss of indexical value in Sala's work, one at the historical level and one at the photographic level, indicating the impossibility of representing an actual referent. Not only is Enver Hoxha's body turned into a mere automaton, a puppet that no longer signifies and embodies communist ideology, but such loss of historical meaning is rendered through the repeatability Sala exerts on it, as a 'vengeful' postcommunist spectator using multiple technologies of audiovisual reproduction. By deferring the historical referent along a chain of technological conversions, from the 1977 film reel, to the 1997 videotape, to the final digitization on DVD, the artist empties its photographic indexicality.[13]

Conclusion

Thomas Elsaesser has argued that the cinema can positively contribute to the political crisis post-Cold War Europe is experiencing, precisely by bringing its own crisis of representation on screen, and, more importantly, the loss of indexicality epitomized by new media. He writes:

> How, then, might the cinema play a role in such a different arrangement of conflict management and communication, and how can it contribute to what I call post-identity thinking? My first answer is: it can contribute its own crisis of representation. (2008a, 23)

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[12] As Godfrey notes: "as the archival interview is repeated, its sense is slowly clarified, but as each new 1997 interview enlightens Sala, the emptiness at the heart of the archival interview is exposed. Repetition, therefore, has a double force – clarifying and emptying meaning" (Godfrey, Obrist, and Gillick 2006, 41).

[13] As Christiane Paul rightly observes apropos of digital technology in the space of the museum, there are different levels of interpenetration, and it is important to make a distinction between the use of digital technology "as a tool, either to produce a more traditional art form (such as a sculpture or a print) or to store and deliver works (a digitized version of a painting on the Internet or a video on a DVD)" and its use as an actual medium in the production of "new media art" that is "computational and based on algorithms" (2008, 3). In that respect, Sala's *Intervista* would still belong to the former category of artworks that have been digitized in order to be shown in loop in the gallery space. Yet, it is worth noting that digitization effects Sala's work both at the level of technological delivery and of contents as it defines the narrative's self-reflexive mode: the (im)possibility to store and convey memory through iterated shifts across different delivery technologies. In that respect, Sala's *Intervista* works in the way Paul prescribes that "new media art" should, by focusing on the process of the information flow more than on the object: "that new media art constitutes a shift from object to process affects both the curatorial process and the documentation of these artworks, which mutate from one version to the next" (ibid., 6). Sala's documentary focuses on the complex process of technological continuities and ruptures, acceptance and resistance, among different media platforms, a process in which the digital revolution becomes meaningful only when understood and compared in light of the "period of prolonged transition, during which the various media systems competed and collaborated, searching for the stability that would always elude them" (Jenkins 2006, 11).

According to Elsaesser, this double crisis of the historical and technological disappearance of the referent, opens up space for new spectatorial awareness and narrative possibilities. He claims that this double crisis "names different aspects of a change in episteme…for which we may not yet have the appropriate name, but in whose general direction much of our thinking seems to gesture." Hence, cinema should address this unnamed epistemological change by means of shifting its operational modalities from "claiming the real," as it can no longer be accomplished through the digitization of a disappearing ideological subject, to "performing presence" (ibid., 24).

In this essay about the transmedia memory of Albanian migration, we have seen how the change Elsaesser solicits for the future of European cinema, from solely representing to critically performing the real, is occuring in Italy within the art gallery and the museum. Gjergji's, Paci's, and Sala's media installations do provide the spectator with an affective and epistemological experience based on the rupture of the televisual reality effect as applied to the Albanian migrant, a 'language break' which for them, however, *also* signals the end of the grand narratives of the Cold War.

It is worth investigating these works because, as Silvestri would put it, they provide the critical "countershot" that is still missing both from contemporary Italian cinema and the Italian mediascape at large. They open up space for a new audiovisual discourse about migration in Italy, through their critical engagement both with dominant media narratives and with more progressive ones, such as Amelio's auteurist film, or Toscani's provocative advertising. The difference between Gjergji's, Paci's, and Sala's installation art and the latter group of Italian progressive representations is that these artists promote a different affective identification between spectator and characters on screen, more directly oriented toward garnering sympathy for a postcommunist Albanian protagonist, rather than familiarizing the Italian audience with the migrant by utilizing him/her as a screen for the deployment of the Italian drama of emigration. As Elsaesser notes in another essay on the relationship between the cinema and the museum space, in which he specifically discusses media artists' personal involvement through installation art, "the self-reference of the museum" becomes the "occasion for a new kind of accountability and self-implication for the filmmaker" (2008b, 47). He argues that self-reflexivity per se is not a value, but it becomes such when it prompts one's sense of personal accountability, both on the artist's and on the spectator's side. The installations I have considered here allow for this self-implication, in that they align the museum spectator with Albanian characters who are affectively tied to the artist's personal life in postcommunist Albania, as is the case with Paci's daughter and Sala's mother. The history of Albanian migration to Italy is reframed through a public staging of the private and yet historicized bonds between the artist and his/her family, which become the new locus of the spectator's identification.

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