

OPERATING ON THE FRAME: INTERVENTIONS IN THE MEDICAL FILMS OF THE NOVECENTO AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR IN YERVANT GIANIKIAN AND ANGELA RICCI-LUCCHI'S *OH! UOMO*

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«La guerra è la grande esperienza, è la ferita mal cicatrizzata
che riprene a sanguinare non appena la tocchi»

NUTO REVELLI

The “*Il corpi dei soldati*” section of *Oh! Uomo* (Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci-Lucchi, 2004), the final film in the Italian filmmakers’ trilogy dedicated to the First World War, begins with the image of a seated man. This first image shows us only his legs, one of which is suffering constant spasms, accompanied by a soundtrack of a few short and dry but hair-raising drum rolls. Shortly thereafter, in a medium shot that lasts more than twenty seconds, we see the face of this sick body, a young man with a gaze as agitated as his leg. This is not the only startled looking soldier with symptoms of trauma to appear in the images of *Oh! Uomo*: throughout the film, Gianikian and Ricci-Lucchi, piecing together archival documentary footage from the 1910s, show us the terrible physical and psychological consequences suffered by civilians and soldiers who fought in the Great War, with images of hunger, misery, death and, specifically in the fourth part of the documentary, amputations, injuries, withered

skin, prosthetic limbs, neurosis, mutilated bodies and deranged minds. These are shots taken in medical institutions during and after the war, documenting what was left of these wounded bodies, filmed at the time as *objects of clinical study* (either for research into the new war neurosis which the medical world had given the name of “shell shock”, for the purposes of diagnosis and determination of a procedure to cure it, or to document the processes of physical reconstruction of soldiers using prosthetic implants), but which now appear to take on new life after being rescued from the archives and pieced together by the directors for a different purpose in this documentary. It is clearly with this in mind that the Gianikians gave *Oh! Uomo* a subtitle as apt as provocative as: *An Anatomical Catalogue of the Deconstruction and Artificial Reconstruction of the Human Body*.

There are at least three theories that could be posited to explain why Gianikian and Ricci-Luc-

chi took an interest in medical documentaries and chose these archive images of wounded soldiers to include and manipulate in *Oh! Uomo* and to make them central images to the discourse of the film. One possible reason relates to a certain idea of chronological necessity, in spite of the fact that Gianikian and Ricci-Lucchi do not generally consider the question of narration in their films.¹ Produced between the early 1990s and 2004 with the First World War in Italy's Trentino region as its thematic core, the trilogy that concludes with *Oh! Uomo* began with *Prigionieri della guerra* (Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci-Lucchi, 1995) and its images of deportations, of the experience in prisons and chilling mass deaths on the Eastern front in the historical province of Galicia (now in Ukraine); it continues with *Su tutte le vette é pace* (Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci-Lucchi, 1998), a hallucinatory vision, through the manipulation of the original frames, showing military operations in the Italian Alps in the so-called *Guerra Bianca* during the Great War; while the final film in the series recounts the events after the end of the war: the soldiers' return home, and the aftermath of four years of brutal conflict between the biggest European nation-states and their regions of colonial influence. *Oh! Uomo* thus responds to a logical need in the temporal arrangement of the events of the First World War, as it presents the consequences in human terms of a military experience like the Great War, i.e., the real meaning of the barbarism, whether by showing the mass deaths resulting from a war characterised by large-scale industrial and technological organisation, or by revealing the injuries, both physical and psychological, suffered by both civilians and soldiers. On this point, the Italian historian Antonio Gibelli explains that in Italy alone around 40,000 soldiers were hospitalised due to psychiatric problems over the course of the war (GIBELLI, 1998: 123), but as Gibelli also notes, the mental paradigm shift which the First World War represented was not

limited to patients diagnosed with shell shock, as these victims merely reflected the absolute transformation of the human psyche that would come to define the parameters of modernity.

