

6-2018

Remembering World War I in 2014: Films and TV Productions in Austria and a New Path of Visual Memory

Karin Moser
University of Vienna, University of Innsbruck

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uno.edu/hlw>



Part of the [European History Commons](#), and the [Film and Media Studies Commons](#)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-No Derivative Works 4.0 International License](#).

Recommended Citation

Moser, Karin. "Remembering World War I in 2014: Films and TV Productions in Austria and a New Path of Visual Memory." In *Habsburg's Last War: The Filmic Memory (1918 to the Present)*, edited by Hannes Leidinger, 51-67. New Orleans: University of New Orleans Press, 2018.

This Chapter is brought to you for free and open access by the University of New Orleans Press at ScholarWorks@UNO. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Habsburg's Last War: The Filmic Memory (1918 to the Present)* by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UNO. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uno.edu.

REMEMBERING WORLD WAR I IN 2014:

FILMS AND TV PRODUCTIONS IN AUSTRIA AND A NEW PATH OF VISUAL MEMORY

Karin Moser

For decades, World War I has been less interesting for movie and TV productions in the German-speaking area, whereas in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, the memory of the Great War has quite a long tradition, in film and also in the visual culture. In Austria and in Germany, the Second World War and the Shoah dominated documentary films and movies.¹ In Austria, however, this subject matter has been addressed only since the 1970s. Before that, the Austrian victim-myth made it impossible to discuss the participation of Austrians in crimes during the era of National Socialism.

The 2014 memorial entailed substantial changes in visual memory. Movie and TV productions reflected the First World War in partly similar, partly quite different ways when compared to the prior visual memorials. Those films will shape a new kind of collective memory.

1 Barbara Korte, Ralf Schneider, and Claudia Sternberg, *Der Erste Weltkrieg und die Mediendiskurse der Erinnerung in Großbritannien: Autobiographie - Roman - Film 1919–1999* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2005), 2.

Commemorative cultures are always based on identity-building contents—contents traditionally transmitted and consolidated. Naturally, cultures of memory are never totally homogenous. There always exists various parameters of remembrance that are competing and that are changing permanently.²

However, a common place of experience and expectation connects people and creates collective memory. Concerning Austria, the public broadcaster Österreichischer Rundfunk (ORF) is—especially because of the Film Funding Act—still decisive for film productions.³ Movies and TV programs produced or co-produced by the ORF are therefore essential for the Austrian culture of memory. They represent the current opinions and values of this memorial community. Hereafter, tendencies of this actual visual commemorative culture are highlighted.

Questions of guilt

“A period of violence started. And this period has left deep scars in the history of our continent.” –Jean-Paul Bled⁴

Who is to blame for the outbreak of World War I? This is one of the central questions that is raised and answered, at least in many of the films released in 2014. The response is difficult and easy at the same time; difficult, because of the complex alliance system in Europe at

2 Astrid Erll, *Gedächtnisromane: Literatur über den Ersten Weltkrieg als Medium englischer und deutscher Erinnerungskulturen in den 1920er Jahren* (Trier: WVT, 2003), 6.

3 Karin Moser, “Kinowelten: Eine Filmgeschichte,” in *Streitbare Brüder: Österreich : Deutschland. Kurze Geschichte einer schwierigen Nachbarschaft*, ed. Hannes Leidinger, Verena Moritz, and Karin Moser (St. Pölten: Residenz, 2010), 209–213.

4 Jean-Paul Bled in the film documentary *Der Weg in den Untergang*, directed by Robert Gokl and Leo Bauer (2014).

that time and because of the variety of national demands and independence efforts, especially in the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy. Film documentaries like *Der Weg in den Untergang*, (directed by Robert Gokl and Leo Bauer) describe the circumstances surrounding the start of the War in a clear, neutral way, accompanied by statements of Austrian, German, British, French, Serbian, and Bulgarian historians. Graphic cards, animated photos, re-enactment scenes, and contemporary film clips try to illustrate by means of these visually appealing images a complex political system. The “expert part” of these films is unemotional and sober as possible and tries to give answers through facts, particularly concerning the question of guilt.⁵

