The Filmmaker as Metallurgist: Political Cinema and World Memory

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Abstract:
Compared to earlier waves of political cinema, such as the Russian revolution films of the 1920s and the militant Third Cinema movement in the 1960s, in today's globalized and digital media world filmmakers have adopted different strategies to express a commitment to politics. Rather than directly calling for a revolution, 'post-cinema' filmmakers with a political mission point to the radical contingencies of history; they return to the (audio-visual) archives and dig up never seen or forgotten materials. They reassemble stories, thoughts, and affects, bending our memories and historical consciousness. Following Deleuze and Guattari's geophilosophical ideas in *A Thousand Plateaus* filmmakers can be considered metallurgists. Discussing the work of Tariq Teguia, John Akomfrah and others, this article investigates several metallurgic strategies that have a performative effect in reshaping our collective memory and co-constructing the possibility of 'a people to come.'

Keywords: political cinema; metallurgy; audio-visual archive; world memory; digital culture.

In the age of globalized digital culture, what could still be considered as political cinema? In his contribution to *Venice 70: Future Reloaded* (2013) Tariq Teguia gives us in a few scenes a suggestion: a drawing of a clenched fist referring to the Black Panthers, a man in silhouette at an editing screen, a young woman seen from behind who slowly turns around to face

us, and in voice-over the words: 'Still, tomorrow's cinema will be saying, "Someone is here".'[1] The revolutionary hand on the poster, the (director at his) computer, and an image that refers to Teguia's latest film *Zanj Revolution* (2013) are thus combined with the simple acknowledgement of a presence: someone is here. It seems that the most political gesture that today's cinema can make is this acknowledgement of a presence, which is in fact a presence on the stage of world history, a presence in our collective memory. Compared to the most well-known classical political films such as Sergei Eisenstein's *Strike* (1925) and *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) or Gillo Pontecorvo's *The Battle of Algiers* (1966) the question of political action has shifted. Rather than calling out to the people to gain political power in a new nation state, political cinema today seems to address history, memory and the archive in more direct ways, reshaping the conditions of the re-emergence of 'a people'. Obviously political cinema has dealt with the question of history and memory before, but the creation and recreation of the audio-visual archive as 'world memory' has become essential to political (film) aesthetics today. Deleuze has described world memory as a memory that goes beyond the conditions of psychology, 'memory for two, memory for several, memory-world, memory-ages of the world.' (Deleuze 1989, 119) For Deleuze, Alain Resnais's work exemplifies this type of world-memory that cinema expresses, indicating that in his films the past no longer relates to the memory of a 'single character, a single family, but to quite different characters as to unconnected places which make up a world-memory.' (117) My proposition elsewhere has been that Resnais's cinema is at the avant-garde of a digital logic of contemporary media culture (Pisters 2012, 217–242). In the following I'd like to elaborate how filmmakers today form and express world-memory and can be considered as metallurgists that mine the archives, bending the material images and sounds that contribute to our political consciousness.

Eisenstein as Metallurgist

In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari introduce the concept of metallurgy in their treatise on nomadology, a chapter on the difference between segmentary state politics and minoritarian nomadic politics that subvert and invade the state from the outside as a 'war machine' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, 351–423). It is in this chapter that we find one of the few film stills reproduced in the book: an image from Eisenstein's film *Strike* (1925) that 'presents a holey space where a disturbing group of

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1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cnInrN4id-w. Last accessed 3 August 2015.

people are rising, each emerging from his or her hole as if from a field mined in all directions' (413–414). While on first appearance this image of 'metallurgic people' may seem to present a nomadic war machine that destabilizes the state apparatus by undermining it, in fact Deleuze and Guattari's reference to Eisenstein's film is more complex. Therefore it is relevant to unpack their arguments a little more before turning to metallurgic strategies in contemporary media culture.

How do nomads invent or find their weapons, Deleuze and Guattari ask when they unfold the different aspects of the war machine (403). By giving the example of the difference between a sword (descending from the dagger) and the saber (descending from the knife), they introduce the idea of a 'machinic phylum' or technological lineage, which they develop essentially in its metallurgic form. Metal is not only the basic material for both weapons and tools, but Deleuze and Guattari see metal also as matter-movement, matter-energy, and matter-flow that are the conductor of all matter: the machinic phylum has a 'metallic head as its itinerant probe-head or guidance device' (411). Deleuze and Guattari argue that metal is more comparable to music, not only because of the sounds of the forge but also because both metal and music develop in a continuous variation of its own formal and material properties. They propose to look at the myths and ethnographic studies of the mines that can be both state owned or clandestinely exploited (so metals and mineral can be both captured by the state apparatus or operated by a nomadic war machine). However, Deleuze and Guattari ask us to pay even more attention to the artisans-metallurgists, the smiths, as collective bodies, that follow the material-flow of metal and transform it by producing objects, tools or weapons. To 'follow the flow of matter is to itinerate, to ambulate,' they argue (409). The smiths, the artisans-metallurgists who follow and transform the matter-flow, are neither nomadic nor sedentary. Deleuze and Guattari give great importance to these itinerant people, and even ask whether these metallurgical peoples of all sorts 'are the ones who kept up the mines, boring holes in European space from every direction, constituting our European space.' (414) Yet, their ambiguous status moving between state apparatus and nomadic war machine can be disturbing. And it is precisely in relation to this hybrid or mixed status that this image from Eisenstein is brought in.[2]

