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Interweaving Realities: Spoken Language and Moving Images in the *Sonne halt!*, Experimental Film by Ferry Radax

Abstract: This paper analyses the experimental film *Sonne halt!* by Ferry Radax, an Austrian filmmaker renowned for his unconventional approach to cinematic practice. Filmed and edited between the end of the 1950s and early 1960s, the film at first may appear to be a belated homage to the previous European experiments in avant-garde cinema, already carried out a few decades earlier. However, since there have been no great ‘historical avant-garde’ movements in Vienna in the period between the two world wars – according to the novel argument made by Klaus Kastberger – it was already the middle of the 20th century when the ‘original’ avant-garde strategies were finally acknowledged in Austria, and simultaneously appropriated by the ‘neo-avant-garde’. In this peculiar historico-cultural context *Sonne halt!*, in its fragmentary non-narrative structure which resembles Dadaist or Surrealist playfulness and openness, innovatively and radically interweaved two disparate film registers: moving image and spoken language. Various sentences arbitrarily enounced throughout the film – which have their origin in Konrad Bayer’s unfinished experimental, pseudo-autobiographical, montage novel *der sechste sinn* – do not constitute dialogues or narration of a traditional movie script but rather a random collection of fictional and philosophical statements. At certain moments there is a lack of rapport between moving image and speech – an experimental attempt by Ferry Radax to challenge one of the most common principles of sound and narrative cinema. By deconstructing *Sonne halt!* to its linguistic and cinematic aspects, this article particularly focuses on the role of verbal commentaries within the film.

Keywords: Ferry Radax; *Sonne halt!* [*Sun Stop!*, 1959–1962]; experimental film; Konrad Bayer; *der sechste sinn* [*the sixth sense*, 1966]; Austrian neo-avant-garde; spoken language; moving image

Into the unknown: brief introductory notes on Ferry Radax and Austrian experimental film

“franz goldenberg went to the cinema!
suddenly he recalls his six senses
and the events appear in a different light.”
Spoken by Konrad Bayer in *Sonne halt!*

When starting a discussion about the history of Austrian experimental cinema, one can examine the following daring claim made by Peter Tscherkassky, an Austrian filmmaker working with found footage, and an experimental film theoretician/historian as well: “If there is any area of art in which Austria has been able to advance to top international ranks, it is that of avant-garde film. In almost no other country has cinema developed as a pure art form as radically as it has in Austria.”² Indeed, Austrian experimental film – during recent years finally recognized as a legitimate *tradition* and becoming more widely available for audiences – led by all of its filmmakers (Peter Kubelka, Ferry Radax, Kurt Kren, Ernst Schmidt Jr., Dietmar Brehm, Peter Tscherkassky, Martin Arnold, to name some of its important representatives),³ thoroughly, systematically and anarchically explored the film medium. It is one of the most consistent national avant-garde film movements, whose large body of work is founded on radical experimental filmmaking, destroying almost all of the preconceived notions of cinema as a seventh art. However, Austrian experimental film as a whole for a long time remained an unavailable cinematic curiosity, an obscure filmmaking practice only recently critically rediscovered for the English public thanks to the editorial efforts of Peter Tscherkassky on his publication *Film Unframed: A History of Austrian Avant-Garde Cinema* (2012), and due to the increased number of film screenings and their DVD availability.⁴ This paper represents an attempt to theoretically and analytically explore one paradigmatic early work of this significant avant-garde film movement: *Sonne halt!* (*Sun Stop!*, 1959–1962) by Ferry Radax.

Ferry Radax, an experimental Austrian filmmaker still to be discovered, both academically and non-institutionally,⁵ is one of the Austria’s pioneers of postwar

¹ All of the English translation of the film’s speech and spoken sentences is based on the subtitles of the DVD edition: Ferry Radax, *Sonne halt!* (Vienna: DVD Edition Der Standard/Hoanzl, *Der österreichische Film*, 2007), #91. In the process of transcription, original lower case letters (*Kleinschreibung*), typical for the Austrian neo-avant-garde practice, are retained.