While in previous Austrian documentary films the role of Emperor Franz Joseph with regard to the beginning of the Great War was now and then indifferent or even pro-Habsburg, in 2014 there are no more “excuses” about his old age or his mental confusion. No one talks about his supposed “love of peace.” Even the relieving question, “Was he misinformed or ill advised by his brain trust?,” isn’t raised anymore. All experts, all voiceovers, agree unanimously that Franz Joseph wanted war.⁶ Some documentarians, (notably *Kaiser*

5 The same strategy is presented in Andreas Novak’s documentary *Kaiser Franz Joseph und der Erste Weltkrieg* (2014).

6 The only exception is *Sarajevo: Das Attentat*, a film “documentary” directed by Kurt Mündl. This film seems to be a propaganda film for royalists. Without any kind of critical grappling with the role of the Emperor, the successor to the throne, and the military brain trust, this film provides nostalgic kitsch and old-fashioned clichés. In addition to that, contemporary film clips, feature films, and photos are cited incorrectly. Cf.: Karin Moser, “Visuelles Erinnern: der Erste Weltkrieg im österreichischen Film- und Fernsehchaffen,” in *Habsburgs schmutziger Krieg: Ermittlungen zur österreichisch-ungarischen Kriegsführung 1914–1918*, ed. Hannes Leidinger, Verena Moritz, Karin Moser, and Wolfram Dornik (St. Pölten: Residenz, 2014), 247–248.

Franz Joseph und der Erste Weltkrieg, directed by Andreas Nowak), explain the Emperor's psyche and attitude: In his view, declaring war was a matter of honor. Nobody doubts that the emperor, as well as the majority of his advisory team, opted for the war, regardless of the consequences. They knew, as well as all sovereigns of the continent did, that there would be a European and even a global armed conflict. "The responsibility for the war was located in Vienna and Berlin" states the German-British historian John C. G. Röhl in *Der Weg in den Untergang*.

While film documentaries try to explain the outbreak of the War in a more or less unemotional way, feature films are more focused on evoking emotions or capturing moods.⁷ The Austrian/German/Czech film production *Das Attentat: Sarajevo 1914*, (2014, directed by Andreas Prochaska), tries to capture the general mood of melancholia, the farewell of an era and first of all a wartime spirit. The main character is Leo Pfeffer, an examining magistrate who is ordered to clarify the background of the assassination of the Austrian heir to the throne, Franz Ferdinand. It soon becomes clear that the head of the government and the military forces demand only one single unambiguous result: The attack was planned and supported by the Kingdom of Serbia. A *casus belli* should be legitimized, but Leo Pfeffer is interested in the truth. While in film documentaries of 2014, the general opinion is that unlucky coincidences ended in the assassination, in this political thriller a new kind of conspiracy theory is presented:

7 Moods are long-winded, vaguer interpreted, while emotions are more influenced by experiences and are related to actions, objects or persons. Cf.: Carl Plantinga, *Moving Viewers: American Film and the Spectator's Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 54–61. Gerhard Roth, *Fühlen, Denken, Handeln: Wie das Gehirn unser Verhalten steuert* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001), 269–270.

All information engenders the suspicion that political forces at the top of the Austrian monarchy at least enabled the attack. Pfeffer confronts the political leaders with unpleasant questions: Why did only thirty-six policemen protect the route of the convoy of Franz Ferdinand? How can they explain the absence of army and gendarmerie? Why was the route of the convoy published in the newspapers? Additional examinations of Pfeffer are thwarted, witnesses disappear, and Pfeffer is threatened and blackmailed. The mood of insecurity, fear, and aggression is imparted through stylistic means. The basic note of color is blue; a cold atmosphere is created. Typical thrill elements, like changing effects of light and shadow and the interchange of focus (Pfeffer sharply defined, his opponents blurred) produce a feeling of generalized insecurity—the insecurity of a disappearing (outdated) world, the unrest at the beginning of a war.

