

Journal of Screenwriting

Article for the Special Issue:

Screenwriting and Animation

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Screenwriting Animation in the Essay Film: The Challenges Presented by Silenced History

ABSTRACT

This article explores the use of animation in the essay film and analyses how screenwriting animation becomes a complex process of translation of the message the film wishes to address. With a focus on issues encountered in the development of two produced short essay films, *Lunch with Family* (Turina 2016) and *San Sabba* (Turina 2016), the article maps the process that in both cases guided to the scripting of animated sequences, and analyses why in the editing room the director chose to use stills from the animations, instead. An example of the narrative techniques applied to mediate silenced history and postmemory in film, this contribution intends to add to the larger discussion on the current state of the art in screenwriting non-fiction.

INTRODUCTION

During development and production, different scripts and notes call *Lunch with Family* (Turina, 2016) and *San Sabba* (Turina, 2016) animations but the released films bear no sign of animated sequences. As one of the two editors and the director of these films, I can affirm that in both cases I developed them incorporating in the script animated scenes. However, it is impossible to answer the many questions this statement elicits if we do not consider the process by which the sequences of still images taken from the animated footage substituted the animation itself. In *Lunch with Family*, the miniature

of the white room filled with white books, whose pages are empty, was the setting for the animated representation of the author's relationship with the past. Within this space, I would have taken the form of a woman looking at the mute pictures of ancestors, framed above the fireplace, and trying to read the empty books in the room. The middle point in this animated subplot, to be played in intervals of episodic and self-contained sequences, was the appearance of a photo of two brothers previously considered unrelated to the family in the pictures. From that moment, the family members would whisper life stories, of which the woman would struggle to make sense. Climax and resolution would be found within the internal relation between the animated scenes and different voiceovers, the last of which takes the audience to the conclusion and reveals the autoethnographic nature of the film. In *San Sabba*, the animated sequences were longer. The screenplay presented a braided narrative, where the animation ran through the entire film apparently unconnected to the rest. The animation, which focused on hidden freedom fighters living in the forest, interacted with the images of archival material and shed light on the entire film. The effect was charming and bitter-sweet. However, everything had disappeared by the time I finished editing the footage and created the two essay films now preserved in the Slovenian National Library in Trieste and Ljubljana.

ANIMATION IN THE ESSAY FILM

The essay film as a form sits between fiction and nonfiction and speaks simultaneously about the subject matter and image-making. It appeals to me because of its dual lens, in that it is an art form and a reflection on culture production designed to reveal multiple facets of factuality and facticity (Heidegger 1962:174). Animation is one of the figurative techniques commonly used in the essay film, as its polyformic qualities aid in the cinematic translation of complex realities.

The first animated documentary, *The Sinking of the Lusitania* (Winsor McCay, 1918), reflects critically on historical events. McCay emphasises the importance of the German's warning of danger, which was taken lightly by the crew and resulted in the sinking of the ship and the loss of many lives. The mediation of an event nobody had observed, this film employs animation as the 'eye' of the audience and the 'pointing finger' of the director, who engages critically with the translation of history in film.

Tower (Maitland, 2016) narrates the 1966 mass shooting at the University of Texas employing animation. Comparably to McCay, Maitland permits us to follow the events chronologically through the translation of archived footage into an animation. Aided by the testimony of witnesses, whose aged faces are revealed only in the third act, the film gives a coherent form to the fragmented information offered by the victims, bystanders and police officers. Placed within a continuum between mimesis and abstraction (Furniss, 1998:6), these films reconfigure physical and emotional experiences and claim the space between frames to allow for the visibility of a creative process based on precise associative relationships of subsequent images. The animation in these films delivers cohesion and continuity, the performance of a connection between history and the present, memory and the social group invested in it.

