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**Grand Tour – a film in-debt(ed): Exploring the possibilities of the
essayistic filmmaking form.**

Begklis, Fotios

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Grand Tour – a film in-debt(ed)

Exploring the possibilities of the essayistic filmmaking form.

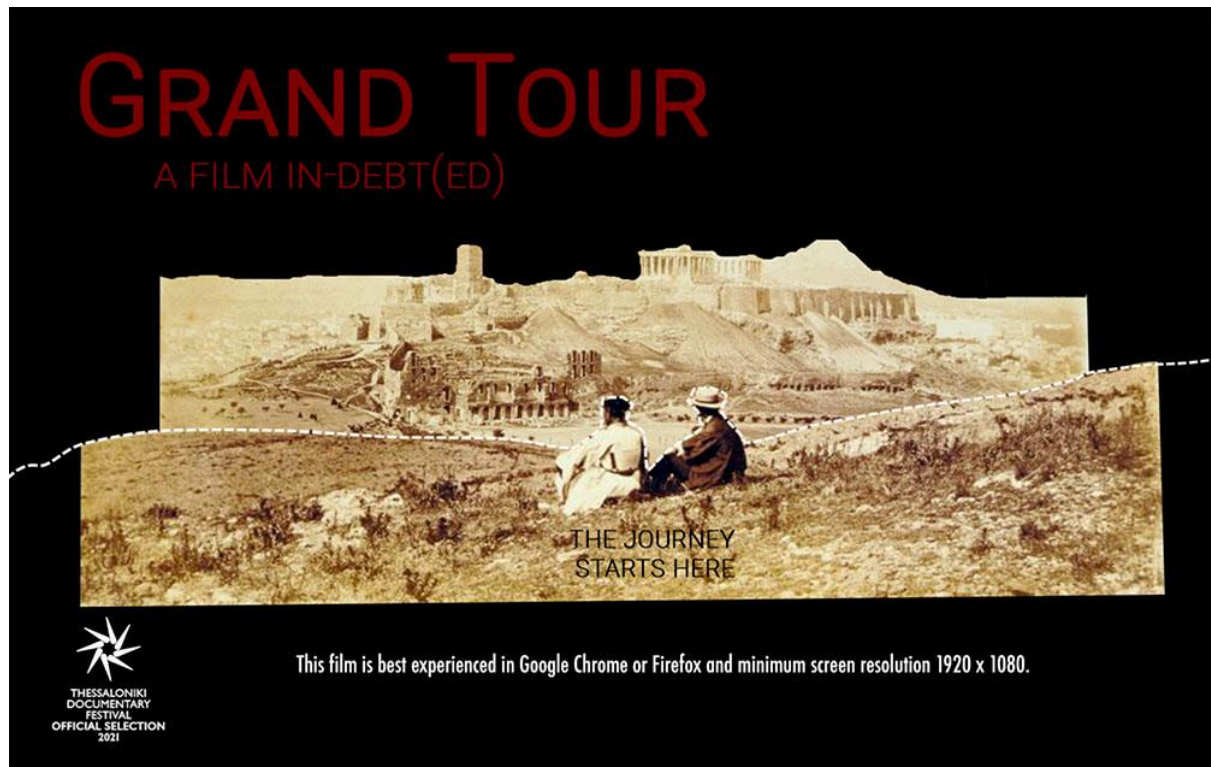


Figure 1 - Grand Tour's home page

Fotios Begklis

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

University of Westminster, London

Abstract

This practice-as-research thesis concentrates on the field of essayistic filmmaking. Through my practice and the written thesis, I explore how the montage of interwoven layers of images, sound, interactivity and networking connectivity can potentially expand the conventions of essayistic filmmaking practice. At the heart of my research is the creative practice of researching and developing an online essay film, *Grand Tour a film in-debt(ed)*. The film explores an alternative reading of the recent Greek financial crisis without explicitly addressing the crisis, but in the tradition of essayistic filmmaking, by exploring the disjunctive threads that make links with the past and open the present to new interpretations. The development of *Grand Tour* is grounded in multiple iterative prototypes. Based on this incremental research process, I explore the possibilities of multiple interwoven layers of montage and the new creative potentials this creates for essayistic filmmaking practice. I define the montage of multiple interwoven temporalities as metabatic, and through the practice of developing *Grand Tour*, I suggest an alternative way of thinking about the recent Greek financial crisis which challenges the dominant narratives.

My inspiration for developing *Grand Tour* is drawn from the writings of European travellers who visited Greece in the 18th and 19th centuries. For more than eight years I immersed myself in extensive archival research and developed several online film prototypes. Through this research I understood the role that these travellers had in the formation of the emerging modern Greek identity and explored their links to subsequent political and financial interventions and the accumulation of debt in the modern Greek state. Following the essayistic filmmaking tradition, I dialectically associate the financial debt with the cultural debt of ancient Greece, suggesting modes of ambiguity and speculative thinking that describe Greece as a place in a constantly disjointed state, defined by a series of fragmented political, economic and cultural past and present encounters. The creative process of my practice is a montage of multiple disjunctive fragments where linearity is constantly disrupted. My iterative creative practice and the disjunctive nature of the film do not offer specific answers and fixed interpretations. Instead,

they suggest and explore questions, and enable new essayistic threads, that challenge the current limited narratives about the Greek financial crisis.

Dedication

While I was in the final period of writing this thesis my father died. The following year, after a struggle with Alzheimer's, my mother died. I dedicate this work to both of them.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to my supervisors Sandra Gaudenzi and Michael Godard for all their support and comments, which enabled me to complete this work. I also want to thank Prof. Joram ten Brink for his help in starting this research project many years ago – his enthusiasm for this project was an inspiration - it has been a great pleasure working with him. I thank Prof. Tom Corby for his guidance to contextualise my work within the broad practice as research methodologies; it has been a privilege working with him. My thanks also go to Peter Goodwin for his helpful wisdom in giving me the last push to finish this thesis.

Finally, my deepest gratitude to my partner Sally Pomme Clayton for her support and participation in all aspects of this work.

Author's Declaration

I declare that all of the material contained in this thesis is my own work. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

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How to access and play *Grand Tour*

The current form of *Grand Tour* is not fully compatible with all web browsers and screen resolutions or with mobile devices. To fully access and experience the film you need to use the latest version of Google Chrome, you need a screen with a minimum resolution of 1920 by 1080 pixels and you need to have disabled any active adblockers, site blockers and web trackers. *Grand Tour* does not collect any personal data from the viewer accessing the film; however, viewers need to deactivate any adblockers because the film incorporates embedded layers of social media feeds. *Grand Tour* can also be accessed and fully experienced via private browsing, which all web browsers offer without disabling adblockers, site blockers and web trackers. The film is developed based on Google Chrome's specifications; however, it also works on other popular browsers such as Firefox and Edge. However, on these browsers the film has not been user tested and might not function as expected. For example it does not start automatically, and the viewer needs to select the play button in the top left corner. It partially works on Android and Apple based mobile devices.



Figure 2 - Grand Tour's home page

To fully access and experience the film you need to use Google Chrome with a minimum of 1920 by 1080 pixels screen resolution, and you need to have disabled any active adblockers and site blockers.

If your screen does not support 1920 by 1080 resolution you can use the zoom out option under your browser's view menu to make the film smaller to fit within the resolution of your screen.

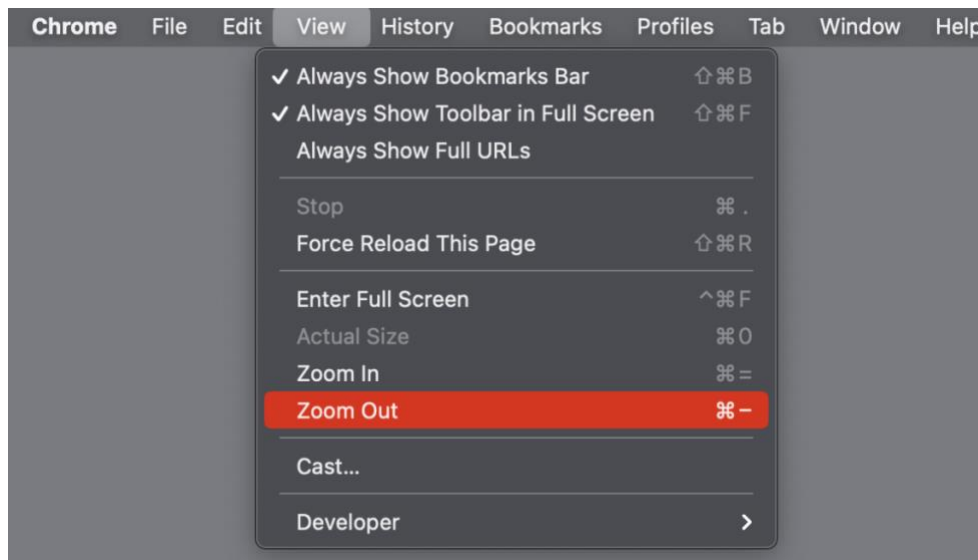


Figure 3 - Zoom in and out in a web browser.

If you don't want to deactivate adblockers you can also fully access the film using Chrome's incognito window for private browsing (or Firefox's private window).

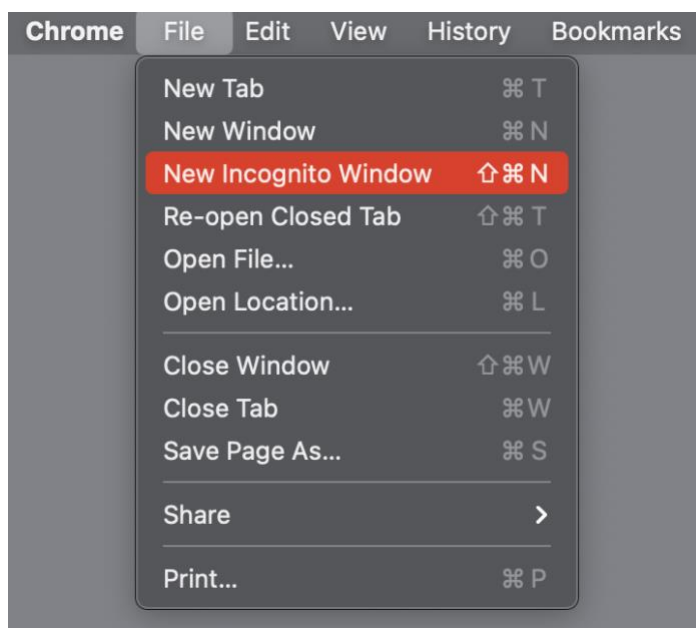


Figure 4 - Activate private view.

The film starts automatically; however, if it does not start automatically, click on the play/pause toggle button in the top left-hand corner of the screen (A) to start it. The red dots at the top of the screen (B) are active hot spots and if you click on any of them, they will take you to different parts of the film. Small flashing arrows and vertical lines within the cinematic frame (C) suggest the presence of interactive elements. Please use the scrolling wheel of your mouse to interact with these parts of the film by scrolling up and down.

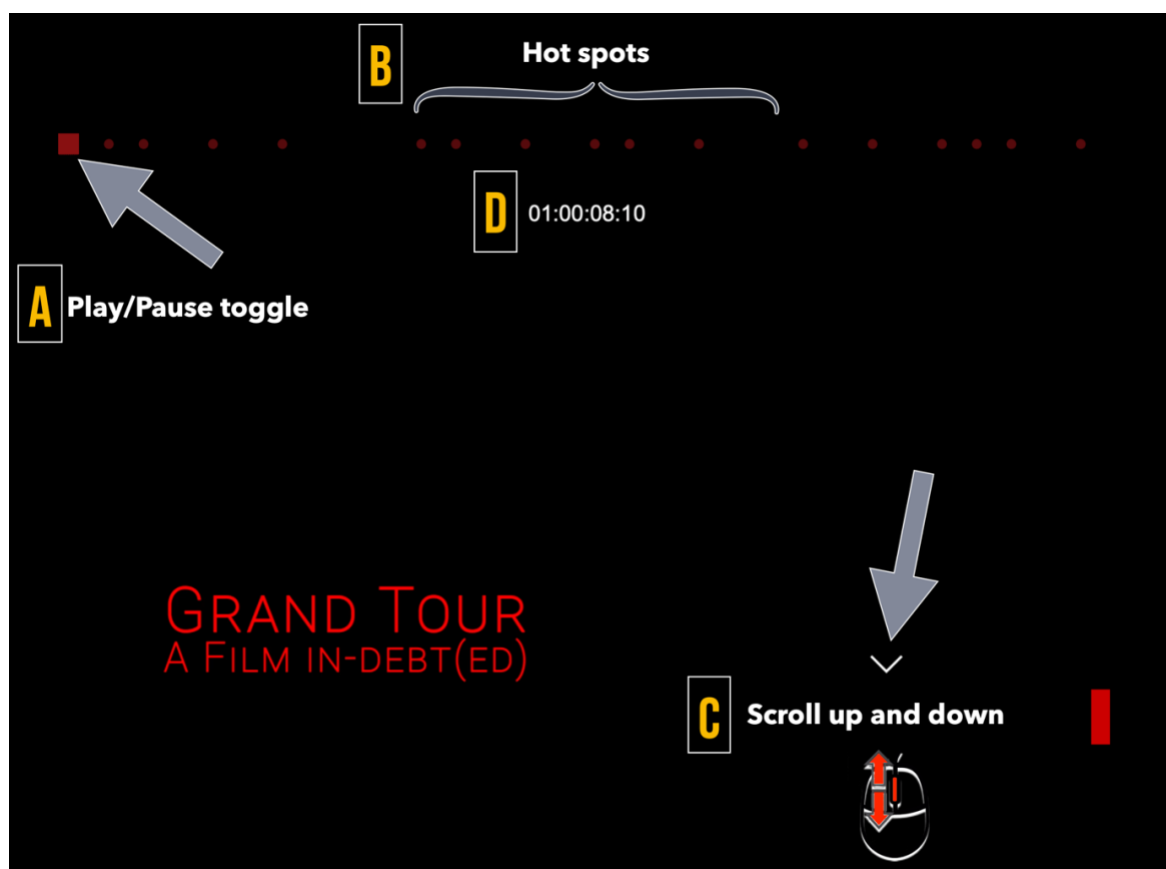


Figure 5 - How to access Grand Tour.

The official URL of the film is www.thegrandtourfilm.uk; however, I created a version specifically for my PHD submission with a visible timecode (D) that may help you locate parts of the film that I discuss in my written thesis. This is the URL for the timecode version: www.thegrandtourfilm.uk/index_phd.html.

Grand Tour – a film in-debt(ed):

Exploring the possibilities of the essayistic filmmaking form

“You are going to see a beautiful country” – this was what I was repeating to myself at the same time. The name of Greece, even more than that of Spain or Italy, is full of promise. You will not meet with a young man in whom that name does not awaken ideas of beauty, of light, and of quiet happiness. The least studious school-boys, who inveigh most eloquently against Greek history and Greek translations, even if they fall asleep over their lexicon, they dream of Greece.

(About 1857, pp.1-2)

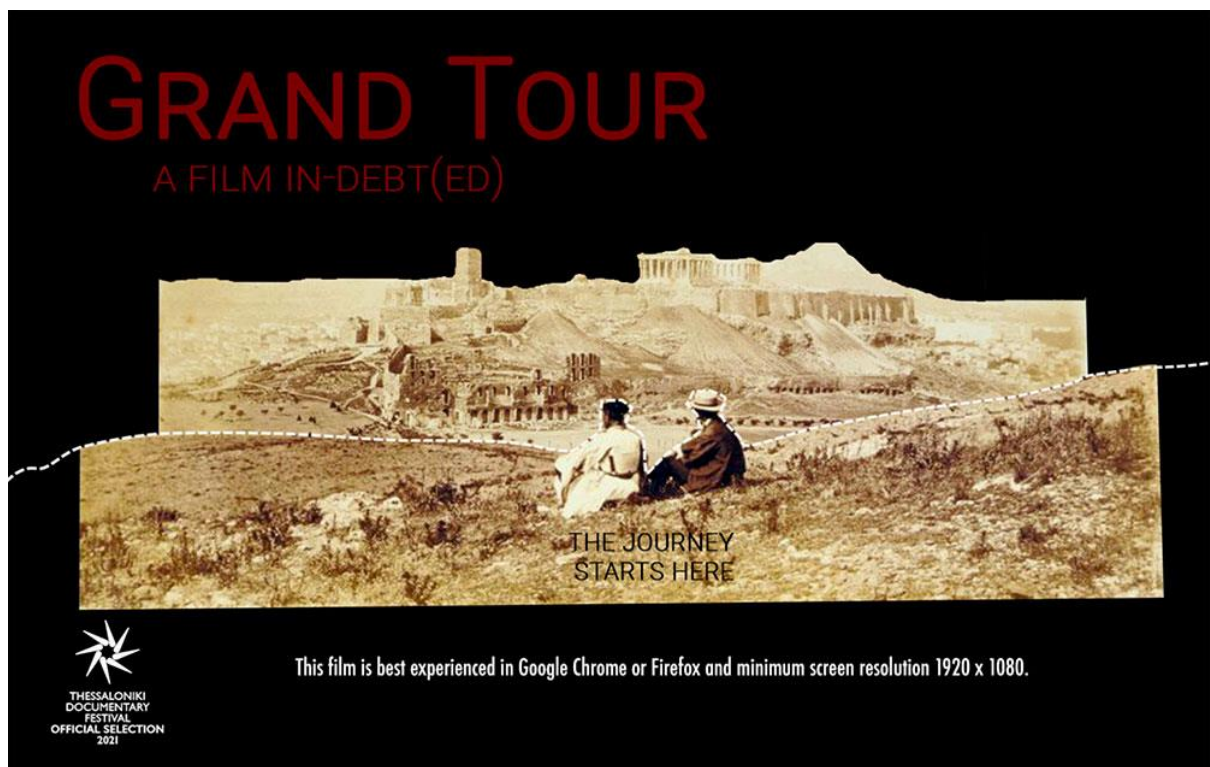


Figure 6 - Grand Tour's home page.

1. Introduction

The online essay film *Grand Tour* is at the centre of this practice as research project (PaR). The film is inspired by and based on the writings of 18th- and 19th-century travellers to Greece. These travellers' accounts describe Greece 200 years ago, on the eve of its first-ever default. The film also describes Greece 200 years later, in the middle of its fourth default crisis (Manolopoulos 2011; Gourinchas, Philippon & Vayanos 2016; Varoufakis 2017; Hamilakis 2016). Greek debt has resulted in four significant default episodes and Greeks have suffered a series of devastating foreign debt crises. In total the country has been in a state of default for about 50 per cent of the time since 1821, the year of Greece's independence (Reinhart & Rogoff 2011, p.21). The solutions after each crisis have been similar: a series of externally imposed austerity programmes. The effects of these programmes, that are meant to rescue Greece, have been devastating (Reinhart & Rogoff 2011, p.21). *Grand Tour* draws on the discourses of the Greek crisis, suggesting an alternative reading of modern Greek reality in the context of its relationship with the past. The film moves backwards and forwards in time and juxtaposes and synthesises a multi-layered montage of videos, archive images, animations and social media posts augmented by interactivity that interweaves these elements together. *Grand Tour* draws on the essayistic film's form of disjunctive, dialectic, playful and subjective qualities to invite an open and creative rethinking of the recent Greek economic and social crisis. The sub-heading of the title of the film (*in-debt(ed)*) refers to the classical debt of the modern western world to ancient Greek culture and the accumulated financial debt of modern Greece to Europe (Tziovas 2014; Hanink 2017). This playful arrangement of words suggests a dialectic and ambivalent association between these two distinct debts,

amplifying further the dialectic tensions between past and present and emphasising the dialectic potentials of the film.