Thus, the film evokes emotions at various sensual levels and communicates messages in direct and subliminal ways. High-ranking representatives of the Austrian-Hungarian Ministry of War were aware of the power of visual propaganda. The wartime propaganda transported enemy images, mythical hero images, and announced victories. Film documentaries of the memorial year unmasked the work of the propaganda departments. *Die Macht der Bilder. Lüge und Propaganda im Ersten Weltkrieg* (2014, directed by Günter Kaindlstorfer) takes a look backstage: Production conditions, censorship regulations, the fakeness of re-enacted combat scenes are discussed, and the presentation of a “clean” visualized war, without dead bodies, injured soldiers, poison gas attacks, etc. is critically examined. The nearly idyllic and glorious presentations of war in the contemporary films of the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy are contradicted by photographs demonstrating the cruelties of war. Especially the topic of war crime is no longer a taboo; many film productions of 2014

focus on crimes against the civil population, especially in Serbia and Galicia. Thousands of people were accused of spying without any evidence, expelled and even executed. Film documentaries like *Kaiser Franz Joseph und der Erste Weltkrieg* or *Die Macht der Bilder* apply new animation technologies to visualize the atrocities of World War I. By zooming in on the pictures of executions and dwelling for some seconds on the faces and dead bodies of older men, women, and even children, the gruesome fate of thousands of people and the feeling of lawlessness becomes tangible.

Documentary movies of 2014 finally reflected the disappearance of old resentments toward Serbs passed on for a long time. Peter Patzak's feature film *Gavre Princip: Himmel unter Steinen* was attacked even in 1999 by an Austrian newspaper. Director Patzak presented on the one hand occasionally brutal-acting Austrian-Hungarian law enforcers, and on the other hand a sensible, clever, and fragile assassin having grown up in poverty. The Austrian daily paper *Kronen Zeitung* headlined "Peter Patzak Honored Murdering Boy" and insinuated treason.⁸ At that time, the Serbs were still considered an enemy by some people. Nowadays, documentaries also include the Serbian side. In *Der Weg in den Untergang*, not only do Austrian and Serbian historians and scientists give differing views of the conflict, the Serbian remembrance of The Great War is even a central part of the film. Two musicians play old Serbian melodies composed during World War I. In history lessons, Serbian pupils learn about

8 Peter Patzak quoted this headline in an interview ("Patzak setzt Mörderbuben ein Denkmal"). Cf.: Andreas Ungerböck, Karin Moser, Roman Scheiber, "Ich habe mit der Spitzhacke hineingeschlagen, alles war Stein" in *Peter Patzak: Filmemacher, Autor, Maler*, ed. Karin Moser and Andreas Ungerböck (Wien: filmarchiv austria, 2009), 34.

the successful battles of the Serbs and about the massacre of Šabac in August 1914, where the civil population was murdered by soldiers of the Austrian-Hungarian army. At the mass grave, the son of a survivor tells the young people about the crime and asks them to preserve the memory of the victims.

But concerning war crimes, one question is missed: Is there also an individual kind of guilt? What about the guilt of the single soldier? Only in one documentary—*Krisen, Morde, Bürgerkriege* (2014, directed by Andreas Nowak and Wolfgang Stickler)—this topic briefly sketched: In 1918, a commission of lawyers started to examine “breaches of duty” during the War. The investigations considered revising bad treatments and punishments by soldiers, death penalties and executions. But the commission was interfered with; records disappeared and were kept under lock. War crimes against the civil population were, at least, not sanctioned. The leaders of the old system, (for example, military personnel, but also lawyers), who still filled important positions after 1918, had no interest in critical approaches to the “last chapter” of the monarchy and its army. Traditional mentalities, resentments, and enemy images prevailed in the long run.

Furthermore, nearly all the films produced in the memorial year carry the message that World War I was a prelude to World War Two. Potential for violence increased, and the use of weapons of mass destruction became habitual. Above all, the rise of fascist and racist ideas is discussed: Resettlements of people in order to create “ethnic pure” territories at the Eastern border (*Kaiser Franz Joseph und der Erste Weltkrieg*), anti-Semitic attacks especially in the East (*Die Macht der Bilder*), using the Jews as scapegoats for losing the war and the social crises after World War I (*Krisen, Morde, Bürgerkriege*). Feature films also refer to anti-Semitism: The examining magistrate Leo Pfeffer (*Das Attentat: Sarajevo 1914*) is attacked because he is a Croatian Jew. In the biopic drama, *Clara Immerwahr*, (2014, directed

by Harald Sicheritz) the husband of the main character, a leading chemist, is mocked and called an “artificial Aryan.”

Several films—documentaries as well as features—end with a view toward poverty, suffering, economic crises, and remilitarization after World War I, as well as the atrocities of World War II. Often, the number of victims are compared: violence leads to more violence. There is always an invitation to reflect.