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2. See for an analysis of metallurgy in relation to contemporary art practices, Sjoerd van Tuinen's article on the cosmic artisan and the return of mannerist virtuosity (Van Tuinen 2016).

If we now return to *Strike* and reconsider the role of the people that emerge from the holey space, these 'metallurgists' are the ones who set fire to the bourgeois houses and create chaos (hence they seem nomads, on the side of the workers, the strikers, subverting the state). But in fact they are hired by the ruling class to act as *agents provocateurs* and thus help the bourgeoisie (the capitalists, the state). Accusing the strikers of sabotage and unruliness, the ruling class can now hit back and use force in the battle that subsequently emerges – and which leads to Eisenstein's famous dialectically cut images of the people slaughtered like cows on the battlefield. The metallurgists emerging from their holey space are indeed disturbingly ambiguous and itinerant, neither nomadic nor state bounded. Of course the reference to this image from *Strike* does not yet make Eisenstein a metallurgist as such. Here there are a few additional observations to make. To begin with it is not far-fetched to see how Eisenstein, in a sense, was an itinerant 'ambiguous' artist following the matter-flows of political consciousness and moulding them in aesthetic forms of expression. He obviously takes the side of the proletariat, the people. But we must not forget that his films were 'A Production of the First State Film Factory,' as announced at the beginning of *Strike*. And so we see that from the beginning there is a complex relationship of Eisenstein as a metallurgic filmmaker, moving between the people and the state. While Eisenstein in the beginning sympathized with the idea of a 'dictatorship of the proletariat,' we know that his relationship with state dictatorship grew more and more complex with the transformation of the state apparatus into totalitarian Stalinism.

The other important point here to make is Eisenstein's relation to the past. As is well known, Deleuze and Guattari have discussed their ideas on nomadism and metallurgy in relation to space. Geology is more important to them than history. Nevertheless filmmakers do relate to history, to time and temporal relations to the point that they are 'forgers' of world memory. I will elaborate on this later on. For now, I would simply like to recall that *Strike* is a revolutionary film that reminds the people how and why they came to power by addressing the past. The film remembers the events of a pre-revolutionary Russia when in 1903 workers of a factory went on strike, which was brutally suppressed by the factory owners and the ruling class. At the beginning of the film the proletarians are invited to 'Remember… that ours is the power, if united, to struggle against capital.' And clearly a dialectics between the rich, fat, individualistic bourgeoisie and ruling factory owners versus the hard working, skinny and deprived proletarians is presented to emphasize the reasons for this unified struggle against capitalism. Also Eisenstein's other films, such as *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) and *October* (1927) refer to historic events related to

the revolution of the Russian people, approved by the state. *October* was the official film for the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution of 1917. It is known that Eisenstein had other film projects in mind but was censored many times, always forced back into the state version of history and mythical past. *Alexander Nevsky* (1938) was approved by Stalin (except for one reel that was taken out) and again glorifies the Russian past, recalling a legendary battle in the thirteenth century on the ice of the frozen Lake Peipus where Alexander Nevsky defeated an invasion of Teutonic knights (connoted as German, a nation with whom the Soviet Union was on a bad footing at the time). *Ivan the Terrible* (1944) was appreciated by Stalin because he admired Ivan the Terrible as a great example, a national hero.[3]

All Eisentein's films speak of the past from the point of view of 'a single group,' from the perspective of a united people. As Deleuze indicated in his reflections on political cinema, these classical political films can speak from this position of a people because the people were there to begin with, out there in the factories, in the streets, even if they were to be captured increasingly by a totalitarian state apparatus (Deleuze 1989, 216). Eisenstein referred to the past as a reminder of this unification of the people. In that sense he was a metallurgist of a classical political phylum. This particular relation to the past will change as we will see momentarily. But let us first turn to the geophilosophical material aspects of the machinic phylum of metallurgy.

