

Članak je primljen: 7. jul 2014.
Revidirana verzija: 16. jul 2014.
Prihvaćena verzija: 23. jul 2014.
UDC: 791.221.8:82-311.9 ; 7.038.543 ;
791.633-051 Grinavej P.

dr Micha Braun (Miha Braun)

Institute of Theatre Studies, Leipzig University
mibraun@uni-leipzig.de

“But underneath I think we are now in a very exciting melting pot.” Peter Greenaway’s Re-invention of Mannerist Style and the Historicity of Cinema¹

Summary: Within his cinematic works, British filmmaker, painter, curator, and multi-media artist Peter Greenaway proves techniques of discontinuous narration and playfully tries to retrieve forms of representation and perception that already seemed to be marginalised in the modern era. Those techniques are argued to have the potential to examine recent representations of cultural order and the historicity of the present.

The paper is focusing on two peculiarities in Greenaway’s work that make the historicity of cinema evident: first, his commitment to a mannerist aesthetic, which he disjunctively connects to epistemological questions of the present, and, second, the examination of the cinema situation itself, which he calls a *dying dinosaur* – a relic of modernity that needs a revolutionary reconditioning. In giving insights into two major works that are closely linked over a period of almost 25 years, Greenaway’s strategies of historicising cinema will be addressed. They are to be characterised as key examples of Greenaway’s techniques of establishing a space of encyclopaedic history-telling and discontinuous perception that outreaches the capacities of *classic* filmic representation.

Keywords: Peter Greenaway, historicity of cinema, mannerist aesthetic, *The Falls*, *The Tulse Luper Suitcases*;

Introduction

Some discontinuities and a-synchronisms, moments of interruption and dislocation, were initial points for me to reconsider Peter Greenaway’s artwork. The filmmaker and media artist throughout his works analyses and reconditions forms of filmic representation and observation.

¹ This paper presents an elaborated version of a lecture, given at the Cinema | Avanca Film Festival 2011 in Avanca, Portugal. It reflects some key points the author’s dissertation thesis on Peter Greenaway’s practice of history and storytelling. Cf. Micha Braun, *In Figuren erzählen. Zu Geschichte und Erzählung bei Peter Greenaway*, Bielefeld, transcript, 2012.

Focussing on the references and connections of two levels of perception, this paper takes a new glance at Greenaway's occupation with filmic modes of storytelling and imagining order: first, his conspicuous commitment to multiple mannerisms and figures of style that seems to be borrowed from an early modern aesthetic and builds up an artistic strategy for coping with epistemological questions of the present and, second, his examination of the viewer's situation within the cinematic disposition, which he wants to put under a revolutionary reconditioning.

The following will provide some cues about Greenaway's irregular and fragmented way of storytelling in two major works – the *biographic anthology The Falls* (1980) and the multi-perspective long-term project *The Tulse Luper Suitcases* (2003ff). In conclusion, it will be revealed how Greenawayan cinema can be perceived as a medium of a contemporary historiography.

Discontinuous Storytelling: *The Falls* (1980)

I want to make films that rationally represent all the world in one place. (...) I demand, as we all do, some sense of coherence, of order in the world. And we are always defeated. This is the human condition. (Greenaway)²

The Falls comes up as Greenaway's first feature-length film, though not quite a flick for the theatres. Like many of his short films before, it claims to be an academic (i.e. tedious) documentation. In the end, however, it proves to be a 185-minute-experiment on ways of storytelling, montage, and structuring image, sound, and symbolic references that happened to be a first hit with audiences beyond regular festival screenings.

The opening sequence elucidates the emergence of the following plot: a Commission for the Investigation and Documentation of an unforeseen Violent Unknown Event (=VUE), that hit Europe and other parts of the world, regularly releases biographic documentations on selected victims of that event. The VUE had a remarkable impact on them: their anatomy was affected in different manners like compression of viscera, loss of weight, and bettering of sight as well as an enlargement and strengthening of arm, chest and breast muscles. In addition, they were struck by a plenitude of yet unknown languages as well as a marked preference for singing.

Styled like a systematic, indexed and cross-referenced catalogue, *The Falls* promises to offer a neutral mapping of the most updated knowledge concerning the VUE. Depending on respectively available information, the ninety-two biographies give essential facts about the affected people's lives before and after the VUE. Linguistic and ornithological experts regularly comment on the events, while some of them will be introduced later as struck by the VUE themselves. A couple of names prove to be pseudonyms for other people; frequently also faults and fakes within the directory occur. The sequences, covering everything between nine seconds and five minutes in length, are presented in manifold ways: documentary style biographies alternate with interview formats, tabloid coverage, reports from different places of the world and family portraits.