IN OH! UOMO ALSO MOUNTS A FERVENT CRITICISM OF THE IDEOLOGY THAT DOMINATED THE NOVOCENTO ITALIANO, THE SCIENTIFIC POSITIVISM SUSTAINED BY THE GROWTH OF INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM AND TAYLORISM

A second reason for the Gianikians' choice of these images of wounded soldiers and military medical films can be found in the background story behind the creation of *Oh! Uomo*. With visual material taken from film libraries all over Europe (Moscow, Vienna, Paris, Madrid and Bologna), as well as images from the personal archives of Luca Comerio and letters and other written documents used by the Italian filmmakers for the film's soundtrack (documents of popular literature: letters written by soldiers, their wives and mothers, testimonies from the archives of the Museo Storico de Trento and the Museo Storico Italiano della Guerra de Rovereto), the *Oh! Uomo* project was supported by the same contributors who had taken part in the first two films in the war trilogy: the historian Diego Leoni, and the singer Giovanna Marini, who set the written documents to music and gave them her voice. Leoni's participation proved to be fundamental for the production of this final film, as Robert Lumley reveals in his book *Entering the Frame: Cinema and History in the Films of Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci-Lucchi*, as in the original project the film had a completely different objective: rather than travelling across Europe following the withdrawal of the troops and civilians after the armistice that brought the Great

War to an end, this project was supposed to return to the setting of the Trentino region to explore “the complex outcomes of the conflict [of the First World War], from the imposition of a nationalist agenda to the commemoration of the dead and the establishment of ‘winter sports’ out of the machinery of war” (LUMLEY, 2011: 85-86). Then in 2001, Leoni discovered a set of film reels at the Vienna film library showing the terrible famine that struck the Volga region (Ukraine) in 1921. This footage was decisive in Gianikian and Ricci-Lucchi’s decision to redefine the purpose of the project, leaving the Alps behind and focusing instead on making a film about the effects of war on the bodies of the survivors and, ultimately, on the human condition in the aftermath of war. In keeping with the usual work method of these two filmmakers, this footage taken both in the rear-guard and on the margins of the battles and in the withdrawal from the front-line, found in the archives of European film libraries, underwent a process of deconstruction, re-filming and re-assembly using their so-called *analytical camera*, a viewing and filming device that works not only on the footage as a whole but on the individual frames in order to operate directly on the image. It is an artisanal procedure with discursive implications in aesthetic, ethical and political terms that will also be explored in this article.

Finally, *Oh! Uomo* (through this work of appropriation and reformulation of the images that typifies Gianikian and Ricci-Lucchi’s method) also mounts a fervent criticism of the ideology that dominated the Novecento Italiano, the scientific positivism sustained by the economic progress accompanying the growth of industrial capitalism, which posited, among other notions, an intimate metaphorical relationship between man and machine; the ultimate fusion of faith in technology and Taylorism that would find devastating expression in the Great War. Gianikian and Ricci-Lucchi insist that their analytical camera, which comprises two components (one

vertical rail and one horizontal rail), “accepts the perforated celluloid of Lumière” while the second rail would be “closer to the devices created by Muybridge or Marey” (GIANIKIAN, RICCI-LUCCHI, 2000: 53). Various pioneers of the moving picture contributed to the birth and development of scientific cinema, both in the audiovisual experiments featuring the human body conducted by Étienne-Jules Marey, followed by his unorthodox group of disciples, Georges Demenÿ, Georges Marinesco, Vincenzo Neri and even Albert Londe; and also in the films of Eugène Louis Doyen, Camillo Negro and Roberto Omegna, whose work serves both to detail surgical procedures and to document neurological pathologies. And it is precisely the ideological legacy of these foundational films that the re-filmed and re-edited images that Gianikian and Ricci-Lucchi include in *Oh! Uomo* examine, while also questioning our position as spectators of our past and as spectators of our present, as this exercise in appropriation carried out by the filmmakers has extracted these images from the medical context of their original viewing conditions and located them in a new context in which the brutality of the violence they reveal reverberates with much more force.