1.1 The 'crisis'

Most of the recent international media coverage and widespread political and economic attention Greece has recently attracted is defined by the 'crisis' (Tziovas 2014; Hamilakis 2016; Hanink 2017). This trend, to reduce Greece and Greek people to mere by-products of the economic 'crisis', has turned crisis into the key discourse that currently defines Greece, placing it under a narrow, restrictive and descriptive label. In ancient Greek, crisis (Greek: Η Κρίση) means 'choice' and 'judgment'. In the context of the recent Greek financial emergency its meaning takes exactly the opposite direction. The crisis limits political and economic choices and subsequently restricts the options of Greek people to re-invent society and imagine possible alternative future trajectories beyond the crisis. An example of this restricted framework is how the imposed austerity and political dependency on the Troika's decisions were presented as the only available option (Varoufakis 2017). My film explores ways to start thinking about Greece beyond this restrictive straitjacket of crisis. *Grand Tour* is an online essay film that is made as a response to this limiting narrative. It aims to resist 'Κρίση' as a reductive narrative and does so by looking at the crisis in an alternative way that confronts the 'crisis' as a predominantly financial narrative and explores new ways of engaging with the Greek past.

1.2 The context of this research

Grand Tour contributes to the debate about the crisis that has devastated Greek society socially, politically and economically (Gourinchas, Philippon & Vayanos 2016; Varoufakis 2017) but also exists as a research digital media artefact that supports the objectives of my thesis. One of the key research aims of creating *Grand Tour* is to reaffirm the essay film as a form that pushes the boundaries of filmmaking by exploring the central methodological and practical parameters of adding interactivity and networked connectivity within essayistic filmmaking practice through the possibilities of film montage. As Hudson and Zimmerman argue, following the analysis of 130 digital media projects, “digital objects are fluid, malleable, responsive and changing” (Hudson & Zimmerman 2015, p.5) and they have the potential to expand “thinking about analogue practices”, raising questions and challenging notions of representation, ethics, genre and authorship (Hudson & Zimmerman 2015, p.20). Following Hudson and Zimmerman’s argument, my intention is to explore the further potential of what an essay film is and what it can do, thereby expanding the understanding of the essayistic discourse.

The form of *Grand Tour* is unstable and fragmented and the montage of multiple layers, including interactive and social media layers, is the catalyst that sets a dialogical process in motion. *Grand Tour* employs film montage approaches inspired by Godard’s’ historic montage methods and Farocki’s soft montage techniques, interwoven with interactive elements and social media feeds to produce disjunctions, openness and uncertainty, which are common characteristics of the essayistic form (Corrigan 2011; Rascaroli 2017). The written thesis brings together the main writings of essay film theorists and practitioners and theories of film montage, networking and interactivity in

order to foster an understanding of its precedents and aesthetic roots, and explore the potentials for essayistic filmmaking. I will suggest in this thesis that we need to consider an essay film such as *Grand Tour* as a novel artefact which is expressed by the key conceptualisations of the essayistic filmmaking practice and the expressive qualities of interactivity, networked connectivity and montage.

1.3 The central axis of this research

The axis of my practice-led research revolves around characteristics and key qualities of the essay film genre. Central to the essay film are dialectical disjunctions and in-between spaces (Alter 2018; Deleuze 1997b; Montero 2012; Rascaroli 2017). Rascaroli notes that “the dialectical disjunction that is at the basis of the essay form creates in film in-between spaces that must be accounted for, in so much as they are central to the essay film’s functioning” (Rascaroli 2017, p.8). The term ‘in-between spaces’ is used as a process to develop the film and refers to the gaps, fissures and spaces between the multiple interwoven layers of the film. In *Grand Tour*, in-between spaces and dialectical disjunctions are moulded by montage and amplified by the interactive and networking qualities of the film. My key assumption is that an online essay film such as *Grand Tour* is different from a traditional linear essay film because it is unstable and interconnected, with multiple interwoven temporalities available throughout the film, therefore allowing viewers to develop a critical position and construct new meanings outside the linear temporal dimension of the film, not only in relation to the film’s expressive subjectivity (Lopate 1992; Rascaroli 2009) but also to the montage of images, sounds, interactivity and networking affordances of the film.

Grand Tour appropriates montage, interactivity and networked connectivity to enable an alternative essayistic film practice and create opportunities for critical reflection about essayistic filmmaking. It is worth emphasising here that essay films have always had the potential for inviting viewers to take part in the constructions of a film's meanings (Alter 2018; Montero 2012; Rascaroli 2017). However, the traditional linear essay film is constructed with the premise that the viewer will watch it from beginning to end in a linear manner following a particular line of arguments and thoughts, linked or contrasted with specific images within a particular timeframe. My argument is that this potential for inviting viewers into a continuous dialogue with the film and into the construction of a film's meanings can be intensified by the montage of multiple intersected temporalities and amplified by the pervasive use of interactive and networking elements.

1.4 Grand Tour

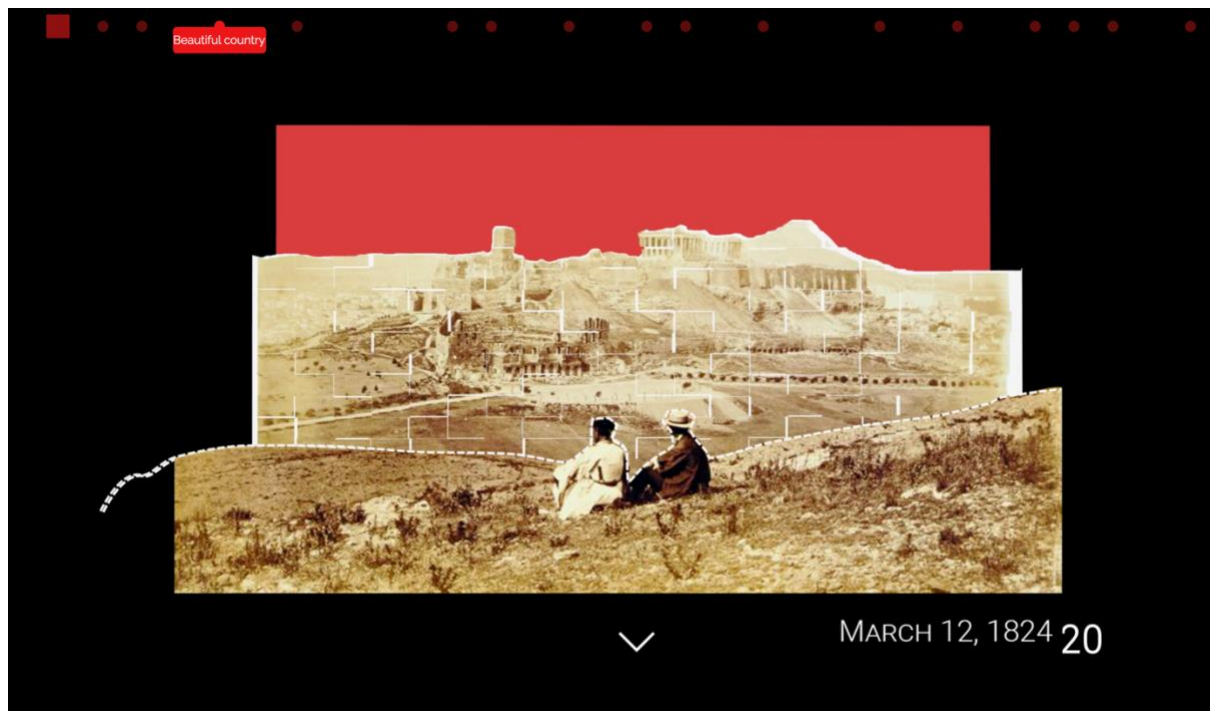


Figure 7 - Grand Tour's interface.

Grand Tour invites viewers to look at the past through the eyes of European travellers; to examine the present through my views of visiting Greece and collecting sound and images as another modern traveller; to interact with the interwoven layers and social media feeds, and to experience the actual shock of the disjunctions of all these layers folding, unfolding and interweaving together. The role of the interactive and networked elements are designed to draw the viewer in a simple way into the disjunctive filmic space between past and present, presence and absence. The main aim of this approach is to allow viewers, using the fluidity of interactivity and the plasticity of scrolling, to reimagine historical threads, underscored by the dialectic tensions between past and present and amplified by the possibilities of montage. In researching and developing the film, I aimed for continuity in respect to essayistic form, essay film aesthetics and filmmaking practice. The cinematic conception of

Grand Tour is contingent on the widely accepted and idealised form of how a linear film looks, defined by the rectangular cinematic frame. This form of film is linked to certain framing styles, visual techniques, editing and sound design principles according to accepted filming, genre and cultural conventions. However, *Grand Tour* as a film is also different. It deviates from the traditional filmmaking essayistic form by incorporating layers that do not apply to usual cinematic conception, pacing that is controlled by the viewer, interactive hot spots and interactive animations and embedded social media feeds. *Grand Tour's* multiple layers are constantly folding and unfolding in a fluid movement, which occurs within the cinematic frame and is driven by interactivity. The playful use of scrolling mainly carries the interactivity of the film and is its primary interaction mode. Interactivity operates as a cinematic feature of *Grand Tour* but most importantly as an essayistic device that aims to amplify the fragmentation and dialogic tensions of the film.

1.5 The structure of *Grand Tour*

Grand Tour is a film that is constructed from multiple interwoven layers. The underpinning skeleton of *Grand Tour* is structured around the axis of a 30-minute-long video that is referred to as the narration layer. While the narration layer is progressing horizontally, it triggers intertwined layers. The narration layer is constructed from video footage, motion graphics and animations and a voice-over. Its text contains letters, diaries and accounts from travellers who went to Greece during the 18th and 19th centuries read by a female voice; and reflections and thoughts read by me, a male voice. The intertwined layers are activated by the narration layer, and they include graphics, sounds, cut-out visuals, interactive animations triggered by the

viewer and multiple layers of social media feeds. The external layers are constrained within the rectangular frame of the film and viewers can interact with these layers by using their mouse to scroll up and down. The graph below gives a visual explanation of the logic and structure of *Grand Tour* (figure 8):

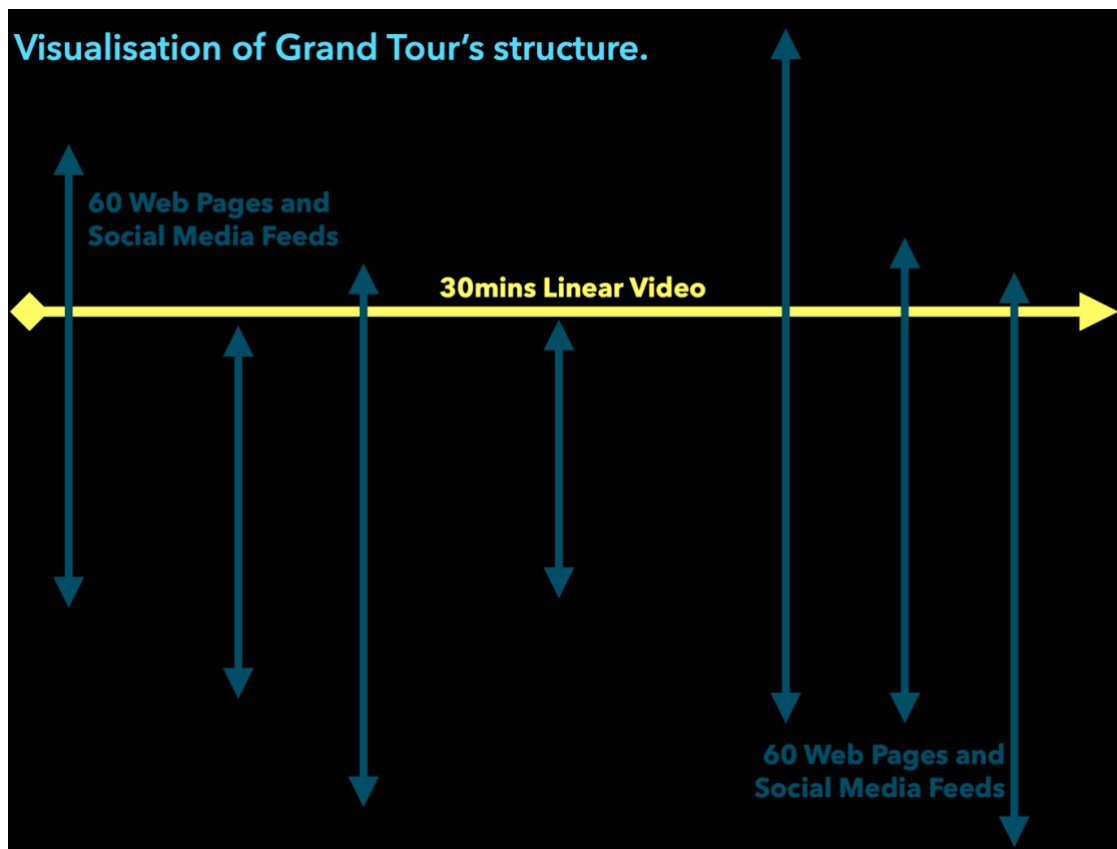


Figure 8 - *Grand Tour's* layers and structure.

This graph is a rigid and one-dimensional visualisation of the structure of *Grand Tour*. However, the visual conceptualisation and final disjointed shape of the film are inspired by the broken and fragmented bodies of the ancient Greek statues (figure 9) that I saw and studied in my visits to many archaeological sites and museums across Greece while researching and shooting *Grand Tour*.



Figure 9 - Kritios Boy statue at the National Archaeological Museum of Athens

One particular ancient Greek statue ignited my imagination in developing *Grand Tour* and I endeavoured to imaginatively reconstruct its visual qualities in my creative explorations (figure 10).



Figure 10 - Statue in the National Archaeological Museum of Athens.

The statue is exhibited at the National Archaeological Museum of Athens and depicts the body of a naked young man without head, arms and lower legs. Its body and legs are covered with many scratches and scars from the past: wear and deterioration inflicted by its being buried for many years, and by human

determination to excavate it. In developing *Grand Tour* I envisioned the body of the mutilated statue as the linear narration layer of the film, while the interactive layers cut into the film and the experience of watching it; like the carved lines traversing the body of the statue, these interwoven elements are inscribed onto the body and fabric of *Grand Tour*, as past and present exist in the statue. What this image and *Grand Tour* have in common is the emphasis on intersected tangible temporalities embodied by the multiple layers and inscriptions of the past.

1.6 The beginning of *Grand Tour*

The seed for this research was planted in my mind more than twenty years ago when I decided to shift the focus of my work from traditional filmmaking to interactive multimedia and web-based film production. My work has been greatly inspired by the multimedia work of Chris Marker, and Peter Gabriel's Real World Multimedia company. Filmmaker Chris Marker made *Immemory* (1997), a multimedia CD-ROM merging film clips and digital technology. In the booklet that accompanies the CD-ROM, the publisher describes how "Chris Marker has combined the key fragments of his life and work in the shape of interactive 'zones', about cinema, war, travels. He maps the imaginary country which extends before him." In an interesting twist, indicative of the short life span of digital artefacts, *Immemory* is now mainly accessible as a linear video on YouTube. Real World Multimedia reutilised Peter Gabriel's music and collaborated with visual artists such as Helen Chadwick to produce a number of interactive CD-ROMs. The two most successful productions were *XPLORA 1* (Coulson, 1993) and *EVE* (Coulson, 1996). I had the pleasure of playing both CD-ROMs and I still own a copy of *EVE*. Despite its age, *EVE* still looks and feels

fresh and modern and if you can find an old enough PC to access it, is still a very enjoyable experience.

1.7 New online frameworks

However, my attempts to integrate my filmmaking ideas into innovative interactive films failed in one way or another because of the medium's technical limitations. I mainly produced interactive CD-ROMs with short, low-resolution films that failed to materialise my ambition to create a fully immersive cinematic experience. However, during the last decade the rapid expansion of broadband internet access and network technologies, combined with a number of interactive video technologies and new HTML5 based video streaming frameworks that have been developed, has resulted in the resurrection of my very old dream. These web technologies employ new ways of encoding and compressing data, allowing the more efficient integration of videos, photos, comments and interactivity (Devlin 2012). All these new media frameworks and video streaming services, merged with the increasing use of social networking sites as central ways of connecting people (Shirky 2008; Lovink 2012; Fuchs 2013), have created the conditions for a new type of online video which is described as web native video (Dovey & Rose 2012, p.163). The key feature of web native videos is that they can play directly in any web browser without the need for specialised plugins. The early versions of all web browsers required specialised QuickTime, Flash or Windows Media Player plugins in order to play videos. This was considered to be a serious usability issue (Lawson & Sharp, 2011) and also isolated the online video content from the interconnected affordances of the web. It operated rather like a traditional TV set in a hypermediated environment (Dovey & Rose 2012, p.164). The most

popular plugin for accessing online video was Flash Player (Moss 2020). Apple's decision not to support Flash on iPhones and iPads made Flash obsolete and it was gradually displaced by the new browser HTML5 mark-up language and protocols (Devlin 2012). Currently, all popular browsers, including Chrome, Firefox, Safari and Edge, support native video playback (no plugins are required) by utilising the latest HTML5 mark-up language. *Grand Tour* utilises the latest HTML5 frameworks that support web native video. The key intention of using web native video is to draw the viewer into the cinematic space of the film in a simple and effortless way, without any technical barriers, pop-up windows or extra plugin requirements, and to fully exploit the interactive and networking affordances of the native capabilities of web browsers.