Metallurgy, Cinema and Geophilosophy

It may still seem that the idea of filmmakers as metallurgists is simply a metaphor. However, while a metaphoric reading is possible, it would be a wrong to miss the profound material understanding of the concept that Deleuze and Guattari propose. There are several levels on which it is possible to understand this materiality of metallurgy in connection to cinematic practices. First, all films and all other media can be seen in connection to a machinic phylum, a lineage from the earth to our screens. As Jussi Parikka reminds us in *A Geology of Media,* media materiality is very metallic (Parikka 2015, 34; see also Maxwell and Miller 2012). Ranging from metallic silver for photo chemicals to coltan and many other elements that compose our mobile phones, computers and other

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3. The second part of the film, shot in 1946 met more criticism and was banned because it depicted totalitarianism in a more ambiguous way. The film was only released in 1958, five years after Stalin's death and ten years after Eisenstein's passing away. Part 3, also shot in 1946, was even destroyed.

electronic devices, there is a material lineage that we can trace back to metal and metallurgy. All our digital devices contain many different noble and base metals, to the point that in our contemporary media-saturated age, the raw materials are getting scarce. The ores grow thinner, the mining machines need to dig deeper; some metals such as europium and terbium have run out and can only be found in small quantities in China. Coltan is mined in Congo and is sometimes referred to as 'blood coltan' because of the exploitation and conflicts it involves.[4] In this sense, all our media are very closely connected to the history, ethnography and geopolitics of mining.

Not only are the resources directly connected to the earth and geopolitical dynamics connected to this, but at the other end of the chain, when our electronic devices have become broken or become obsolete, there are the enormous quantities of e-waste that we have been producing since the second half of the 20th century. The world is littered by mountains of rubbish-dumps, often covered up as parks or recreation zones (in Europe alone there are about 150 000 such rubbish mountains). Moreover, Africa is not only a resource for copper, coltan and many other metals, but also the biggest e-waste dump of the world. Slowly but surely, however, new ways of dealing with all this waste in more sustainable ways are emerging. In Europe, landfill mining is a sort of re-mining project, where waste is transformed back into both green energy and into material resources (for example as plasma rock that is obtained by metallurgic processes such as forging and quenching), and in so-called 'urban mining', in which e-waste is bought back from African countries in order to be re-transformed into noble and base metals.[5] A ton of mobile phones contains 300 grams of gold; gold ore of the same weight does not contain more than ten grams of gold, often much less. Considering the fact that world-wide about two billion cell phones are sold, this gives an idea of the material resources needed and hidden in our tools. And this doesn't even include all television screens, computers and other electronic devices.

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4. See http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/blood-coltan/. Last accessed 2 August 2015.
5. See the television program *Vuil Goud* (*Dirty Gold*), VPRO Television, Frank Wiering, 2015. http://tegenlicht.vpro.nl/afleveringen/2014–2015/vuil-goud.html. Last accessed 1 August 2015. The documentary follows among others the initiators of the Dutch organization Closing the Loop, who have started a project in Ghana to help solving the huge problem of e-waste by buying broken and damaged cell phones and ship them back to Belgium were they are retransformed into seven noble and ten base metals that can be used again as resources for cell phones and other electronic devices. The idea is that such urban recycle mines will also find their way to more local plants in Africa and everywhere in the world.

So before we can see anything on our screens, there are the manifold variations of the machinic phyla to be considered as the first aspect of filmmakers as metallurgists. This is an ecosophical and geopolitical lineage of the machinic phylum. Or, as Adrian Ivakhiv has called it, this is the 'material ecology' of cinema that between the mining and re-mining described above, also includes the intermediary stage of 'locations and sets were narrative ideas and shooting scripts are crafted into cinematic words, designed, shot, edited, assembled, and distributed, to their delivery on stage and screens.' (Ivakhiv 2013, 90).

Secondly, as Jane Bennet has emphasized, metal is 'vibrant' and 'bursting with a life.' (Bennett 2010, 55) Bennett refers to Deleuze and Guattari's conception of metal as the summit of the idea of nonorganic life, a material vitalism that is full of intensities and affective energy that has its incipient qualities and formative power. Metal contains an 'impersonal life' that is important to Deleuze and Guattari for understanding the immanence of life contained everywhere on and in the earth. (Deleuze 2001). The technological vitalism that Deleuze and Guattari describe is a complex phenomenon, full of what they call 'double articulations' between unformed, unorganized, matter as intensive and expressive Bodies without Organs and formed, organized, stratified content. (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, 43) Content and expression are the two main articulations that are not opposed but interlocked. In addition, Deleuze and Guattari conceive each endlessly variable matter-flow that is stratified, selected and organized in relation to assemblages that 'may group themselves into extremely vast constellations constituting "cultures," or even "ages" […] The assemblages cut the phylum up into distinct, differentiated lineages, at the same time as the machinic phylum cuts across all, taking leave of one to pick up again in another, or making them co-exisit.' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, 406). What is most important is that in metal, even if it may seem solid and impenetrable, there is a vitality to the materiality itself that makes its metallurgic principles all the more essential to take into consideration when we turn to look at more specific metallurgic principles of political cinema in the last part of this article.

