ON ALTERITIES 1968 NEWSREELS

DANAE GALLO GONZÁLEZ AND LYUBOMIR POZHARLIEV

Danae.Gallo-Gonzalez@romanistik.uni-giessen.de

<https://www.uni-giessen.de/fbz/fb05/romanistik/LitKul/pers/wima/gonzalez>

Lyubomir.Pozharliev@gcsc.uni-giessen.de

<https://www.uni-giessen.de/fbz/fb04/institute/geschichte/osteuropa/personen/HaDi_neu/soe/Lyubomir-Pozharliev>

KEYWORDS

1968, mono-screen society, multi-screen society, newsreels, *Other*, screened alterities

HOW TO CITE

On Alterities 1968 Newsreels

1_On Screened Alterities

The focus of the fourth issue of *On_Culture* is the presentation of 'alterity' in news-reels.[1] The concept of 'alterity' has different meanings, and one of the objectives of this volume is to explore the multiplicity of its usages, as well as some relational, moral, and ethical aspects of the understanding of *Othernesses*. Following the approach of the study of culture, 'alterity' could broadly be defined as "culturally determined percep-tions of differences."[2] This notion is interrelated with regional or country-specific dom-inant identity construction discourses and thus it opens a wide field of transnational comparisons. Alterity narratives shall be understood as narratives about other (inter/in-tra)national, political, gendered, or racialized groups, embodied by a variety of social classes and generations, and discursively excluded from the specific dominant identity constructions.

Political consequences derived from the production of alterity narratives are espe-cially evident in the current situation of the rise of extreme-right parties in Europe; the so called 'refugee crisis;' and the expansion of the 'illiberal democracies' of Viktor Orbán, Vladimir Putin, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and Donald Trump.[3] They demonstrate the intriguing political consequences derived from the production of alterity narratives in what Manuel Pinto has called the 'multi-screen' society we live in today.[4] The mul-tiplication of screens experienced in contemporary everyday life comes with a cogni-tive transformation of the ways we perceive and signify the reality constructed by au-diovisual semantics. The flow of fast, intermittent, and occasionally fully decontextu-alized visual stimuli that are consumed in a mobile manner makes an active and critical treatment of discourses extremely difficult. In light of the above-mentioned worrisome social and political developments, it is important to slow down and focus on what here will be called 'screened alterity:' the multiplicity of audiovisual othernesses produced by different dominant identity discourses to be consumed via a screen.

Additionally, the resurgence of screened alterities that fully question the assumed consensual basis of our equal, liberal, democratic societies manifests the relevance of dealing with the conceptual and practical intricacies of 'alterity.' It implies the necessity of re-examining the narratives articulating this consensus and the imagined original keystones sustaining them.

2_On Alterities and 1968

The second axis of this volume is the year 1968. This choice is provoked by a desire to boost that year's 50th anniversary celebration in 2018 with studies on constructions of alterity in various newsreels produced around the world in the course of 1968. More importantly, it investigates 1968 as a year that called into question several dominant discourses, both in the West and in the East. It can be regarded as a turning point for the narratives of equality that sustain liberal democracies, signaling a crucial moment for societal awareness about and activism for and by minorities, until then only referred to as *Others*.

However, some scholars have warned about the liberating narratives employed in discussions of 1968. For example, Minhea Panu soundly asserted that:

> the political imagination spawned by the 1968 moment stimulates precisely those projects operating through Othering. Thus, continuing to use 1968 to fuel our political imagination helps to strengthen any dominant identity that is defined in relation to its Other and all power relations that are structured by such binaries.[5]

Panu not only contradicts the common idea that defines 1968 as the beginning of the end of alterity. She claims that this binary mode of articulating identity would not overcome discrimination of different kinds of *Others*. Thus, Panu also argues that liberatory narratives surrounding 1968 reinforce *Othering*-processes that took place back then. Therefore, an analysis of the understanding and conceptualization of 'alterity' narratives produced during this pioneer period could shed new light on contemporary problems. More specifically, examining the articulation of alterity in 1968 newsreels thus also has the potential to provoke reflection on the present 'multi-screen' society.

If the twenty-first century has witnessed the blooming of this 'multi-screen' society, the twentieth century can be characterized as the century of the 'screen' or 'mono-screen' society. The motion picture industry was born at the turn of the twentieth century and rapidly evolved to become an integral part of Western society. Since cinema attendance reached high peaks — from the mid-1940s in the US to 1968 in some European countries such as Greece, Bulgaria, Spain, Italy, and Hungary[6] — screens have represented and produced epistemologies that strengthened the cohesion of different identitarian groups by relationally vehiculating alterity narratives.