² Peter Tscherkassky, “The Roots of Diversity,” in *Innovative Film Austria* (Vienna: Federal Chancellery, Film Division, 2005), 10.

³ For the most comprehensive collection of Austrian experimental films available in DVD format, the reader is advised to consult and explore the catalogue of Index DVD: <http://www.index-dvd.at/>

⁴ See the above footnote.

⁵ A recently published collection of critical texts on Radax, although only in German, seems to raise additional interest for this filmmaker: Otto Mörth, Isabella Hirt, Georg Vogt, ed., *Ferry Radax – Vision, Utopie, Experiment* (Wien: Sonderzahl, 2014).

avant-garde artistic practice. A large body of Radax's filmography consists of many experimentally conceived films, but he is possibly most renowned for his unconventional portraits of important artists, writers, and thinkers – e.g. Konrad Bayer, Thomas Bernhard, and Ludwig Wittgenstein, respectively. His directorial debut *Sonne halt!* – the main case study of this article – is a 26 minute experimental film (this length refers to its third, and final, version),⁶ and today – at least among the rather limited number of experimental film devotees – has the status of “Austrian avant-garde classic”⁷. This black and white short experimental film seems to be freed from rigid rules of common cinematic syntax: in an almost plotless procession, individual shots and scenes are tied randomly, even more arbitrarily in comparison to earlier film works of Surrealist and Dadaist movements. Although not the very first attempt in Austria to seriously and uncompromisingly experiment with film language – in fact, Peter Kubelka's *Mosaik im Vertrauen* (*Mosaic in Confidence*, 1955), where Radax was the camera operator, represents “Austria's first bona fide, domestically produced avant-garde film work”⁸ – *Sonne halt!* was nevertheless groundbreaking and significant in its endeavor to liberate and question many restraints of traditional cinema. The following section of this paper introduces the film and maps some of its radical aspects.

Plot, stop! Eradicating the film narrative in *Sonne halt!*

Filmed between 1959 and 1960 in Monte Rosso with the financial support from the Austrian Ministry of Education,⁹ *Sonne halt!* incorporates many experimental filmmaking techniques while striving for the mode of non-narrative – or, at least, *pseudo-narrative* – avant-garde cinema. Destroying in many ways its possible plot – even though the story is sometimes promised among the ‘false’ connections between numerous unrelated scenes¹⁰ – Radax constructed a film which is not a puzzle whose constitutive elements could be assembled alternately in order to retrace the supposedly original meaning impregnated by its creator. Yet, *Sonne halt!* is not only unconventional for its ungrammatical and random anti-narrative syntactic editing method, but it also incorporates various formal experimental techniques: direct plastic intervention on the material of the film medium (most evident in the imagery of explosion of the sun), scenes shot in negative, still photography, etc. Finally, one of its key features

⁶ Peter Tscherkassky, “The Halted Sun of Ferry Radax,” in *Film Unframed: A History of Austrian Avant-Garde Cinema*, ed. Peter Tscherkassky (Vienna: SYNEMA-Gesellschaft für Film und Media/Sixpack Film, 2012), 85.

⁷ Ibid, 83.

⁸ Peter Tscherkassky, “Ground Survey. An Initial Mapping of an Expanding Territory,” in *Film Unframed: A History of Austrian Avant-Garde Cinema*, 15.

⁹ Tscherkassky, “The Halted Sun of Ferry Radax,” 84.

¹⁰ This paper intentionally avoids clearly reproducing the plot of the film, and instead of an hermeneutic approach oriented towards the narrative, primarily focuses on the theoretical analysis of audio-visual material elements (e.g. film signifiers). For the reconstruction of the synopsis of *Sonne halt!* see the text on Radax by Peter Tscherkassky: *ibid*, 86, 90–91.

– explored in detail in the next chapter of this article – is the deliberately extreme discrepancy of relation between moving image and verbal voice, a radical strategy apparently indispensable whenever one attempts to undermine dominant sound-film conventions.