The third geo- or ecophilosophical principle of metallurgy as such, that I want to mention here, is related to Deleuze and Guattari's argument that 'metallurgy is the consciousness or thought of the matter-flow, and metal the correlate of this consciousness.' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, 411) When the primary itinerants, the artisan or the smith follow the matter-flow, they produce objects and invent affects that can be both creative and destructive. As we have seen already in respect to the image from *Strike*, the metallurgist is an ambiguous figure of a vague essence.

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As a nomadic war machine, metallurgy can be both creative and destructive, depending on the particular assemblage or constellation it enters or connects to. As Deleuze and Guattari indicate it is not the nomad or artisan who defines the constellation, it is the constellation that defines the nomad (423). And thus there are creative and destructive war machines; there are lines of flight that create and there are ones that turn into destruction, or domination. Deleuze and Guattari are careful in pointing out that there is a constant communication between these two options: 'the worst of the world war machines reconstitute a smooth space to surround and enclose the earth. But the earth asserts its own powers of deterritorialization, its lines of flight, its smooth spaces that live and blaze their way for a new earth' (423). One can think here very concretely of the metallurgists that can create tools and weapons; or of the many apparatuses and machines of perception that are used in both war and cinema (Virilio 1989).

   It is important to connect this consciousness of thought of the material ecology of cinema (and other media) to the social and mental ecologies, the two other dimensions of Guattari's 'three ecologies' that always belong together (Guattari 1989). Ivakhiv describes the social ecology of cinema as including 'the social relations by which films and their meaning are made, the representations of social life which they carry, and the social and cultural uptake and transformations of those meanings in contexts ranging from film festivals and cineplexes to living rooms, blogs, bodies (gestures, expressions, t-shirts, and so on), and interpersonal relationships' (Ivakhiv 2013, 90). The mental ecology leads us to perceptions, understandings and interpretations of the world, and the ways in which cinema is connected to (formed by and co-constituting) both individual and collective consciousness. Cinema is not just a second-order representational practice, but it is a world-making practice that, like the book and other art practices, makes a rhizomatic connection with the world (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, 11).[6] It is on this level that we can consider how matter and memory are interconnected in relating perceptions to memories in different variations and movements between the virtual and the actual, translated in cinematographic concepts by Deleuze in his *Cinema* books (Bergson 2010, Deleuze 1986 and 1989).

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   6. In the introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari reject the notion of mimicry and say about the relationship between the word and the book: 'the book is not an image of the world. It forms a rhizome with the world, there is a parallel evolution of the book and the world; the book assures the deterritorializarion of the world, but the world effects a reterritorialization of the book, which in turn deterritorializes itself in the world (if it is capable, if it can)' (11).

Light, colours, shapes, grains, and pixels transform and translate into affects and understandings in a multi-layered entanglement of matter and meaning, as Karen Barad has put it more recently (Barad 2007). It is here on this level of the entanglement of matter and memory that I will pick up again the question of political cinema as a metallurgic practice that has its particular variations and strategies in contemporary digital culture.

Political Cinema and Inventing the Past

So it is in these very concrete ways that filmmakers are smiths that know how to bend time, or to 'sculpt in time' to quote another famous Russian filmmaker, Andrei Tarkovsky (Tarkovsky 1989). The creation of images is a material and political practice related to movements between sedimentary and nomadic forces that can mine our understanding of history in many different and mixed and dynamic ways. We have already seen that the war machine is not automatically 'good' or 'nomadic' and that metallurgists strategies can be bent in many different directions, both creative or destructive, and sometimes both at the same time. Here I would like to focus on cinema's relationship to the past as a particular concern in relation to its political dimension. Compared to the classical films described by Deleuze as movement-images, this relationship to the past has changed dramatically and always in connection to the world. As we have seen in Eisenstein's work, but also with the first films of the so-called Third Cinema movements that emerged after World War II, in all the colonized parts of the world undergoing a struggle for decolonisation, there was 'a people' that could be addressed in order to raise emancipatory consciousness. *The Battle of Algiers* (Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966) is a case in point, a film made by the communist state to commemorate the War of Independence from France in Algeria. Like the early Russian revolution films of Eisenstein, *The Battle of Algiers*, too, was conceived as a film for a 'single group' (and it was for this reason that initially it was banned in France).[7]

But the euphoria of independence soon changed into disappointments about dictatorships, internal crises and migration. As Deleuze indicates in *The Time-Image*, the biggest modern political filmmakers had no longer 'a people' to refer to. And in spite of all the local differences in world cinema, modern political filmmakers have in common that they show how 'the people are missing' (Deleuze 1989, 215). There is no longer a single

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7. The movements of *The Battle of Algiers* as a memory that transforms from memory of a single group into world memory in the digital age, I have described in *The Neuro-Image* (Pisters 2012, 227–237).