TECHNOLOGY, TRENCHES AND MADNESS

Without entering into debate about the circumstances that gave rise to the war or the specific historiographical details, I nevertheless believe it necessary, with a view to outlining the conditions in which the footage of patients with shell shock and the medical film images appropriated by Gianikian and Ricci-Lucchi were produced, to nuance this study with the perspectives of the historians Eric J. Leed and Antonio Gibelli, who have studied this historical period with attention to the phenomenon of the trenches that characterised the First World War, analysing how these and other technological transformations, and the *modus operandi* of war itself, altered the

psychological condition of both soldiers and civilians. In addition to the more than 16 million casualties suffered by the nations involved in the conflict, the war machine produced massive numbers of wounded, amputees, cripples, paraplegics and mentally disabled people on a scale never seen before. The Great War, suggests Gibelli in *La grande guerra degli italiani 1915-1918*, “was above all a *biological event* in which, for four years in any part of the European continent, millions of men engaged systematically in killing their fellow human beings through the use of modern technologies; millions of bodies, most of them young and healthy, were turned into decaying corpses” (GIBELLI, 1998: 7).

Eric J. Leed offers an examination of the new killing technologies put into use in the First World War in his book *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War 1*, one of the seminal works in the new anthropological historiography of the Great War that emerged in the 1970s, based on multiple first-hand testimonies by old veterans. Leed argues that many

welcomed the war as an escape from industrial society. But in war they learned that technology shaped the organization of men, machines and tools just as it had in peacetime. [...] But it was the dissociation of technology from its traditional associations that made it strange, frightening and demonic. Technology was removed from a context in which it was comprehensible as the instrument of production and distribution; functions which made life possible and European culture dominant. It was ‘resituated’ into a context of destruction, work and terror, where it made human dignity inconceivable and survival problematical. [...] Its repositioning in a context of pure destruction made strange and monstrous that which was formerly familiar, a matter of pride and an engine of progress (LEED, 1981: 31).

Or, as Anton Kaes points out in the introduction to *Shell Shock Cinema: Weimar Culture and the Wounds of War*,

although historians disagree as to whether the Great War was the primal shock of the modern age or the culmination of unbridled industrialization, no one would deny the unprecedented ferocity and destructiveness of the world’s first technological war (KAES; 2009: 2).

And added to the consequences of this rise of technology as a deadly force was the nightmare of the trenches, both a prison and a combat setting, a structure that protected the soldiers from enemy attacks and artillery while at the same time immersing them and paralysing them in a muddy tunnel where they had to struggle with a thick darkness and with the mounting pile of the corpses of their comrades. Leed notes that

when the rules of trench warfare began to be recorded in tactical manuals, it was learned that artillery was both the cause and the solution of the immobilization of the war [...]. In description after description of the major battles of the war one perception always emerges: modern battle is the fragmentation of spatial and temporal unities. It is the creation of a system with no center and no periphery in which men, both attackers and defenders, are lost (LEED, 1981: 98).

It is hardly surprising that all these conditions of chaos and destruction should give rise to a new, dark and sinister vision of the act of war. According to Leed,

neurosis was a psychic effect not of war in general but of industrialized war in particular. Prior to the thorough mechanization of war the most common psychic disability was homesickness, or what the French in the Napoleonic wars called *nostalgie*, a form of intense separation anxiety. The range of hysterical symptoms that the First World War brought forth on an enormous scale was unprecedented in combat (LEED, 1981: 164).

In February 1915, *The Lancet*, the leading British medical journal of the day, published the first article dedicated to a study of the new war neurosis:

Contribution to the Study of Shell Shock” by Dr Charles S. Myers. The article describes the blindness and memory loss of three soldiers who had suffered constant shelling in the trenches (MYERS, 1915: 316-330), and goes on to suggest that all three cases exhibited a clinical condition very similar to hysteria. The symptoms of shell shock, as Leed notes in *No Man's Land*, were exactly the same as those of hysterical disorders in peacetime, although “they often acquired new and more dramatic names in war: ‘the burial-alive neurosis’, ‘gas neurosis’, ‘soldiers heart’. True, what had predominantly been a disease of women before the war became a disease of men in combat (LEED, 1981: 163).

It might seem bold to assert without the customary scientific rigour that there was little difference in the forms of diagnosis and treatment of one type of patient and another, but it is an irrefutable fact that in imitation of the women interned at Paris’s famous Salpêtrière hospital directed by Jean-Martin Charcot, many soldiers diagnosed with shell shock or physiological and physical pathologies were subjected to confinement for the purposes of observation and analysis using the new viewing and recording devices as clinical study cases, and were thus turned into catalogues of abnormal bodies.