1.8 Interactive essay films

Exploring interactivity and networked connectivity in the context of essayistic film making is a problematic task because of the limited literature exploring interactive essay films. Furthermore, the existence of only one film, *Grey Skies/Blue Skies* (Brasier, 2014), as far as I know, which is defined as an interactive essay film, makes the contextualisation of *Grand Tour* even more complicated. Hannah Brasier is an academic and media practitioner who, as part of her PhD, produced *Grey Skies/Blue Skies*, a film she defines as an online interactive essay film. Brassier describes her film as interactive essay film that “attempts to translate a strong authorial thinking voice, characteristic of the essay film, to develop a multilinear voice specific to the online environment” (Brasier 2017, p.28). *Grey Skies/Blue Skies* was made using the Korsakow authoring software and it is accessible online on Brassier's personal web site. *Grey Skies/Blue Skies* has a very simple interface that allows viewers to follow a

non-linear poetic narrative by clicking on different actionable short video clips and aims to develop a multilinear essayistic voice. *Grey Skies/Blue Skies* is typical film made in the Korsakow system that follows the principles of database cinema, which I will explore in more detail in chapter two. Its multilinearity and narrative openness is fascinating; however, it is lacking interactive fluidity and filmic qualities. The starting point of my practice is that in making *Grand Tour* I aimed for continuity with essayistic film practices and film aesthetics. *Grand Tour* proposes a form of film that is an assemblage of cinematic conventions, interactive gestures and networked connectivity, conveyed through its montage aesthetics. Furthermore, in *Grand Tour* montage and interactivity functions as an essayistic rhetoric device that disrupts, both tangibly and metaphorically, the filmic linearity and continuity, in order to unwrap another hidden continuity, the historical continuity of the modern Greek nation being defined by debt, nostalgia for an elusive idealised ancient past and external political interference. The dialectic tensions between past and present define and drive the montage, interactivity, and social media manifestation of the film.

1.9 idocs

Because of the limited literature and the few interactive essay film paradigms, I expanded the scope of my study to a relatively new type of online film described as interactive documentaries (idocs). An idoc is very broadly defined as “any project that starts with the intention to engage with the ‘real’, and that uses interactive digital technology to realise this intention” (Aston & Gaudenzi 2012, p.124). The definition is very open and incorporates many different types of digital and online projects that have been labelled as web-docs,

transmedia documentaries and cross-platform docs. The key thread that connects all these idoc projects is that they incorporate elements of interactivity and documentary practice (Aston & Gaudenzi 2012). My thinking and my written thesis build on the work of interactive documentaries and the related scholarly research and practice. I focus in particular on their work around the concepts of interactivity. The starting point of how interactivity is understood in this thesis is based broadly on Andersen's classification that "An interactive work is a work where the reader can physically change the discourse in a way that is interpretable and produces meaning within the discourse itself" (Andersen 1990, p.89). I also take inspiration from Gaudenzi's (2013) investigation of the notion of "living documentary" (Gaudenzi 2013, p.72) and her work to conceptualise interactivity as an open and relational process where the "The user is not 'observing' the digital artefact, not 'controlling' it, but 'being transformed' by it" (Gaudenzi 2013, p.75). I also draw on the experiential dimensions of the interactive and the "potential to produce knowledge or understanding through embodied experience" (Nash 2021, p.7) from the perspective of the viewer. A last strand of my thinking follows and develops the notion of "para-functionality" established by Dunne (2008, p.43). Para-functionality describes art and design projects that exemplify functional estrangement, where function is used to encourage reflection and not functionality. Merging these four diverse bodies of research and thinking produces my conceptual framework in the context of my written thesis and my online essay film *Grand Tour*.

1.10 Metabatic montage

The biggest challenge of making a film such as *Grand Tour* is how to assemble all the separate interactive and networked audio-visual layers. Assembling all the individual parts of a film is what filmmakers define as montage. Montage, in its current cinematic state, has been around for more than a hundred years. In the early decades of the 20th century, Soviet filmmakers created the foundations of montage as we know it today (Dancyger 2018; Frierson 2018). This thesis, in the context of essayistic filmmaking and creating an online film such as *Grand Tour*, proposes a new conceptualisation of montage that is conveyed through cinematic conventions, interactive creative gestures and networked connectivity. This potential new notion of film montage is termed as metabatic montage. The term 'metabatic' originates from the Greek word *μετάβασης*, which describes the temporary transitional state between two distinctive modes. In the context of my work, metabasis describes the state of the film where the linear progression of the film is paused but at the same time the film is still progressing through the montage of its multiple interactive and networked interwoven layers. *Grand Tour* does not progress sequentially as a traditional linear essay film, but rather reacts and interacts dialogically with the viewer and the world and itself. *Grand Tour* is a film constructed by a metabatic montage of gaps, cracks and in-between spaces, ambiguities and disjunctions that tear apart the fabric of the film. Metabatic montage dialectically associates all these elements together, and is the key aspect of differentiation from traditional linear essay films. The written thesis interrogates the gaps or the in-between spaces the viewer experiences while watching *Grand Tour*. These spaces are carved into the fabric of the film and are defined by the disjunctions and juxtapositions between images and

different media, between the past and the present and between the viewer and the film. Metabatic montage is central to any understanding of *Grand Tour*. Montage in *Grand Tour* enables viewers to make multiple connections in an interconnected and interactive web of several layers that surround and shape the disjunctive structure of the film. *Grand Tour's* metabatic montage is augmented and amplified by interactivity and is used as a method of essayistic enquiry for reflexive exploration about the historical, cultural and political dimensions of Greek indebtedness and the past. Through the accounts of foreign travellers, *Grand Tour* explores the historical, political and social developments that began/occurred in Greek society 200 years ago. But it also explores the capacity of the film to make connections between past and present, ideas and conceptions and trace an essayistic trajectory that has always been there but was not visible.

1.11 The main research questions

In this written component of my PaR project, I focus on four key research themes and enquiries:

1. What possibilities emerge from the development of an online essay film in the exploration of the recent Greek crisis, and how might this develop new essayistic ways of thinking that counteract current narratives about the crisis?
2. To what degree do the creative practices of embedding interconnected temporalities within the layers of an online essay film offer potentially new possibilities of thinking about the Greek past and develop renewed ways of engaging with the present?

3. To what extent do the iterative prototypes and practical essayistic explorations of adding interactivity and networked connectivity as part of an online essay film potentially expand the conventions of essayistic filmmaking practices?
4. How can film montage practices, augmented by interactivity and networked connectivity, be deployed to explore and potentially amplify the dialectic possibilities of an online essay film, and how do they potentially expand earlier conceptualisations of film montage?

My research uniquely locates these questions in the exploration of essayistic film practice and emerges through the collision of digital media practice, interactivity, film montage and networked connectivity. The film is located at the intersection between digital media and essayistic filmmaking. This practice-based research is pertinent because it progresses the understanding of what an essay film can be. It is relevant to current practice and is a continuation of the cutting edge and experimental essay film tradition, maintaining the legacy of experimentation with the form and the latest technological developments (Alter 2018; Rascaroli 2017). Alter (2018) observes that “Historically, essays tend to appear in times of crisis” (2018, p.15), and she quotes Homi Bhabha that “In every state of emergency there is an emergence” (2018, p.15). *Grand Tour* is a response to such a crisis, which is still unfolding in Greece, but it is also an expression of this crisis. It is an attempt to create a film that reflects the (re)current economic disasters and fragmentation of Greek society. *Grand Tour* aims to resist being a reductive narrative and does so by looking at the crisis in an alternative way that confronts the ‘crisis’ as a dominant narrative and explores new dialectic forms of engaging with the Greek past as part of the present of Greece.

1.12 Thesis structure

The written thesis is divided into eight chapters. In the first chapter I introduce the project, its main arguments, theoretical references and the main research questions. The second chapter provides an overview of the methodological background to this study. I position my work within the context of academic practice-as-research (PaR), but also relate it to academic discussions that bring together academic inquiry and creative practice, such as practice-based and practice-led research. This discussion is followed by a review of the iterative development of *Grand Tour* and the design of several prototypes over six years, including the specific challenges and questions that I encountered during the development of the film. The iterative progression between the different stages of my artistic practice and exploration is also reflected in the structure of the thesis. From chapter three to chapter seven the thesis develops in a cyclical way through a series of layered iterative discussions about the key themes of this PaR project: essayistic filmmaking; film montage; Interactivity and social media. The progression of the thesis reflects my recursive methodological approach and the disjunctive interactive structure of the film. This mirrors the multidimensional and interdisciplinary journey across several non-linear developmental phases of creating *Grand Tour*, echoing the film's key themes of cyclical debt dramas, (re)current defaults and political disasters of modern Greece. Chapters three to seven each initiate an iterative cycle that appropriates and expands upon the previous themes and generates pertinent critical and theoretical foundations to support the research aims and practical explorations of the thesis. This process requires frequent cross referencing, signposting and to some degree repetitions and recurrences of themes, theoretical clarifications and arguments between the chapters. During

the final stages of editing the thesis I tried to minimise repetitions, overlaps and signposting. However, in order to maintain a coherent framework and conceptual thread, and to sharpen the focus of the understandings emerging from my research, I maintained throughout the thesis some repetitions of arguments and themes.

This iterative hierarchy starts in chapter three with my discussion about essay films, which addresses the context of this study, essayistic filmmaking. This chapter explores the fundamental theoretical concepts that underline essayistic filmmaking. The aim of this chapter is to create a critical theoretical foundation of key essay film concepts and to formulate a platform that will enable a discussion around the potentials of essayistic filmmaking in the context of this practice-as-research project.

The fourth chapter investigates film montage and attempts to provide an initial conceptualisation of what metabatic montage is. The starting point for this iteration is the complex layering in *Grand Tour* of multiple disjointed videos, sounds, social media feeds and interactivity. This demanded that I explore new concepts and review appropriate concepts of film montage in order to discuss its dialogical potentials. In the first part of this chapter I revisit key concepts discussed in chapter three about the dialogic qualities of essay films; I examine the origins of dialectic montage with a particular focus on the work of early Soviet filmmakers and Deleuze's notion of in-between space. In the second part of this chapter I critically review three key notions central to my research themes: Manovich's conceptualisation of spatial montage; Farocki's notion of soft montage; and Godard's historic montage method.

Chapter five focuses on revealing the possibilities of interactivity. The main aims of this chapter are initially to establish a foundation layer of key concepts about interactivity and then to explore interactivity further in relation to *Grand*

Tour as an affordance that creates a unique dialogue between the text, the filmmaker and the viewers of the film. This chapter iterates some key concepts discussed in chapters three and four about essay films and dialectic montage. It focusses on exploring the dialectical relationships that open up between the layers of *Grand Tour* when they are mobilised, merged and juxtaposed with the intertwined layers of interactivity.

Chapter six investigates the networked elements of the film. In this iteration the aim is to explore how *Grand Tour* renders real time social experiences within the fabric of the film. This chapter iterates discussions from previous sections of the thesis with the aim of refocusing them on the essayistic notion of subjectivity and multi-vocality. Chapter six builds upon these key essayistic notions and attempts to explore the dialogue between the film's multi-layered subjectivity and the social media voices captured within the space of the film. Chapter seven is the final iterative step before the conclusion of the thesis. The structure of chapter seven is an essayistic amalgamation of themes and arguments explored in the previous chapters. Its conceptual thread builds upon all the previous iterations; however, it reflects the essayistic, dialectic, and disjunctive qualities of *Grand Tour* itself. It explores in essayistic way scenes and parts extracted from the final iteration of *Grand Tour*, examining its disjunctive openness, dialogic potentials, and how the film suggests a unique way of thinking about the recent Greek financial crisis. It defines further the concept of metabatic montage and explores the essayistic ways in which *Grand Tour* goes beyond traditional sequential methods of montage by exploiting the networked and interactive properties of native online films, which transform viewing into a playful, digressive and dialogic experience. The last chapter of the research seeks to illustrate how this practice-as-research project rearticulates aspects of essayistic filmmaking, explores the implications of

adding interactive and networked elements, and outlines the dialectic potentials of this form of essayistic filmmaking practice.

2. Methodology

In chapter two I discuss my methodological approach. The main point of departure for this PaR project emerged from my film montage practice and my creative encounter with essayistic filmmaking, online media production technologies, interactivity and networked platforms. My methodology's iterative cycles of creative exploration and practice are at the heart of my approach. The questions explored in this thesis have emerged from several iterations and overlapping stages of creative developments and practical experimentations that have become the foundations for this research project. In embracing the openness of essayistic filmmaking practice and the experimental essay film tradition, my methodology focuses on generating questions, exploring new paths and revealing the expressive potentials of film montage, interactivity and connectivity in the context of essayistic filmmaking practices. The focus of my methodological approach is on the creative research process, rather than on finding explicit answers, providing detailed practical solutions, or arriving at a definite end point. The methodological basis of my research process is in effect a cycle of researching, knowledge gathering, prototyping, developing and testing. It is a series of iterative production and research cycles through which knowledge, practical montage approaches and essayistic possibilities surface iteratively.

I start the discussion by defining the main methodological approaches of this research, which aimed to build and experiment with multiple prototypes (Dam, Siang, 2021). In the first part I review the main filming approaches and the extensive archive research. In the final part I discuss the iterative prototyping process I followed to develop the practical component of this PaR project, the online essay film *Grand Tour*.

2.1 Practice-as-Research

In this thesis I am exploring the research topic through my creative practice. My film is developed within the context of practice as research (Nelson 2013) but also relates to other academic discussions that bring together academic inquiry and creative practice, such as practice-based and practice-led research (Batty & Kerrigan 2018). For Nelson, practice as research (PaR) “involves a research project in which practice is a key method of inquiry and where, in respect of the arts, a practice (creative writing, dance, musical score/performance, theatre/performance, visual exhibition, film or other cultural practice) is submitted as substantial evidence of a research inquiry” (Nelson 2013, p.9).

Batty and Kerrigan recognise the difficulty of defining practice-based methodologies in creative research. However, for methodological purposes they define two main types of creative practice research: practice-based research and research-led practice; practice-led research and practice as research. (Batty & Kerrigan 2018). Practice-based research is the “result of research and therefore preforms the research findings” and practice-led research “is used as a site for systematically gathering reflections on the process of doing/making in order to contribute knowledge to the practice of doing/making” (Batty & Kerrigan 2018, p.7).

Based on these definitions the methodological approach of this research is closer to Nelson’s definition of practice as research (PaR); however, it appropriates concepts from both methods. It is comprised of two main elements: an online film which is the “product” of the research; and a “durable record”, a written thesis which provides evidence of the process and context, and includes a conceptual framework for the research. *Grand Tour*, the

“product” (Nelson 2013, p.26) of the PaR, is the result of research of “multiple modes of evidence reflecting a multi-mode research inquiry.” (Nelson 2013, p.26) and the final online film preforms the research findings; however, it also includes elements of systematically gathered critical reflections on the process of creating the film (Batty & Kerrigan 2018, p.7).

2.2 Filming

The main body of location filming for *Grand Tour* was completed relatively early, between 2015 and 2018, but sporadic filming continued after 2018. The first location filming took place in Athens in 2015. The focus of my filming was on places and locations. I used a combination of static filming on a tripod and handheld filming. The main camera I used was a lightweight 4K mirrorless video camera which allowed me easy access to public spaces. Through the filming I was interested in emphasising two main visual modalities: a multi-layered modality that represents the many visible layers of history that are omnipresent in most parts of Greece, and a fluid modality that embodies movement and visually represents the journeys of travellers in Greece. The first modality is mainly represented through the use of long and wide shots of spaces with visible layers of history, such as the ancient agora in Athens (figure 11) and Thessaloniki (figure 12), the ancient site of Delphi and the ancient oracle in Dodoni. The aim is for the camera to capture the accumulated layers of history, which are clearly visible, and highlight their juxtaposition with the modern Greek reality (figure 12).



Figure 11 - View of Acropolis from the ancient Agora. Screenshot from Grand Tour.

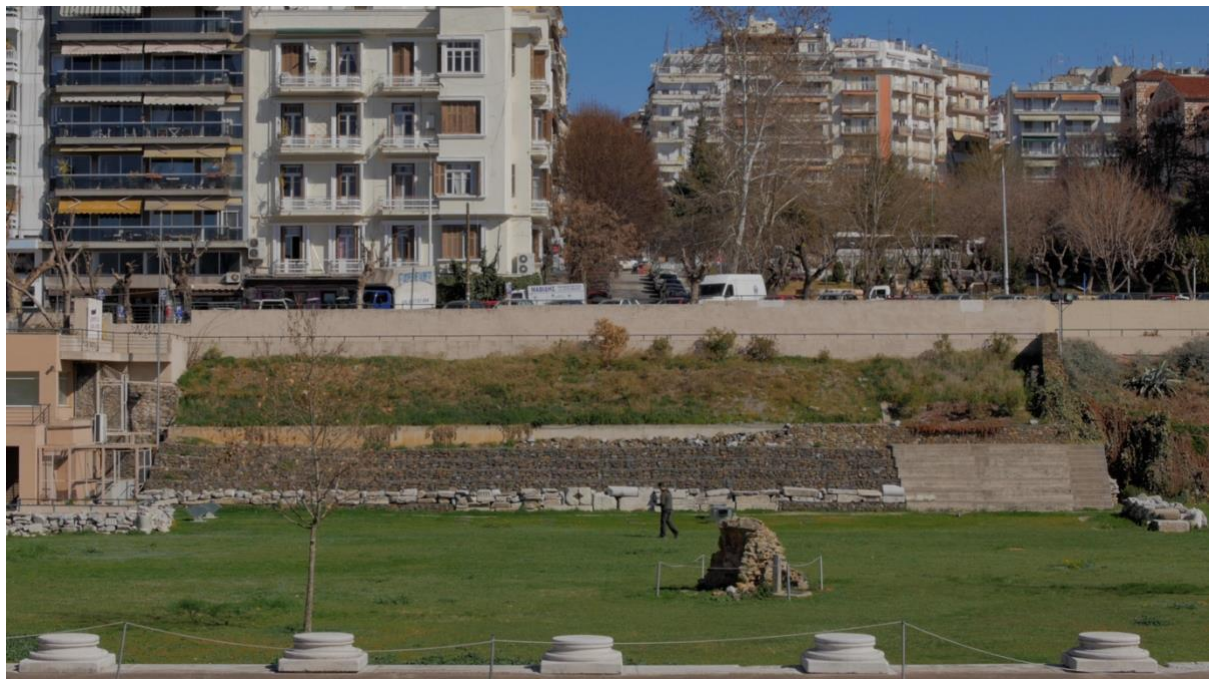


Figure 12 - View of Navarino Square, Thessaloniki. Screenshot from Grand Tour.

The second modality embodies movement and is represented through handheld and tracking filming. Traveling to the actual places the early travellers went to on their journeys, and filming some of these real locations, is

an effort to instigate what Rickly-Boyd describes as ‘existential authenticity’ through the use of film (Rickly-Boyd, 2013). Through my filming, temporal and spatial locations that are separated by 200 years, one belonging to the travellers and the other my own in the present, unite dialectically inside the online shared space of *Grand Tour* (figure 13).



Figure 13 - View from inside the car, Ioannina. Screenshot from *Grand Tour*.