Cultural studies written on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of 1968 went beyond narrow political and national approaches to the year by concentrating on deconstructing master narratives.[7] They insisted on the necessity of tackling 1968 from a thematically,

conceptually, and methodologically broad transnational perspective. A goal that has not yet been reached. These studies tended to center on protest movements and on showing their contradictions as well as the reasons for their failure or success. There is little research devoted to countries where the movements of 1968 never happened or were censored and silenced, nor much research on other kinds of events, counter-discourses, and alterity narratives medialized in different formats during this period. The present issue of *On_Culture* builds on this essential turn in the study of 1968 by setting the focus on national and transnational comparative studies of alterity.

3_On Alterities in the Newsreels of 1968

In 1968, going to the cinema meant watching not only a movie, but also a newsreel that was broadcast before it.[8] Newsreels were weekly, or in some countries biweekly, ten-minute audiovisual summaries of the most significant news from the previous week. They were broadcast all over the world from the late 19th century until the mid-1980s, and were normally composed of a series of sequentially edited items combining 'hard' and 'soft' news, such as local and international news, culture, pictures from daily life, entertainment, and curiosities. There were some exceptions, though. Soviet newsreels, *kinohroniki*, for instance, featured a main newsreel item that was usually dedicated to only one event.

Newsreels rarely included original diegetic sound from the footage shown. Instead, they were commonly accompanied by a voice-over commentary superimposed on background music. The complexity of the newsreel format enabled newsreels to be largely used for more or less subtle propaganda purposes both in 'soft' and 'hard' news. Yet, those purposes differed significantly depending on the political nature of the countries where newsreels were produced and broadcast. In some countries, including the entire Eastern Bloc and Franco's Spain, there was a state monopoly over the production and/or distribution of newsreels,[9] and they were a mandatory part of any cinema screening. In many countries in the West, including the United Kingdom, USA, and France, cinemas could choose between newsreels produced by different companies, which were distributed in a competitive manner.

From the 1920s onward, Pathé, an international company originally founded in France, dominated the global distribution of original footage and of ready-to-go news-reels.[10] Pathé newsreels were produced for export, and screened mostly in smaller

countries, where indigenous companies could not contest the strong French competition.[11] According to a UNESCO survey from 1952, back then, the USA (with companies such as Paramount, Fox Movietone, Warner-Pathe, and Universal), the Soviet Union (Kinohroniki), the United Kingdom (Universal News, Gaumont British News, Pathé News, British Movietone News, British Paramount News) and France (Pathé, Gaumont, Eclair, Eclipse) were the major producers and distributers of newsreels.[12] The International Newsreels Association (I.N.A.) was founded in 1957 in order to regulate and facilitate the exchange of footage among members.[13]

The transnational circulation of footage invites an examination of the national audiovisual representations of 'reality' in the newsreels of 1968. Despite the rise of television, in 1968, cinemas were still well visited, and therefore remained one of the most influential vehicles for producing epistemologies about 'reality.' Newsreels, accordingly, are a wonderful medium through which to observe how alterities were screened during this period and for what purposes.

Newsreels, in spite of their extensive commercial non-academic usage in contemporary media, are still not well investigated from academic or cultural-historical perspectives. In particular, English-language scholarship dealing with newsreels continues to be surprisingly scarce. What exists has primarily been devoted to mapping the newsreel industry, newsreels' generic and formal features, and their content as related to the First and Second World Wars. Nevertheless, there is still little work on the content of other periods throughout newsreel history, nor on the alterity narratives generated by this media format.

Still, recent research focused on the above-mentioned 'multi-screen' modus of representation has simultaneously raised interest in 'mono-screen' media, including newsreels.[14] The *Encyclopedia of the Documentary Film* published in 2006 marked the first comprehensive transnational comparison,[15] and the *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* is among the few journals that constantly investigates newsreels from multinational perspectives.[16] Most contributors to the topic stress the need for further profound research employing comparative perspectives or content-based case studies.[17] Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia, South America, and Australia have also remained blind spots in newsreel research. Recently, this gap is being tackled by a number of scholars in their research on newsreels (though often, unfortunately, from their own nation- and

language-specific perspectives): Rafael Rodríguez Tranche and Vicente Sánchez Biosca are working on Spain;[18] Lilyana Deianova, Nina Nikolova, Svetlana Sabeva, and Mila Mineva on Bulgaria;[19] and Maria do Carmo Piçarra on Portugal.[20]

4_About this Issue

Issue no. 4 of *On_Culture* seeks to fill this void by featuring texts by scholars from diverse fields in the humanities, social sciences, and other areas of cultural studies working on the representation of alterity in newsreels of 1968. Each contribution offers a synchronic, content-based analysis of items that are still not covered by contemporary research.[21] The issue further contributes to the broader field of newsreel scholarship by bringing together examples from countries that have generally been excluded from English-language academic literature. The inclusion of scholarly work on 1968 newsreels from Italy and Eastern Europe, with contributions on Bulgaria, Hungary, Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union, is among the distinguishing features of this issue of *On_Culture*.