In its structure though, the film presents a heterogeneous collection of files and records that boldly purport coherence where there is hardly any to be found. Therefore, a narration is needed, which gives a comprehensive story that legitimises the event as well as its outcome. Accordingly, *The Falls* offers a rhetoric or historiographical narrative that sports a very well-known literary

² Peter Greenaway in: Marcia Pally, "Cinema as the Total Art Form" (orig. 1991), in: Vernon Gras and Marguerite Gras (eds.) *Peter Greenaway. Interviews*, Jackson, Univ. Press of Mississippi, 2000, 107.

topos: the passion of mankind and its salvation by sacrifice. The VUE then would have to be conceived as a purging event, which is explained and legitimised by the commission. The victims though, would then be incorporated into the narrative as martyrs, witnesses, and living (or, even better, dead) memorials of its truth and significance. For modern standards, a genetic *historical* narration would require some elucidating and disentangling examinations; some systematic comparison and unambiguous classification. At the same time, references to mythical and other *irrational* modes of storytelling help to recognise and honour the collective suffering as well as the interpretative authority of the storyteller.³

All of which is to be found in *The Falls*: the victims are classified by different types, their suffering and their aptitude for martyrdom, and diverse theories for the explanation of the event are offered and discussed. The VUE commission collects all data and at the same time appoints patterns of interpretation. Its narrative, though it covers a chaotic event, is characterised by some organising principles, such as the alphabet (from Falla- to Fallw-), numeration of biographies, formats of presentation (photographic documentation, live report, interview, etc.) as well as the allocation of authority to the commission's members and experts. This immanent logic of order is accompanied by rhythmic constituents like montage, instrumental music, and paradigmatic songs like the "VUE hymn" and a recurring "Bird List Song". Peculiar is a consistent combination of taxonomic utility of the ordering device with a sensual component that only at a first sight supports the underlying narrative. For example, the alphabet as well as the numeration of the biographies not only fulfil their pretended functions as neutral ordering systems, but they also provide (at times) contradicting services of dramaturgical disorientation, i.e. by clustering or perplexing cutbacks.

Consequently, the viewer's scepticism against the narrative's normative approach grows due to subtle or overt disturbances. For one, the singular event of the VUE is presented, described, and reviewed in ninety-two successive tales of suffering, but all the differing facts and facets, the individual questions and conclusions about this event, create conflicting narrations. Increasingly, the VUE commission seems not to be able to manage the situation and to give its authoritarian reading the needed prevalence. Beyond that, the sheer amounts of new languages resist thorough investigation and refer to the deep ambivalence of the modern project of taxonomy: the exhaustive classification of phenomena, causes, and outcomes by and through means of language reveal their totalising tendencies as well as – by their in-translatability – their futility against non-controllable chaos.

And in fact, chaos takes over: facts derange and contradict each other, images and events experience multiple interpretations, causalities get negated and all the commission's categories prove to be futile. In the end, all efforts to analyse the VUE using rational methods and narrative embedding, show nothing other than the randomness of a singular and ambiguous event that cannot be completely captured and measured by scientific approaches. The *genetic* patterns of storytelling do not prove to be sustainable and provoke covert as well as upfront counteraction.

Additionally, recurring allegoric or mythic motifs influence the perception of narrative: water as the spring of life as well as a source of insecurity and fear; man's dream of flying as a promise and an endangerment alike; birds and ornithology as a medium of prediction as well as metaphors for the oncoming death. Those tropes and symbols bring up a sensual connection of the underlying narrative with danger and fundamental fears. Such ambiguous and complementary elements within the narrative give an irritating impression of the cracks and gaps in any attempt to reduce complexity and fortuity to a simple story line.

Moreover, at the end of the film the whole encyclopaedic project is to be jeopardised. Leasting Fallvo, throughout the film a renowned VUE commission biographer, turns out to be a notorious inventor of stories, whose abilities to coin tales and anecdotes instantly improve even further after

³ Cf. Jörn Rüsen, "Historical Narration: Foundation, Types, Reason", *History and Theory*, 1987, Vol. 26, No. 4, 90.

his own affection by the VUE. “It was said that if the VUE had not happened, then Leasting Fallwo could have invented it.”⁴ Finally, the viewer is set out an over-structured farrago of images, stories, and impressions that degrades the underlying storyline to a mere accessory.

However, the reduction of the VUE narrative to substantial nonsense with a simultaneous indication of a reflexive position on power structures and interpretative competences is not the only aesthetic strategy Greenaway is pursuing. Rather, he comes up with specific formal practices to put forth not only cognitive processes of disillusion, but also aesthetic and sensual experiences that allow alternative ways of handling contingency. Consequently, it is argued that Greenaway’s style of storytelling is a *mannerist*⁵ one; considering his combining of explicit and metaphorical language, sequential and paratactic image structures, allegoric ordering systems and metonymic connotations, all of which lead directly into artificiality and reflexivity, or otherwise into nonsense and chaos. By that, Greenaway excessively overstrains the viewer through intending a “losing count”⁶ in the overflowing and aberrant complexity of images, language, music, and action.