Essay films that engage with personal memory and history, however, confront a new set of questions. Often predicated on the understanding that ‘memory makes us’ (Radstone and Hodgkin 2003:2), these films explore the way authors' remember and offer the possibility to consider how people inhabit their cultural inheritance. The animation is often employed to express how the author finds meaning in individual memories within a collective context. The relationship to a group provides the framework into which ‘remembrances are woven’ (Whitehead 2009:126), and often layered in the form of animation created in conjunction, or drawn on top, of archival material. For example, *Learned by Heart* (Rimminen, 2007) evokes the past coupling the music that populated the author's childhood with animated photographs, which links her life to those of the women of her parents' generation. The result is a film that embraces nostalgia and reconstructs a continuity of individual and collective memory. The animation is knitted into the found footage and photos, mirroring the author's presence as a young girl knitting and observing the world of men. The narrative device is revelatory of her transferred relationship with the past (Rossington and Whitehead 2007:7) and her gendered angle of inquiry. *Waltz with Bashir* (Folman, 2008) offers another excellent example of how animation aids in the illustration of autobiographical events and reveals more than anticipated. Designed to investigate the protagonist's long forgotten memories of the 1982 Sabra and Shatila Palestinian massacre, the film concentrates on the portrayal of a problematic reasoning process, mirrored in the slow movements of the animated soldiers. As the traumatic past surfaces in the soldier's present, it brings back significant memories. Within this representation, however, forgetting in this film acquires a double revelatory meaning, in that it reveals the past

and does not allow for the indication of personal responsibility, as it emphasises the idea that during war reasoning is bound to fail. The lack of reflection on archetypes of causality or alternative possibilities of action, emphasized by the enhanced symbolism of the animation, contributes in revealing the author's lack of a critical or social commentary on the depicted war. Thus, the animation seems to support a narrative of tortuous guilt attribution (Kroustallis 2014).

Within the frame of Holocaust studies and Postmemory studies, animation aids films exploring the oscillation between continuity and rupture with the past, inherited trauma and identity (Hirsch 2008:106). *The Last Flight of Petr Ginz* (Dickson, 2013) employs animation to celebrate the life of a teenager who by the age of sixteen had produced five novels, a diary about the Nazi occupation of Prague, an underground magazine, and had walked to the gas chambers at Auschwitz. In representing what makes us human, this film invites us to ponder on our knowledge of the Holocaust, its representation and Petr's fear of forgetting the feelings he felt when witnessing the decadence of society into inhumanity. The presence of extracts from his work, the autobiographical tone and the animation facilitate a reconfiguration of the past rooted in a subjective perspective, from the bottom up. *I was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* (Fleming, 2010) attempts something similar but confronts the issue of postmemory. The animation is an adaptation of Bernice Eisenstein's illustrated novel (2006), which explores her identity through the experience of her parents who survived Auschwitz. The film was directed by Ann Marie Fleming, who found the project particularly challenging as a non-Jew. Initially, Fleming scripted a mixed media documentary on the lines of her *The Magical Life of Long Tack Sam* (2008), where photography was coupled with animated sequences, but finally resolved to use animation and to copy Bernice's drawings. The drawings offered her the point of access to what the film needed to be. Animation permitted Fleming to keep the book's humour and make the talking about the Holocaust bearable. The result is a film that elicits reflection, not only on what is recognized as 'Holocaust fatigue' but also on the 'Holocaust addiction', in that the film is a child of survivor's story. It reflects on the experience of entire 'generations of people who know what this means, where you haven't gone through the experience yourself yet you identify yourself through the experience of others' (Dallian 2010). The film resonates with my work in *Lunch with Family* and *San Sabba*.