Personalization

“What is heroism? There are no heroes!” –Franz Künstler, survivor of World War I⁹

Various studies show that documentaries with biographical background generate more interest. Personal access seems to be more attractive to the audience.¹⁰ Anecdotes, peculiarities, and family history make political, economic, and social facts digestible to viewers. Thus film documentaries nowadays tend to use typical feature film styles and elements. And as Robert A. Rosenstone ascertained: “Film insists on history as the story of individuals, either men or women (but usually men) who are already renowned, or men and women who are made to seem important because they have been singled out by the camera.”¹¹

9 Statement of Franz Künstler (soldier of World War I) in the film documentary *Kaiser Franz Joseph und der Erste Weltkrieg*, directed by Andreas Nowak (2014).

10 Sönke Neitzel, “Der Erste Weltkrieg in den Geschichtsdokumentationen des ZDF,” in *Der Erste Weltkrieg im Film*, ed. Rainer Rother, Karin Herbst-Messlinger (Munich: edition text + kritik, 2009), 224.

11 Robert A. Rosenstone, “The Historical Film: Looking at the Past in a Postliterate Age,” in *The Historical Film: History and Memory in Media*, ed. Marcia Landry (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 50–66.

As a matter of fact, films about World War I released in 2014 also focused on personal biographical elements and stories.¹² Two productions deal with the life stories of important, confident women who fought against conventional patriarchal structures, misogyny, and war. The dull and underwhelming biopic film *Eine Liebe für den Frieden*, (2014, directed by Urs Egger) is less focused on the strong character and work of Nobel Peace Prize Winner Bertha von Suttner. On the contrary, her relationship to Alfred Nobel dominates the story, narrated in a dime novel style. In the end there remains only one question among the audience: How intimate was their relationship?

Clara Immerwahr, on the other hand, succeeds in presenting a rich and complex picture of a highly intelligent, spirited Jewish woman who is ultimately ruined by a patriarchal militant system. She attained an admission to study at the university level, was the first woman with a degree in chemistry in Germany, and worked together with her husband Fritz Haber at the technical university of Karlsruhe. The film impressively shows how Clara is more and more restricted by conventions, male chauvinism, (even from her husband), and by the political system. We sense that she is more and more cornered by the expressive play of Katharina Schüttler, by narrowing camera angles, by alternating light and shadow and dark color patterns. Clara publicly condemned the use of poison gas and shot herself in protest.

Movies are fiction, and in order to attract the public interest, dramatization and emotionalizing strategies are utilized. Highlighting positive and negative characteristics of the protagonists and creating popular and unpopular figures provide

12 This of course also includes *Das Attentat: Sarajevo 1914*. Here the story is narrated from Leo Pfeffer's point of view.

orientation to the audience and specify the interpretation.¹³ Regarding the Great War, family stories are very popular to evoke empathy. The year 1914 marks the dramatic turning point and offers extensive personal emotional referents. Everybody is affected by the conflict, suffers deprivations, and loses relatives in the War. Contemporary personal family stories (such as the experiences of grandparents and great-grandparents) are in this manner connected to fictitious dynasties. Big politics changed the life of every single person. After 1945, the rare Austrian feature films that refer to World War I mostly center around these kinds of family stories.¹⁴ In 2014, one production picked up this type of plot: *Der stille Berg*, (2014, directed by Ernst Gossner) focuses on an Austrian-Italian family and the conflict in the Dolomite Alps. During a wedding party, the message of the outbreak of war is transmitted. Exactly in this moment, a wedding photo is shot. The shocked faces of the guests are freeze-framed on the picture. Henceforth, the family is divided. Friends and relatives find themselves confronting each other as enemies. The War is a severe test for relationships, whether between lovers, relatives, or friends. The exceptional situation intensifies positive and negative traits. The popular figures act as opponents of war, the negative characters serve as denounciators (an envious Austrian teacher) and fanatical warmongers (a narcissistic Italian commander). The central Austrian-Italian lovers survive the War and dream of a new life in the New World: America.

Broadcasting companies and film production companies tend to focus on interesting, now and then ambivalent, historical persons for the sake of popularity. The whole story of historic

13 See also the theoretical explanations of Sönke Neitzel concerning TV documentaries: Neitzel, *Geschichtsdokumentationen*, 219, 232.