group that can be addressed via the cinematographic image. And so the acknowledgement of a people who are missing becomes the new basis on which political cinema is founded: 'Art, and especially cinematographic art, must take part in this task: not that of addressing a people, which is presupposed already there, but of contributing to the invention of a people' (Deleuze 1989, 217). Deleuze mentions the films of, among others, Ousmane Sembene in Africa, Glauber Rocha in Brazil and Pierre Perrault in Canada (or better: Quebec). Perault's films, for instance, are considered as important in the process of defining Quebec's national identity. In his *Pour la suite du monde* (1963) we see how he revives the old practice of beluga fishing on the island of Coudres, thus performing a direct operation on the reality of the islanders who also participate in the whole process. Glauber Rocha's *Antonio das Mortes* (1969) and Ousmane Sembene's *Ceddo* (1977) also draw a speech act out of myths of the past in order to reconstruct them in respect to a people in the making. In this phase of political cinema we see how 'quite different characters' (Deleuze 1989, 117) start to participate in the making of history and memory, and the active function of the filmmaker and the camera as a participant in the story-telling of a people to come. So with these changed realities of both politics and the political role of cinema, memory and the past enter into a new dynamic. Story telling is no longer the recalling of myths and glorified past and filmmaking becomes a speech-act, a performative act in which 'a people is inventing itself' in collaboration and co-creation with the filmmaker. (223) These ideas of Deleuze on the modern political film are well known and have been discussed and elaborated widely in relation to world cinema and postcolonial discourse (see for instance, Bignell and Patton 2010; Martin-Jones 2011).

What I would like to argue is that political cinema has arrived at yet another stage, which not only involves the myths, stories and customs of the past that are recreated in performative ways, but which also involves in increasingly intensive ways both the traditional archive and the audio-visual archive in itself as its material-flow. So filmmakers today are not only using their camera to create new images, but also, increasingly, the archive. Of course, the found footage film is not new. Filmmakers have been working with archival images for decades. Avant-garde filmmakers have been experimenting with found footage material long before the arrival of the digital age: Joseph Cornell's *Rose Hobart* (1936) and Bruce Conner's *A Movie* (1958) are two such iconic examples. And in the 1990s a significant number of visual artists, including Douglas Gordon, Péter Forgács, Yervan Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi, started to make new films from early medical films, classical Hollywood and unknown home movies, reflecting on both the material and content of the archival images.

This trend is continued with artists such as Bill Morrison and Christoph Girardet (See Bloemheuvel et al., 2012; and Herzogenrath 2015). In a more explicit political context Paolo Pasolini and Giovanni Guareschi's *La Rabbia* (1963) has to be mentioned as a found footage film in two parts, by two 'different characters' with opposing world views (communist and monarchist) who reconstructed the same news reel material into two composed assemblages, connecting to opposed political concerns. The project was controversial and for long only released in limited ways, but it proves Deleuze and Guattari's point about the itinerant qualities of metallurgist artisans.

But when I talk about found footage and the audio-visual archive in the digital age, something has changed compared to the earlier examples. In both institutional archives and the less stable and 'open archive' that can be found online (on platforms such as YouTube, Vimeo and social media), we can see how the sheer quantity of material available turns cinema into a memory related to (previously) 'unconnected places'. And so here again we can see how the filmmaker becomes quite literally a metallurgist that works with all kinds of different material-flows that he discovers when mining the depths of the archives of our collective 'world memory.' So it is not that this has never been done before but there is definitively a more intense and more widespread relation to the audio-visual archive than ever before, profoundly related to our digital tools.

Metallurgic Principles of Relooping the Past

While filmmakers have always already had the film material quite literally in their hands at the editing table, cutting and gluing celluloid into expressive and meaningful assemblages, spectators received it as a projection of images and sounds. Today with our digital tools, everybody has become a potential editor and film images are much closer 'at hand' – ready to be transformed. So while we are all potential smiths with a 'vague essence' that can bend and influence collective consciousness, metallurgist strategies are also more prominently part of the political practices of (professional) filmmakers today. There is certainly more work to be done about the difference between the seemingly open cast forms of mining related to such open sources as YouTube and other databases, and the tunnelling deep into the vaults of undisclosed archives that certain filmmakers and artists have access to.[8] Here I would just like to give a few salient metallurgic principles that

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8. This article is part of a larger work in progress on metallurgy and cinema practices.

contemporary filmmakers employ in a political way, recreating the past to claim a presence for a people of the future.