POSTMEMORY

In her essay *The Generation of Postmemory* (2008) Marianne Hirsch describes how individuals can be haunted by events in the past that they have not experienced but have been transmitted to them, often unconsciously. She focuses on the families of Holocaust survivors, whose children inherited a history of obliterated communities and prolonged exposure to inhuman conditions. The survivors tend not to speak about the 'multiple ruptures and radical breaks introduced by trauma' (Hirsch 2008:111), but the catastrophe inflects the inheritance of the past, in that the descendants experience it as absence, silence, and excess of unspoken feelings. This archetype can be applying to the experience of a less known community, the Slav indigenous population of the Northeastern part of present-day Italy, which from 1918 until 1945 suffered a process of cultural and physical genocide. Descendants of the persecute Slav in Italy experience a similar relationship to the past of the children of Holocaust survivors. However, in their case denial and silence are dominant to these days. Italy does not recognise its policies of persecution, forced Italianization and intended genocide against the Slav, and more specifically the Slovenian indigenous population. Thus, in this case, Hirsch's theory is not only relevant on a personal level, but it constitutes a valid key to the reading of a social situation that continues to provoke trauma (Turina 2016, 2017). When personal memory is in opposition to the hegemony of history, the essay film works as an alternative to the historical discourse that is sanctioned and iterated as official history (Rossington and Whitehead 2007:10). Animation here might constitute a valid technique to give voice to alternative archives, which are typical of disenfranchised groups (Whitehead 2009:13), especially as it offers an array of techniques able to address Hirsch's goal:

The retrospective glance of trauma might be expanded and redirected to open more multiple, alternate temporalities that might be more porous, more present and future oriented, and that also might galvanize the sense of urgency about the need for change. And about the means to activate it. (Hirsch 2017)¹

¹ Marianne Hirsch, *Memory's Tenses. From Present Past to Future Perfect*, Berlin, May 24, 2017. Available at: <https://www.ici-berlin.org/events/marianne-hirsch/>

LUNCH WITH FAMILY

The short essay film *Lunch with Family* (Turina 2016) translates life writing and archival data into a story. A British veteran of the Italian campaign of 1945 inquires about a name, Vlado Turina. The journey to discover if Turina was a spy or a freedom fighter, an Italian or a Slovenian, takes the researcher filmmaker from the public to the private sphere and changes her sense of identity forever. To discuss the scripting of animation within this film's dramatic structure, it is necessary to recall how the organization of experience entails a sequence of decisions. Experiencing is capable of many kinds of relationships between units but experiencing as such is not patterned. When experiences are specified, then schematic relationships between experiences are likewise specified (Gendlin 1962:154). In this case, I developed the screenplay for *Lunch with Family* with a specific focus on my relationship with the silenced history of the Slav indigenous population of the Northeastern part of present-day Italy. The archival material that I discovered in the Narodna in študijska knjižnica (Slovenian National Library of Studies) in Trieste, Italy, put in motion a process of reckoning with the past that translated in an understanding of the effects of silence in my life. It set crude limits to the framing of my view, cutting out the rest of the possible interpretation of the material I found in the archive. It felt like the right project for the employment of animation because animated documentaries can portray states of mind and emotions difficult to represent in live-action sequences (Wells 1997; De Gaudio 1997; Honess Roe 2011); thus, the film was conceived as looking inwards to reflect on localism, memory and history.

The animated sequences were placed within a defined space, the miniature of a white room, which in *Lunch with Family* (Turina 2016) embodies the subjective representation of the rupture with an unrecoverable family's tradition. Also, it constitutes the only space in which the personal loss becomes negotiable, as therein lies the key to unclaimed existential possibilities open to the future. In retrospective, this very private place predicated on the re-enactment of moments captured only in life writing, allowed for the disclosure of my family's predicament. Their lives were always threatened by the forced silencing of history, as in tragedy life is always threatened by fate (Greene 1944; Prior 1947:22-23; Bowra 1957:125-129; McCollom 1957: 56-62 and 159). In translating this discovery in moving images, I thought the film was about