Considering some of its alternative filmmaking methods mentioned above, one can argue that *Sonne halt!*, a film which exhibits a “wide variety of influences”¹¹, represents merely a delayed reaction and Radax’s homage to the Surrealist cinema of the 1920s and early 1930s. Although seemingly a three-decade belated version of Buñuel’s/Dalí’s Surrealist classic *Un Chien Andalou* (*An Andalusian Dog*, 1929), and founded on similarly uncompromising dream-logic automatism and free associations, *Sonne halt!* nonetheless seems to have a more random structure, while the former remains more narratively motivated and mimetically consistent. In any case, in order to fully understand the specificity of the Austrian postwar context, it is important to give one additional historico-social explanation. Namely, since there have been no great avant-garde movements in Vienna established and active in the period between the two world wars – according to the novel argument made by Klaus Kastberger in opposition to the historicity of Peter Bürger – during the 1950s in Austria occurred an unprecedented simultaneous intertwining of historical avant-gardes and neo-avant-gardes.¹² Contrary to Bürgerian problematic argument (already deconstructed by Hal Foster)¹³, Kastberger recognized that, instead of solely repeating diverse experimental strategies and techniques which historical avant-gardes have already explored, Austrian neo-avant-gardes have discovered these experimental modes for the very first time, previously destroyed and made unavailable by the Nazi regime under a pretext of combating “degenerate art” (*Entartete Kunst*). This synchronous occurrence (historical avant-gardes plus neo-avant-gardes, instead of the former versus the latter) marked the foundation of the “unique Austrian avant-garde”¹⁴. Thus *Sonne halt!*, made within a historical context quite different from the French one, and informed by new creative influences, could not have simply replicated filmmaking mode of *Un Chien Andalou*.

In such a postwar atmosphere of newly discovered avant-gardism, Ferry Radax artistically collaborated with one of the most influential Austrian neo-avant-garde figures: Konrad Bayer, an important but still relatively unacknowledged experimental writer, artist, and performer. He was selected for the leading role in the *Sonne halt!*, as Franz Goldenberg, and recited all of the off-screen text as well.¹⁵ Bayer was one

¹¹ Ibid, 91.

¹² Klaus Kastberger, “Wien 50/60. Eine Art einzige österreichische Avantgarde,” in *Schluß mit dem Abendland. Der lange Atem der österreichischen Avantgarde* (Profile 5), ed. Thomas Eder and Klaus Kastberger (Wien: Zsolnay, 2000), 5–7.

¹³ Hal Foster, “Who’s Afraid of the Neo-Avant-Garde,” in *The Return of the Real* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), 1–34.

¹⁴ Kastberger, “Wien 50/60. Eine Art einzige österreichische Avantgarde,” 7.

¹⁵ Aside of *Sonne halt!* Radax made a few more films directly dedicated or otherwise related to Konrad Bayer: *Am Rand* [*On the Edge*, 1961], *Konrad Bayer, oder: die Welt bin ich und das ist meine Sache* [*Konrad Bayer, or: I am the World and That Is My Problem*, 1969], *Der Kopf des Vitus Bering* [*The Head of Vitus Bering*, 1970].

of the key members of the Vienna Group (*Wiener Gruppe*), a radical Austrian neo-avant-garde – or even *post-avant-garde*¹⁶ – interdisciplinary movement active during the 1950s and the first half of 1960s. While working with the group Konrad Bayer produced various intermedia artworks, famous for their peculiar mixture of textual and performative features, creating specific speech-behavioral situations wherein the limits of social and linguistic borders were daringly explored; the most paradigmatic work in such a mode were the group's performances, proto-happenings named Literary Cabarets (*Literarische Cabarets*).¹⁷ In this regard, *Sonne halt!* had a strategy similar to the activities and performances of the Vienna Group: an almost unmediated, radical attack on the bourgeois values and traditional taste.