The first metallurgic principle could be called the principle of 'multiple versioning of the past.' Compared to the heroic and official version of the past that was proposed as the version of the past of a single group (often the nation state), we can see an explosion of versions of the past in the contemporary age. All of these versions are mediated, very often by different audio-visual aesthetic forms. For instance, the historical figure of the legendary independence leader, Patrice Lumumba, elected as first prime minister of the Democratic Republic of Congo, assassinated shortly after his election in 1961, was accounted for in many official news reels around the world in the 1960s, which then disappeared into various television archives everywhere in the world. In 1990 Raoul Peck made a beautiful poetic and personal essay film *Lumumba, La mort d'un prophète* (1990). Peck, originally from Haiti, lived as a child in Congo at the time of the assassination.[9] The film includes news footage of the events, personal memories and home videos of the Peck family made by his father in the 1960s and 1970s, and shots of contemporary Belgium, the former colonizer. In a very personal and poetic way Peck follows the matter-flow of the archival material and reflects on the ungraspable nature of the historic events that nevertheless leave their traces in the contemporary world. But the essayistic, poetic and philosophical form of this film did not make it an accessible film for a larger audience; it was difficult to see in a theatre or to obtain a video copy. A decade later Peck remade his film as a much more popular commercial film, as *Lumumba* (2000), with Eriq Ebouaney performing as Lumumba. This film presents a different aesthetic strategy, less poetic, more dramatized according to Hollywood stratifications (with a story line for Lumumba and his wife and family), reaching out to a different type and much larger and younger audience. This could be seen as a form of 'selling out,' but I would rather propose to see it as a metallurgic strategy, disturbing perhaps, but certainly one form of strategic alliance that filmmakers have at their disposition to remember the past and reshape collective memory.

And today this versioning continues online. On YouTube, there are several more documentaries to be found on Lumumba, such as

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9. Haitians were brought to Congo in the early sixties to help building the new country. Peck's mother worked as a secretary to the government. She quit her job the moment she had to order rope to hang opponents. Peck recalls her stories about the political situation: 'My mother says that Lumumba is abdicated by the one he himself appointed as president.' President Kasa-Vubu was influenced and 'helped' by the Belgian and American government who considered Lumumba as a dangerous communist.

Cha Cha Independence, The Story of Lumumba, The Assassination of Lumumba and several *Hommages to Patrice Lumumba*, many of which retake images from the previous films, including Peck's fiction film, combined with additional materials. And so we see that with Lumumba, the story continues. In fact, the story never ends. For every historic event, there is a multiplication of versions of its stories. These stories do not necessarily contradict one another, but each time a slightly new perspective on history is given. We have Lumumba, the historical person in a news reel; Lumumba, the personal essay film; Lumumba, the dramatized Hollywood version; Lumumba, the documentary; Lumumba, the homage remix, etcetera. Something similar can be said about Harvey Milk, the gay activist in San Francisco in the 1970s, who equally exists in news reels, documentary and dramatized forms, as well as in several tribute videos and mash-ups. History is everywhere as a mediated memory. What is important is the multiplication of perspectives, the folding and unfolding of history in many different forms of expression. This retelling and repeating in different forms is how history becomes world memory, of different groups, to unconnected places, across national borders.

Connected to the first strategy is a second principle that could be described as 'intensive, affective remixing.' As indicated earlier, it was possible to have access to the archives before the digital revolution, but it took a lot of time, money and technical means to work with those images. This has changed to the point that audio-visual images themselves have become part of the historical speech-act. More than prosthetic memory, audio-visual images have become part of history and memory itself. In addition to the multiple perspectives and versions of history, these versions are also increasingly re-mixed and mashed-up, often combined with new music; these mash-ups usually do not focus on the event or story but they draw out a different intensity, a different affect. *The Battle of Algiers*, for instance, has a beautiful mash-up on the rhythm of 'Listening Wind' by Talking Heads that gives the images a very sad energy;[10] and a more energizing mix of *Battleship Potemkin* and *The Battle of Algiers* to the rhythms of the Clash's 'Rock the Casbah';[11] and an aggressive violent mash-up puts the soundtrack of the torture scenes of *Zero Dark Thirty* over the images of the *Battle of Algiers*.[12] In her contribution to

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10. *Battle of Algiers: Listening Wind*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=POt5O_fHqWA. Last accessed 3 August 2015.
11. *The Battleship Algiers*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tFkxsd4QyrM. Last accessed 3 August 2015.
12. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=drYH1zP66rk. Last accessed 3 August 2015.

Venice 70 Reloaded Shirin Neshat made a digital remix of *Battleship Potemkin* and *October*.[13] Neshat recuts, among others, some shots from the famous Odessa Steps scene, welding the images even in their content: instead of marching forward crushing the people, the armed soldiers now march backwards while Neshat focusses on the face of the woman carrying her child. In combination with the melancholic music this metallurgic gesture is micropolitical and affective. What we experience in this intensive remixing principle is that history gets accompanied by a powerful affect that enters into dialogue with the official versions of history. This can be a powerful tool for political expression. So again, what we see here is how actual history has become world memory, in the hands of many different groups in 'unconnected places'.