Structurally, the manic and arbitrary systematisation in *The Falls* refers to the ambivalent phenomenon of the encyclopaedic project in the *Age of Reason* that aimed to universally depict the entire world as a phenomenon and system. At the same time, the preliminary and symbolic referencing systems within the film are reminiscent of the cabinets of curiosities of the European Renaissance and Baroque that tried to literally build up a completely new cosmos by staging it within a closed monad.⁷ The conspicuously mannerist character of such attempts to order chaotic structures by language and images shows up in *The Falls*’ symbolic seclusion, but then again also in the many invitations the viewer receives to get into his or her own story. Throughout the film there are proposals for choosing and dropping, for linking into different theories and conspiracies and, fundamentally, to believe or disbelieve. Consequences for perception are two-fold: on the one hand, schemes and conspiracies characterise the diegetic level and entangle and bind the viewer by narrative means; on the other hand, on the deictic level, the documentary character of *The Falls* is brought to display as – like in any other film – a total conspiracy of the film-maker with his audience. Here Greenaway’s mannerist storytelling appears in full bloom. Events and their significant figures become equally de-substantiated and pure *facts* become indistinguishable from their fictitious description and contextualisation. Before the very eyes of the viewer, an enclosed cosmos of stories and information emerges and vanishes again.

The arguably most important key to enter the story net of *The Falls* is the question of its authorship. Since subversive paralleling and disturbances of its *straight* narrative rapidly called into question the authority of the VUE commission, an outside observer comes into focus: the recurring *ornithologist* and *master strategist* Tulse Luper is a key figure, which covertly orders *The Falls*. His position as a VUE expert, his referenced ornithological as well as psychological expertise and his outspoken impact on quite a few of the biographies, allow for his consideration as an author or, rather, an ambiguous representative of the author-teller Peter Greenaway. He is endowed with knowledge that other characters are lacking and he is in the position to use it. However, he

⁴ *The Falls*, biogr. 91.

⁵ Mannerism here is to be understood rather as an epistemological category than as a matter of style. It refers not only to questions of grace, expressivity and (un-)naturalness, but even more to an artistic practice of imagination, artificiality, and mostly reflexivity on one’s own position. For a further investigation into the early modern understanding of *maniera* and *fantasia*, cf. Hessel Miedema, “On Mannerism and *maniera*”, *Simiolus. Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, 1978, Vol. 10, No. 1, 19–45.

⁶ Alan Woods, *Being Naked Playing Dead. The Art of Peter Greenaway*, Manchester, Manchester Univ. Press, 1996, 25.

⁷ Horst Bredekamp, *The Lure of Antiquity and the Cult of the Machine. The Kunstkammer and the Evolution of Nature, Art, and Technology*, Princeton, Wiener, 1995, 51–80.

does not tell the stories himself. Instead, Luper works as a mediatory instance in a multi-layered conspiracy with the audience. He comments on the fabula as well as on the act of fabulation and, by doing that, communicates with the viewer within and beyond the narrative.

Baroque Perspectivities: *The Tulse Luper Suitcases* (2003ff)

There is no such thing as history, there are only historians.
(Peter Greenaway)⁸

Encyclopaedias, even eccentric and arbitrary ones like *The Falls*, need regular revision. Thus, it seems plausible that Greenaway updated it within a completely new project called *The Tulse Luper Suitcases* (TLS). This ambitious undertaking cannot be called just a film anymore – it is a potentially infinite collection of multi-media events, which have been produced, performed, and distributed discontinuously since 2003.

TLS claims to be nothing less than an encyclopaedic compendium of the history of the twentieth century, whilst being mainly a biographic project. It pledges to be a reconstruction of the life history of a single character – again Tulse Luper – who is depicted as being connected to any considerable event, every important person, and each significant movement of the twentieth century. In being so, TLS remains, as *The Falls* did, a historical mock-up that calls attention more to *doing* historiography than to *the history* itself. However, whereas *The Falls* concentrated on a textual narrative that was compromised by discontinuous storytelling, TLS works both on the narrative and even more on the visual level on an appropriation of past and present times. Thus, it will be indicated that Greenaway is adopting another means of mannerist attitude in order to represent a disordered world.