ORIGINS OF THE MEDICAL FILM

In the early years of the Novecento Italiano, the scientific landscape out of which psychiatry and neurology began to grow was still associated with the positivist criminology of Cesare Lombroso, and it was not until 1907 that the Italian Neurological Society was founded in Rome. One year later, *The New York Times* published the article “Moving Pictures of Clinics; Prof. Negro Successfully Uses Them in Demonstrating Nervous Diseases”, announcing the first film documentary that *demonstrated* neurological disorders: *La neuropatologia* (1908), a collection of 24 neuropsychiatric cases (Parkinson’s, ocular palsy, hys-

teria, and other pathologies suffered by patients at the Cottolengo in Turin), a film of two hours in length made by the neurologist Camillo Negro of the University of Turin, together with the cinematographer and *metteur en scène* Roberto Omegna, who, as Francesco Paolo De Ceglia suggests in *From the Laboratory to the Factory, By Way of the Countryside: Fifty Years of Italian Scientific Cinema (1908-1958)*, would be one of the major figures in the development of Italian scientific cinema (DE CEGLIA, 2011: 949-967) and in the development of the Italian film industry thanks to his participation as a founding partner and director of the cinematographic division of the Ambrosio film company (GIANETTO, BERTENELLI, 2000: 240-249). Ambrosio himself had already made various films of a scientific nature, such as *Dottor Isnardi: amputazione*, also directed by Omegna (DE CEGLIA, 2011: 949-967). Meanwhile, Professor Negro would continue his scientific career working with neurological diseases, and during the First World War he dedicated his efforts to the study of shell shock, treating and filming clinical cases of wounded and traumatised soldiers admitted to the military hospital in Turin (DAGNA; GIANETTO, 2013: 117-120).

But rather than continuing along this chronological continuum in relation to my object of study, it is imperative at this point to turn back in time, following the line traced by Lisa Cartwright in *Screening The Body: Tracing Medicine’s Visual Culture*, to identify the origins of the medical film according to the visual rhetorical devices – its *mise en scène* and its ideological implications – established by its pioneers, which leads us back to the chronophotography of Etienne-Jules Marey and to the medical film genre that began with the films of the Lumière brothers, as “[t]he cinema’s emergence cannot be properly conceived without acknowledging the fascination with visibility that marked the preceding decades of nineteenth-century Western science” (CARTWRIGHT, 1995: 7).

To understand the gaze and the device that sustains this visibility and records what is seen, we must also turn back to Michel Foucault, for whom the gaze is born when a body begins to be observed. The attentive eye makes the diagnosis: the gaze refers to seeing through the body to become an utterance and discourse. It also makes visible that which the illness conceals, signalling the tension between the two, transforming the symptom into a sign, establishing taxonomies and seeking economy in health. In the opening passages of *Le corps du cinéma*, Raymond Bellour has also reflected on this principle of normalising control, both in the clinic and in the psychiatric institution, in which the eye is transformed into a device according to the postulates of Foucault, and notes with no small degree of perplexity that “the clinical gaze has the paradoxical property of

THE DEVICES THAT CAPTURED THE MOVEMENT SERVED NOT ONLY TO RECORD, DIAGNOSE AND CATEGORISE BASED ON GESTURES, POSTURES AND ATTITUDES, BUT ALSO TO “OFFER VISIBLE EVIDENCE OF THERAPEUTIC EFFECTS, THEREBY EXHIBITING A MEDICINE CAPABLE OF PERFORMING ‘MIRACLES’”

understanding a language in the moment when a spectacle is viewed” (BELLOUR, 2009: 25).

There can be no doubt that the sight of the first moving bodies resulting from the experiments of Marey and his successor Georges Demenÿ at the physiological station in the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris was quite a spectacle. But in addition to offering the wondrous landscape of skin in motion, in the scientific field Marey would make a decisive contribution to the establishment of the parameters for how and why to film a body: the concept and the reading of the moving body, its kinetics, through the use

of the new visual recording instruments form the core of his thinking and his research not only paved the way for the subsequent films of the Lumières, but would also contribute to the vision of the human body as an “energy producer” (GLEYSE, 2012: 750-765) and, consequently, to understanding it as merely one more element in the assembly line and industrial productivity of Taylorism (GLEYSE, BUI-XUÂN, PIGEASSOU, 1999: 168-185), the hegemonic economic ideology during the Second Industrial Revolution.