2.3 Archive research

Archives play an important role in the research and production of *Grand Tour*. Visualising and voicing out archive materials has a significant role in the film. However, *Grand Tour's* archival dimension is structured not only of historical texts and visual documents, but also of social media assemblies of posts, feeds, videos and hashtag collections. My archival research explored a very wide bibliography of British, French and Italian travellers and included images, maps, sketches and diagrams written by European travellers who visited Ottoman-occupied Greek territories from the 18th to 19th centuries. Views of Greece have been deeply influenced by the writings of Lord Byron and his

description of modern Greece as a land haunted by its ancient past and as “a female needing rescue from a Turk by a saviour from the West” (Roessel, 2002 p.8). Lord Byron described the early British travellers to Greece as the Levant lunatics, unleashed for the antiquities of Greece (Tregaskis 1979). Eisner comments, for the same period, that the age of “travel to Greece – to paint her, loot her and write about her, had just begun” (Eisner, 1993 p.89). An anonymous critic in the *Quarterly Review* of July 1814 wrote: “No man is now accounted a traveller, who has not bathed in the Eurotas and tasted the olives of Attica; while, on the other hand, it is an introduction to the best company and passport to a literary distinction, to be member of the ‘Athenian Club’, and to have scratched one’s name upon a fragment of the Parthenon” (Eisner, 1993 p.89). The majority of the travellers' writings are digitised by Google and are out of copyright and freely available for any type of use and re-use through the www.archive.org website. Giving voice to the archive and my considerations about how it is presented and performed are key parts of my creative research. By removing the journals from their original context, I have decontextualised them, but they still possess and preserve some of their indexical qualities. Furthermore, these qualities are loaded with specific historical weight. By re-appropriating these journal passages and juxtaposing them into the new context of the film, they clash together and produce new meanings and new interpretations, although all the raw archive materials and direct quotes are carefully kept in their original form, highlighting my key motivation to construct and maintain a direct and authentic thread with the actual past of early Greek history. Based on the collected archive texts and direct quotes I recorded the voice-over of the female traveller in the narration layer of the film (see Appendix 3 for the voice-over script).

2.4 Prototyping

In this section I will discuss the process of prototyping as I would like to introduce my initial creative work, experiments and thinking process, including specific challenges and questions that I have encountered during the iterative development of the film. The PaR project is grounded in many prototyping experiments. All prototypes were low fidelity small scale versions of online films, but sufficient to explore different scenarios and allow me to make decisions about aspects of: the editing; the style of motion graphics and animations; the length of film segments; the interactive elements; and the manifestation of social media within the film. These prototypes were limited online working models of specific concepts that allowed me to visualise my ideas and explore their appropriateness. This iterative prototyping PaR methodology helped the development of *Grand Tour* immensely by allowing me to visualise my ideas as something more tangible that I could use, see, feel, play with and test.

There are multiple layers to the methodology of this PaR project, and it is grounded in an iterative process that constantly moves back and forth between practice and conceptualisation, and between different sections of the thesis. The iterative methodological approach is based on design thinking practice and its iterative prototype-based methodology (Brown 2009). My main motivation in following this methodological approach was to not allow myself to form ideas and concepts too early, but rather to allow fluid notions and conceptions about essay films, montage, interactivity and social media to undo fixed ideas in order for new thinking about montage and essayistic filmmaking to emerge.

2.5 Prototyping as ideas generator

One of the key values of prototyping is that it is generative, which means that as you work through the prototyping process of experimentation and testing you generate and reject ideas (Brown 2009). The activity of building prototypes encouraged my reflections and thinking about different possibilities. Working between multiple iterations and practical experiments with the film, new ideas emerged and unique connections were formed that go beyond a simple dialectics of trial and error. Prototyping helped me to decide what worked and what did not work well in an essayistic filmmaking context, and also to discover and define the limitations of the technologies I used and consider alternative solutions. The prototypes were used mainly as conceptual, creative and technical springboards to test diverse approaches and explore different parts of the film, in order to integrate the interactive and networked layers inside the film frame (see Appendix 1 for links to the prototypes).

2.6 Prototyping process

I started developing *Grand Tour* in 2016. *Grand Tour's* final iteration was completed by December 2019 however it formally went live on the 1st of January 2021. During these five years of creative practice working on the film I took multiple and diverse roles. The task was daunting and involved applying multiple skills and using completely different mindsets. In the early stages of my creative practice, I followed a holistic approach and worked on the different components of the film in parallel, for example, by editing the film and developing the interactive online elements at the same time. This working pattern was unproductive and led to frustrations and many unfinished prototypes. Reflecting on these initial frustrating delays and poor results I

decided to experiment with the double diamond process. This process was developed by the British Design Council and describes a “process of exploring an issue more widely or deeply (divergent thinking) and then taking focused action (convergent thinking)” (Design Council, 2019). I started making much smaller scale prototypes and followed a role based working process. I worked on each individual component of the film with a single role, mindset and skillset, for example as film editor, sound designer, graphic or web designer. This shift in my artistic practice allowed me to break the film into small parts and creative tasks. This gave me the creative freedom to be more experimental in my practice and also the structure to finish the multiple creative tasks. However, this approach created gaps, overlaps, repetitions, and lags between the several components of the film. Usually in online interactive projects such as *Grand Tour* there is a team of people with diverse skills working together at the same time throughout the project or during specific development stages. Typically, the core team consists of a producer, director, researchers, writer and a designer, along with the support roles of film editor, cinematographer, assistants, sound designer and web developer. In creating *Grand Tour*, I played all these roles. Therefore, several parts of the film (video and audio, interactive elements, and social media) did not progress uniformly during the several iterations. Until the last and current iteration of the film there were always delays and conceptual and developmental lags and gaps between the diverse elements and dimensions of the film.

2.7 The prototypes

During the development period of *Grand Tour*, I have developed the current final version of the film, two core prototypes, and many smaller scale experiments. I cannot review all the different stages and prototypes I developed, before I reached the final form of *Grand Tour*. However, I will examine two key iterations of *Grand Tour* to illuminate how, through my creative practice, I explored my research queries. I believe it is important as part of this PaR project to trace and review the key iterative developmental stages of my creative research work because developing digital media projects is part of what Murray (2012) defines as a “broader collective effort of making meaning through the invention and refinement of digital media conventions”, and by creating new digital media artefacts and develop new methods “we expand our ability to understand the world and to connect with one another” (Murray 2012, p. 2).

2.8 Grand Tour – First prototype (2016)

The first iteration of the film was developed based on the assumption that the final film had two divergent interactive paths (figure 14).

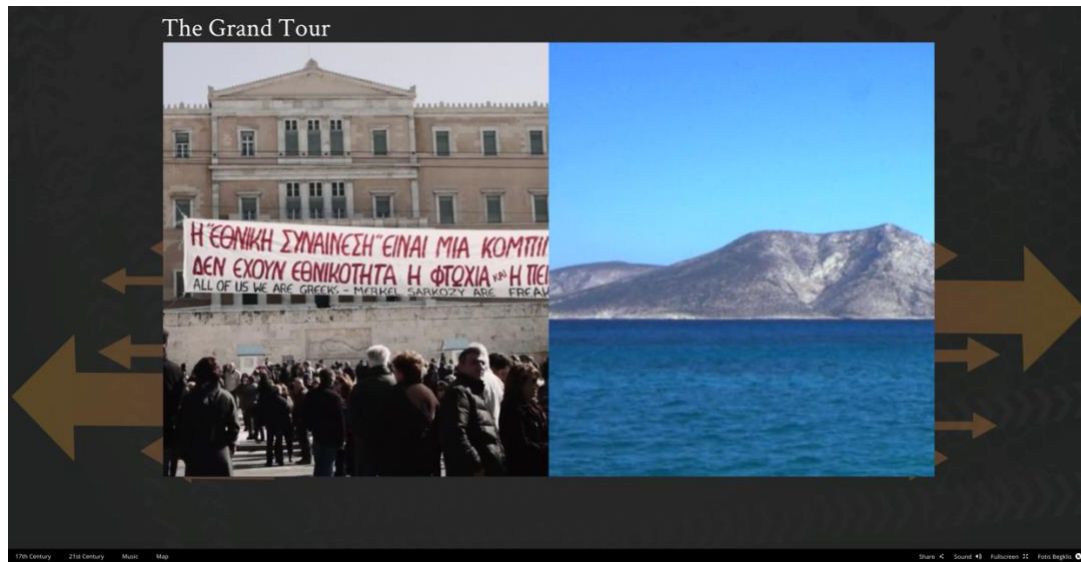


Figure 14 - Screenshot from the first iteration of Grand Tour.

My initial motivation was to allow viewers to access the film through two different non-linear paths that moved in opposite directions: the present path on the left and the past path on the right (see Appendix 1 for the link to first prototype). I believed at this stage that the past/present dichotomy needed to be very clear from the opening of the film and would allow viewers to choose their non-linear paths from the very beginning of their online experience. In line with this approach, the early iterations of *Grand Tour* were largely based on the concept of an online interactive digital object with multiple non-linear paths and an interface that links together semi-autonomous interconnected blocks. The film based on the first prototype consisted of a number of interconnected building blocks/web pages and each individual block/page had an embedded short YouTube video (figure 15).

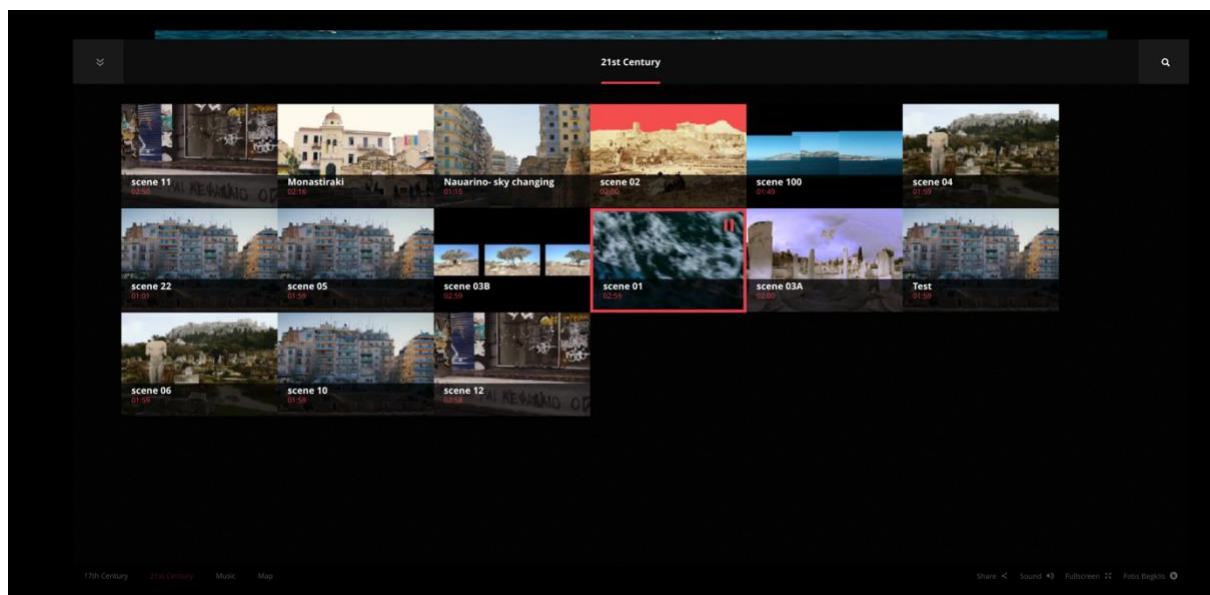


Figure 15 - Screenshot from the first iteration of *Grand Tour*.

These blocks/pages have been described as clips (Manovich 2002) “SNUs” or “smallest narrative units” (Soar 2014), “shots” (Miles 2008), and “story currents” (Weinbren 2007). These descriptions largely reflect the concept of the film as database (Manovich 2001, Lovink and Niederer 2008). Manovich attributes new media work “as the construction of an interface to a database” (Manovich 2001, p.226). Developing *Grand Tour* as an online film driven by a database of searchable YouTube clips, and sequences with stable and firm boundaries between the separate elements, was intended to fulfil one of the aims of the film which was to create dialectical tensions between the distinct parts of the film. However, after a number of screenings, reflecting on the feedback and echoing my initial research aims, I realised that this approach lacked the cinematic qualities and potential to invite viewers into an open dialogic exchange and to generate the dialectic tensions and disjunctions I wanted *Grand Tour* to embrace. I wanted *Grand Tour*’s online assemblage to operate on another level, in line with essayistic thinking and filmmaking

practices: a cinematic experience that echoes the ambiguous relationship between past and present and embodies the diachronic oscillation of Greece's perceived image in Europe between the imaginary ancient classical ideal and the exoticization of the land of modern Greeks (Tziouvas 2014; Hanink 2017). Greece's image in Europe is inspired by 19th-century Romanticism and German Classicism (Roessel 2002). Goethe, in his reworking of the ancient Greek tragedy "Ιφιγένεια ἐν Ταύροις" by Euripides, describes this 19th - century longing for a vanished ancient Greek greatness when he writes:

My sad soul seeking from the Grecian soul,
But to my sighs the waves bring no reply
Save hollow murmurs rolling from afar.
(Goethe 1851, p.2)

Delacroix also expressed his philhellenism in his famous painting the *Massacre of Chios* (1824), while Shelley declared that "We all Greeks" (Shelley, 1866). In contrast, David Hume found that "the intelligence, industriousness and efficiency of ancient Greeks has nothing in common with the stupidity and laziness of the current inhabitants of the region" (quoted by Glykofrydi-Leontsini, 2016, p.359). Also in a more recent statement the French president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing (2020) stated, "To be perfectly frank, it was a mistake to accept Greece Greece simply wasn't ready. Greece is basically an Oriental country" (Spiegel 2012, para.13). This ambiguous perception of modern Greece by other European countries originates with Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer, who arrogantly declared in 1830 that:

The race of the Hellenes has been wiped out in Europe. Physical beauty, intellectual brilliance, innate harmony and simplicity, art, competition, city, village, the splendour of column and temple – indeed, even the name has disappeared from the surface of the Greek continent [...]. Not the slightest drop of undiluted Hellenic blood flows in the veins of the Christian population of present-day Greece” (Fallmerayer 1830, translated from the German by Elsie, no date, para. 1).

As Jusdanis notes, “the peculiar situation of Greek culture is reflected in its very name: modern Greek. The qualifier reinforces the advantages of survivalism yet urges negative comparisons. Modern Greeks feel themselves belated in respect to the European and inferior in respect to the classical” (Jusdanis 1991, p.67). However, this admiration for an idealised classical Greece and a contempt for modern Greece is still a reality. It is clearly reflected in the representation of Greece in the international media during the years of the Greek crisis started in 2010 (Tziovas 2014; Hanink 2017; Hamilakis 2016). An “orientalist” view of Greece, echoing Edward Said (1978), is full of stories of laziness, corruption, lack of discipline, recklessness and dishonesty, qualities that can be also found in abundance in the journals of many European travellers to Greece in the 18th and 19th centuries (Jusdanis 1991; Glykofrydi-Leontsini 2016).

The compartmentalised rigidity and absence of fluidity of the database logic was not able to embody and capture the openness and uncertainty of these dialectic tensions and create an online cinematic space with the dialogic qualities that materialise the disjunctive coexistence of past and present, the key modality that I wanted viewers to sustain while watching and interacting with *Grand Tour*.

2.9 Grand Tour – Second prototype (2017)



Figure 16 - Screenshot from the second iteration of Grand Tour.

In the second iteration of the film, I explored montage methods, cinematic qualities and embedding interactive fluidity, that were missing from the first database driven version of the film (see Appendix 1 for the link to the second prototype). The key challenge was to create a cinematic interface between viewers and the film and give agency to the viewer-user to interact with the film in ways that embody the main modalities of the film. There is a short text that describes in very broad terms what the film is about and what the context of the film is. This short text is merged with the image of the Greek parliament in Athens, with demonstrators holding banners, and establishes the main context of the film. However, the most important addition in the new opening screen was not the elimination of the two divergent paths but the addition of simple and playful interactivity embedded in the fabric of the film. In this screen the viewer can use the scrolling button of her mouse to play back or scroll back a series of static frames. If the viewer scrolls up and down fast enough it looks and feels as if they control the film. The viewer can slow it

down, reverse it and fast forward it. The discovery of this simple playful way of interacting and playing back the film was a major creative, conceptual and technological breakthrough. It acted artistically as a conceptual springboard to redirect *Grand Tour's* development in a completely new way. Through interactive scrolling, the film grants access to the viewer to control the speed and direction of the film. Therefore, these static frames acquire duration and become an integral part of the fabric of the film.



Figure 17 - Screenshot from the second iteration of *Grand Tour*.

This frame by frame and pixel by pixel scrolling navigation approach allowed me to unify the film's fabric with the viewer and achieve an interactive simplicity that through montage can potentially amplify dialectic tensions and add the cinematic qualities that were missing from the earlier prototype of *Grand Tour*. However, despite the major technical, conceptual, and creative breakthrough and the development of the frame by frame scrolling as a way of controlling the film and unifying it with the viewer, I used this method only in a few sections of the final film and on a much smaller scale. The main reason

was the technological boundaries posed by online development, and specifically, by the restrictions of the online platforms and the limitations of bandwidth which arise from the size of the frame-by-frame image sequences. In online performance tests that I completed, the downloading time of the film was far too long. Even fast connections required a substantial amount of time to download all the images and allow the viewer to interact with the film. In some cases, it took thirty to sixty seconds, and this delay altered the flow and performance of the film. The constraints of the frame-by-frame approach, combined with problems with the interactive development platform I used for the prototypes, shaped my creative practice and redirected the development of the final prototype and current form of the film in very different directions that I discuss in more detail in the next chapters.

2.10 Final thoughts

My practice as research is grounded in many iterations of multiple prototyping experiments. This methodological approach is based on design thinking practice and its iterative prototype-based methodology (Brown 2009). Prototyping helped me to decide what worked and what did not work well. I used all these prototyping experiences as conceptual, creative and technical springboards to test diverse approaches, visualise my thinking and explore different parts of the film, in order to integrate the interactive and networked layers inside the film frame. However, the technological boundaries posed by the online media framed my artistic practice and defined the development path and the form of *Grand Tour*. As I stated in the introduction of the thesis, recent technological innovations and fast networks are mature enough to allow web native films such as *Grand Tour* to exist. However, there are still

many limitations. For example, there are still many inconsistencies between browsers, operating systems and hardware. Currently, online applications and web sites, before they go public, have to complete specific performance tests, compatibility and accessibility testing. These tests are usually performed by dedicated teams or outsourced to specialised companies that employ large teams specialised in testing websites. For the scope of this thesis, I did not have the technical capabilities and budget to test and evaluate *Grand Tour's* performance and compatibility across all web browsers, devices and operating systems. As I discussed in the introduction, *Grand Tour* is specifically developed to perform on a computer with a minimum resolution of 1920 x 1080 pixels and a relatively fast internet connection. Also, *Grand Tour* is specifically optimised to play only on a browser on a personal computer. It would not be possible for it to be projected onto a big cinema screen as the videos, graphics and animations are relatively low quality, adjusted specifically for web use and optimised for faster downloading times. One of the early prototypes I developed aimed to explore mobile phone compatibility. I developed a very simple way to interact with the film based on the orientation of the phone. Holding the phone horizontally the viewer can watch the film, rotating it vertically the flow of the film pauses, and a scrollable interactive layer is added. However, despite the simplicity of the prototype, the amount of advanced programming involved and the need for very complex coding frameworks made it almost impossible within the PhD timeframe and my current coding knowledge to develop it on my own. The development of a mobile compatible version is my main priority for the next iteration of the film.