TLS offers an open-ended history project that calls for interaction and interference. Accordingly, there is no pivotal story line alongside which the viewer, or rather the user, could work through the vast quantity of facts and fiction. The recipient has to decide on his own what part of TLS he is choosing first and next. All formats though give credence to a particular path of scientific research and history writing – belonging to a complex canvas of Luper research, established by an equally fictional and real community of investigators. All of them aim to reconstruct the whole life history of Tulse Luper by following his traces and connections, by reading and interpreting his works and – most importantly – by finding and analysing the ninety-two suitcases he left all over the world.

Luper is to be characterised as a traveller, a seeker and adventurer whose life long aim would be to “find things (...) people have lost”.⁹ This is why he is on the tramp, travelling without destination and always getting caught by external circumstances. He collects abstruse and banal objects, looks for lost and forgotten places and by doing this he casually re-writes history. However, at the end of the third part of the cinema film, as the long anticipated ninety-second suitcase is unsealed, another revelation takes place. It contains spectacular evidence that upsets any speculation and facts about him. Most shocking is the allegation that Martino Knockavelli, Luper’s best friend and prevalent companion on many of his journeys, invented all of Luper’s stories and projected his own likes and dislikes, prejudices and fantasies on him. Apparently, Luper died in

⁸ *The Tulse Luper Suitcases, part 2: Vaux to the Sea* (2004a), Dir. Peter Greenaway, NL/ES/UK/IT/HUN/LUX/RUS/GER, ep. IV, sc. 39.

⁹ TLS, pt. 1, ep. I, sc. 14.

1921, aged ten years old, under a collapsing brick wall. Within a second, the genetic approach of any Luper biography and also of the narrative medium of cinema is rendered obsolete. The assumedly objective historiographical storytelling that is based on references and evidence as well as on artefacts and trusted sources in order to produce a straight-line story of evolution and ordering proves to be a purely interpretative undertaking. The reference of historiography as well as the illusionary machine of cinema to an exterior truth – may it be the historical *res factae* or even *present reality* as ontological categories – is discovered as irreducibly bound to and only constituted in language.

Nevertheless, TLS gives reason to a form of historiography that complies with the present need for regulative storytelling and with the necessity to cope with a history that is conceived merely catastrophic and discontinuous than advancing and progressing. A characteristic model for Greenaway's *history-telling* can be found in the third part of the film in which Luper fulfils his order to tell the wife of a Soviet colonel three stories a day with great serenity. The one thousand and one stories of his Gulag Scheherazade consistently interfere with the on-going story line of the episodes, as they intermit with the fabula of the reconstructive history project called TLS. Every story is akin to the others, but still a completely new one. With their constant rerun of the similar in new shapes and forms, Luper's memoranda of the contingent world order teach us its phenomenological depth and richness.

With the knowledge and experience of the twentieth century, any systematic or idealistic attempt to make the past disposable, to bridge the gulf to the present time, has to be accepted as failed. Accordingly, Greenaway is approaching the past by telling his own story, or many stories, of singular events and personal *vitae* that do not claim to be *the* history. Instead, the pivotal events of the twentieth century are told by the life histories of ninety-two *main characters* whose paths were crossing at neuralgic points in *world history*. Furthermore, those life (his)stories do not hide the aching wounds, the scars and open spots of a catastrophic century in a calming and legitimising master-narrative, but instead show them and keep them positively present. In the light of Walter Benjamin's materialistic historiography,¹⁰ the stories Luper is collecting can be seen as tales of the other, the subaltern and dislocated. Amongst others, he tries to keep hold of the cultural peculiarities of pursued and eliminated ethnic minorities in the Second World War as well as in the genocides, mass displacements and imprisonments during the Cold War.

Thus, the essential element for the quality and success of history-telling is the knowledge of the place and the overt praxis of the historian and the storyteller. As a keeper of the social memory of a community, he not only serves the requirements for compensation of harrowing experience, but also avouches the sustainability of that community. Hence, the *mediality* of his remembering and storytelling comes into focus – the question, whether one's own position is seen in its historicity and how eager ambitions are to bring the past in a lively way to the present.¹¹ Greenaway's preferred structuring method in TLS is playing games: like on a chessboard, figures and events are being repositioned again and again – neither always clearly arranged nor moved by consistent rules, but plain and planned, at least at the start. However, playing games is always jeopardous, as regularity can be suspended and the flow of action gets in the way of control – incalculable and risky operations occur *inter ludium*. The actuality and totality of every game of life and death that is called history produce vast potentialities, but also exclusions and detachments, especially of the defeated dead.¹²

¹⁰ Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History" (orig. 1940), in: Eiland Howard and Michael W. Jennings (eds.), *Walter Benjamin. Selected Writings*, Vol. 4: 1938–1940, Harvard, Belknap Press, 2003, 389.