And beyond the conception of the body as being at the service of *techne* (rationalisation of energy, of movement and its use according to the scientific paradigms of physical performance), the use of the moving picture as a tool for codifying the body reveals a twofold function in the images recorded. First of all, the moving picture very clearly sequences the physical transformations that a body undergoes while instituting the concept of the episodic against the idea of the complete and finite found in the still image; and, secondly, it suggests the possibility of intervening at some point in the sequence and in the action if there is a dysfunction in the body being filmed. The devices that captured movement (the chronophotographic apparatus, the nine- and twelve-lens cameras invented by Albert Londe, the photographer at Salpêtrière Hospital, or the film camera itself) thus served not only to record, diagnose and categorise based on gestures, postures and attitudes, but also to “offer visible evidence of therapeutic effects, thereby exhibiting a medicine capable of performing ‘miracles’” (PANESE, 2009: 40-66).

The images produced by Charcot and Londe in the Salpêtrière asylum, or in the films of successors like George Marinesco (considered the first scientist to make a medical film, in 1902) and also of the neurologist Vincenzo Neri, serve this dual function of diagnosis of the sick body (amputation, trauma, hysteria, disability) and of recording the process whereby the body is treat-

ed to be cured and/or returned to the standards of *normalcy*; similarly, we also find the dialectic of the medical procedure in the films by French surgeon Eugène Louis Doyen, to whom we owe the introduction of the camera for the first time into the operating room, and in the collaborative work between Camillo Negro and Roberto Omegna. With respect to the insistent presence of the rhetoric of the procedure in these types of films, and more specifically in the case of Doyen, Thierry Lefebvre notes their “choreographic” quality (LEFEBVRE, 1995: 72), both for their strictly delimited *mise en scène* and for the instructive function which these films presuppose. In the case of Doyen, the surgeon and his team would review the material filmed to identify erroneous surgical procedures and ineffective processes, but at the same time these types of films were conceived for circulation in European academic spheres of the era and only on very few occasions would they be shown in commercial theatres. Thus, before turning to Gianikian and Ricci-Lucchi’s analytical camera, the far from trivial question raised by this overview, paraphrasing a point raised by Pasi Väliäho in *Biopolitics of Gesture: Cinema and the Neurological Body*, is: to what extent do films, and more specifically medical films as devices for control and normalisation of the body and the mind as Giorgio Agamben describes it, attempt to “capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control or secure the gestures, behaviours, opinions or discourses of living beings”? (VÄHILI, 2014: 112).

ARCHIVE AGAINST TECHNOLOGY: GIANIKIAN AND RICCI-LUCCI’S ANALYTICAL CAMERA

The bulk of Italian cinema filmed during the First World War was in the hands of private companies, as noted by Alessandro Faccioli in *Film/Cinema Italy* for the online publication “Encyclopedia:1914-1918”, and Luca Comerio, a pioneer of

Italian cinema from Milan, was without doubt the most important name among the non-military cinematographers of the war. Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci-Lucchi have studied and reformulated Comerio’s cinematic legacy in most of their documentary films using found footage, including *Oh! Uomo*, both as archives and in view of the consideration of Comerio as a symbolic figure of Italy’s imperial, proto-Fascist past. However, the huge influence of the legacy of medical and neurological films of Comerio’s contemporaries mentioned earlier in this article has hardly been addressed in critical approaches to this film. This is a question that requires the relevant research, as it is precisely the images of the bodies of wounded and traumatised soldiers shown in *Oh! Uomo* that foster this metaphorical analogy that has been identified on different occasions by numerous critics in considerations of the methodology employed by the filmmakers with the material they work on, the use of the *analytical camera*, and the task of reconstruction of the image and of history. It is important to note once again that the reconstruction of the bodies of the soldiers that Gianikian and Ricci-Lucchi show us bears symbolic similarities to their reconstruction of the archives, and is suggestive of a situation in which the wounded body and the damaged frame exchange gazes, as skin and celluloid recovered for posterity through the *analytical camera*.