14 Moser, "Visuelles Erinnern," 241–245.

events is structured around one or several “persons of interest.”¹⁵ In *Der Weg in den Untergang*, the central figure is General Oskar Potiorek, military governor of Bosnia-Herzegovina. His role at the beginning of the War and during the conflict, as well as his character, are closely examined. The circumstances that lead to World War I are explained, but the plot always returns to Potiorek. We learn from commentary that Gavrilo Princip wanted to kill him (instead of Sophie Chotek) and Franz Ferdinand. Re-enactment scenes emphasize the information we get about Potiorek. His reaction to the assassination attempt is demonstrated in the facial expression of the actor playing the part of Potiorek. He always tries to divert attention from his failures in guarding the convoy of Franz Ferdinand and Sophie. For this purpose, he blamed and attacked the government circles in Serbia and constantly demanded an act of reprisal. The first attack against Serbia commanded by Potiorek in August 1914 is accompanied by his diary entry: “Today my war started!” Again and again, we see the artist performing his part, writing letters, looking contemplative and grave through the window of his office. (He never talks.) His face is spotlighted to be able to observe mimic art in every detail. Blurred colors, brown, green and grey shades generate the idea of a historical atmosphere. In contrast to Potiorek, his “enemies,” the Serbs, are presented in contemporary film clips or animated sceneries. The Serbian people are portrayed in a human, fun-loving, and peaceful way; scenes of everyday life, of family celebrations, contradict the picture of a violent ethnic group spread by the propaganda. The filming in the Šabac of today—with the pupils and the son of the survivor of the massacre—affirm this impression. The spectators are motivated to build a positive relationship with the Serbs and to adopt a more distanced attitude to Potiorek and thus to the leaders of the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy.

15 This reflects the experiences of the author (who is also scriptwriter) with broadcasting companies (ORF, Arte) and film production companies.

Nowadays, sovereigns are certainly no longer the central figures of memorializing art. Film documentaries maybe still pretend to have the story of a monarch in focus by choosing a sovereign-oriented title, but the voices of the people have become more and more important. In *Kaiser Franz Joseph und der Erste Weltkrieg*, we still find generally known icons of the Emperor (the huntsman, the old, quirky ruler) whose honor dictated that he start the War. But we have counterparts: Fairly old Austrian and Italian soldiers describe the unvarnished truth of wartime experiences, for example, how dead bodies of troopers were used by the Italians to cover and protect them from bullets. The Austrian soldier describes the physical reactions to a gas attack: burning in his nose and throat and the blinding of comrades.

The 2014 film documentary *1918: Ende und Anfang* (2014, directed by Robert Gokl) is completely dominated by voices, voices of the rulers and the people.¹⁶ The so-called “communicative memory” has an important role in films released in the memorial year, although 100 years have passed. The “communicative memory” is linked to a personal horizon of experience and therefore dependent on contemporary witnesses. But also their direct descendants are carriers of this memory if they experienced real daily life contact to them. So personal conversations, but also personal letters and diary entries of the contemporary witnesses, are parts of the “communicative memory.”¹⁷

16 Not one single expert (e.g. a historian) takes part in this film documentary.

17 According to the cultural scientist Jan Assmann, the “collective memory” is composed of the “communicative memory” and the “cultural memory.” The “cultural memory” is far abstracted from the personal carriers of memory (contemporary witnesses, for example) and is shaped by the meanings and values of the present society. Cf.: Jan Assmann, “Kollektives Gedächtnis und kulturelle Identität,” in *Kultur und Gedächtnis*, ed. Jan Assmann, Tonio Hölscher (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), 9–19.

In 1918: *Ende und Anfang*, interviews from earlier years, sometimes decades-old, are reused to give people a voice. Sound recordings of Emperor Karl I, Empress Zita, and Heinrich Schuhmann, the personal cinematographer of Karl, represent the perspective of the dynasty. Through the personal statements and reactions of the first-person witnesses, we get an impression of the attitude to life in these days during and after World War I. One woman—incited by the filmmaker—starts to sing the old hymn of the Emperor. Another lady explains that there was never enough food, but she wanted her father to eat more. So whenever she finished half of her meal, she pretended to have had enough. Such little personal stories evoke empathy, here for a girl who loves her father. A soldier speaks to the different treatment of ordinary soldiers and officers: People fighting at the front nearly starved, receiving substandard food, while the military leaders without combat mission had four meals during the day. An audio recording of Karl I during the War provides another image: In his propaganda statement, the Emperor presents an ideal of a united Austrian-Hungarian army full of fighting spirit and confidence. His personal cinematographer Heinrich Schuhmann describes a totally different situation, which gives the impression that Karl officially played a role but in reality was shocked by the experiences on the battlefields. Once, they came to a place where a whole regiment was exterminated. The Emperor started to cry, prayed, and wanted to end the War.