¹¹ Cf. Eelco H. Runia, "Presence", *History and Theory*, 2006, Vol. 45, No. 1, 1–5.

¹² Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History* (orig. 1975), New York, Columbia Univ. Press, 1988, 56.

Throughout TLS the engagement with images of history is the most peculiar aspect. Herein, Greenaway considers how the representation of history is working with and by images by taking into account the cinematic attempt to suspend disbelief. The capacity of the cinematic apparatus to affect the viewer reminds him of the absolutist and counter-reformist efforts to suspend any religious, political and generally epistemological doubt and scepticism by artificial means.¹³ By combining conventionalised narrative with an overwhelming multi-media experience the recipient shall – in favour of sentimental affection – abandon all reservations against that exact artificiality. The seminal techniques of such a *suspension of disbelief* are, according to Greenaway, initiated in Renaissance art and carried to the extreme in the Baroque.

At the turning point from an art that ideally just imitated nature (*imitatio naturae*) to a position of artistic *autonomy*, a paradigm shift in the forms of representation in European history of arts and sciences took place. A peculiar feature of the newly found stylistic language was the synthesising of different media according to a superior idea that was not present in the media itself – a closed religious, political, and aesthetic system enacted itself by instrumentally using symbolic forms and gestures and exactly within that justified its operability. Thus, it's religious and courtly arts that in an overwhelming and all-embracing communication process propagated, proclaimed, and (re-)produced absolutist order and its fundamental conditions in concrete, exemplary and ideal form and manner.

At the same time, it was not mandatory for those *concrete* artworks to be organised in a *discrete* way; that is to say they were not committed to an endless and univocal order. Early baroque epistemology took a critical stand on the Renaissance ideals concerning human perception and comprehension. Neither rigidly imitative representation of nature and reality, nor strict containment of the particular to a yet to find universal classification dominated scientific and artistic positions; rather, they were characterised by an acknowledgement of the phenomenological plenitude of the exceptional and the dissent as constituents a truly unique and compelling world. The correlative aesthetic strategy was later called *maniera* or *capriccio*: medial constellations that depict the cornucopia by ensuing highly artificial, imaginative and fluidising principles of order, which complement and challenge *classical* or *realistic* ones alike.¹⁴ Whether those sketches and paintings, those stage or architectural designs, were obeying the conditions of central perspective or not: its fundamentum – the sovereignty of the frame-making subject – was brought into fluctuation by the baroque perspectivity of *inflection*.¹⁵ The mediality and artificiality of those consolidating attempts, of the baroque idea of a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, were openly admitted.

Greenaway is interested in exactly such shifts and cracks; such variations and discontinuities in the aesthetic perceptions of a historical present. He connects the cinematic disposition of media, as a strictly modern phenomenon, with baroque conventions for the perception of art and tries to implement such an artistic attitude into his projects. By doing so, he aspires to deconstruct and overcome the *tyrannies of cinema* – text-bound, frame-driven, camera- and actor-dependent as it seems to be.¹⁶ Therefore, he refers to aesthetic strategies that long before and beyond the invention of the cinematograph were engaged in depicting the world and bringing it into mediated

¹³ This refers to many statements by Greenaway himself, recapitulated in an interview in Alan Woods, op. cit. and in Peter Greenaway, "Cinema is Dead, Long Live Cinema?"; Lecture held at the Nederlands Film Festival, Utrecht (*Variety Cinema Militans Lecture*), 2003, http://www.filmfestival.nl/Assets/Uploads/Documents/VCML_2003_Peter_Greenaway.pdf.

¹⁴ Cf. Hessel Miedema, op. cit.

¹⁵ For *inflection* as a principle of thought in the Baroque as well as in present times cf. Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold. Leibniz and the Baroque* (orig. 1988), Minneapolis, Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1993, 15.

¹⁶ Cf. Peter Greenaway, "Cinema is Dead, Long Live Cinema?"; op. cit.

experience. First of all, Greenaway is criticising the mode of central perspective and its carrier – the single eyed camera apparatus. He is especially troubled by the implied localisation of the observer within the cinematic disposition that is defined by the rigid view of the camera and the world-cutting frame. The transformation of a three-dimensional object or space onto a plain canvas by focussing and decomposing, according to Roland Barthes, makes cinema a modern “dioptrical art”.¹⁷ Its fetish-like perspective, which grounds modern perception since Albrecht Dürer and Leon Battista Alberti, calls up Greenaway’s caution and opposition.