But Konrad Bayer's contribution to the film was not only performance-oriented, for he also provided all of the sentences randomly spoken and verbally disseminated throughout *Sonne halt!* This textual material, far from having the role of a 'movie script', stems from Bayer's never to be finished pseudo-autobiographical,¹⁸ fragmentary montage novel *der sechste sinn* (*the sixth sense*, 1966).¹⁹ Montage technique, first introduced with the invention of cinema, now had its extreme equivalent in the literature and the practice of writing (*der sechste sinn*),²⁰ and was, in turn, revisited in the film (*Sonne halt!*). But the sentences of the unfinished *der sechste sinn* which make their appearance in *Sonne halt!* – even though the film chronologically precedes the publication of the novel – appear quite arbitrarily and subvert any idea of traditional storytelling. In this context, arbitrariness signifies the lack of motivation behind the process of assembling sentences, for there is no drive which animates their semantic impetus: sentences of the novel – or the film scenes or shots – form a chain which does not depend on classical syntax imperatives. In any case, considering the heterogeneity of their respective structures, whether one read the novel first or saw the film and then read a novel, the words of Bayer's text remain decontextualized, and many of the shared sentences and formulations – which appear both in the *Sonne halt!* and *der sechste sinn* – remained estranged in comparison to their original context.

Having in mind the potential incomprehensibility of the plot, given the fact that the film basically presents a random collection of loosely, metaphorically and metonymically related moving images, sounds and spoken sentences, Peter Tscherkassky claims that *Sonne halt!* is, in effect, not interpretatively impenetrable, for Radax, on one occasion, explained to him the meaning behind its audio-visual representation.²¹ Nevertheless, according to the former author, the film retains "the charm of being a

¹⁶ Luka Bešliagić, *Teorije eksperimentalne tekstualne produkcije* (Beograd: Fakultet za medije i komunikacije, 2017), 88.

¹⁷ Oswald Wiener, "das 'literarische cabaret' der wiener gruppe," in *Die Wiener Gruppe. Achleitner, Artmann, Bayer, Rühm, Wiener. Texte, Gemeinschaftsarbeiten, Aktionen*, ed. Gerhard Rühm, (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1967), 401–18.

¹⁸ Ulrich Janetzki, *Alphabet und Welt. Über Konrad Bayer* (Königstein i. Ts.: Hain, 1982), 132.

¹⁹ Konrad Bayer, *the sixth sense* (London: Atlas Press, 2008).

²⁰ Tscherkassky, "The Halted Sun of Ferry Radax," 85.

²¹ *Ibid*, 83.

nearly incomprehensible and will never entirely submit to an exhaustive hermeneutic interpretation”²²; oscillating “between extreme precision in picture-sound editing and free rampant, surreal confusion”²³, the film preserves a high level of structural and interpretative openness. In any case, Peter Tscherkassky suggests the following synopsis – though not so obvious while viewing the film itself: “A dandy who is also a sailor endeavors to court two women; both differ markedly in appearance and style – the one elegant, the other in tune with nature. To impress both, the dandy first shoots the sun and subsequently the moon out of the sky. When he nonetheless fails to succeed in conquering either woman, he leaves town to set sail.”²⁴ This was, therefore, an attempt made by Tscherkassky to offer readers of his essay on Radax a short plot of this non-retellable film.²⁵ However, such an exegetical approach, although underlying some of the film’s cinematic distinctiveness, does not tell us much about experimental linguistic strategies used in the *Sonne halt!* – which we will attempt to discursively explore in the continuation of this paper.

From *Sonne halt!* to *der sechste sinn*, and vice versa: Arbitrary sentences intervene

Sonne halt! and *der sechste sinn* establish a complex intertextual intertwining. This complexity is not only a consequence of the film’s agrammatical, non-narrative approach, but also comes from the fact that the very novel – in its final output posthumously edited by Gerhard Rühm²⁶ – is exceedingly fragmentary and, equally as a film, unfathomable. Various sentences from *der sechste sinn* are arbitrarily spread throughout the scenes of *Sonne halt!* Thus, spoken speech in the film includes some of the leitmotiv-sentences (*leitmotivische Sätze*),²⁷ in their identical state or with some minor variation, randomly repeated several times in the novel, such as: “i have the sixth sense” or “the events appear in a different light”. In the film, words, phrases and sentences, written and spoken by Konrad Bayer, emerge by chance and loosely relate themselves to the images shown onscreen, creating a noticeable and unsettling signifying discrepancy; in other words, speech and moving images are in constant struggle with one another.