A third metallurgic principle is what could be called the 'mining of the mnemonic depths of the archives.' We have already seen how history has become world memory by a multiplication of perspectives and an intensification of affective relations. But still artists (as well as media scholars) dig deeper, searching for what was lost, never seen before but which is there hidden in the folds and mnemonic depths of the archives. Here artists such as Sarah Pierce and John Akomfrah can be mentioned as their metallurgic operations consist of addressing the radical contingency of what has been captured from the archives as official history at the expense of many untold or forgotten stories. Sarah Pierce researched newsreels in the Irish Film Archive. In a project for the online journal *Afterall* 'The Archival Fourth Dimension' she describes how she found counter evidence against remarks made during a dinner table conversation at a party in Dublin where people claimed that there were never any black people in Ireland.[14] This made her ask what it means to be 'erased' from history. So she embarked on 'resurrecting the death' by bringing back those archival counter-images, putting them online and in her art works where she deals explicitly with the forgotten, the unseen, the left behinds, the not-officially accounted for of different kinds of archival material, ranging from ceramics and personal photographs, to letters and 16mm film. She effectively constructs another past 'where the colonised are no longer victims, innocents, oppressed, where language is not nation and origin is not a reliable indicator of who is "of" a place' (Pierce 2009). Referring to Eisenstein's concept of the fourth dimension, the dimension of cinema that is felt rather than known, the dimension where new

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13. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vwV0MhMzluE. Last accessed 3 August 2015.
14. See http://www.afterall.org/online/the.archival.fourth.dimension#.Vb8_dvmqpBc. Last Accessed 2 August 2015.

perceptions and rebellious understanding of the film aesthetics can emerge, Pierce calls for an archival fourth dimension, opening up a 'rebellious' and new understanding of the archive in its relation to history and collective consciousness.

In this way it can be argued that John Akomfrah is another filmmaker/artist who returns to the archive to open up a fourth dimension, to discover the forgotten and never seen that he brings back to light in a new version, a new attempt at history. In *The Nine Muses* (2010) Akomfrah brings together forgotten images of migration from British archives, and combines them with literary and poetic texts from audio books from the canon of English and American literature, music and new images shot in Alaska's snowy landscapes with figures in yellow or blue coats. *The Nine Muses* explicitly addresses memory, starting by recalling Mnemosyne, the Greek Goddess of memory. Mnemosyne slept with Zeus, King of the Gods for nine nights and then gave birth to nine muses. Akomfrah calls up all nine muses and blends their mnemonic forms: epic poetry, music, History, dance, tragedy, comedy, astronomy, love and the singing voice. Recalling all these muses and remixing them with the different archival sources and his own images, we can see Akomfrah here as a metallurgist, literally bending collective memory as a poet of world memory. In an interview in *The Guardian* Akomfrah explained his concerns for the archive by referring to the ambiguity and open-endedness of the archival material:

> Migrants were often filmed in relation to debates about crime or social problems, so that's how they get fixed in official memory. But that Caribbean woman standing in a 1960s factory isn't thinking about how she is a migrant or a burden on the British state; she's as likely to be thinking about what she's going to eat that evening or about her lover. (Akomfrah in Sandhu 2012)

In another interview Akomfrah adds that the biggest challenge of working with the archive is the fact that one has to work with what there is. So history in itself is not changed. But the perspective on it can be. Because there is a lot that has never been seen: 'For every hour of a film made, there are tens or hundreds of hours that never get used, just sitting there in boxes' (Akomfrah 2012). Another challenge that he mentioned is to make these concrete and unconnected fragments cohere in some whole, some new assemblage. There is a commitment to a radical contingency or indeterminacy that Akomfrah sees as one of the defining features of the contemporary digital age. It is this commitment to the contingencies and ambiguities of history that make him into a metallurgist, following the matter-flows in the archive, bending it in aesthetic affective forms that can

escape from the mnemonic depths in order to create a new life, an afterlife, another version of history.

The fourth and final metallurgic principle that I want to raise here (and obviously this list is inconclusive), could be called 'the butterfly effect.' Before returning to Tariq Teguia, I'd like to mention one more contribution to the *Venice 70 Reloaded* project.[15] Atom Egoyan is another filmmaker who has always worked with the audio-visual archive. In *Family Viewing* (1987), for instance, home movies not only refer to the family but also to the Armenian genocide of which there are very few archival images on record (See Baronian 2005). In his short film for the *Venice* project Egoyan shows us his mobile phone, telling us that the memory on his device is full, so he has to erase certain images. He chooses some footage of an Aton Corbijn exhibition that he visited in Amsterdam. The photos of the exhibition are well known and will not get lost, Egoyan reflects in voice-over. But what will get lost are the sounds of his footsteps in the gallery, and his fascination for one particular image that he shows us, of a photograph of a black man with a white butterfly on his chest. Egoyan's cellphone zooms in on the butterfly, while Eyogan concludes: 'Now that I've shown it to you, I can delete it, the butterfly will escape and I can make space for other things.' While erasing a memory, he still passes it on, even though in an uncertain way like sharing a memory. The butterfly that Egoyan allows to escape in his short film refers also to the famous butterfly in chaos theory. Thus, in respect to memory, it can be argued that memory traces, however small, can be picked up at unexpected places, and have unpredictable effects when followed in a new environment, a new age, a new assemblage.