Consequently, vast techniques of image splitting, framing within and against other frames as well as fading and blending are implemented in TLS. Sequences are shown from different angles, whether harmonised on the same time code or offset and interfering. Within multiple frames different takes of the same shot are combined, layered, switched, and adjusted. Cuts and blacks, contrasting and continuity shots are not located between the images, but within – making montage not a matter of succession, but of simultaneity. Like in mediaeval triptychs or in highly mannerist compositions, images get spatialised – dismembered, layered, and clustered into conflicting parts that hold still and move at the same time. The viewer has to constantly take up new perspectives and to coordinate his different perceptions within one sequence. Additionally, those images get charged with a sensuality that also remind of baroque mannerism, which are de-emotionalised and distanced, but yet very affective in their impact. Like in paintings of El Greco or Velázquez, the viewer is directly addressed by different means, looked at and struck by a concussive message: this is about you, testifying the order of life and, especially, death.

Moreover, Greenaway’s affinity to the dark ground of the image, his own type of *chiaroscuro*, moves the observer to fluctuate. The wide open spaces of a train station, the endless horizon of the American Moab desert or the depth of Rembrandt-like illuminated interiors are confronted within one image with the claustrophobic narrowness of closed chambers and compartments. Blackened studio shots are edited into generous landscape tracking. Additionally, daylight shots with an enormous plasticity of the interior correspond and conflict with spotlighting and contouring that let the shapes blur beyond recognition and only vaguely brings the bodies and objects out of the dark. A gloomy ground of indeterminacy, a visual spatialisation of infinity that reaches far beyond *regular* space order is to be found in many sequences. Such a *fuscum* or *fond*, as Deleuze calls it, also characterised a lot of mannerist art stylistically and epistemologically. Greenaway’s images appear to be undercoated by a *baroque* knowledge and its captivation to the arcane, the enigmatic and the mani-folded.¹⁸

By using such techniques of composing, by designating frames and points of view and by intervening into image space and narrative time Greenaway truly creates *palimpsests* on the screen. A magnitude of story lines, memorisations, and possible interpretations are folded therein and the viewer is consistently invited to come near and to look, to read and to decipher, whereas the palimpsest gets written over and over. Even more than *The Falls*, TLS overstrains its viewers as it advocates a *losing count* that requests the development of an individual perspective. As in baroque curiosity chambers, in TLS a performative space of observing and display opens up. The viewer is not just facing a film image anymore, more than that he is implemented into the experimental arrangement and its processing – he is ensnared into interplay of self-empowering and powerlessness with regard to representative images.

¹⁷ Cf. Roland Barthes, “Diderot, Brecht, Eisenstein” (orig. 1973), in: *Image, Music, Text*, London, Fontana, 1979, 70.

¹⁸ For the implications of a baroque *chiaroscuro* and the folded perspectives in El Greco’s, Caravaggio’s, and Tintoretto’s artwork, cf. Guilles Deleuze, op. cit. esp. 35.

Conclusion: Cinema as a Medium of a Contemporary Historiography

(...) I think some of the most exciting periods in cultural history have been highly mannerist. (...) And (one ...) period is now, from virtually the collapsing modernism to something we are still searching for. (...) underneath I think we are now in a very exciting melting pot.

(Greenaway)¹⁹

Greenaway's interest in the artistic styles and epistemological insecurities of those periods with a "cultural lack of confidence"²⁰ relates directly to current modes of representation of historical and cultural order. His foremost occupation with the cinematic disposition of narrative, image, and storytelling moves him to deconstruct current conventions of cinematic perception.

Firstly, Greenaway questions the conventional way of cinematic narration. His discontinuous story lines, the disclosure of mythical patterns in *rational* narratives of order and sense, and the general discussion of language as a medium of *coming to terms with disaster* result in an encyclopaedic narrative structure that demands an active and following observer. Secondly, Greenaway exposes central perspective as a fundamental principle of cinema that by its singular eye orientation and ideo-real frame cuts regularly reduce its perception possibilities. In his imagery the basic conditions of this Renaissance-born way of composition are discussed and deconstructed. The viewer is requested to constantly relocate himself towards his images and to question his own habits and inscribed patterns of perception. The potential of films to insinuate continuity and homogeneity by linear perspective and a harmonious montage is equally recognised and discussed. Like, for example, in a Brechtian epic opera Greenaway follows the principle of a "radical separation of the elements"²¹ and lets them take effect on their own without any subordination to a singular idea or univocal fabula.²² Not at last, *Tulse Luper* as a third disturbance of cinematic conventions brings in another view, if not many different perspectives on his surroundings. He comes in as an author and a storyteller in his own right who accounts for the (his)stories told and even provides their content. However, at the same time his persistent refusal to be characterised and depicted in one valid *Luper* fabula or even a personality is unhinging the scenarios and leading any cinematic attempt to create representations again to no end.