my quest and the sense of loss I felt at the discovery of a family member, Vladimir Turina, of whom I knew nothing. In writing each animated scene, I looked for a way to write *myself*. It was about history, but mostly, it was about receiving a silenced history and dealing with it when it obliterates your identity. I started filming the first sequence in stop-animation in January 2015. The room and the moving puppet were utterly powerful and soon a story started to take form: the non-fictional elements were translated into fiction by the simple application of the rules of screenwriting (inciting incident, middle point, climax). However, the process generated a dilemma: the conflict between the dramaturg and the essayist could not be resolved. The personal narrative became overly relevant at the expense of the silenced history I wanted to make visible. Suddenly, I could see how the animation created a static empathy, created expectation and imposed a narrative structure that failed to question the ontological value of the animation itself. I realized that I needed to disrupt the story arc, to minimize the function of the animated character, and to subject the narrative to the jarring voids of the narrative impasse. If successful, this disruption of linear narrative would allow for the return to the white room, as a symbol of the unshakeable feeling of loss present in the Slovenian community of Trieste. Return to the white pages never written by those who died prematurely, to lost white books that burnt during the Fascist assaults of bookstores, libraries and personal collections, in the mute photos bearing no indications of names. I stopped production in March 2015 and returned to the screenplay.

Silenced history, and its uncanny status indicating that the understanding of the past can be tempered with and its knowledge can be deleted, generates a rivulet of cultural and psychological consequences that flow through time and touches the lives of the descendants in multiple ways. If in the film, I could only explore who I am, the question generated from the discovery of Vladimir's life. To look at the different layers of experience, memory and feelings of postmemory tearing apart my identity, I needed to give voice to the mute faces, the hidden documents, the emerged photos. Only by revealing the "loneliness of the monster and the cunning of the innocent" (Gornick 2002:35), I could allow for the tragedy to be revealed. Hence, animation, which had taken control of the project and relegated the archival material to the role of informative commentary, needed to move from centre stage to the background. The investigation, as the driving force of the film, needed to become the reason beyond the presence of both miniature, archival material and expository voice-over. First, I would establish how the silenced history had been deleted from public memory, and there were

documents demonstrating its occurrence. Second, I needed to offer a sense of the scope of the cultural, human and political catastrophe happened in a city that within one generation had to become from poly-ethnic, homogenous. Thus, the personal story would serve in its metonymic function, in that my experience was a part of a whole collective story, which needed to gain prominence.

To allow for more attention to the historical events, I erased from the screenplay the animated sequenced and shifted the gravitational core of the narrative to the collective and expository. However, within the time I redraft the new script, and the completion of the film, my relationship to the events kept re-inventing itself as a response to the overwhelming information I continued to find in the archive. The personal aspect continued to challenge the internal structure of *Lunch with Family*, and I continued to write scenes taking place in the white room. They gave voice to the process of inner questioning, and cyclical recapitulation of my family's history, in relationship to the most relevant event endured by the indigenous Slavs of Trieste, all witnessed by Vladimir, my father's cousin. A quick look at those pages reveals the historical moments whose narration dictated the final version of the film: in 1909, the Italian militant student organization *Sumsun Corda* started the attacks against Slavs in Trieste. In 1920, the attacks against Slav cultural and economic associations, libraries, shops and practitioners intensified, and culminated with the arson of the Slovenski Narodni Dom (Slovenian National Hall) (13th July 1920). Subsequently, the declaration on the electoral programme of the Fascist party in Trieste stated: "this is the end of the good Italian's epoch" (Pahor 2010: 29-34). Between 1918-1945, half million Slavs had to *become* Italian, in that they were forced to change their names and surnames. Persecution, arrests, concentration in penal houses, torture, transfer to Italian concentration camps and killings continue until 1945, with the aid of the Germans between 1943-1945. The 1st May 1945, 5 Yugoslav tanks entered Trieste and liberated it from the Axis. The 2nd of June the blue collars of the city, the middle class of Slav origins, and some Italians groups gathered in the central square and celebrated the joyful occasion. The 12th June 1945, the Yugoslavs agreed with the Allies to have Trieste managed by an Anglo-Americans committee.