These two registers, as two strictly separate, independent realities, apparently communicate rarely, but when such a moment occurs, it seems just an unexpected “side-effect” of audio-visual materiality of the film. In *Sonne halt!* the moving image

²² Ibid, 84.

²³ Peter Tscherkassky, “Die rekonstruierte Kinematografie. Zur Filmavantgarde in Österreich,” 15, <http://www.tscherkassky.at/download/kinemato.pdf>, acc. December 4, 2017.

²⁴ Tscherkassky, “The Halted Sun of Ferry Radax,” 84.

²⁵ See footnote no. 10.

²⁶ Malcolm Green, “Introduction,” in Bayer, *the sixth sense*, 5.

²⁷ Janetzki, *Alphabet und Welt. Über Konrad Bayer*, 143.

and the verbal sentence (comprising not only of words pronounced but also a several hand-written captions in French, sporadically inserted between the scenes) mostly do not constitute a dialogue, as opposed to traditional sound cinema – and even to silent narrative movies. Therefore, this process is not dialectical in the sense of reconciliation of the two film planes: the connection of visual with verbal is rather of a *hybrid* nature, which means that each of them irreducibly retains its identity. As a result, the meaning is constantly floating and gliding from one scene, or even one shot, to the next, challenging any viewer with the intention to impose meaning and signification on the film's arbitrarily constructed network of signifiers. In the history of the cinema, this exploration of the (im)possible rapport between images and sounds anticipates – but given the obscure status of *Sonne halt!* does not directly influence – among others, the following filmmaking modes: film-essays²⁸ made by, for example, Alain Resnais, Jean-Luc Godard, Chris Marker, and Marguerite Duras, combining spoken speech and/or screen captions with the moving image; meticulous examination of discursive potentiality of communication discrepancy between sound and image in the works of Peter Kubelka, in particular in *Unsere Afrikareise (Our Trip to Africa, 1966)*;²⁹ semiotic experiments carried out by American structural film artists – for instance, in the films of Michael Snow such as *Rameau's Nephew By Diderot (Thanx to Denis Young) By Wilma Schoen (1974)*; etc.

As already suggested, speech in *Sonne halt!* primarily manifests itself in the form of sentence (*der Satz*), analogously to the theory of language developed and explored by Ludwig Wittgenstein, whose philosophy Konrad Bayer was highly acquainted with. According to the late findings of the former thinker, to speak means to play a language-game (*Sprachspiel*):³⁰ Bayer's sentences are thus obeying, but also questioning and transgressing the given social, cultural and, obviously, linguistic norms. That is why the narrator's speech in the film resembles common, everyday language (some sentences are elliptically built with only a few words), testing basic communication. For that reason, Wittgensteinian linguistic skepticism, sometimes even based on tautological redundancy in the usage of language (e.g. "Lipschitz', Lipschitz said"), prevails most of the time in the film. Bayer, whose work was strongly informed by Ludwig Wittgenstein's critique of language,³¹ continued in *Sonne halt!* to explore his own philosophical preoccupations, investigating the question, to what extent perception and cognition of reality and everything else relies on the structure and practice of language. Consequently, both the film and the novel examine the multifaceted issue of interdependence between language and subjectivity.³²

The above-mentioned different relations between images and sentences in *Sonne halt!*, in regard to their potential synchrony – or the lack thereof – could be

²⁸ Phillip Lopate, "In Search of the Centaur: The Essay-Film," *The Threepenny Review*, 48 (Winter 1992): 19–22.

²⁹ Cf. Peter Tscherkassky, "The World According to Kubelka," in *Film Unframed: A History of Austrian Avant-Garde Cinema*, 75–9.

³⁰ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1997).

³¹ Cf. Luka Bešlagić, "The Influence of Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Language on the Textual Production of the Vienna Group," *AM: Journal of Art and Media Studies* 9 (April 2016): 55–64.