The exuberant multiplication of perspectives within Greenaway's archive of stories and images, which can be retrieved and re-arranged at any time, captures a facet of modern historiography that, according to Michel de Certeau, has to be made consciously: writing history is a playful *practice* used by societies to make explicit, put in miniature, and formalise their most fundamental strategies and, *by that, act out themselves* without the risks and responsibilities of *making* history itself.²³

¹⁹ Peter Greenaway, in: Kerstin Frommer, *Insenzierte Anthropologie. Ästhetische Wirkungsstrukturen im Filmwerk Peter Greenaways*, Cologne, Univ. Diss., 1996, 194.

²⁰ Ibidem.

²¹ Bertolt Brecht, "The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre: Notes to the opera *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*" (orig. 1930), in: John Willet (ed. and trans.), *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, London, Methuen, 1964, 37.

²² For a more detailed analysis of this aspect in another filmic example cf. Micha Braun, "Tantum umbrae ad parietem. Zur Aneignung frühneuzeitlicher Mediendiskurse in Peter Greenaways *The Baby of Mâcon*", in: Günther Heeg, Markus A. Denzel (Hrsg.), *Globalizing Areas, Kulturelle Flexionen und die Herausforderung der Geisteswissenschaften*, Stuttgart, Steiner, 2011, 111–133.

²³ Michel de Certeau, op. cit. 9.

However, historiography as a “staging of the past”²⁴ and as a game originating in the present that is ruled by only that present is not just a pastime; instead it is a societal necessity – to put the haunting past into a bearable and conciliatory relation to oneself. As a result, within *The Falls* and TLS history is *staged* again by the sequence of indications about figures and events, about atrocities and disasters of the twentieth century. However, this re-enactment is done in the most artificial way and without any demand to create something like a *historical truth*. Instead, it occurs with the greatest sensitivity for the experience and the potentialities of a surprising “presence of the past”.²⁵

“Cinema is dead, long live cinema”:²⁶ in times when cinema is challenged like never before by a large number of image related media that get smaller, faster, and more mobile all the time, Greenaway’s films promote it still as a medium of relevance and serious occupation with present times. With his special attempt to make films by mannerist means, by over-structuring and over-burdening them in a most artificial way, he unfolds the historicity of cinema and marks it as a structurally modern phenomenon. Moreover, by referring to all the differences and translations and especially the diversified history of the cinematic media and arts, Greenaway also creates playful possibilities to perceive language, images, and sound that lie beyond the homogeneous and continuous narratives of classical cinema and illusion-creating media alike.

In a context of a self-reflexive cinematic situation and within the space and time of *reading* and experiencing those films, awareness arises for the order-generating power of stories and perspectives. Even more, one not only recognises, but in a way corporeally experiences and perceives (in the Aristotelian meaning of *aisthesis*) how those artificial means acquire a presence in our lives. After all, making (and consuming) films for Greenaway is mostly an ethical occupation.²⁷ In his film making, a slight antidote to the totalising efforts of present times emerges – in an overtly representative composition of image and sound, of storytelling and history writing by an author who exposes himself as contingent and as subsequent to the paradigms of intertextuality, i.e. to the belatedness and *originary secundarity* of any act of speech and writing.²⁸ By that, and far from believing in any *dead of the author*, some interminable, consistently reshaping communication process between the storyteller and the observer is brought into play. What follows is up to the latter.

Bibliography:

- Barthes, Roland, “Diderot, Brecht, Eisenstein” (orig. 1973), in: *Image, Music, Text*, translated by Stephen Heath, London, Fontana, 1979, 69–78.
- Benjamin, Walter, “On the Concept of History” (orig. 1940), in: Howard, Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (eds.), *Walter Benjamin. Selected Writings*, Vol. 4: 1938–1940, Harvard, Belknap Press, 2003, 389–400.
- Braun, Micha, “Tantum umbrae ad parietem. Zur Aneignung frühneuzeitlicher Medien-diskurse in Peter Greenaways *The Baby of Mâcon*“, in: Heeg, Günther, Markus A. Denzel (Hrsg.), *Globalizing Areas, Kulturelle Flexionen und die Herausforderung der Geisteswissenschaften*, Stuttgart, Steiner, 2011, 111–133.

²⁴ Ibidem.

²⁵ Eelco H., Runia, op. cit. 5. Cf. also Walter Benjamin, op. cit.

²⁶ Cf. Peter Greenaway, “Cinema is Dead, Long Live Cinema?“, op. cit.

²⁷ Cf. Alan Woods, op. cit. 228; Kerstin Frommer, op. cit. 193, Peter Greenaway, “Cinema is Dead, Long Live Cinema?“, op. cit. 1.

²⁸ Cf. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (orig. 1967), Baltimore–London, Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1997.