Doris Bachmann-Medick's _*Essay* opens the issue with an analysis of the concept of 'alterity.' She examines the state of the art on 'alterity,' offers a scholarly discussion on the genealogy and implications of this concept, and relationally comments on the approaches to alterity used by the authors of the _*Articles*' section.

The _*Articles* examine how different axes of alterity were screened in the newsreels of individual countries in 1968; these include Bulgaria, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, and former Yugoslavia. Tom Clucas transcends the national scope and offers a comparative analysis on French and British coverage of the May 1968 events in Paris in two subsidiary companies of Pathé. He draws on Brian Treanor's 'chiastic' approach to alterity and on Nelson Goodman's concept of 'worldmaking,' and states that, despite having access to the same original footage, French and British newsreels employed highly fluctuating figures of alterity to polarize audiences for national political purposes. Inês Gamelas focuses on the representation of student protests, concentrating on Italy. Using Michael Pickering's concept of the 'stereotypical Other,' she analyzes how the items produced by *Radar Cinematografica* on Italian university manifestations register a gradual process of alterization of the protesters. Nicola Nier elaborates on the audio-visual emplotment of a key event of 1968, Martin Luther King Jr.s's

assassination. She applies Julia Kristeva's concept of 'otherness' to illustrate the strategies deployed by *Les actualités françaises* to relationally articulate France's national identity around (North-American) racism.

In contrast to the above three case studies, which focus on the portrayal of specific events in newsreel broadcasts in democratic countries, the other three _*Articles* endeavor to analyze various screened alterities in newsreels of authoritarian countries from a broader perspective. Danae Gallo González provides an overview of the themes and modes of representation illustrated in the *NO-DOs* of 1968, and uses Chantal Mouffe's concept of the 'political' through the lens of 'alterity' to demonstrate the political function of the seemingly non-political footage of Spanish *NO-DO*s. Based on Zygmunt Bauman's conceptualization of 'otherness' and on Francis Cooper and Roger Brubaker's 'categorization,' Lyubomir Pozharliev presents a nuanced analysis of the different alterity figures globally articulated in the Bulgarian *Kinopregledi* of 1968, contesting the assumption that authoritarian countries' newsreels merely reproduce dichotomist Cold War propaganda. In line with his argument, but from a performative perspective, Mila Turajlić examines former Yugoslavia's *Filmske Novosti.* She focuses on the items covering Tito's travels to Asia and Africa and reflects upon how, through the newsreels, Yugoslavia opposed the dominant two-bloc division of the socialist East and the capitalist West. Through the concept of 'performative solidarity,' Turarajlić deconstructs the production and usage of the *Filmske Novosti* within and beyond Yugoslavia, the founding member and only European country in the Non-Aligned Movement.

Janka Barkóczi's contribution serves as an excellent transition to the _*Perspectives*' section. She shares with previous contributions the focus on newsreels of 1968, but does not explicitly concentrate on alterity. Exposing particular techniques and rituals of the Hungarian Newsreels, *Magyar Filmhíradós,* Barkóczi focuses on the highly sensitive approach that Hungarian newsreels took to the 1968 *Prague Spring*. Fearing possible echoes of the 1956 Hungarian uprising, this mode of representation was a strategy to silence the memory of Hungary's traumatic recent past. Vera Otdelnova's contribution closes this issue of *On_Culture* by widening the media representing this period of time. Her contribution, dedicated to a rather marginal movement within Soviet art of the 1960s, examines strategies deployed by artists to question the totalitarian state power.

From a macro-structural point of view, this issue additionally offers a transnational overview of the alterity narratives produced by the newsreels' audio, visual, and textual semantics that signified different facets of 1968. The contributions to this volume challenge several widespread presumptions about how alterity was articulated and/or screened back then. The papers on Eastern European newsreels exemplify how they challenged the basic dichotomies of the Cold War, which were related to the aggressive opposition between the 'capitalist' West and the 'socialist' East in at least in two aspects. First, a third global actor — located in countries from the so called 'Third World,' whose alterity is constructed in a more complex way as neither *Us* nor *Them* — had a significant presence in Bulgarian and Yugoslav newsreels. The bipolar notion of 'otherness' is thus overcome with more complex nuances and abstractions referring to internationalism and solidarity. Second, the representation of the Western world in the newsreels had different faces: protesters in Western Europe are 'comrades' for the socialist countries, unlike the 'American imperialist' enemies. In between the extremes, diverse neutral *Others* had been exposed, such as business partners or careless spoiled Western petit bourgeois women, etc. Paradoxically, those socialist newsreels in line with primary propaganda messages try to widen this perspective.

