

Claude Lanzmann's first film made in the sixties, "Pourquoi Israel", is now finally available on DVD. It's including lots of conversations with people coming mostly from east Europe and having arrived in Israel in the fifties and sixties. Some of the interviewed ones obviously preferred it to do a kind of interview acting instead of just saying what to say in order to help the documentation of the facts. Like the one group, that describes the immigration situation on the Israeli boarder by pretending to be angry, kind of trying to fulfill the standards and stereotypes of anyone, who was arriving finally only with just one suitcase and their memories. They had been betrayed by these officials, they claim in the film years later, while sitting again on their old suitcases on the train station, misleading the film audience. Anyways, they tell, how they were put into trains and passed without stopping through the towns they were promised to be brought to and went further and further far away into the stony non-comfort Negev desert. Last stop was a place of absolute or almost nothing but some miserable concrete half-finished new huts. Here you will live, they were told, if you want a house then build the houses quickly. It was the sixties in the film and the former immigration group really just acted as if lamenting in all many details about their fate, sitting on their suitcases, as if they would rather prefer to go again. But suddenly in the middle of the lamentation scene one of them starts telling, how wealthy and beautiful his brother would be living in comparison in his city of refuge, which happened to be Monte Carlo, just after the end of a long journey including escape from Nazis and torturous years in the Soviet Union. While he keeps telling, the film is showing the images of the story tellers' own new rough hometown, displaying really the hardest and cheapest structure of what could be called a village or city. But suddenly in an incredible turn of feelings, he adds, that he would never exchange town with his brother anyway, would not change Dimona to Monte Carlo. I maybe never did experience such an emotional turn of direction in the narrative of a film, so much just produced only through the way people speak and act, never I observed a sudden change from the developing sadness of the narrative, from participation in a saddest story into a revelation and participation in a story of happiness, actually to hard to explain here anyways. As well it is hard to find a comparable moment in a film, which shows such a change of emotions represented through acting to emotions resulting from documenting a real story of somebody interviewed, or simpler, a sad story of the past resulting in a happy representation of the present. The related emotional tension grows even higher since the images of the present might be representing anything, but for sure not an image of a situation of happiness, when another new citizen of Dimona, one of the same group with the suitcases says something simple and non-actingly like, "I would never leave our Dimona any more, alone since in Dimona nobody will tell you, what we have to do, we always since arriving really lived together and we care, take care that nobody tells another what to do", and yet another one of the former actors of purest lamentation, he says he would not leave either, even if you would give him 11 and a half millions and laughs until one starts crying, because one is just saying his daughter is one year old and she is the first generation of their Dimona. They all tell you with all their games of acting, this is what we tell you in the single and probably only moment of being seen and perceived outside and beyond our own world, then this is what we can tell and send away as our story, that, that Dimona it is of course the most beautiful place in the world.

autobiographical attempts of telling some story myself, almost during the same historic period or just after the production of "Pourquoi Israel", stories, which should be placed between both the cities Vienna and Jerusalem and particularly in Vienna, should consist of images of the Israel, are images that came mostly through TV, through photographs, through newspapers and through letters to my father. It is here the period of the subjective transformation of being the child, who just observes the family and just agrees with everything to becoming the young man, who disagrees in everything and is finding increasingly many motives to develop sometimes weird rebellious attitudes. It's just a very 60ies or 70ies thing to explain the subjective transformation vis a vis the mirrors of public mechanisms using primarily TV and it is changing and confusing events and representations, feeling while writing almost as happy as the people of Dimona, while sitting in a slightly run-down strange and time-forgetting Viennese cafe, writing about Israel as an image and issue of the childhood. The TV period between the ending of the inclusive and complete unconscious family inclusion of the child and the beginning of the separation of and from the family should no doubt in my case be best determined as the period between the six days war images and the live transmission of the Olympic games in Munich 1972. That just completely without a special Israel consideration, talking from Vienna in fact. I wish, I had time to annoy you with an endless text on the whole context of which my imagination was developing the idea Israel, painting the particular light in which in the narrow rooms of the childhood house I heard the stories of older visitors, sometimes dramatically sometimes almost ironically telling events of murder or of unbelievable torture during the Nazi period and as well like how in contrast to that the beautiful modern Israeli feeling of a parallel home was unveiled within the transmissions of Golda Meir's appartement, whenever she sat together with Moshe Dayan, of course just for the cameras. *One man, he came in each winter; he said the Germans they killed and they killed. He told more what happened before he ended in Ausschwitz, then about it. They put all many people together on a square, he was one of them and the Nazis asked the doctors and teachers to get together separated and they went over the other part of the square and one of the teachers said, I knew it, that they will need us and then they stood together and the Germans they killed them. It took them some time. Then they killed more and then the rest was brought away to the camp. He often looked at me, more than to the other people in my family, now I understand, what I meant to him, just because I was the youngest there, still a child, he wanted that I hear him and know what happened and that I will tell it later. That way he looked at me and explained that they killed everywhere, anywhere they came to every new town, they just killed and killed that way. They asked first the people, who were at the university, the intelligent people as he called it who thought each time again they ask would them because they would need them, but shortly later they were all dead and killed. Other visitors told about the time between March and November 1938 in Vienna, how the neighbours forced them to do crazy things and chased them, or once about how a synagogue was burning. I could not forget that and asked in school if they knew where the burning synagogue had been and the teachers were not telling me, and some of them even told other stories instead, like how the Russians were and what they did. Some of the other pupils were telling, how Austria was forced to do it and said how horrible the Germans were and that I should not be against Austria. Soon I started guessing that probably most of the other people in the district would not tell me either*