- Braun, Micha, *In Figuren erzählen. Zu Geschichte und Erzählung bei Peter Greenaway*, Bielefeld, transcript, 2012.
- Brecht, Bertolt, “The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre: Notes to the opera *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*” (orig. 1930), in: Willet, John (ed. and trans.), *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, London, Methuen, 1964, 33–42.
- Bredekamp, Horst, *The Lure of Antiquity and the Cult of the Machine. The Kunstammer and the Evolution of Nature, Art, and Technology*, Princeton, Wiener, 1995.
- de Certeau, Michel, *The Writing of History* (orig. 1975), translated by Tom Conley, New York, Columbia Univ. Press, 1988.
- Deleuze, Gilles, *The Fold. Leibniz and the Baroque* (orig. 1988), foreword and translation by Tom Conley, Minneapolis, Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1993.
- Derrida, Jaques, *Of Grammatology* (orig. 1967), translated by Gayatri C. Spivak, Baltimore–London, Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1997.
- Frommer, Kerstin, *Inszenierte Anthropologie. Ästhetische Wirkungsstrukturen im Filmwerk Peter Greenaways*, Cologne, Univ. Diss., 1996.
- Greenaway, Peter, “Cinema is Dead, Long Live Cinema?”, Lecture held at the Nederlands Film Festival, Utrecht (*Variety Cinema Militans Lecture*), 2003, <http://www.filmfestival.nl/Assets/Uploads/Documents/VCML_2003_Peter_Greenaway.pdf> (last accessed in 2013/05/22).
- Miedema, Hessel, “On Mannerism and *maniera*”, *Simiolus. Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, 1978, Vol. 10, No. 1, 19–45.
- Pally, Marcia, “Cinema as the Total Art Form” (orig. 1991), in: Gras, Vernon and Marguerite Gras (eds.), *Peter Greenaway. Interviews*, Jackson, Univ. Press of Mississippi, 2000, 106–119.
- Runia, Eelco H., “Presence”, *History and Theory*, 2006, Vol. 45, No. 1, 1–29, (cf. also the follow-up “Forum: On Presence”, *History and Theory*, 2006, Vol. 45, No. 3, 305–374).
- Rösen, Jörn, “Historical Narration: Foundation, Types, Reason”, *History and Theory*, 1987, Vol. 26, No. 4, 87–97.
- Woods, Alan, *Being Naked Playing Dead. The Art of Peter Greenaway*, Manchester, Manchester Univ. Press, 1996.

Filmography

- *The Falls* (1980), Dir. Peter Greenaway, UK.
- *The Tulse Luper Suitcases, part 1: The Moab Story* (2003), Dir. Peter Greenaway, NL/ES/UK/IT/HUN/LUX/RUS/GER.
- *The Tulse Luper Suitcases, part 2: Vaux to the Sea* (2004a), Dir. Peter Greenaway, NL/ES/UK/IT/HUN/LUX/RUS/GER.
- *The Tulse Luper Suitcases, part 3: From Sark to the End* (2004b), Dir. Peter Greenaway, NL/ES/UK/IT/HUN/LUX/RUS/GER.

**“But underneath I think we are now in a very exciting melting pot.”
Piter Grinevej – re-invecija manirističkog stila i istoričnost filma**

Apstrakt: Britanski reditelj, slikar, kustos i multimedijalni umetnik Piter Grinevej, u polju filmske umetnosti deluje tehnikama diskontinuirane naracije i živopisnim pokušajima da povrati forme reprezentacije i percepcije koje izgledaju marginalizovane u eri modernog društva. Smatra se da ove tehnike imaju potencijal da preispitaju savremene reprezentacije kulturalnog uređenja kao i pitanje istorizacije sadašnjosti.

Ovaj tekst se fokusira na dva aspekta Grinevejevog rada koji čine očiglednim fenomen istoričnosti filma. Prvi se odnosi na njegovu posvećenost manirističkoj estetici, koju on neraskidivo povezuje sa epistemološkim pitanjima sadašnjosti, dok se drugi aspekt tiče preispitivanja situacije u kojoj se film danas nalazi, a koju on naziva *umirući dinosaurus* – poput relikta modernosti kome je neophodan revolucionarni preobražaj. Uvidom u dva ključna ostvarenja, koja povezuju period od skoro dvadeset i pet godina, biće problematizovane Grinevejeve strategije istorizacije filma. One će biti interpretirane kao ključni primeri Grinevejeve tehnike formiranja prostora enciklopedijskog pripovedanja i diskontinuirane percepcije koje prevazilaze kapacitete *klasične* filmske reprezentacije.

Ključne reči: Piter Grinevej, istoričnost filma, maniristička estetika, *The Falls*, *The Tulse Luper Suitcases*;