On the contrary, Western European newsreel representations of student protests in French, British, Spanish, and Italian newsreels harden the stereotypes about the West, the 'decent people' opposing the rebellious chaos and irrational and violent youth that is clearly othered. The *Other*, in these cases, is not to be found outside the national borders, nor outside the Western bloc, but rather on an intra-national level. In fact, with exception of some subtleties in the Spanish newsreels, there is no trace of Cold War rhetoric at all. It is noticeable that alterity constructions do not screen nor comment upon the 'Eastern *Other*,' which can be considered an extreme case of othering and showcases a process of invisibilization. By these means, Western newsreels expel the *Other* from the reality produced by the newsreels. Thus, the status quo in Western and Eastern Europe is maintained, but in diverse and often unexpected ways.

Nevertheless, Western newsreels also strategically and punctually screen alterities among Western counterparts. They emphasize the equality in French society in contrast to North-American racism, and Spain's quiet and ordered society's existence thanks to Franco's opposition to the chaos of the 'democratic world.' This strategic use of other-

ing narratives makes possible the coexistence of distinct and varying 'grammars of alterity'[22] within the same national newsreels, or even an identical international company, as in Pathé's biased covering of student protests. The *NO-DOs* strategically articulate another 'grammar of alterity' when illustrating Spain's modernity, aligning the country as a counterpart in the league of other modern Western countries. Similarly, *Radar Cinematografica* deploys alterity in a gradual logic in the covering of university protests in Italy. In this sense, Western newsreels also show nuanced and sometimes contradictory articulations of alterity that dismantle still-dominant narratives both about the clear-cut bipolarity of the Cold War in 1968 and the liberatory meaning of the year for othered minorities.

This analysis of the (trans-)national audiovisual representation of 'reality' in the newsreels of 1968 sheds new light on a variety of alterities. More precisely, it tackles the audiovisual representation of alterity, conceptualized in this issue of *On_Culture* as 'screened alterities.' The different contributors to the issue exemplify that such 'screened alterities' are nationally determined, but differ depending on the political status of the country: democratic vs. totalitarian or dictatorial, and/or socialist vs. capitalist. Further, the production (private vs. public) and distribution (mandatory vs. voluntary) of newsreels as well as the national agenda underlying the editing of specific items played a significant role in the process of *Othering*. Additionally, the strategic editing of transnationally circulating footage reveals the relational and contextual nature of the (inter-/intra)national-, political-, racialized-, and/or generational-based alterities screened in cinemas around the world in 1968.

As this issue demonstrates, the richness of events in 1968 make the year indeed beneficial for a transnational analysis of 'screened alterities.' It was a year when the 'screen society' was on the rise, and the audiovisual representations of alterity developed back then still continue to shape its significance even in the days of the 'multiscreen societies.' In light of the approaching 50th anniversary of 1968, this issue offers readers a closer look at Europe as it was screened back them.

_Endnotes

[1] This issue comes as a result of 'The 1968 Newsreel' collaborative research project, led by doctoral students and postdoctoral researchers at the *International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture* (GCSC), Justus Liebig University Giessen. Members from the GCSC *Research Area 8: Cultures of Knowledge, Research, and Education* and from *RA 5: Media and Multiliteracy Studies* launched the project in 2014 together with the working group *Film und Filmtheorie*. Throughout the last four years, over ten associates of the project have organized workshops and master classes and have held regular meetings to discuss individual, nationally focused research on newsreels and broader theoretical-methodological issues. The project speakers Danae Gallo González and Lyubomir Pozharliev would like to express their gratitude to all those who enriched this project and helped to bring this publication into being. Particularly, we would like to thank Prof. Roel Vande Winkel and Dr. Doris Bachmann-Medick, who held inspiring Master Classes and lectures at the GCSC. We would also like to express our gratitude to the GCSC for its financial and moral support, and to the great Editorial Team that managed the publication process.

[2] Ansgar Nünning, "Alterity," in *Grundbegriffe der Kulturtheorie und Kulturwissenschaften*, ed. id., (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler Verlag, 2005), 1–2, here: 1; translation by the authors.