The most important difference in the use of the miniature in the final film is the absence of any embodiments of the author; consequently, the white room became the place of absence and unclaimed possibilities. The narrative choice of eliding my presence from the film was dictated by the need to mirror the absence of continuity of

my life with a past that I discovered only recently. The rupture I was contemplating, and the inner void I felt confronting the social and cultural loss experienced by my ancestors indicated the presence of a permanent caesura. The oscillation between what I am and what had been, however, offered me the possibility to create a voiceover that is my only point of entry into the silenced past. In the process, I found that no differently than the silenced events that marked my ancestors' lives, the feelings brought about by postmemory looked for their recognition in the outside world. This reverberating need for recognition was instrumental in remembering a detail of my childhood. The memory concludes the film and sheds some light on the paradigm by which I explain my existence. The simplicity of a lost memory, but ingrained in my brain, reveals how not only silenced history is detrimental to the life of people, but people contribute in the silencing by removing painful knowledge to try to fit in the society they must inhabit. Decades of invisibility and discrimination, ossified when the victims seemed to morph into the guilty party. This feeling is lent to the descendants, whose primal struggle is to feel adequate - if not to break free from their inherited position.

In retrospect, the decision to remove the animation helped the film to maintain its focus on revealing the silenced events censored by Italian history through the archival finding. Also, it allowed for Vladimir's story to become paradigmatic as the link between the lost past and my present life. The images of the white room retained their haunting beauty and assumed an additional layer of significance when we see a final image of Vladimir in a frame on the wall. It becomes apparent how I touched what he left behind, documents and photos, but I can only concoct him because I have never met him. Thus, he belongs to the wall of mute faces. Dead, distant or silent, in the film the key figures able to reveal the past to me are unreachable.

SAN SABBA

The animation I produced for *San Sabba* (Turina 2016) failed to be edited in the final version of the film for completely different reasons. The film opens with my voiceover, while I consider how for some people the past, history, is never past. What follows is the story of a convoy of Nazis who left Treblinka and moved to the Northeastern part of Italy in 1943. They had completed Action Reinhardt in Poland and were ready to engage in anti-partisan combat in the north of Italy and in Yugoslavia. Buried under the

overwhelming evidence of the Holocaust, this is the story of a very little known concentration camp specialized in the killing of freedom fighters in Trieste, Italy. Initially, there was a screen idea (Macdonald 2013) and a series of notes taken during my frequent visits to the concentration camp's Museum, the Risiera di San Sabba. Most of all, I had hundreds of photos.

For *San Sabba* I never wrote a screenplay. My dialogue with the material happened in the editing room. There, images of the people organizing the dehumanization of thousands, the images of torture and the killing, as well as the photos of the persecuted and the victims, clashed with the animated representation of the soft stories I had heard growing up. Stories that contained an epic tone but had never been linked directly to members of my family; stories that entered my life as an educational device on a very specific slice of history that was considered an unthinkable topic of discussion when children were present. To this canvas of reference, I aimed to bring the documented function of the camp, as found in the documents held by the History and Ethnography Section of the Slovene National and Study Library of Trieste. I started to edit them into a braided narrative, and to develop some animated sequences enacting the daily routine of Slav freedom fighters living in the forest with their families. The different strands of the narrative were to join up in the end and shed light on the entire story. Voice-over served as the organizing principle, as the film explores the multiple facets of memorialization and I cast questions on the absolute absence of public recognition of the key function of this very public space.

Observing the site of the museum as a place of postmemory, however, I realized how its history produced different levels of rupture with the past to different people. It varied from the most radical trauma, the loss of family, to less violent forms of separation like the geographical distance from the homeland of the parents or grandparents. Each experience, however, created a caesura in the history of the family that affects it in the present. What is more, the site surprised most the Italian audience, who did not know of its existence; and deluded the Slav audience because of its reductive narrative. Arguably, the site did not give adequate space to the history of the Slav anti-fascists that were tortured or died on site either in the first permanent exhibition (1976) nor in the new one (2016). I decided to include this feeling of betrayal in finding no traces of such history in the Museum of the Risiera di San Sabba. Also, to display the potential poly-vocality of the site I decided to present its multiple uses during the period between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th