The stories give insight into a time of misery, hunger, fear, and insecurity.¹⁸ After the war, nobody knew what the future will bring, the old familiar system having ended. This atmosphere is

18 Even the recording of Empress Zita gives an impression of end time, being left alone. She describes the last hours in Schloss Schönbrunn and how the guards disappeared little by little—only their weapons were left in a corner.

captured by interviews and sound recordings, while the re-enactment scenes of the war failed.¹⁹

In a quite personal view, the programs on World War I were designed by the nine federal studios of the Austrian broadcasting station ORF. The story of the Great War was focused on local history. Television broadcasts gave an insight into living conditions of the rural population, showed aspects of the daily life of women in the regions during the War, reported about one of the worst prisoner-of-war camps in Salzburg, and presented the works and destinies of Styrian artists (painters and photographers) who had been in service for the propaganda department.²⁰ Diary entries, letters, photos, and souvenirs provided by the general public helped to create a folk, popular memory. The audience was invited to become a producer themselves by adding their family memorabilia.²¹ By sharing their memories with others, they start to recreate the commemorative culture.

19 We see pictures of dead soldiers, which are interrupted by shots with a handheld camera. These scenes demonstrate an escape on the battlefield accompanied by dramatic piano sounds. The whole sequence is constructed and artificial.

20 Pressemappe ORF: Gedenkjahr 2014. 100 Jahre Erster Weltkrieg, 2014, 29–33, March 15, 2016, http://programm.orf.at/dateien/55545_100_Jahre_Erster_Weltkrieg.pdf.

21 This tendency in program design (inviting the population to add their family stories and souvenirs) has been apparent for several years. Cf.: David Williams, *Media: Memory, and the First World War* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 279.

Global emotions

*“It was possible for us to travel from the Atlantic to the Bosphorus in a few days. [...] Anything was possible; we only had to desire it hardly.”*²²

The reminiscence of the First World War is nowadays a global phenomenon. No longer do individual nations have their more or less self-contained memory; different aspects and views are demanded, and they are already standard, in the cinematic reappraisal as elsewhere. The common (especially European) remembrance was obvious in numerous commemoration ceremonies also broadcasted on television.²³ Moreover, almost all the documentaries from 2014 (such as *Kaiser Franz Joseph und der Erste Weltkrieg* or *Der Weg in den Untergang*) pictured World War I as a global, and not only European, conflict.

The 2014 three-part TV documentary series *Der taumelnde Kontinent*, (2014, directed by Robert Neumüller and based on the eponymous book by Philipp Blom) also followed a pan-European perspective but concentrated on the period before 1914. Political, economic, technical, social, and cultural evolutions in Germany, France, Austria-Hungary, the United Kingdom, and Russia are presented as connected. The variations in experience, positive and negative, at the beginning of the modern age is revealed. Industrialization, motorization, freedom of movement, consumer

22 *14 Tagebücher des Ersten Weltkriegs*, directed by Jan Peter (2014), Part I, opening comment.

23 This involves, for example, intercultural and international concerts in remembrance of the victims of World War I: “Europe Sings: Opening of the Wiener Festwochen” or “Memorial Concert 1914–2014 in Sarajevo.” Pressemappe ORF: Gedenkjahr 2014. 100 Jahre Erster Weltkrieg, 2014, March 15, 2016, 26, http://programm.orf.at/dateien/55545_100_Jahre_Erster_Weltkrieg.pdf.

culture, trends in sexual liberation, the women's movement, political mass movements, eugenics and anti-Semitism are exemplified by more or less well-known personalities. The message of *Der taumelnde Kontinent* is that European nations had already been interlinked before 1914, intellectually, mentally, but also culturally and economically. Every action of a nation or a country affects the rest of the continent.