3. The past meets the present

This chapter aims to explore key theoretical conceptualisations that underline essayistic filmmaking. The objective is to create a theoretical foundation of key essay film concepts and formulate a platform that will enable a discussion about the potentials of essayistic filmmaking in the context of this PaR project. In the first part of this chapter I will review the Greek essay film *Agelastos Petra* (2000) and identify the potential differences between traditional linear essay films and an essay film such as *Grand Tour*. In the second part of this chapter I will depart from the main theoretical conceptualisations and focus on the subjectivity and dialogic potentials of the essay film.

3.1 The past meets the present

To start the theoretical exploration of the essay film genre and how it informs my practice, I will begin by discussing the Greek essay film *Agelastos Petra* (2000) (*Mourning Rock*). *Agelastos Petra* is one of my key inspirations in making *Grand Tour*. *Agelastos Petra* shares with my work the thematic thread of exploring the ambiguous relationship between ancient and modern Greece. *Agelastos Petra* was produced and directed by Filippos Koutsaftis. Koutsaftis took more than twelve years to make the film. After its official premiere at Thessaloniki International Film Festival in 2000, the film received an “unprecedented positive response” from Greek audiences and film critics (Papadimitriou 2015, p.31). The film was also recently presented as part of the 2020 Essay Film Festival organised by the University of Birkbeck in London (Essay Film Festival, 2020). The film is about the ancient city of Eleusis. The contemporary name of the city is Elefsina (Greek: Ελευσίνα). Elefsina is a

relatively small city about thirty kilometres outside Athens in the region of the Peloponnese. It is known for the vast oil refinery located very close to the city, and for its rich and spiritual ancient past. The city and the broader area around the city are heavily industrialised and profoundly damaged by the pollution produced by the oil refinery. However, in ancient Greece Elefsina was a highly significant sacred place. It hosted the “Elefsinia Mysteries”, a series of rituals in honour of the ancient Greek goddess Dimitra and her daughter Persephone, who had been abducted by Hades. The myth says that Agelastos Petra is the name of the *petra* (Greek word for rock or stone) where Dimitra rested to mourn the loss of her daughter Persephone.

3.2 *Agelastos Petra*: an essay film

The film utilises the common essayistic approach of a strong subjective and diaristic voice-over directly addressing the viewers (Rascaroli 2009, pp.36-39), narrated by the director Filippos Koutsaftis. Laura Rascaroli clearly and directly links the use of the “I” with essayistic filmmaking and describes voice-over as “a privileged tool for the author’s articulation of his or her thought (in conjunction with sound and images), and hence a prime location of author’s subjectivity, as well the main channel of the enunciator’s address to the spectator.” (Rascaroli 2009, p.38). Rascaroli suggests in contrast to widespread negative reception of voice-over in documentary studies that the voice-over's main use in essayistic filmmaking is to deflate its authorial power and encourage viewers to interpret the text in more personal and diverse ways. The diaristic style and subjective tone of the voice-over has similarities to *Sans Soleil* (1983), the emblematic essay film made by Chris Marker (Alter 2006). Lopate describes *Sans Soleil* as “a meditation on place in jet age, where spatial

availability confuses the sense of time and memory” (Lopate 1992, p.251). *Agelastos Petra* shares comparable meditative and confusing qualities with *Sans Soleil*. In *Agelastos Petra* the filmmaker makes extensive use of dialectical juxtapositions of images of oil refineries and the surrounding industrial landscape, alongside ancient Greek ruins and recent archaeological excavation sites. Koutsaftis’ poetic voice-over fluctuates between past and present and as a result the viewer never knows when and where they are.



Figure 18 - Screenshot from the film *Agelastos Petra* (2000).

In *Agelastos Petra*, the past and the present of Elefsina coexist in a cinematic space, contaminated by modern industry and infused by the ceremonies that immersed the ancient Greeks in commemorating life and the alternation with death. Within the film, multiple fragmented temporalities are presented and these temporalities are entangled together; thus the links between past and present become blurry and indistinguishable. This filmmaking approach is used

to disrupt the notion of continuity and uninterrupted history. The film is also interwoven with observations about the dramatic ecological destruction of the area, the multiple layers of buried history and the influx of refugees from Asia Minor, who relocated to Elefsina after the catastrophic thrashing of the Greek expedition army in Turkey in 1922. Papadimitriou comments that “The uneasy relationship between the ancient and the modern in Greece is nowhere as evident as in Eleusis” (Papadimitriou 2015, p.32). Koutsaftis uses a loose linear narrative following a series of archaeological excavations from the late 1980s to the late 1990s; however, the central thread of the film is loosely driven by an inhabitant of Elefsina, Panagiotis Farmakis, a “scavenger of ancient ruins” and “a fool with a foolish relationship with the ruins, rejected by those around him,” as Koutsaftis introduces him in the voice-over. Farmakis is presented as an elusive figure who meanders around and whom the director meets accidentally in different parts of the city. Watching the film you feel that Farmakis has been transported from the past, from the time of the Eleusinian mysteries, to play the role of a modern priest keeping the memory of the past alive within the present. Farmakis is always walking fast, searching for or carrying on his shoulder heavy ancient fragments. In contrast to the usual urban meandering, which focuses on the present, Farmakis is meandering in another invisible temporality, amid the past and the ancient ruins. Farmakis’ presence in the film crosses historical time and creates an in-between space of time. He softens the limits between ancient and modern ruins and perhaps even between human fragments (the Greek refugees from Asia Minor) and ancient fragments. Farmakis also becomes the emotional thread of the film when the director reveals to us, near the end of the film, that he was accidentally killed by a car during the period that the film was being shot, while scavenging for more ancient fragments. Koutsaftis’ direct address to the

audience establishes a reflexive dialogue, asking us to participate in the construction of the film's meanings. The film is saturated with references to death and renewal, the key themes of the Eleusinian mysteries and also part of the myth of Persephone. It depicts an ephemeral and recurrent multi-layered historical experience that reflects on the relationship between ancient and modern Greece and the multiple manifestations of the past within the present.

3.3 *Grand Tour* and *Agelastos Petra*: two different essay films

Grand Tour and *Agelastos Petra* both have reflective subjective voice-overs and share the same obsession with dialectic montage and the exploration of the relationship between the ancient Greek past and the modern present. However, *Grand Tour*, apart from the different thematic and aesthetic approach, utilises film montage intensified by interactivity, and multiple voices supported by networked connectivity, to amplify its essayistic potentials. In *Grand Tour*, montage and temporality are dimensions to be manipulated by the viewers exploiting the interactive affordances of the film. Linear filmic time in *Grand Tour* is in a fluid state compared with the specific and linear experience of watching *Agelastos Petra*. In *Grand Tour* the viewers make associations between the sequential images of the film but also between the disjunctive unstable images that emerge by scrolling up and down, and the absent voice-over that is submerged somewhere within the fabric of the film. Both *Grand Tour* and *Agelastos Petra* utilise film montage techniques to create dialectic tensions and juxtapositions; however, *Grand Tour's* montage is intensified by interactivity and the ephemeral properties of the social media feeds and posts. The result is a magnification of the duration of the filmic space, like an expanding crack within the fabric of the film that invites the

viewer to literally descend into the fabric of the film, to play and interact with it. While experiencing the fragmentation, disjunctions and juxtapositions between the folding and unfolding images and the narration layer, the viewers shift further away from the lingering narration layer, get detached and in a sense become misplaced and lost. This new detached temporality invites viewers to shift perspective. Viewers try to reconnect and adjust between the new point of view and the paused narration layer and link it to the new fluid images, thereby creating multiple new dialectic associations and potential meanings. For example, in this part of the film at 08:30 we can see at least four different juxtapositions generated by the movement of the unstable social media posts within the same filmic space (figure 19).

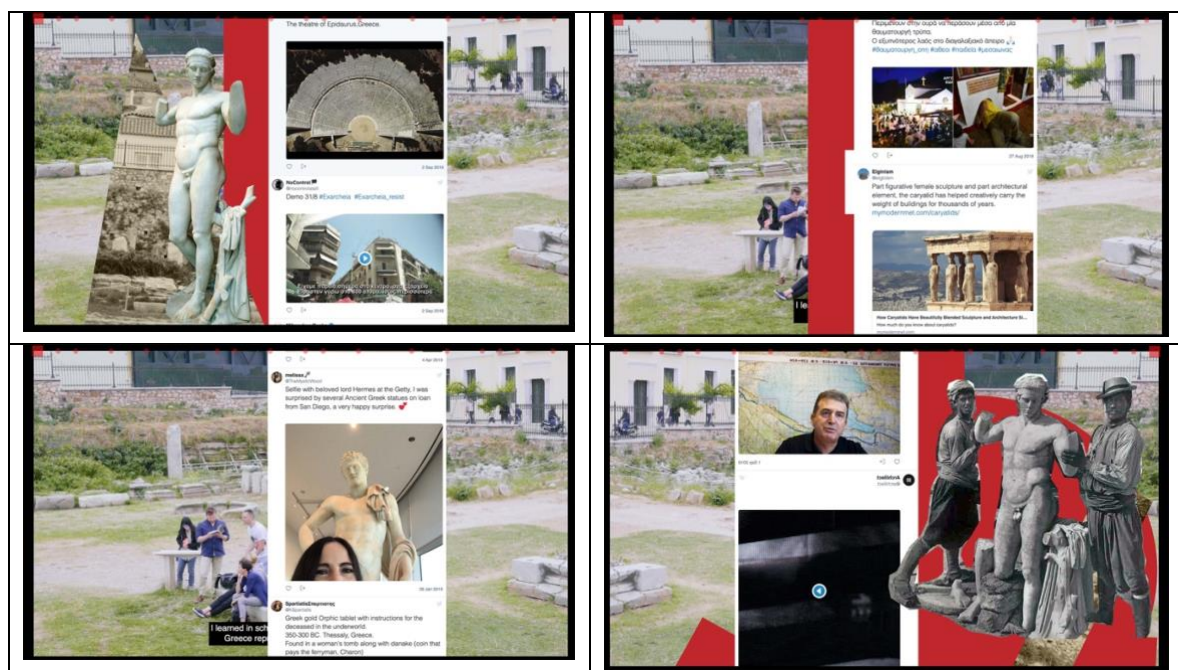


Figure 19 - Screenshots of how scrolling operates within Grand Tour (08:30mins).

Additionally, in this example another unique notion emerges as a result of networked connectivity and the viewer's active engagement with the film: the notion of multi-vocality, and the parallel existence and juxtaposition of different voices embodied by the fluid embedded social media Twitter feeds.

The Twitter feeds are dynamically linked to the active Twitter social media account of *Grand Tour* and is fluid and continually updated. All the interactions are happening outside the film, in another, completely different public space, the space of social media. Because the feeds are formed algorithmically, they are in a constant fluctuating state and therefore there are gaps between their fluid voices and the stable voice located in the narration layer. These gaps create ambiguities and in-between spaces that further undermine the certainty of the film and amplify the dialogic tensions between the stable parts of the film and the open-ended uncertainty of the feeds. I explore the notion of multi-vocality in more depth and with specific examples from my work later in this chapter and in chapter six of the thesis. In *Grand Tour*, simple and playful interactivity is the key modality through which the viewers physically engage with the film. The viewer, through her fluid vertical and horizontal scrolling, draws attention to the dialectic tensions between the interwoven layers and fragments of the film in relation to each other (figure 20).

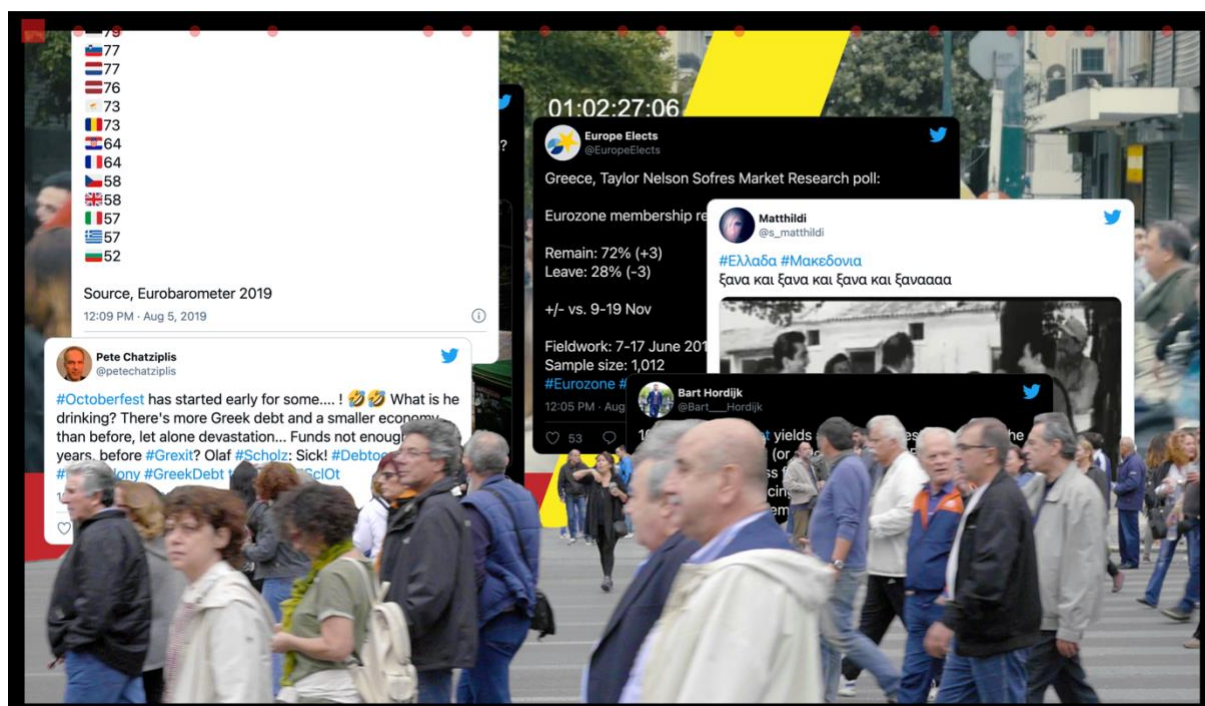


Figure 20 - Screenshots of how scrolling operates within *Grand Tour*.

In a linear essay film with conventional montage techniques, these dialectic tensions, disjunctions and juxtapositions are the result of the sequential progression of stable images, sound and cuts. According to Montero, essay films stage dialectic tensions and clashes “through the counterpoint of images and soundtrack and also by contrasting pictures and written text and by playing different worldviews off against each other in a way that demands a reaction from the viewer.” (2012, p.106). In *Grand Tour*, dialectic tensions are produced by montage of contrasting pictures in line with Montero’s statement; however, they are also motivated and amplified by viewers’ physical interaction with the film and the unstable openness of the social media feeds. These interactions construct an invisible conceptual and bodily metaphor that shapes the way viewers are invited to form a dialogue with the film and sense the abstract notion of the invisible historical threads of the current Greek present and ancient Greek past. *Grand Tour* threads a constellation of shards of the past embedded in the present, where tangled temporalities and tangled images and sounds are edited together to create unstable in-between spaces. The in-between space generated and traversed by the rewinding and recurrent scrolling movement can be regarded as embodying the past and present historic thread and serving as a visual-kinetic metaphor of return and the recurrence of past events. The notions of recurrence, return, folding, and unfolding are key expressions of the film and operate as conceptual metaphors and essayistic thinking devices to invite new dialogic interpretations about the links between past and present in Greece. I will discuss in more depth the interactive elements and networked dimensions of *Grand Tour* and the notion of metabatic montage in the next chapters of the thesis.

3.4 The main qualities of essay films

The aim of this part of the thesis is to review key definitions, notions and conceptualisations and attempt to outline the key qualities of the essay film genre relevant to this PaR project. I am primarily interested in exploring how the essayistic filmmaking heritage can guide my practice and theoretical explorations to form a platform that will enable a discussion around the potentials of essay films such as *Grand Tour*. The conception of essay film has never been static and defined. Rascaroli recognises that defining the essay film is not as simple as it might seem, and suggests that it is “a hybrid form that crosses boundaries and rests somewhere in between fiction and nonfiction cinema” (Rascaroli 2009, p.24). In the introduction of her first book about essay films, *The Personal Camera*, she accepts that there is a lot of confusion about what the term “essay film” means. She hesitates to make a definite categorisation, saying that they are “deeply idiosyncratic and form a diverse, paradoxical, heretical body of work” (Rascaroli 2009, p.2) but she isolates a number of shared features such as:

Metalinguistic, autobiographical and reflective, they all posit a well-defined, extra textual authorial figure as their point of origin and of constant reference; they strongly articulate a subjective, personal point of view; and they set up a particular communicative structure, largely based, as I will argue, on the address, to the spectator, or interpellation. (2009, p.3).

Alter (2018) recognises a recent increase in the use of the term “essay film” by non-fiction practitioners and defines its key characteristics as “indeterminacy,

hybridity, openness, playfulness” (2018, p.4). Corrigan adds another dimension to Rascaroli’s and Alter’s definitions of the essay film, describing the essay film as “a kind of encounter between the self and the public domain” (Corrigan 2011, p.6). According to Corrigan, in an essay film, the author’s “unsettled” subjective experience confronts, asks and provokes the public to experience the real world in order to establish a shared connection where dialogue and reflective communication can take place. In *Grand Tour* this shared connection and dialogue is materialised through the multiple threads interwoven into the fabric of the film social media feeds. My creative practice and essayistic experimentations and the written thesis focus on the potential of relating the critical qualities of the essay film, the authorial and subjective presence and the dialogic structure based on the direct address of the viewer as a public encounter between the author and the viewer, to the montage of the interactive and networked affordances of digital media.

3.5 In-betweenness

In Rascaroli's second book, *How the essay film thinks* (2017), she departs from the significance of dialogism as expressed in her first book (2009) and focuses her discussion on the “dialectic tensions between juxtaposed or interacting filming elements” of essay films (Rascaroli 2017, p.8). Rascaroli argues that these juxtapositions between the filming elements in an essay film generate gaps. These gaps create discontinuities and essay films build their meanings in these “in-between” spaces. For Rascaroli, examining this in-betweenness of essay films is key to understanding how “the essay film thinks” (Rascaroli 2017, p.8). Rascaroli argues that the essay film has the capacity to think, and she locates it among the predominantly nonverbal methods of montage, genre,

sound design, temporality, framing and composition. Rascaroli places Deleuze's writings on film as her key point of reference, particularly Deleuze's notion of cinema as image of thought (1997b) and his concept of interstice, which Deleuze describes as the space "between two actions, between affections, between perceptions, between two visual images, between two sound images, between the sound and visual" (Deleuze 1997b, p.180). Rascaroli argues that for Deleuze, what matters "is no longer the association of images but the interstice between two images, as a result of which these become radically external to each other" (Rascaroli 2017, p.10). For Rascaroli, essay films function in this in-between space. They develop through fissures and disjunctions and their interstitial operation between images generates the possibility of new "thought from the outside" (Rascaroli 2017, p.10). Rascaroli's conceptualisation of "in-betweenness" is a key departure point in this thesis. I will further explore in-betweenness in the next chapters, as I attempt to answer the key question of this thesis.