Because the *analytical camera* operates in and as a tool – which at the same time is an operating room – and an instrument for cutting and suturing, a device that evokes the machinery and optical toys of the 19th century, through which the bodies appearing in the archive footage being worked on are viewed and manipulated. The intentions of their discourse, however, are completely different from those declared by the people responsible for the images being appropriated. In the early 1980s, in response to a need to view a large number of Pathé Baby 9.5mm silent film reels that the filmmakers had discovered

and had not been able to transfer to another format, Gianikian and Ricci-Lucchi came up with the idea of the *analytical camera*, a device whose operation they explained in an article published in 1995 in the journal *Trafic*, titled “Notre caméra analytique”. On a technical level, it comprises two mechanisms: a vertical rail through which the archive celluloid is run manually (so as to avoid further deterioration of the already deteriorated original material) and illuminated by photographic lamps that vary the temperature of the negative; and a second, horizontal rail, holding another camera similar to Marey’s chronophotographic device, which records the original frame and is used to operate on them, re-framing them, slowing them down or colouring them. But the analytical camera is not just a machine; it also constitutes a very strict ethical framework with respect to what is filmed with it and includes extensive work of research, cataloguing and intervention which Ricci-Lucchi has compared to “vivisection” (MACDONALD, 2000: 24). At the heart of this labour of re-configuration and re-production of the image is a minimum work unit and a minimum conceptual unit: the frame, a “kind of tense body in the new text” (FARINOTTI 2009: 59), which Gianikian and Ricci-Lucchi subject to extensive temporal variations, turning a moving picture into an almost still image, slowing it down, stopping it and allowing the frame to recover the time it lost in its previous condition and removing it from the “hysteria of velocity” (GIANIKIAN, RICCI-LUCCHI, 2000: 53)².

In the absence of exact knowledge of the origins of the images of the soldiers featured in *Il corpi dei soldati*, I will explore the process whereby Gianikian and Ricci-Lucchi intervene in these images of men who have suffered physical mutilation and shell shock, based on the ethical premise of giving them back their status as individuals and humans, given the questioning of scientific positivism and the machine-man metaphor by subsequent generations. “When the

bodies of mutilated soldiers were presented on screen, they were generally presented as being restorable by modern surgery and orthopaedics engineering,” comments Andrea Meneghelli in *Suffering in and after the War* for the online publication “European Film and the First World War: A Virtual Exhibition by European Film Archives”; but in *Oh! Uomo*, these images of physical and mental reconstruction are stripped of the propagandistic rhetoric through deconstruction, re-editing, slowing down and re-filming in light of revisionist historiography on the Great War. The *modus operandi* is explained by Lumley in his monograph on the filmmakers, based on a talk given in April of 2009 at the Harvard Film Archive following a screening of *Oh! Uomo*:

footage showing men suffering from shellshock and then of men who have undergone facial surgery has been re-filmed. In the original films, only the surgeons and doctors would have been named and the inter-titles would have outlined their achievements. The soldiers, who featured in the film, went unidentified, unless by military insignia. In *Oh! Uomo*, the medical professionals and the inter-titles are cut out, and the images are re-framed. The speed of the film is slowed down through step printing. Spectators find themselves, as a result, faced with men who look out from the screen at them for a length of time that requires us to acknowledge their presence and remember their faces (LUMLEY, 2011: 89).

Remembering faces with agitated gazes: archive images of detritus and wounds from the devastation resulting from the faith of the Novecento in the military and in scientific and technological progress. These are images, removed from the context of medical treatment and study for which they were filmed to be re-contextualised in a context of cinephilia, that shake us and point out to us, like a hallucinatory nightmare, the true power of reality. Even today, as we celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of the Great War, these frames of bleeding

bodies and wild spasms disturb our senses and project our legacy towards an uncertain future. In *Vida secreta de las sombras*, the critic Gonzalo de Lucas concludes that “cinema records the passage of time and leaves a wake of past experiences that call up spectres” (DE LUCAS, 2001: 19), and in *Oh! Uomo* it is the work of Gianikian and Ricci-Lucchi and their analytical camera that call up the ghosts of the First World War and Europe’s distressing past, who say to us: “We are lost in a deep night; I do not know where we are going. And you?”³ ■