*and started
thinking how big an injustice that is,
and started to think that I will one day finally
not live in this district of injustice anymore, unless
some of us would change it and would find out the worst
of them, who live silently unharmed in their house and their
garden and go to them and bring them to justice and kill them
according to the rules of the Mossad. But we never did.
We just left it instead. Once a year we got a big box full of bright
oranges. The box was standing in the grey cellar, my father yelled
up the stairs, that the oranges from Israel came in and are here. I
came down the stairs, maybe someone else came with me as well and
we looked at the oranges of Israel and I did not but did understand that
there is something special about them and it would be stupid to ask what
this special thing is about, but a bit older maybe like 10, I asked why we
have each year these oranges from Israel and I felt it was stupid to ask,
because my father obviously did not know how to answer and, it is true,
that he really just only could say, they are for the memory and that, as
I already knew, that they are from the Mandel Pepi. Mandel Pepi was
as old as my father, he was able to save his life in the last moment and
left Vienna to Palestine, but did never come back and I knew that often
they wrote each other very long letters.
I still did not understand the „problem“ of TV then, but I started to
develop it, considering the some mode of looking for instance at a
leader of a country, of a state actually, and I think I was in the first
step of transforming the childlike brain into modes of politicalness
and modes of political standards maybe. Which means to actually
not see and formulate political terms, more just feeling sympathy,*

attraction in particular representations of these public leadership representatives or means just having emotions of rejection towards these representatives and taking them for objective and for granted, whatever, I really should interrupt myself, whenever I try to become abstract and complicated, and I guess I wanted to try saying and confessing in a slightly ugly attitude, that in all my lifetime at least I have achieved a bit of a detache myself to develop myself far away from the „unpolitical“ subjective view of things, and that I am sometimes having the impression some other art people never did so. Try to be political but it's just personal reactions. They remain children in representation. But now and here I wish I could return to these „low“ stages of public awareness again, not alone for following the more exciting modes of storytelling.

I don't try to research, what happened in these years in reality, about what are the true facts of who did what and when, the years when I started connecting myself to TV. I am sure things are quite wrongly mixed up in my memory, just trying to follow the importance of influence. Maybe Golda Meir actually appeared a bit later in TV, only after she became prime minister and not during the six days war, but I maybe might have thought already then in my first TV year, that Golda Meir was very lovely alone for not trying to present herself in connection with the powerful images or with objects of a representational power, or within powerful environment, or idolatrous environment and I might have thought already then, that she even might have had fun with not doing so. I would say it was my first political image memorized from TV in general. She sits in an appartement like office, with Moshe Dayan in his uniform and blindfold next to her. She was immediately a kind of far away aunt to me and they both seemed to have the power to communicate between and without the words. I thought they sit next to each other, but whenever they would sit opposite each other and other public representatives of a bureaucratic kind would be included they would just look at each other and they would not have to say anything to each other. I remember I liked the mirage a lot. And I imagined she would think like, „Moshe, if they want to hurt us and they are so stupid to do it, they don't know, so why don't you send our beautiful mirage birds just that they will see might be enough“ then Moshe would send the beautiful mirages up in the sky into the brightest sunlight and then the mirages would even wave with their wings and people would understand. I just thought, that was what was happening, when our TV screen was changing the image from Golda and Moshe in their house to the mirage jets in the sky as I was turning round sometimes looking up to my family for their reactions, to observe the observers. I still wanted and needed to adjust my commentaries to the rest of the family and indeed, it was an important situation for days obviously. The word „war“ was mentioned often enough, but in connection with an incredible dark past, I felt. But now war was simultaneously developing in my life time and the country, which represents the victory so much and the victory of culture was involved. And it turned out more serious since I became aware that the days of the first TV transmission of a war during my own life had begun and even changed the particular steady rhythm of everything in the house. It seemed to me, probably just to me, as if it was the first war of the land of Israel too and that it was a particular test, I thought I quite understood already, that it was scary, because how could particularly the people of Israel defend it, they were said then, sixties, to be the most unexperienced with the tools and the tools of a war. It almost touched me, that many many fundamental fears and sorrows were raised from darkness all over a sudden, and that these airfix model mirages I built with my brother were the objects everything was seriously dependent on from now on. But I did not really listen to the TV. I just listened to how the days brought increasingly bigger incredible relief, conversation became excited and ended in jokes and laughter all around, visitors came by more frequently and soon the mood turned into better maybe better than any time before, actually I just wanted to finally say, that these mirages were imagined as something miraculous, which at least comes very close actually to the idea of what sometimes is referred to with angels. People said repeatedly it was no war in fact, there was not war, but still, one can say a war was won and the wings of Moshe's shiny silver planes came and just moves up and down and people just decide that the war was won, but no real dirty war was fought any more. Like as if a new time has come and wars were somehow over and no one needed them anymore and any time from now on and after. And besides, the kibbutz will be fine as well.

Hietzing and Rehavia