³² Cf. Janetzki, *Alphabet und welt*, 126.

classified in the following way, and illustrated with some of paradigmatic examples. (1) *Synchronicity between image and speech*. This is most explicitly presented with the first, introductory pictures showing the main actors (Konrad Bayer, Ingrid Schuppan, the sailor Alberto Jolly) while the off-screen narrator is citing their names and roles. (2) *Semi-synchronous mode*, where voice, albeit ironically and metonymically intervening, is not totally opposed to the image. We can see Konrad Bayer, raising his arm and crying out something, while it is spoken: “he raised his hand towards me and shouted: ‘i have the sixth sense!’”; when a figure ascends the stone staircase, a voice exclaims: “and they’ve an elevator in the house”. (3) *Asynchronously connected images and speech*. While Franz Goldenberg descends the staircase, the voice makes a seemingly unrelated commentary: “he flung himself out of bed and remained lying on the polar bear skin. from this point on the story continues – wheel-drive powered!”; the same image of the sailor in his boat is interminably shown while the narrator slithers from one topic (a debate on individuality – see details below) to another (a first person account of one’s strolling through the streets of Monte Rosso). Especially discordant is one of the beach scenes, when the narrator names “Oppenheimer” a figure “who sank down into an armchair made of rosebuds”, whereas Konrad Bayer, commonly associated with the signifier “Franz Goldenberg”, took a seat; afterwards, the expression apparently made by this same person on his occasion of looking at the sun (“120 degrees!”) the voice had attributed to the third name – “Braunschweiger”.

One of the emblematic scenes of the film is based on *chosistic* – systematically explored with the French *nouveau roman* – extremely detailed description, portraying the eating of an apple strudel and the corresponding corporeal psycho-behavioral processes: “i take the plate with the apfelstrudel and sit down a little to one side. i introduce the fork into the apfelstrudel, i bend my head and slowly, very slowly lick the sugar of the crust. it is true! absolutely fresh, soft, sweet appleflesh. my saliva and the appleflesh are a soft sweet mush. suddenly i swallow appleflesh. more and more saliva collects in my mouth. the prongs sink quickly into the apple flesh. my head jerks forward and, with a flick of my tongue, i tear the shreds of appleflesh from the prongs of the fork. hastily i swallow strudel. i stab into the strudel, swallow, stab into the strudel. my tongue digs into the dough.” In an act of discrepancy typical for Radax’s short film (it should be noted that camera records Franz Goldenberg eating the pizza instead of apple strudel), most of this *performative* – rather than purely descriptive, that is *constative*³³ – speech is pronounced *before* Franz Goldenberg commenced consuming the meal onscreen (this tactic resembles one of the literary-performances of the Vienna Group named *friedrich achleitner als biertrinker* [*friedrich achleitner as a beer drinker*, 1958], wherein Bayer reads instructions which Achleitner, also one of the five members of the group, subsequently obediently executes).³⁴ Similarly, in a kind of discursive delay, Bayer’s off-screen speech on food (“omelette, cutlet?”) directly continues even after the scene has changed from the interior of the restaurant to the

³³ Cf. John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).

³⁴ Wiener, “das ‘literarische cabaret’ der wiener gruppe,” 407–8.

open beach.³⁵ In short, one can deduce that *Sonne halt!* encompasses two levels of arbitrariness, as seen in: (1) relation between a particular image and the simultaneously pronounced speech, and (2) relation between respective audio-visual units (scenes), taken as a whole, in comparison to the film in its entirety.

As in Bayer's novel, the identity of characters in the film³⁶ – even of the major one, Franz Goldenberg – does not remain stable or fixed.³⁷ “There is not a lot of interaction between the different characters. The respective identities of the main actor, sometimes shifting within the single shot, are determined by language off-screen [...]”³⁸ These characters are, in well-known Saussurean terms, mainly *signifiers* (a written textual sign in *der sechste sinn*; an audio-visual representation of human figure in the *Sonne halt!*), signifiers which could be easily impregnated with various *signifieds*. In this respect the film and the novel share the same stake in their *anti-humanism*: person is merely a language construction subjected to signifying process – although Bayer's and Radax's positions are based on Wittgensteinian rather than structuralist or poststructuralist conceptualization and terminology. In addition to that, and quite contrary to the just explicated ideological position, it would be important to stress that among the significant philosophical and ethical topics implicitly covered in *Sonne halt!* – *implicitly*, given the film's lack of traditional didactic pretensions, and considering the informality of Bayer's discourse – is a fragmented debate on individuality and individualist anarchism:³⁹ “the masses don't understand, but it's individual being [t]hat brings the circle closer”; “individual being will be revealed! and – thereby – the real universe comes into being!”; “[...] i introduced individuality into the school, and the kids, you should see how they'll turn out. because – ‘the masses’ – what sort of stupid idea is that?, you know? everyone is individual, everyone is tremendously revolutionary, and i think everyone should be different.”