century. Within this narrative solution, I tried to draw from the juxtaposition of indexicality between the photos left behind by the people who were detained or killed on site, and the somehow embellished representation I had formed in my mind of their stories in my childhood. Somewhere in there, liminal and surprisingly safe, there was also my mother's experience. In 1955, she lodged in the concentration camp of the Risiera di San Sabba, which the Anglo-American had opened as a Refugee Camp for people emigrating from Yugoslavia. She had never mentioned the detail before, used as she was to narrate the stories of the freedom fighters her family helped, which I focused the animation on. In remembering her voice, I understood the impact of those stories in my understanding of the site. This generated a process of reflection on the connection between her story, my reading of the past and the archived history of the concentration camp.

As often happens in the making of documentaries, my work on *San Sabba* was disrupted by an event: news of a monument erected in Trieste (September 2016). In the Park of Remembrance, a new plaque announced that the liberation of Trieste happened on June 12th, 1945, at the hands of the Anglo-American forces taking hold of the city. The severity of this action, which cancelled the memory of the liberation of Trieste by the Yugoslav troops, compelled me to re-direct the focus of *San Sabba* on a more public display of archival material. The film became soberer and more political. Ultimately, the animated sequences were taken out of the edited footage because they attracted much attention and established an overly sweet and personal tone for the film. Frames of the animation were translated into still images and inserted in sequences as an indication of the gap between the indexicality of the archival material, whose horrid truth is evasive, and the childish tone of my reckoning with such past.

In the newly edited version, the building became the protagonist, and the narrative became a layering of meaning. I was confident in the power of the site in telling a story on its own. This seems to be true when we see the development of the building from a rice mill to the concentration camp, to a refugee camp and then into the museum, which stands among supermarkets and circus - a mute presence subjected to the commerce of the dark tourism (Lennon and Foley, 1996). Within this idea, the former animation offered material to build a poetic layer of memory, shrouded in a feeling of warmth and protection, which accommodated symbolic and figurative meaning. The chosen still images evoke the tropes of the Holocaust narration, especially in the characterization of a child's coat that presents yellow stars as buttons.

This intentional resemblance comments on the influence of cinema, which had educated me on the look of the Second World War. Also, it indicated my inability to imagine a proper image of these victims, who had not been translated into public representation as they are elided from media attention in Italy. Structurally, the device revealed itself surprisingly useful, as the images were remarkably soft but would not take away too much attention from the harsh reality of a concentration camp in which people were killed and cremated daily. Consequently, this choice created a line of communication between my understanding of the Risiera, and the broader historical account revealed through my wider historical research. The clash of private and public images, micro and macro history, open to view the universe I inherited as a descendant of partisans (my father and members of my mother's family joined the freedom fighters). It also demonstrates the distance between the reality of the events and what postmemory can look like in the mind of a child inheriting a difficult past. However, this narrative structure cast additional questions about the past events and revealed how the film failed to demonstrate the Risiera specific function in the Axis repressive activities. More specifically, the camp as the place of interrogation, torture and killing of freedom fighters and their families, who left behind names scratched on the wooden doors, soaked the building with their blood and went through its chimney as yellow smoke. I considered the use of animation to populate the place, re-create its original structure, the faces of the people, the terror, but this was not a film about a well-known historical event, or a drama about a unique hero. This was about silenced history, and to establish the pertinence of the claim, I needed more archival finding, more evidence.

I gathered the new findings at the Bundesarchiv (National Archive) in Berlin. The discovery of material I did not know existed subjected my screen idea to additional revision. The final version of the film presents the new evidence in a section that is didactical in tone, which aims to juxtapose to the personal narrative and the material found in the archives in Trieste, the German point of view on the Risiera di San Sabba. This last sequence demonstrates how the anti-partisan missions led by the Italo-German troops constitute the fabric against which the more than 300 testimonies offered during the Risiera di San Sabba trial (1976) find the historical background to make sense. In this context, the film covers the entire spectrum of what postmemory might relate to in this case: from the still images of the animation testifying to the naïve storytelling of children to the revelation of the documents and photos of the victims held in the Slovenian archives. From the footage recording the new exhibition failing to indicate

the site's purpose in the antipartisan's Italo-German combat to the German documents offering an overview. Finally, the reiterated exclusion from the Italian public memorials of any link to their policies against the indigenous Slavs.