3.6 The essay film dialogism and subjectivity

According to Montero, the central viewing modality of the essay film is dialogic and includes an exchange between many voices, 'utterances', views in multiple dialogues with images. Montero, following Bakhtin, claims that in essay films "images are approached as visual utterances, firmly rooted in heteroglossia" (2012, p.57). Montero constructs his thinking on essay films based on two key ideas: the idea of "heteroglossia", seen as the "multiple" voices present in a language, and of "dialogism", understood as the different ways that heteroglossic voices relate within texts. According to Corrigan, "The most commonly highlighted feature of the essayistic is the personal or subjective

point of view that organizes its observations and reflections,” (Corrigan 2011, p.79). For Rascaroli, subjectivity is the result of the communicative structure of essay films, that suggests the presence of a strong enunciator in a dialogue with the viewer. For Rascaroli the direct address of the spectator by the enunciator is a fundamental point and key quality of the essay film form (Rascaroli 2009, p.34). According to Rascaroli, the use of voice-over is the most common way for the enunciator to achieve that. The viewer is invited to enter and experience this dialogue as an individual exchange, “eminently personal” (Rascaroli 2009, p.12) between herself and the enunciator/narrator. Ten Brink adds a third dimension in this dialogic relationship between filmmaker and viewers by discussing the mediating qualities of the essay film. For ten Brink, essay films use cinematic language and the organisation of time and space to create narrative and non-narrative structures “methodically-unmethodically edited together” (ten Brink 1999, p.75). Ten Brink draws attention to and intensifies the role of the moving image, and how image, sound and editing construct the cinematic text. According to ten Brink, the essay film is not only the dialogic relationship between the subjectivity of the filmmaker and the embodied spectator, but also includes a third pole, the cinematic text. Hence, the essay film is defined inside this triangular dynamic formation between the experience of the filmmaker, the experience of the film and the experience of the viewer (ten Brink 1999, p.75). Rascaroli also introduces the concept of “openness” of the essay film. She describes it as rhetorical structure that opens up problems instead of giving answers or complete “closed” arguments. For Rascaroli, in the essay film:

rather than answering all the questions that it raises, and delivering a complete, closed argument, the essay’s rhetoric is such that it opens up

problems, and interrogates the spectator; instead of guiding her through emotional and intellectual response, the essay urges her to engage individually with the film, and reflect on the same subject matter the author is musing about. This structure accounts for the “openness” of the essay film. (Rascaroli 2009, p.34).

In other words, Rascaroli argues for a dialogic relationship between the enunciator and the spectator / viewer. In this dialogue the enunciator takes the risk of presenting her subjectivity by directly addressing the viewer in order to initiate and establish this dialogue. The types of dialogic relationships Rascaroli describes are key in *Grand Tour*. For the purposes of this study, Rascaroli’s openness and Bakhtin’s dialogism and polyphony are utilised as the main conceptual framework for expressing dialogic relationships and tensions in this thesis. Interactivity and montage, in particular, construct a powerful conceptual and bodily metaphor that shapes the way viewers form a dialogue with the film and perceive the abstract notions of the invisible historical connections between the current Greek present and the ancient Greek past.

3.7 Literary heritage

In recent academic literature the essay film and the literary essay have been associated in many ways: with the essay writing of Michel de Montaigne (Lopate 1992; ten Brink 1999; Renov 2004; Corrigan 2011; Montero 2012) and with the writings of Georg Lukács, Aldous Huxley and Theodor Adorno (ten Brink 1999; Renov 2004; Alter 2003; Rascaroli 2009; Corrigan 2011; Montero 2012). Alter (1996) finds a strong connection between the literary essay form and the film essay and suggests that the essay film is “Like ‘heresy’; in the

Adornean literary essay, the essay film disrespects traditional boundaries, is transgressive both structurally and conceptually, it is self-reflective and self-reflexive” (Alter 1996, p.170). Adorno, in his famous article *The Essay as Form*, states that “the essay’s innermost formal law is heresy” (Adorno 1984, p.171). For Adorno, the essay follows a fragmented and non-linear development of thinking in order to escape from systematic or scientific knowledge production (1984, pp.151-171). For Adorno, the essay “urges the reciprocal interaction of concepts in the process of intellectual experience” and its power is in its capability to undermine “the jargon of authenticity” (1984, p.155) through “methodically unmethodical” strategies (1984, p. 161). He describes a type of essay writing that exists somewhere between art and science; it is not theory but it is not illogical, it values experience but it is not a diary. Adorno explains that: “Instead of achieving something scientifically, or creating something artistically, the effort of the essay reflects a childlike freedom that catches fire, without scruple, on what others have already done” (1984, p.152).

Adorno’s main contribution to the understanding of the essay film is his emphasis on the text as a subjective, self-reflective, fragmented and hybrid form that subverts systematic thought and constantly challenges the limits of knowledge. Rascaroli (2009) observes that the use of a literary term such as “essay film” to categorise a type of film is an indication of how difficult it is to classify them. She observes that with the extensive use of the term to label various unclassifiable experimental films as essay films, “we will end up equating very diverse films, as sometimes happens in the critical literature—for instance, works such as *Sans Soleil* (Marker, 1983) and *Fahrenheit 9/11* (Moore, 2004), which have very little in common aside from the extensive voice-over and the fact that they both present problems of classification” (Rascaroli 2009, p.25). Corrigan and ten Brink both recognise the literary

heritage of the essay film. Ten Brink locates essay film within an essayistic tradition with roots in Montaigne's work, and Corrigan investigates the relationship between essay film and its literary heritage as part of the wider historical engagement between film and literature, arguing that essay films' literary heritage is one of the main factors shaping the fundamental nature of the essay film (Corrigan 2011).

Grand Tour builds upon the literary and travel heritage of essayistic filmmaking (Naficy 2001). It is designed around archival textual resources as a collage of passages from journals, essays and accounts written by 18th and 19th centuries European travellers. My research for *Grand Tour* started in 2014 when I read Kuriakos Simopoulos' (2007) four volume *Foreign travellers in Greece* (Greek: *Ξένοι Ταξιδιώτες στην Ελλάδα*). Simopoulos' work systematically explores the post-Byzantine period until after the Greek revolution in 1821. He meticulously collected news, books and journals related to the public and private life of Greeks, and the political and financial conditions of Greek society. I completed reading Simopoulos' books in the early stages of my research project. The precise and vivid descriptions inspired me to think about the potential of using the European travellers' views and opinions of their encounters with Greece and Greeks as key reference points for *Grand Tour*. My key research direction was to find testimonies, diaries, essays and direct quotes that could not only describe and provide information but would also be able to reconstruct some of the atmosphere of Greece 200 years ago. My intention was to research, collect and present the views of the travellers and associate them in essayistic and dialogic ways with the current economic, political and social situation of Greece. As I was researching the travellers' writings, I observed them shifting between real and invented localities. Edward Dodwell states that "[In Greece] almost every rock, every promontory, every river, is haunted by the shadows

of the mighty dead” (1819a, p.iv). I began focusing more and more on the theme of imaginary spaces – the imagined space of ancient Greece invented by these travellers in their imaginations, as well as their frustrations when they discovered it, and their eventual disappointment. Dodwell writes in his book:

The sentiment, indeed, with which I feel myself most constantly affected, since I came within sight of Greece, and particularly since I landed, has a strong resemblance to that which I experienced in walking over a country churchyard. Everything reminds me of the departed. The works of the living serve only to inform us of the virtues and excellence of the dead. (1819b, p.50).

This theme of the search for an imagined Greece, travels to Greece and the dialogic juxtapositions of past and present became the key essayistic theme for *Grand Tour*. Travel and travellers are key themes for many essay films. Corrigan, in his discussion about Marker’s films *Letters from Siberia* and *Sunless*, comments that “a multitude of many other essay films have emphasised travel and space as a central motif around which complex ideas and reflections have put in play” (2011, p.105).

3.8 Essay films and documentaries

In this part of this chapter I explore the relationship between essay films and documentaries. Laura Rascaroli argues for an open categorisation for the essay film and suggests that “it does not constitute a coherent genre but is a field or domain still very loosely linked to the documentary tradition” (2009, p.39). However, she agrees with Corrigan, who suggests that essay films need to be

distinguished from the documentary tradition. (Corrigan 2011, p.5). Montero comments, in describing the relationship between essay films and documentaries, that “the tendency has been to place the form at the limits of documentary filmmaking without questioning its belonging to this category” (Montero 2012, p.26). Arthur observes that very few documentary filmmakers will adopt the essay film label “Given nonfiction’s long-standing reticence about asserting personal ‘opinions’ or other markers of subjectivity” (Arthur 2003, p.59). On the opposite site, Renov considers the essay film as part of the documentary tradition and in his collections of essays, published in his volume *The Subject of Documentary* (Renov 2004). Based on Mekas’ film *Lost, Lost, Lost* (1976), Renov discusses the relationship between essayistic films, documentaries and avant-garde. Renov situates Jonas Mekas’ film as part of the genre of personal documentary and links its essayistic subjectivity to autobiographical filmmaking “in relation to the documentary traditions’ historical concerns for the expressive potential of the medium” (Renov 2004, p.69). Montero (2012) traces the persistence of associating essay films with documentary filmmaking in the early conceptualisations of the form and the lack of critical tools to examine essay films’ links to reality. Montero argues that “it is essential to go beyond documentaries in order to engage fully with complex non-fiction film practices, which in many cases set out to problematize the very principles that have historically sustained documentary filmmaking” (Montero 2012, p.53). Ten Brink (1999) agrees with Renov on the strong literary heritage of the essay film but also rejects the notion that the essay film belongs to the documentary tradition. He argues that essayistic filmmaking is an independent genre and tradition that “owes more to avant-garde and literary essay practices than to the documentary genre” (ten Brink 1999, p.7). Tim Corrigan, in a similar tone, argues that “First and most

prominently, I contend that the essay film must be distinguished from broad models of documentary or experimental cinema” (Corrigan 2011, p.5). Corrigan dismisses all recent attempts to classify essay films as “meta-documentaries” or to categorise essay films within the documentary traditions as “limited in their ability to fully acknowledge the critical intervention that the essay film makes in the history of cinema” (Corrigan 2011, p.5). To summarise the relationship of the essay film to the documentary, apart from Renov, who clearly situates the essay film within the documentary film domain, the majority of scholars situate the essay film as completely independent from documentary (Arthur, ten Brink, Montero), or in a fluid space (Corrigan, Rascaroli) where diverse cinematic traditions are able to exist side by side but also “Although sitting at a crossroads, the essay film occupies its own place” (Rascaroli 2009, p.43).

3.9 Final thoughts

Grand Tour occupies what Corrigan describes as “a place where the essay film inhabits other forms and practices” (Corrigan 2011, p.198). It builds upon the literary heritage of essayistic filmmaking and is situated between diverse filmmaking traditions and practices. *Grand Tour* utilises montage, interactivity, and connectivity as essayistic conceptualisations to directly address the viewer and craft invisible threads that carry fragmented recollections, thoughts, and images of the past and present. These fragments are assembled and materialised in-between the temporalities of the film as drifting images and recurrent moments, producing not facts and arguments but rather expressing the essayistic qualities of the film. The polyphony of voices embodying the social media feeds invite viewers to pause, scroll and engage in an open multi-vocal dialogue of different voices with the film, with the subjective voice of the author and in-between the layers and temporalities of the film. Corrigan argues that “Essay film provokes an active intellectual response to the questions and provocations that an unsettled subjectivity directs at its public” (Corrigan 2011, p.55). In line with Corrigan, *Grand Tour* employs essayistic filmmaking approaches to invoke the past and the interrelationship between the journeys of European travellers to Greece in the 18th and 19th centuries and the recent debt crisis, inviting an imaginative rethinking of aspects of modern Greek history. *Grand Tour* evolves within the tradition of essayistic filmmaking. Its unstable and interactive form is not looking for the truth, and it does not provide clear answers. *Grand Tour*'s openness invites questions about and suggests an essayistic attitude towards thinking about Greece's connection with the past based on fragmentation, dialogic tensions and in-betweenness.

4. The possibilities of film montage

“The search for a specific place in the filmmaking process in which theory turns into practice takes us not to the author’s desk but to the editing room.”

(Pantenburg 2015, p.153).

The evolution of digital media technologies and networked platforms created the conditions for *Grand Tour* to exist. Fuchs states that “The rise of computer technology and computer networks (such as the internet) has enabled the convergence of media and machines” (Fuchs 2013, p.43). As I discussed in the introduction to the thesis, it wasn’t possible to make an online essay film with *Grand Tour’s* particular qualities twenty years ago. However, the shift to digital production and the widespread use of digital technologies also creates new practical and theoretical challenges to essayistic filmmaking. *Grand Tour* is an attempt to address these challenges by focusing on the montage of the audio-visual, interactive and networked layers of the film. The biggest challenge in making an essay film such as *Grand Tour* is how to assemble the multiple disjointed layers and create a cinematic digital artefact. Assembling all the individual parts of a film is what filmmakers define as montage and is usually one of the unseen parts of filmmaking (Pantenburg 2015). In this study, montage is used as an important way of researching through practice, and it is crucial in acknowledging montage as one of the key themes of this study. For Farocki, “A montage must hold together with invisible forces the things that would otherwise become muddle” (Ehmann and Eshun 2009, p.74). For Godard it is “simply bringing things together” and montage “makes people see things” (Godard 2014, p.9), while for Willerslev and Suhr, through “the

juxtaposition of montage components” we see “the opening of a gap or fissure, through which the invisible emerges” (Suhr & Willerslev 2013, p.1). The terms “film editing” and “film montage” are often used interchangeably. However, in this study these two terms are used as two intersecting notions, following Farocki’s statement that “Montage is an intellectual linking of images” and editing is for “creating flow, finding rhythm” (Pantenburg 2015, p.157). For the purposes of this study, montage refers to how the intersected layers of *Grand Tour* are connected to evoke intellectual and dialogic relationships between disjunctive spatial layers and temporalities of the film. Editing is perceived as the process of creating flow and continuity by assembling all the audio-visual elements, aiming for unified linearity and rhythm between shots. In contrast to continuity editing principles, *Grand Tour* takes advantage of montage mobilised by interactivity and connectivity to disrupt the spatial unity and temporal linearity of the film.

The broad aim of this chapter is to construct a foundation layer of concepts and theories related to film montage. Drawing on these concepts I will develop my thinking and understanding about the metabatic montage of *Grand Tour*. The first part of this chapter I provide a brief historical overview of the development of montage, and I examine the origins of dialectic montage with a particular focus on the work of early Soviet filmmakers and Deleuze’s notion of in-between space. In the second part of this chapter, I critically review three key notions central to my research themes: Manovich’s conceptualisation of spatial montage; Farocki’s notion of soft montage; and Godard’s historic montage method.

4.1 The trauma of the early days

In this part of the chapter, I step back chronologically and discuss the early attempts to conceptualise film montage and the work of early Soviet filmmakers experimenting with film language, in particular Eisenstein's and Vertov's conceptualisations of montage. Filmmakers over the years have developed a number of practical methods, concepts and classifications to find ways to edit shots together in order to build coherent films. The starting point of the traditional film montage and editing theories assumes a film with a stable structure, that presents a linear and sequential progression of a series of fixed shots and sequences (Bordwell & Thompson 2001; Bowen 2018; Frierson 2018; Dancyger 2019; Zettl 2008). In the early days of cinema the concept of film editing did not exist. Particularly before 1904, movies were made as single long shots, as for example in the films of the Lumiere Brothers (Bordwell & Thompson 2001). However, in the early 20th century cinema embraced many innovations, such as Porter's parallel editing, used for the first time in his hugely popular film, *The Great Train Robbery* (1903), and it increasingly adopted narratives based on the sequential arrangement of individual shots. Over the years, movies became more complex and started linking sequential shots and tableaux to represent some form of narrative progression over time. The links between the tableaux were simple; however, the viewer had to fill in the gaps between the tableaux and provide "some small degree of mental labour" (Aumont 2013, p.7). Aumont argues that even before the invention of cinema, the notion of filling in the missing parts existed. For example, in literature readers had to complete the small or bigger gaps in the narrative of novels. However the early cinema goers did not have any pre-existing experience of watching films in the way that readers of literature had, and the

process of filling in gaps in the context of cinema was something completely new for early cinema viewers. Aumont, referring to early cinema viewers, argues that they “had to overcome the small trauma that each jump from one moving image created” (Aumont 2013, p.7). Aumont describes the perceptually disruptive spatiotemporal dislocation that the viewers experienced when a cut between two shots occurs as trauma.

4.2 Softening the trauma

The elimination, softening, or exaggeration of the trauma and the relationships between two sequential shots in a film has been a subject of reflection for film theorists and an area for intense experimentation for film practitioners over the hundred years of cinema’s existence (Aumont 2013). In particular, the complexity of narrative and film editing techniques proliferated when Griffith, “the father of film editing in its modern sense” (Dancyger 2019, p.4), released his film, *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). Griffith’s innovations in editing instantly influenced mainstream movie production (Dancyger 2019, p.4). From that moment, most filmmakers strived for continuity and linear coherence between shots, and the primary function of editing was to advance the narrative in a way that smoothed and softened the abrupt transitions between shots. This type of editing, defined as continuity editing, had an overarching aim of allowing the spectator to remain orientated to the on-screen action. Bordwell and Thompson write that the basic purpose of continuity editing “is to create a smooth flow from shot to shot” and that mainly “through the handling of space and time the editing furthers narrative continuity” (Bordwell and Thompson 2001, p.262). A good example of the role of continuity in the early American films of the 1920s and 1930s is Slobodan Šijan’s comment about how

Howard Hawks applied continuity in his films: “My theory is that his films are captivating because they build a sense of continuity which is so strong that it allows the complete participation of the audience” (Bordwell & Thompson 2001, p.263). However, Soviet filmmakers, particularly Eisenstein, approached editing in a different way. Eisenstein, in his essay *Word and Image*, argues that “two film pieces of any kind, placed together, inevitably combine into a new concept, a new quality, arising out of that juxtaposition” (Eisenstein 1957, p.4). For Eisenstein, the juxtaposition of two shots “resembles not so much a simple sum of one shot plus another shot—as it does a creation” (Ibid, p.7). Eisenstein introduced the notion of attractions. The attraction was the ideal weapon to guide spectators in a desired direction, and he describes it as:

every element of it that brings to light in the spectator those senses or that psychology that influence his experience - every element that can be verified and mathematically calculated to produce certain emotional shocks in a proper order within the totality - the only means by which it is possible to make the final ideological conclusion perceptible.