Finally, at a certain point in the film, it becomes clear that it is the text – the text of Bayer's later *der sechste sinn* – that dictates the semantic progression of images. However, there is a fundamental distinction between the traditional function of the script in the narrative cinema production and the role of the text in the experimental film; in the case of the latter, text has an equal role, a function which is not based on mimetic assumptions of narrative storytelling. In other words, in the practice of experimental cinema text does not efface itself in order to be subordinated to some supposedly more significant semantic plane. From that point of view, one can say that

³⁵ Finally, this scene has its continuation several minutes later, incorporating the following words: “now i began to chew. more and more dough collects in my mouth. i swallow and swallow and chew very – very – slowly. now i am full.”

³⁶ The names of several characters enounced in the film also appear in the novel: in addition to the already mentioned “Franz Goldenberg” – as a verbal/textual pseudo-autobiographical representation of Konrad Bayer – there are “Braunschweiger”, “Dobyhal”, “Lipschitz”, “Marcel Oppenheimer”, “Neuwerk”, “Weintraub”.

³⁷ Janetzki, *Alphabet und Welt. Über Konrad Bayer*, 137–43.

³⁸ Tscherkassky, “The Halted Sun of Ferry Radax,” 85.

³⁹ One of the important influences on the heterogeneous philosophical position of the Vienna Group was Max Stirner and his manifesto of individuality, *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum (The Ego and His Own, 1844)*.

the spoken text – namely, sentence – generates and stimulates the visual: text serves as a generator of the moving image. Therefore, as previously proposed, each of the sentences spoken in *Sonne halt!* could be marked as a performative statement: since sentences in the film do not merely describe or portray pre-existing reality, together with moving images they rather produce, construct, and create a new one – a new, audio-visual *linguistic film-reality*.

Concluding remarks

In this article, the interdisciplinarity of the method relied on the combination of poststructuralist textual approach with Wittgensteinian philosophy and critique of language, while also not neglecting specificity of the historical context: thus *Sonne halt!* was examined not as a pure aesthetic film-object, but rather as an intertext and complex linguistic structure open to various interpretations and theoretical interventions. Through its intertextual connection with Konrad Bayer's manuscript – later to become a highly radical fictional and philosophical neo-avant-garde text *der sechste sinn – Sonne halt!* positions itself as one of the key works of experimental cinema in Austria which (along with Kubelka's *Mosaik im Vertrauen*, for instance) paved the way for further explorations of the film medium freed from its conventional bonds. One particularly radical Radax strategy of experimentality – primarily explored in this paper – is based upon the playfulness and arbitrariness of relation between spoken speech and film visuals. As previous analysis has illustrated, Bayer's sentences are not necessarily in line with the images shown at the screen: dialogue between moving image and speech occurs not so often and, seemingly, by chance – an attempt by Ferry Radax to challenge and undermine one of the most common principles of sound and narrative cinema. This unexpected inconsistency in relation between image and speech upsets the ordinary cinema viewer and introduces the possibility of an emancipatory role of the film as a medium and a revolutionary tool.

Up to this point in the paper, the label “experimental” has been attached many times to Austrian avant-garde films. In the particular case explored in the previous analysis, the *politics* of experimental film stemmed from the deconstructive approach towards the relation between image and sound, undermining their traditional and conventional connections. Such a semantic discrepancy, paradigmatically investigated with the *Sonne halt!*, became one of the most fundamental subversive strategies of global experimental cinema, and even today remains the pillar of transgressive potentiality of film language.

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