CONCLUSION

The use of animation in the essay film testifies to the fantastic quality of the medium, in that it allows for the materialization of the invisible: from the Greek *phantastikos*, which draws from *phantazein*, 'to make visible'; *phantazesthai*, 'to have visions', 'imagine'; and *phantos*, 'visible', which is related to *pahinein*, 'to show'. These qualities allow for the expression of difficult emotions and the embodiment of traumatic experiences. The act of screenwriting animation assumes different forms and offers different answers to the need of the director. Born from the study of a specific example of silenced history, in *Lunch with Family* and *San Sabba* animation could have offered aesthetic solutions to the mediation of a century of silenced history. It would have started in 1909, when Italian Filippo Tommaso Marinetti published the Manifesto Futurista in the newspaper *Il Piccolo della Sera* (10th February), in Trieste. His programme of aggressive aesthetic action married the Fascist avant-garde, and their enthusiasm lasted for thirty years. The embodiment of the revolution they advocated in, the Axis Concentration Camp of the Risiera di San Sabba is the zenith of a long process of persecution started with the forced Italianization half million people (Purini 2010:10).

A past rich in conflict seems to be ideal for its representation into animation, as the technique offers plenty of creative solutions to present an array of human experiences and feelings. Most importantly, it offers the necessary physical abstraction allowing for a level of distance from the topic. However, the experience gained in the development, production and post-production of *Lunch with Family* and *San Sabba* shows that the fantastic and abstract qualities of animation do not necessarily serve well the mediation of silenced history. The problem lays in the necessity to establish silenced history as a relevant event. This action implies the description of the event, the determination of the event's meaning for the affected community, the acceptance of silence as a memory event and not as an absence of content. The narration of silenced

history, which aims to the discussion and ultimately to the recognition of the silenced past has relevant within the nation, is a documentary action, a claiming of importance and visibility that needs to mediate the evidence with caution. In the case of *Lunch with Family* and *San Sabba*, animation offered an overly abstract rendering and did not allow for the archival and live-action sequences to hold the attention of the audience when needed the most, in the expository mode. In the revelation of silenced history, the expository mode is necessary as a journalistic dictate. It breaks the silence and establishes the event as news. This qualifier confirms silenced history as a real event happened in the past and affecting the lives of a specific group of people. Once the event is documented, recognised, publically discussed and the voice of the persecuted accepted in their right to talk about their experience, then it acquires an element of familiarity. Hence, distance from the topic is contrary to what these films aimed to produce. When the audience grows to find the newly established history as familiar, recognise it, confirm it without a feeling of fear or a sense of shame, animation becomes one of the most generative technique for the aesthetic expression of stories able to close-up on more specific aspects, and figures, in history. However, the stills from animations offered the level of necessary abstraction to tackle topics that invaded the private sphere of the director and put it into a display, in that it revealed the impact of painful secrets in her family's history enabling the emotional arc of each film.

Accordingly, to this idea, the final screenplay of *Lunch with Family* (Turina 2016), and the last editing of *San Sabba* (Turina 2016) were built on the extensive use of archival material, voiceover in numerous languages, interviews and still images. The critique on the transmission of history and the power of memory is enriched using the images from the animation, which function as imposed ruptures of the narrative flow and are often pregnant with questions. Also, they allow for the repositioning of the author's focus, embodied in the camera-eye, as postmemory becomes 'the sight and understanding of a larger history' (Caruth 1996:31). Arguably, the dialogue between these narrative techniques offered to the archival material the narrative support within which to establish each silenced event as worthy to be publically acknowledge and respect.

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