[3] The term 'illiberal democracy' was first critically used by the journalist Fareed Zakaria in 1997, but became politically popular as the primary ideology and doctrine of Hungarian Prime minister Viktor Orbán during his second mandate. See Fareed Zakaria, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy," in *Foreign Affairs*, November–December 1997, accessed August 14, 2017, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/1997-11-01/rise-illiberal-democracy>; Viktor Orbán, Speech at Băile Tuşnad (Tusnádfürdő) on July 26, 2014, accessed September 15, 2017, <https://budapestbeacon.com/full-text-of-viktor-orbans-speech-at-baile-tusnad-tusnadfurdo-of-26-july-2014/>.

[4] See Manuel Joaquim Pinto Silva, "Investigating Information in the Multi-Screen Society," in *Digital Literacy: Tools and Methodologies for Information Society*, ed. Pier Cesaire Rivoltella (Hershey (PA): IGI Pub, 2008), 207–216.

[5] Mihnea Panu, "Subjectivization, State and Other: On the Limits of Our Political Imagination," in *1968 in Retrospect. History, Theory Alterity*, eds. Gurminder K. Bhambra and Iper Demir (New York/Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 160–174, here: 163.

[6] See Michelle Pautz, "The Decline in Average Weekly Cinema Attendance," in *Issues in Political Economy* 11 (2002), 1–18, here: 2; Gregory Paschalidis, "Entertaining the Colonels: Propaganda, Social Change and Entertainment in Greek Television Fiction, 1967–74," in *Popular Television in Authoritarian Europe*, ed. Peter Goddard (Manchester/New York: Manchester University Press, 2013), 53–70, here: 66; and José María Caparrós Lera, *La industria del cine en España: Legislación y aspectos económicos, 1896–1970* (Barcelona: Edicions Universitat de Barcelona, 1984), 208.

[7] See Gurminder K. Bhambra and Ipek Demir, eds., *1968 in Retrospect: History, Theory, Alterity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

[8] See Roel Vande Winkel, "Newsreel Series: World Overview," in *Encyclopedia of the Documentary Film*, ed. Ian Aitken (New York/London: Routledge, 2006), 985–991, here: 985, 990.

[9] See Vande Winkel, "Newsreel Series," 990.

[10] See Vande Winkel, "Newsreel Series," 990, 985.

[11] See Vande Winkel, "Newsreel Series," 986.

12   Peter Baechlin and Maurice Muller-Strauss, eds., *Newsreels Across the World* (Paris: UNESCO, 1952), 18.

13   See Rafael Rodríguez Tranche and Vicente Sánchez Biosca, *NO-DO El tiempo y la memoria* (Madrid: Cátedra/Filmoteca Española, 2001), 148.

14   See Vande Winkel, "Newsreel Series," 985–991; Luke McKernan, "Newsreels: Form and Function," in *Using Visual Evidence*, eds. Richard Howells and Robert Matson (New York: Open University Press, 2009), 95–106.

15   Ian Aitken, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Documentary Film*. 3 Vols. (London: Routledge, 2006).

16   International Association for Audio-Visual Media in Historical Research and Education; International Association for Media and History. *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 23.3 (2003). International Association for Audio-Visual Media in Historical Research and Education; International Association for Media and History. *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 32.3 (2012).

17   For an indicative and comprehensive example, see *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 32.3 (2012).

18   See Tranche/Biosca, *NO-DO*.

19   See Лиляна Деянова, "Националното минало и 'големият декор,'" in *В Социологически проблеми* 1.2 (2005), 34–53 [Lilyana Deyanova, "The National Past and the 'Theatrical Public Space,'" in *Sociological Problems* 1.2 (2005), 34–53]; Нина Николова и Светла Събева, "Упълномощеното тяло. Политестетика на монтажа," *в седмичните кинопрегледи. Социологически проблеми* 1.2 (2005), 7–33 [Nina Nikolova and Svetla Sabeva, "The Authorized Body. Politaesthetics of Weekly Newsreel Montage," in *Sociological Problems* 1.2 (2005), 7–33]; Мила Минева, *Визуалното конструиране на социалистическото потребление* (София: 2017) непубликувана дисертация) [Mila Mineva, *The Visual Construction of the Socialist Consumption*, 2017, unpublished dissertation]; all translations by the authors.

20   See Maria do Carmo Piçarra, *Azuis ultramarinos: Propaganda colonial e censura no cinema do Estado Novo* (Lisbon: Edições 70, 2015), 144.

21   For most recent research, see Ciara Chambers, Math Jönsson, and Roel Vande Winkel, eds., *Researching Newsreels: Local, National and Transnational Case Studies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming 2018).

22   See Doris Bachmann-Medick's contribution in this issue, 6.