(Eisenstein 1957, p.232).

In other words, Eisenstein was already aware of the importance of montage and its power to guide and influence the experience and emotional reactions of the spectator. For Eisenstein, a calculated assembly of emotions, reactions and associations can guide the spectator through a film. A key idea in Eisenstein’s thinking is the notion that the montage of a film is a dialectic process; from the dialogic relationship between two shots that are joined together, a new idea emerges. Deleuze, in his discussion of Soviet montage comments on how Eisenstein uses collision and conflict between two shots to

develop new meanings: “How one becomes two in order to produce a new unity” that raises them beyond their duality (Deleuze 1997a, p.180). Eisenstein developed montage methods that link together different visual elements in variety of arrangements; through the combination of these elements something new and undepictable emerges, creates a surplus, and adds something extra. This ‘extra’ produced destabilises the visual and symbolic meaning of the individual components. This instability creates a fracture that echoes back to the film and new meanings may emerge. During the same period that Eisenstein was experimenting with novel film montage techniques, Vertov introduced the term “visual interval” to describe the movement between the shots. Vertov’s conceptualisation of the interval was the first attempt “to think of filmic in-betweenness” (Rascaroli 2017, p. 9). Vertov defines the interval as the visual correlation between the shots, and it consists of five key correlations: of planes (close-up, long shot etc.); of foreshortening; of movements within the frame; of lights and shadow; and of recording speeds (Vertov 1984). Based on these five correlations, the filmmaker begins the “montage battle” (Ibid., p.91) and decides on the sequence of shots and the length of each shot. For Vertov, the perfect edit is the one that reduces the multitude of intervals to a “simple visual equation, a visual formula expressing the basic theme of the film-object in the best way” (Ibid., p.91). Vertov’s key correlations bring similarities to recent discussions about montage such as Zettl’s notion of screen space and motion vectors (Zettl 2008). Zettl, in structuring the on-screen space as a dynamic field of visual forces, defines three types of dominant vectors: graphic; index and motion. Zettl argues that a “solid understanding of the vector theory will help you immensely in preproduction placement of camera and postproduction editing” (Zettl 2008, p.119). Vertov’s and Zettl’s concepts both explore the invisible relationships

between shots. However, both concepts are limited, because they mainly explore the aesthetic and rhythmic formulas that allow editors to find the perfect ways to visually edit shots together.

4.3 The space in-between

My motivation in exploring the experimentations of early Soviet filmmakers is centred around their vigorous engagement with theories that sought to elucidate and define what montage is, and also their early conceptualisation of montage as an inter-space between frames and shots. However, the montage as an intra-image and space in-between is also explored by Deleuze (1997b).

For Deleuze:

...it is montage itself which constitutes the whole, and thus gives us the image of time. It is therefore the principal act of cinema. Time is necessarily an indirect representation, because it flows from the montage which links one movement-image to another (Deleuze 1997b, pp.34-35).

Deleuze, in his discussion of Godard's unfinished film *Here and Elsewhere*, introduces the concept of interstice and defines it as the space "between two actions, between affections, between perceptions, between two visual images, between two sound images, between the sound and the visual" (Deleuze 1997a, p.180). Deleuze's notion of interstice relates to two important concepts in his discussion about cinema, and the two regimes of cinematic image: the movement-image and the time-image (1997a, 1997b). Deleuze argued that the key quality of the movement-image found in classical cinema is its ability to

associate sequential action-images in a continuous flow that follows the sensory-motor linkage, while in the more developed post-war period, time-image disruptions and discontinuities interrupt the flow of images. The discontinuities of time-image loosen the sensory-motor linkage and generate gaps and cracks in the relationships between images and between images and sounds. Deleuze states that in time-image, "Time ceases to be derived from the movement, it appears in itself and itself gives rise to false movements" (Deleuze 1997b, p.xii). The progression from movement-image to time-image and the notion of interstice led to new approaches to cinematic montage. Deleuze explores the new method of montage based on Godard's disjunctive and discontinuous montage methods and explains them as "method of BETWEEN" (p.180). For Deleuze, in this in-between space, "Film ceases to be 'images in a chain... an uninterrupted chain of images each one the slave of the next'" (p.180). Deleuze's notion of between is a key guiding concept in this thesis. In *Grand Tour*, viewers are invited to interact with multiple layers that juxtapose and combine multiple temporalities. They interact with the temporalities of the narration layer and the temporalities and the false movements of the embedded interactive and networked elements in the intersecting layers. Therefore, "the images are no longer linked by rational cuts and continuity but are relinked by means of false continuity and irrational cuts" (Deleuze 1997b, p.xii).

In the next part of this chapter I explore Godard's key montage concepts with a specific focus on his seminal eight-part video essay, *Histoire(s) du cinema* (Godard 1998). *Histoire(s) du cinema* is a key point of reference for the initial realisation and later development of *Grand Tour*.

4.4 Godard's poetico-historical images

Histoire(s) du Cinéma (1998) is a visually complex analysis of the history of cinema and its relationship to the other arts, and of Godard's reflexive investigation of his films. In eight episodes Godard presents a fascinating, meticulously edited collage of his work on other films, by superimposing and juxtaposing textual quotes and visual layers with additional references to other arts forms. Michael Witt, in the *Introduction to a True History of Cinema and Television* (2014), discusses how the film, initially conceived in the 70s, took Godard over twenty years to complete. The film was based on a series of lectures that Godard co-produced with the Conservatory of Cinematographic Art and gave in Montreal in 1978 at Sir George Williams University. Warner states that "*Histoire(s)* is the apotheosis of Godard's search for a critical form wherein sound and image comment directly on sound and image" (Warner 2018, p.93). In Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinema*, montage is the operational principle. Through complex video montage techniques, Godard uses fragmented parts of films mainly borrowed from other sources and re-assembles them, together with animations, photographs, art films and titles, through superimpositions and visual and historical associational connections. Music, voice-over and short literary on-screen citations further complicate the heavily edited visual space of the film, creating multiple layers of meanings and connections. *Grand Tour* and Godard's *Histoire(s)* share many visual and montage qualities; for example, *Grand Tour's* montage also revolves around its multi-layered and disjointed progression; it is a dynamic composition of multi-layered fragments of images, texts and sounds. Godard's *Histoire(s)* was a great inspiration in making *Grand Tour*. In particular, Godard's method of using

sound and image to comment directly on sound and image inspired my creative practice and set the conceptual foundations for adding multiple layers of interactivity and social media feeds. In developing *Grand Tour* I adapted Godard's *Histoire(s)* montage method as a critical approach and a way of creating connections between things that have never been brought together (Godard 2014, p.218). *Grand Tour* is shaped by heterogeneous fluid visual and audio components, and its online presence demonstrates what Godard, inspired by Reverdy, calls "the *rapprochement*" (Warner 2018, p.99). Pantenburg defines *rapprochement* as "convergence between different types of images, from whose differences and similarities theoretical potential can be gained" (2015, p.75). However, Godard uses it very often as a synonym for montage: "That's what I call montage, simply a *rapprochement*" (as cited in Temple & Williams 2000, p.229). A better way to explain Godard's *rapprochement* is with a specific example that can be found in *Histoire(s) du cinema*, chapter 1A (1998, 43:30). In this short section Godard juxtaposes and superimposes Elizabeth Taylor's footage from the film *A place in the Sun* (1951) and archive footage from the concentration camps and ovens of Auschwitz and Ravensbruck. The "the im/perceptible" (Alter 1996, pp.169-170) connection between the interwoven clips is George Stevens (1951). Stevens was one of the first filmmakers allowed to access the concentration camps of Auschwitz and filmed inside the camp with his 16mm camera, using colour film for the first time (Wright 2000, p.51). After the war, Stevens continued his filmmaking career in Hollywood as cinematographer and director. In 1951 he directed the film *A Place in the Sun* (1951) with Elizabeth Taylor and Montgomery Clift. Godard in *Historie(s) Du Cinema*, Chapter 1A (1998) juxtaposed footage from both of Stevens' films, commenting in the voice-over that: "if George Steven hadn't used the first 16mm colour film in Auschwitz and Ravensbruck,

Elizabeth Taylor would never have found a place in the sun” (1998, Chapter 1A, 47:15). Contrasting Farocki and the Soviet Filmmakers, Godard did not write systematically about film montage. His thoughts and philosophy about film montage can be found scattered in many TV and magazine interviews. Godard, in an interview with Gavin Smith for the magazine *Film Comment*, describes this particular part of *Histoire(s) Du Cinema* as “historical montage” (Smith 1996, para.52). Godard constructs an image of history by juxtaposing completely different images, creating an invisible thread between Taylor’s smile and the burned bodies in the ovens of Auschwitz. Godard suggests in the interview with Smith that the qualities of Taylor’s smile are linked to Stevens’ previous experiences of filming in the camps: “And because George Stevens had shot the Holocaust, kept it hidden away for many many years in his cellar, but when he was shooting *A Place in the Sun* there was kind of both smile and disaster” (Smith 1996, para.49). By superimposing these two diverse realities, Godard is probably trying to answer the unimaginable question of how humanity reached the inconceivable state of building Auschwitz. He does not give an answer but seems to suggest, through this impossible montage, that both realities are part of the same cruel reality of being a human, or, as Wright concludes, that Godard’s montage “produces an apparition of the Real, a sublime recognition of the impossibility of doing justice to reality” (Wright 2000, p.55). In one of his interviews, translated into English by Michael Witt and included in his book *Introduction to a True History of Cinema and Television* (2014), Godard gives another example of his historiographic montage method:

I’m discovering today that Griffith was the contemporary of mathematicians such as Russell and Cantor. At the same time moment

that Griffith was inventing the language of cinema, roughly the same year, Russell was publishing his principles of mathematical logic, or things like that. These are the sorts of things I like linking together (Witt 2014, p.xix).

Grand Tour echoes Godard's approach to film montage, that entails linking together "disparate phenomena to create poetico-historical images" (Witt 2013, p.xix). However, as I will discuss in more detail in later chapters, *Grand Tour's* montage techniques can potentially expand Godard's approaches as many elements of the film are fluid and lack stable form because they are assemblages of incomplete disjunctive layers and ephemeral social media feeds that are constantly changing.

4.5 Shades of softness

In the first part of this chapter, I discussed how filmmakers endeavoured to find ways to soften the trauma viewers experienced while watching films constructed through a series of sequential shots. However, the notions of "soft" and "softness" in the context of film and the language of montage have also been discussed by Farocki (2009) and Manovich (2001). Manovich uses the term "soft" to describe a film that does not have a specific hard structure (traditional narrative) and the media fragments of the film can be edited in several variations. Manovich defines the approach used in his *Soft Cinema* (2002) project as soft aesthetic and argues that the soft aesthetic of database driven narrative will replace the hard aesthetic of traditional narrative because the media fragments included in the database can have several connections with many other clips. *Soft Cinema* is a dynamic driven media installation

created by Len Manovich and Andreas Kratky (2002). Originally it was conceived as a multiscreen video installation, and later on was developed for DVD with a new narration, music and graphics. The novelty of the *Soft Cinema* project is the installed software. This custom-made software edits the movie in real time by choosing videos and music from the database. The real time editing of the film is based on editing rules programmed by the authors. The foundations of the editing rules are a set of 10 parameters that describe each clip. The parameters detail the location in which the clip was shot, the subject, brightness and contrast, motions, etc. However, the editing rules incorporate elements of ambiguity and the progression between the clips can be random or semi-random, based on the selection of previous clips and other randomly selected parameters. Manovich's *Soft Cinema* DVD was an important inspiration when I started developing *Grand Tour*. However, as I discussed in chapter two about prototyping, after the early iterations of *Grand Tour* I decided to change the direction of the development of *Grand Tour* and deviate from the aesthetics of the database driven framework.

4.6 Harun Farocki and soft montage

Soft montage is a term used by Harun Farocki. There is no clear and formulated definition, but Farocki uses it in the context of discussing his installation work with multiple projections running at the same time and describes soft montage as “where the relation between images becomes as important as the images themselves.” (Ehmann & Eshun 2009, p.69). In the context of Farocki's work the presence of two images in a soft montage is a recurring theme. There is a particular piece of Farocki's work that inspired my work and I will examine it in the next section of this chapter. *Schnittstelle (The World of Photography:*

Interface, 1995) is a 24-minute double channel video installation. The installation was screened in an art gallery and originally had two separate monitors positioned next to each other (Farocki 1995). However, there is a version of the film on YouTube with two juxtaposed videos in one screen. I was only able to access the YouTube version and my comments are based on this version of *Interface* and also on descriptions and pictures accessed on Farocki's foundation website. *Interface* was Farocki's first experimental installation with two visual channels. He continued exploring it in later works such as: *Eye / Machine* (2000); *Deep Play* (2007); *Feasting or Flying* (2008); and his last work, *Parallel* (2012). During *Interface*, Farocki sits at a video editing desk with two monitors in a laboratory environment. He watches his own previous films, reflecting on the process and implications of montage and explaining his decisions. We watch Farocki, throughout the film, editing his footage and at the same time looking at his two monitors, or we look at the two monitors at the same time. This soft montage of the two video channels allows the clips from one monitor to open a dialogue with the other or with the video of Farocki, in just the way that Farocki states in the film, allowing "image to comment on image". The clips on the two monitors are from his previous films: *Inextinguishable Fire* (1969), *Between Two Wars* (*Zwischen Zwei Kriegen*, 1978), *An Image* (*Ein Bild*, 1983), and, co-directed with Romanian filmmaker Andrei Ujică, *Videograms of a Revolution* (1992), and the *Workers Leaving the Factory* (*Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik*, 1995). Farocki, in *Interface*, foregrounds the actual physical effort of editing and through the implications of soft montage is trying to examine the changing technological conditions and how the images technically and associatively interact when they are placed in opposition or superimposed, asking the questions "What do these two images share? What can an image have in common with another?" (Ehmann & Eshun

2009, p.72). The image the video camera captures, and the separate images of the monitors, generate multiple temporalities that mirror and intersect with each other and at times short circuit. At one point in the film Farocki shows a close-up of a scar on his hand. The scar is the visual evidence of his burning his hand with a cigarette during the shooting of his film *Inextinguishable Fire* (1969); at the same time we see in one of the monitors the actual film of the moment he burns his hand. Farocki describes this montage methodology as soft montage. Soft montage relates to the presence of many images inside the visual space and how they relate to each other in a soft way to create new meanings, without excluding each other as in the case of single projection. It allows images to produce new, or unfold hidden, inaccessible meanings, by short circuiting the images in an infinity loop or what Deleuze describes as “tearing a real image from clichés and turning it against them” (Deleuze 1997b, p.21). According to Farocki, this type of montage does not “predetermine how the two images are to be connected” (Silverman & Farocki 1998, p.142). In Farocki’s soft montage we are confronted at the same time with several images. The images do not replace or negate each other but invite exchanges between them. “The image comments on the image,” says Farocki, pointing at each of the television screens, and the viewer is allowed space in which to freely construct their own associations and meanings. The disjunctive relationship between tangible and visible, presence and absence emphasises the in-betweenness of the film.

Montage allowed Farocki to interweave his film clips, not as separate temporalities but as parts of a dialogue with the same source: the horrors of the war and the terrible consequences to humans. Elsaesser, commenting on Farocki’s work, states that “the habit of thought to express one thing through another, and to ‘see’ the self in the other” is so prominent in Farocki’s films

that “it must be considered the founding gesture of Farocki’s body of work and the signature of his mind at work” (Elsaesser 2004, p.19). This articulation of thought requires a dialogue between images that enunciates its meaning through the associations of many voices to make visible the invisible. I want to note here that I have great admiration for, and feel an affinity with both Godard and Farocki as a practice-based researcher, creative practitioner and active film editor, because they not only reinvented montage and changed the direction of cinema but were both active film practitioners who edited most of their ground-breaking films themselves. Although Farocki edited most of his films himself, he often used the pseudonym of Rosa Mercedes as the editor of his films. Godard, who worked only with the film editor Agnès Guillemot (2005), from the late seventies onwards he edited all his own films.

4.7 Metabatic montage

Within *Grand Tour's* cinematic frame, the cuts happen not only between frames in progressive order, as in traditional filmmaking, but images emerge from within the fabric of the film. This contrasts with traditional essay films where the edits between images are presented sequentially. In *Grand Tour*, the Eisensteinian surplus meaning, Farocki's soft montage, "where the relation between images becomes as important as the images themselves" (Ehmann & Eshun 2009, p.69), and Godard's historic montage between different types of images (2015, p.75) are amplified by the dialogic junctures between the unstable and malleable intersected layers of moving images, sounds, interactivity and multiple voices of the social media feeds to make visible the invisible and imperceptible (Gaudenzi 2013; Andersen 1990; Suhr & Willerslev 2013; Alter 1996). In this part of this chapter I expand on the potentials of montage and conceptualise it as a process in which the dialectic linkage of the layers of the film underlines the heterogeneity of the incorporated layers and temporalities. Instead of stressing the linear continuity, montage in *Grand Tour* rather emphasises gaps, false movements (Deleuze 1997b), disjunctions and in-between spaces (Rascaroli 2017; Deleuze 1997b) as the result of the clashes between the interwoven temporalities. The fracturing of the linear progression and the disjunctions generated are initiated by the viewer through simple interactive actions. Viewers, through interactive scrolling up and down, experience *Grand Tour* as a fluid transitional artefact in between stable and moving images, that constantly oscillates between these states. They can play with it, scrutinise each edit, and scroll from one shot to another. This form of montage is augmented by the physical engagement of the viewer with the fluid interactive layers of the film as they inscribe multiple sets of dialogic

relations and poetico-historical threads into the fabric of the film. In soft and unstable associative imperceivable fibres, montage, augmented by the interactive movement of the multiple intersected layers, constructs the impression of false filming temporalities but also, through juxtaposition, energises images to comment on images. This engagement of the viewer feels inherently more dialogical than the montage occurring within the sequential cinematic space of traditional linear essay films.