In his film *Zanj Revolution* (2013) Tariq Teguia picks up several 'escaping butterflies.'[16] The film's main character, an Algerian journalist, named Ibn Battuta (played by Fethi Ghares) is a reference to the historic figure Ibn Battuta, a Tangiers born fourteenth century jurist who traveled across the Middle and Far East and wrote about his travels in a book called *The Journey* (Ross 1986). At the beginning of the film Battuta emerges slowly from a misty landscape, as if he quite literally escapes/resurrects from the past. The butterfly-word that Buttata then picks up on is 'Zanj,' a word that is uttered by young rebels in the South of Algeria that Buttata interviews. 'Who do you think we are, Zanj?' the youngsters ask him.

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15. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f2WcFnq5BTI. Last Accessed 3 August 2015.
16. *Zanj Revolution* was shown at the International Film Festival Rotterdam 2014 where I saw the film. I would like to thank Tariq Teguia for providing me with a viewing copy for research purposes.

The historical Zanj Rebellion took place in the ninth century in Iraq and was a revolt of black slaves against the central government of the Abbisid Caliphat. Battuta asks his newspaper permission to investigate this historic revolution and sets out to Beirut and Iraq, to find out more about this forgotten piece of history. The film is told in a fragmentary way, young rebels from different parts of the world (in Algeria, in Greece, in Lebanon) are shown at meetings discussing politics and the possibility of a new revolution, or making music. In Beirut the journalist Buttata meets Nahla, a Palestinian young women (she is also the women in Teguia's *Venice 70 Reloaded* episode), who arrives from Greece to look for her homeland – which she has never seen – and visits relatives in Shatila (a place haunted by traumatic memories). They spend some moments together, to then each go their own way. Teguia started filming in 2010, before the Arab Spring revolutions, which the film both anticipates and picks up on (while they were filming in Beirut the Arab Spring revolutions spread in the Middle East).

Besides references to historical figures and revolutions, Teguia also revives the spirits of political and revolutionary cinema, especially Eisenstein's aesthetics. The meetings of the rebellious youngsters are often shot in counter-light rendering there figures as silhouettes, more like generic figures. These images recall the images of the strikers in Eisenstein's *Strike* who at some iconic moments are also filmed in silhouette. At other moments, Teguia subverts our canonical image repertoire, opening up Eisensteinian fourth dimensions of our collective archive. One scene seems to be a subversive and rebellious homage to Hitchcock's' *Rear Window* (1954). Battuta and Nahla are in a hotel room, facing the windows of rooms on the other side. They are dancing, the soundtrack contains an excerpt of the audio archive of Black Panther activist Eldrigde Cleaver's legendary speech of 1969 'If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem.' In the opposite rooms some American business men are dealing in cash, handling all kinds of shady business (involving arms, property and land). As a sort of revolutionary version of Hitchcock's Lisa, Battuta climbs through the rear window of the Americans' hotel room, takes the money and runs. Leaving the hotel together, they divide the money. Nahla uses it to illegally cross the Mediterranean back into Greece with a relative, and here we see another drama emerging when two dots in the landscape, two figures get company from other figures: border police… It is a drama of the dots – we don't get any close ups, the images become more generic like this – but we understand the horror and tragedy of the scene unfolding before our eyes. It is by way of these aesthetic means of 'de-individuating' that they become powerful images of resistance – they are neither just of a single

group, but aesthetically these images connect different groups in unconnected places.

Battuta, for his part, now has the money to travel to Iraq, quite literally following the metal-flow of the revolution that he has found in Beirut: a metal coin, the money that the free Zanj used, offered to him by an archivist he visited. Battuta finds a guide. In very long shots the landscape again slowly but surely uncovers human figures traversing the landscape, on the search for the original resting place where the coins were found. Then they arrive: the landscape is completely empty and barren; nothing reminds us of its revolutionary history. But then his guide turns towards him, uncovers his veiled face, and tells him: 'Yes, but we are here,' acknowledging their presence; and implicitly acknowledging the presence of the camera. They are there being filmed, somehow picking up the legacy of the metal coin, transformed by the metallurgism of the camera, of the filmmaker as metallurgist. At the same time Nahla manages to escape from the police and joins the demonstrations in Athens – equally captured by multiple cameras. So we see here that the implications of Deleuze's world memory, that consists of fragments of history that belong to quite different characters as to unconnected places, which are now even more explicitly marked as radically contingent. It is in the contingency of the depths of history, of the depth of the archive, that new stories can be remixed by filmmaking metallurgists, resurrecting the death, giving voice to the unheard, bringing to light the unseen, trying another version of history, trying again, looping and relooping with slight variations, looking for a better past. Not to create the final version, but to ever fail better. So that at least, 'still tomorrow, cinema will be saying: someone was here, someone is here, and someone will be here.'

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