NOTES

- 1 The concept of the catalogue is the most common rhetorical device in the films of Gianikian and Ricci-Lucchi. The first of their cinematic works to include this concept in its title is *Catalogo della scomposizione* (1975), a ten-minute film describing a photo album of landscapes and people in Central Europe. Similarly, their first found-footage film, *Karagoez- Catalogo 9,5* (1981) also alludes to the concept of the catalogue, which they have since returned to repeatedly (“archive”, “diary” and “inventory” are other recurring words in the titles of their films). As noted above, the idea of the catalogue is also included in the subtitle the filmmakers gave to *Oh! Uomo*.
- 2 The slowing down of the image until it is almost a still-frame is a recurrent device in Gianikian and Ricci-Lucchi’s films. Its use acts as a statement of opposition to another of the avant-garde trends of the Novecento which they also firmly, although subtly, criticize: the Futurism of Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and its fascination with technology, violent speed and war as extreme displays of the expressive potential of its aesthetic theories. It is also worth noting here that Marinetti glorified war as “the only hygiene of the world” in his Futurist Manifesto.
- 3 These are the last words in *Pays Barbare* (Yervant Gianikian, Angela Ricci-Lucchi, 2013), a kind of epilogue to the filmmakers’ war trilogy that explores the rise of Fascism and the colonial wars during the Fascist regime

of Benito Mussolini. The original Italian is: “Siamo immersi in una notte profonda, non sappiamo dove stiamo andando. E voi?”.

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OPERATING ON THE FRAME: INTERVENTIONS IN THE MEDICAL FILMS OF THE NOVECENTO AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR IN YERVANT GIANIKIAN AND ANGELA RICCI-LUCCHI'S OH! UOMO!

Abstract

Working with archive footage, in their film *Oh! Uomo*, which closes a trilogy on the First World War that also included *Prigionieri della guerra* (1995) and *Su tutte le vette e Pace* (1998), the Italian filmmakers Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci-Lucchi recover the legacy of medical and neurological films of the Novecento with the aim of exposing the devastating effects of the Great War and the social, scientific and technological ideologies that sustained it. This paper traces the origins of the genre and identifies the main scientists, doctors and filmmakers in Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century, in order to reveal, on the one hand, the rhetoric of its *mise en scène* and, on the other, the discursive strategies adopted by Gianikian and Ricci-Lucchi in their analysis of this footage and their deconstruction of the discourse on which the archive images are based through the use of the device they call the *analytical camera*.

Key words

Film, Medical films; Documentary; Found Footage; Yervant Gianikian; Angela Ricci-Lucchi; World War I; Novecento.

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OPERAR EL FOTOGRAMA: INTERVENCIONES EN EL GÉNERO DEL CINE MÉDICO DEL NOVECENTO Y LA PRIMERA GUERRA MUNDIAL EN OH! UOMO, DE YERVANT GIANIKIAN Y ANGELA RICCI-LUCCHI

Resumen

Mediante un trabajo con el archivo, en su película *Oh! Uomo* los cineastas italianos Yervant Gianikian y Angela Ricci-Lucchi, con la que clausuran la trilogía dedicada a la Primera Guerra Mundial, formada también por *Prigionieri della guerra* (1995) y *Su tutte le vette é pace* (1998), recuperan el legado del cine médico y del cine neurológico del Novecento con el objetivo de mostrar los efectos devastadores de la Gran Guerra y de las ideologías sociales, científicas y tecnológicas que la auspiciaron. En la propuesta presentamos una genealogía del género y señalamos a los principales científicos, doctores y cineastas de la Europa de principio del siglo xx para desvelar, por una parte, la retórica de su puesta en escena y, por la otra, apuntar cuáles son las estrategias discursivas de Gianikian y Ricci-Lucchi a la hora de analizar esos trabajos y desarticular el discurso sobre el que se apoyan esas imágenes de archivo a través del uso del dispositivo de la *cámara analítica*.

Palabras clave

Cine; Cine médico; Documental; Found Footage; Yervant Gianikian; Angela Ricci-Lucchi; Primera Guerra Mundial; Novecento.

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