Connection instead of disconnection is the guiding principle of the films broadcasted in 2014. Again and again, personal writings are used to show similarities of experience of the "enemies." Based on diaries and letters from 35 countries, the 2014 international large-scale production *14 Tagebücher der Ersten Weltkriegs*, (2014, directed by Jan Peter) recounts the history of the Great War through the individual fates of participants known through pictures and writings. The experience of war is portrayed through the point of view of female and male soldiers, nurses, children, female workers, journalists, housewives, and artists. The starting commentary of every episode appeals to a sense of collective community. This strong community is presented by emotional attachment. Emotions, fears, and privations are the same in Austria-Hungary or Serbia, in France or Germany. Re-enactment scenes, letters, and documentary footage are skillfully connected and convey an atmospheric picture from the outbreak of the War, from the front lines, from those who stayed at home, and from the end of the struggle. Psychic and physical exertions, longing for family and for lovers, and fear of death are the essence of writings left from the War. The presented individuals have more in common than they have differences. By connecting individual war experiences, the idea of global emotions is demonstrated.

The director of *14 Tagebücher der Ersten Weltkriegs*, Jan Peter, explained in an interview that this series is a kind of new genre. He named it "documentary feature film" (*Dokumentarischer*

Spielfilm).²⁴ Actually, Peters arranged a play of the senses in an impressive manner: On the one hand, the spectator starts to have a personal relationship with the portrayed characters, as we learn about their life journey, their family environment, and their motives to fight, to help, to survive. Close-up shots of the faces of the actors let us observe their emotions in detail. By combining their writings with re-enactment scenes and documentary film footage, the senses of the audience are activated: We seem to hear, smell, and even feel what happened to them.

In one of the eight episodes, wounds and disability are the central topics. A fifteen-year-old Cossack woman, Marina Yurlova, is wounded. The army doctor decides to amputate one of her legs. Through her writings, and through the re-enactment scenes, we become aware of her panic, fear, despair, and her struggle for the preservation of her leg. At least she succeeds; we hear actors reading out lines of letters written by soldiers who lost limbs: They feel incomplete, useless, and are afraid of their future. They see no more sense in life. They describe in a comprehensive way their pains and the sense of still feeling the lost limb. Voices of “nurses” report about terrible cries of pain and the permanent smell of blood (“I live in a world of bandages and blood!”). Sounds and smells in some sequences become dominant. For an example, in picturing gas attacks, commentary and pictures are skillfully connected. Re-enactment parts are interrupted by documentary film material and combined with lines from letters. The voices of the soldiers of the past report of the smell of chlorine, the painful irritations of the throat, the impossibility of breathing. In such a way, the War is perceptible in its diversity of terror and violence. The senselessness of the War is strikingly illustrated.

24 *Making of 14 Tagebücher des Ersten Weltkriegs*, directed by Reinaldo Pinto Almeida.

The documentary film series *14 Tagebücher der Ersten Weltkriegs* is significant for the development of Austrian and probably also European filmmaking. Large-scale productions can only be financed in a cooperative effort between several countries. The microcosm of a state or nation is no longer in focus; on the contrary, the global importance of events has to be presented. But film producers are also interested in utilizing current political and social attitudes. Therefore, the film productions on the occasion of the 100-year anniversary reflect social values and norms of a dominant memorial community. Present demands of this community determine how the history of the Great War has to be read.²⁵

Broadcasting companies, film producers, and (also political) funding institutions, as well as sponsors, develop an extended visual memory and affect the current and future commemorative culture sustainably. The message is clear: World War I was a global phenomenon and is a memorial for the whole of Europe. Mutual understanding is demanded; the political and military forces of all involved countries are to blame for the outbreak of war. The horrors of the First World War were the beginning of a long, painful process characterized by setbacks, leading to a European policy of agreement and peace. Thus film and television prepare a culture of memory apart from the mostly nation-focused historiography.²⁶

25 Siegfried J. Schmidt, *Die Welten der Medien: Grundlagen und Perspektiven der Medienbeobachtung* (Braunschweig: Vieweg, 1996), 65.

26 Cf.: *Salzburger Nachrichten*, March 21, 2016, <http://www.salzburg.com/nachrichten/oesterreich/politik/sn/artikel/1914-nationaler-blick-auf-krieg-dominiert-95878/>.