4.8 Spatial montage

Metabatic montage builds upon and expands Manovich's conceptualisation of "spatial montage". Manovich argues that "Spatial montage represents an alternative to cinematic traditional temporal montage, replacing its traditional sequential mode with a spatial one" (2001, p.322). He makes a distinction between spatial and temporal montage, and suggests that spatial montage "involves a number of images, potentially of different sizes and proportions, appearing on the screen at the same time" (2001, p.322). Manovich suggests that new digital technologies and desktop computers offer new experiences to viewers through multiple overlapping windows and multifaceted GUI that guide them away from the traditional cinematic "logic of replacement" towards "a logic of addition and coexistence". In his discussion about Olia Lialina's web-based work *My boyfriend came back from war!* (Lialina 1996), Manovich argues for a new dimension of montage: "As the narrative activates different parts of the screen, montage in time gives way to montage in space. Put differently, we can say that montage acquires a new spatial dimension" (2001, p.325). In cinema the narrative is activated by the sequential movement of the images and in spatial montage by "the position of images in space in

relation to each other” (2001, p.325). Betancourt (2016) questions aspects of Manovich’s spatial montage theorisation and argues that it is founded upon an opposition of a sequential mode with a spatial mode that does not exist. For example, in *My boyfriend came back from war!*, when the viewer selects the different windows and the images inside the windows change relations spatially, this transformation also happens over time. For Betancourt, Manovich disregards the temporal dimension that the accumulation and repositioning of images intrinsically involves, and argues that in spatial montage “duration is not considered in relation to the form.” (2016, p.54). Betancourt concludes that this limitation means that Manovich’s theorisation “does not conceive or address any of the other potential combinations possible within cinema (motion pictures) precisely because the theory is not constructed to consider the inherent temporal dimension, resulting in a static conception of these potentials” (Betancourt 2016, p.54). Manovich’s notion of spatial montage as a starting theme within which to analyse *Grand Tour’s* montage approaches is very useful but is also limited. His conception seems static, describing primarily the accumulation, layering and coexistence of windows at the same time, rather the gaps and the in-between spaces these layers can create within the cinematic frame. Manovich developed spatial montage based on the common GUI desktop design approach of dividing the screen into multiple windows rather than creating a unified cinematic frame. Manovich also focuses mainly on the position of the images and their relationship to each other within the frame and not off-screen relations, addressing the viewer by means of unfolding images buried within the fabric of the film. In *Grand Tour* there is one unified cinematic frame, and the multiple fluid intersected layers unfold inside and outside the film frame. The intersecting layers pierce the filmic fabric and when the viewer scrolls over the

in-between lower space of the frame, spatial and temporal montages operate at the same time in a fluid state. In *Grand Tour* the cracks and gaps in between the interwoven layers, and their presence and absence, underscore the in-betweenness of the film. Exploring these in-between gaps and disjunctive spaces and not the accumulation of static overlapping windows is key to understanding how *Grand Tour* is formed and how metabatic montage operates. In the next part of this chapter I will examine the opening of the film extracted from the final iteration of *Grand Tour*. I will use it as departure point to explore and refine the qualities of metabatic montage and how it is implemented to create dialectic threads that explore the key themes of the film, and the research aims of this thesis.

[4.9 *Grand Tour* starts here](#)

The viewer is confronted by the metabatic qualities of the film immediately with the opening titles. The viewer is presented with a simple animated flashing arrow pointing down. This visual animated cue prompts viewers to use their mouse to scroll up or down to interact with the page and reveal more content. The animated arrow, combined with vertical intersected lines on the screen, overlapping the image, are simple invitations for the viewer to act and explore these lines but also indications of the presence of hidden layers outside the cinematic frame.

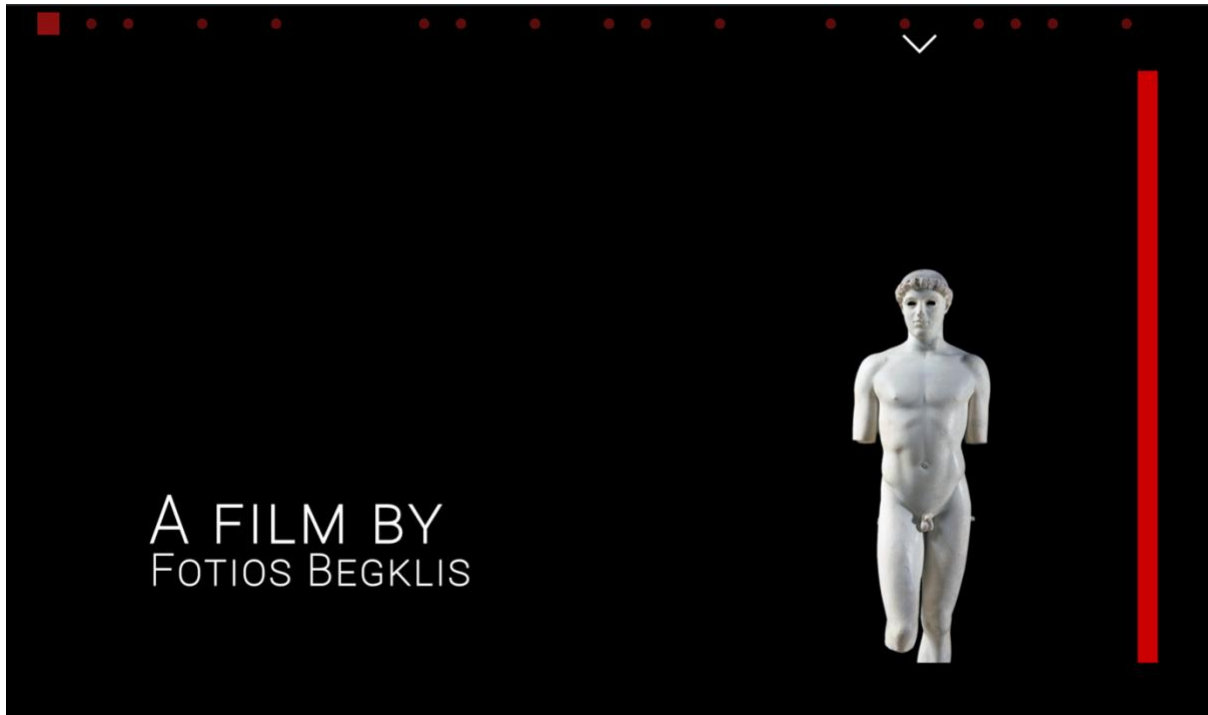


Figure 21 - Screenshot from the opening scene of *Grand Tour*.

In contrast with the hidden interwoven layer, the narration layer of the film follows traditional cinematic conventions and starts with opening credits that include the names of all the key collaborators, as in any typical linear film. The adherence to cinematic aesthetics is further highlighted by the typical sixteen by nine (16 x 9) cinematic aspect ratio of the film. The reason I use a standard cinematic frame is because I want to communicate the feeling of a sequential film and emphasise the dialectic tensions in between the clashing temporalities. As I stated earlier my overall aim throughout this PaR has been to create a film that maintains the qualities and illusions of a cinematic experience in order to build dialogic spaces between the traditional linearity and the disjunctive structure that exists within and outside the filmic frame of *Grand Tour*. Practical frameworks and techniques that incorporate interactivity, video and social media are not new and already exist. For instance, Facebook and Twitter integrate all these elements in a very successful way. However, *Grand Tour* amalgamates them inside the cinematic

frame and as part of the fabric of the film in an attempt to reproduce and then destabilise a linear cinematic experience. On top of the screen a thin red bar is overlaid across the frame. The bar functions as simple directional layer with active hotspots that signposts some form of linearity and emphasises the hybridity of the film. The top layer is simple and transparent; it does not attract attention to itself but invites viewers to jump to other parts of the film and interact with the horizontal temporal dimension of the film in a non-linear way. The main graphical components are familiar navigational elements such as simple buttons with text tooltips. The tooltip above each red dot includes a short description that suggests some form of structure and associations with other parts of the film. The main aim of the top layer is to exploit viewers' pre-existing experiences and knowledge of interacting with online films and web-based video applications by using familiar interaction patterns that allow viewers to navigate easily inside *Grand Tour*. However, *Grand Tour* is also different; for example, there is no progression bar and indication of the length of the film, as in all films found on online video platforms such as YouTube and Vimeo. Thus, the viewers do not know how long the film is and do not know where they are in relation to length of the film. This approach makes the film temporally unpredictable, disorientates viewers and reinforces the uneven and disjunctive qualities of the film. The uneven and unquantifiable spaces between the dots of the bar, that in traditional online linear films usually indicate specific and measurable segments of temporality, further confuse the viewer and emphasise the inconsistent and fragmentary progression of the film. The top bar invites viewers to interact and move freely within the narration layer of the film and move freely between discrete parts of the film. When viewers jump from one part to another part through the top bar they

can see dates on the lower part of the screen that create the sensation of some kind of progression within the temporal dimension of the film (figure 22).

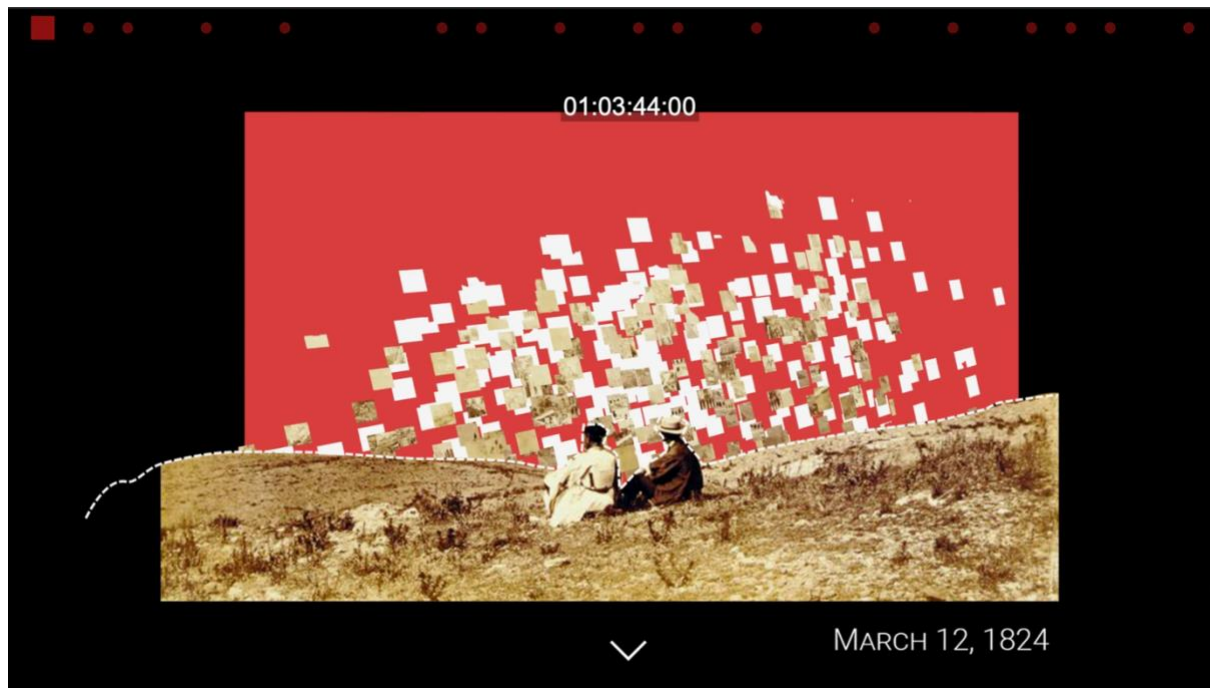


Figure 22 - Screenshots from *Grand Tour* with non-linear dates (03:44mins).

However, the on-screen dates are not in chronological order; all the dates are from the 19th century and progress in an unsystematic way. The main idea behind the unpredictable temporality of the progression bar and the unexpected use of dates is to undermine the notion of linearity and the constructed concept of filmic and historical linear progression. *Grand Tour's* non-sequential openness invites viewers to 225 possible junctions between different types of images augmented by the interactive affordances of the bar (15 red dots by 15 red dots). Furthermore, because the film automatically progresses each time the viewer jumps to a new section of the film, the potential combinations are much higher. Instead of forming a linear relationship between past and present, *Grand Tour*, through its interactive fluidity and unpredictability, compresses multiple past and present threads,

fractures time and resurfaces memories and narratives of the past. In line with Godard's and Suhr & Willerslev's definitions of montage as an intensity that opens gaps through which the invisible emerges (Godard 2014; Suhr & Willerslev 2013), *Grand Tour's* montage amplified by interactivity generates temporal shifts, ambiguities and in-between spaces that make visible the invisible cracks and holes of the constructed narrative of the historical continuity of modern Greece from its ancient past (Herzfeld 1986).

4.10 The unbroken link with the past

The notion of uninterrupted continuity has been a central principle based upon how modern Greece is constructed (Herzfeld 1986). As the historian Fleming has argued, "Greece's brief modern history has been shaped entirely by the socially-constructed belief that it employs an unbroken link with the classical past" (cited in Hanink 2017, p.105). Konstantinos Papanigopoulos (1891) and Spyridon Zambelios (1881) (Demertzis and Stratoudaki 2020) were the first two key historians of the 19th century who endeavoured to construct a linear historical narrative of Greece as the foundation for a unified Greek identity. In their studies, the focus was on constructing a linear continuity and finding similarities between modern Greek culture, customs and folk songs and those of their ancient ancestors. Papanigopoulos', *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους* (1860) and Zambelios', *Περί πηγών της Ελληνικής εθνότητας* (1857) were "in some way a response to the ideological needs of their emergent polity" (Herzfeld 1986, p.9). They formed the foundation for the official historical truth which, through the formal educational system, was transferred to and widely adopted by their contemporaries and by subsequent generations. Their work is still taught in Greek schools, where it is propagated as the key national

narrative (Κουλούρη 1988; Κουσερή 2015; Φραγκουδάκη 1997). *Grand Tour's* metabatic montage, materialises one of the key themes of the film, which is the relationship between the Greek past and present. *Grand Tour* exploits montage amplified by interactivity to form relationships between and link fragments of history by creating Godard's poetico-historical (Witt 2013) threads between the apparently distant images of the ancient Greek past and the reality travellers faced visiting Greece in the 19th century and today. At any time, the viewer can interrupt the linear progression, shift further away from the surface of the film, rupture it and play with it. The suspension of the linear flow of the narration layer of the film - as in linear essay films - is meticulously constructed in advance, shifting the power to the viewer. The viewer controls the film, in an open dialogue with the film which is supported and maintained by the interwoven layers and social media feeds. The viewer takes control of her own vision and the film is literally assembled in her hands and mind. However, as the movement takes place vertically, the interactive top-bottom schema becomes part of the symbolic structure and language of the film and serves as powerful metaphor. The top parts of the layers, potentially linked with the present, are interchangeable with the lower parts of the layers, which potentially relate to the past. For example, in this part of the film (figure 23), the narration layer includes images of modern Athens shot from above. The intersecting interactive layer includes cut-out images of the Acropolis; and an on-screen text with the famous quotation, "I am afraid we are bankrupt" (Greek: "**Δυστυχώς επτωχεύσαμεν**"), from the Greek Prime Minister Xarilaos Trikoupis in the Greek parliament in 1893 (Τρίχα 2016); the dates of all the Greek defaults; and an archive cut-out image of two Greek farmers from the 19th century.

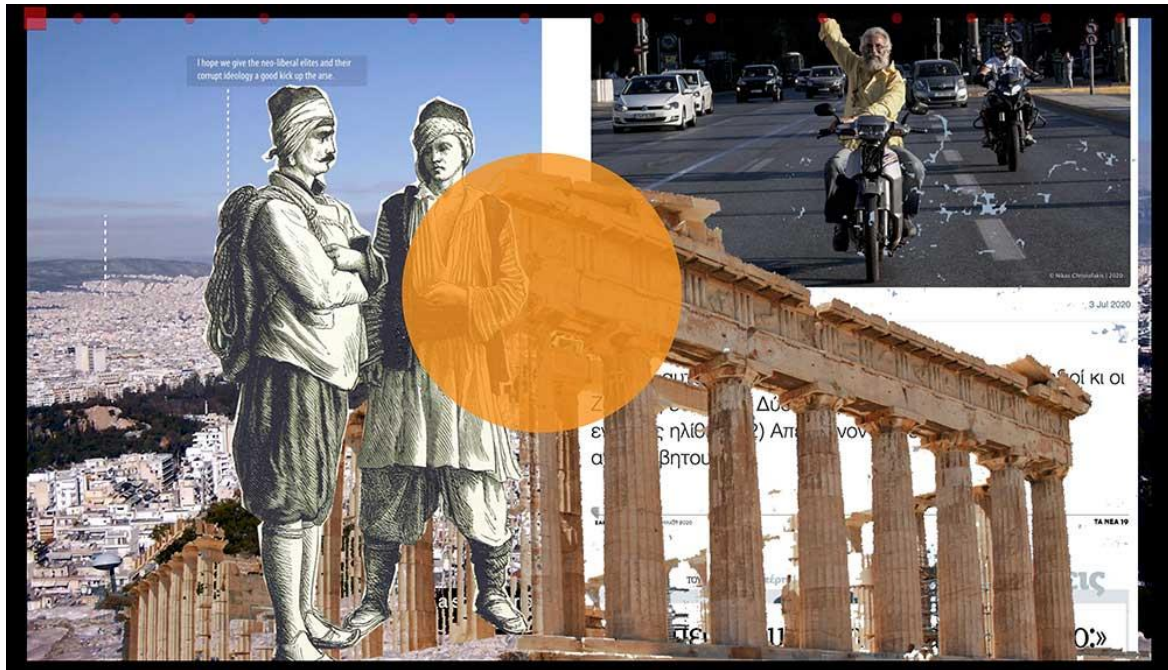


Figure 23 - I am afraid we are bankrupt. Screenshot from *Grand Tour* (01:25mins).

The playful scrolling movement generates unpredictable montages, interchanges between different types of layers, false movements and junctures in an unstable dialogue between past and present, and between images, feeds and on-screen text. This montage of images that pivots around an illusory unbroken temporality, linking them in a poetico-historical way, resembles Godard's methods of historical montage (Smith 1996), and "makes people see things" (Godard 2014, p.9). However, the unstable embedded social media feeds capture and reflect the current Greek reality that exists outside the film, further underscoring the open and disjunctive dialogue in-between images and temporalities. *Grand Tour's* playful metabatic montage operates as a magnet, bringing past and present close to each other, embodying the anthropologist Faubion's observation during a field trip to Greece in the 1990s that "I still know of no other place in which history past and present has been so dominant an ethical concern; no other place in which history past and present has been at once so productive a moral burden and so compelling a modern object of sociocultural recreation" (Faubion 1995, pp.12-13).

4.11 Final thoughts

As I discussed at the beginning of the thesis, the current theoretical frameworks of the traditional notions of montage language are problematic when being applied to online films such as *Grand Tour*. Therefore, a new set of notions is needed, supported by new ideas and practical conceptual frameworks. In my discussion of the montage of *Grand Tour* I incorporate and amalgamate shades of softness and openness to explore the potential of metabatic montage. *Grand Tour's* metabatic montage can be described not as a simple accumulation and juxtaposition but more as a soft and open dialogue in-between the hard progression of the linear narration layer and the interwoven layers. The new poetico-historical images that emerge or disappear through the viewer's interactions with the film deviate from the continuous flow of the linear sequence, and as a result parts of the image break up and fracture from the main progression of the film and generate multiple cracks and gaps. These gaps can be seen as a metabatic montage. This type of montage allows viewers to explore the in-between openings and engage in an open and unpredictable dialogue with the film. From the dislocations and the dialogic associations between the unstable points of view that the fragmented and tangled layers present, new thoughts and meanings emerge. Merging Farocki's notions, "where the relation between images becomes as important as the images themselves" (Ehmann & Eshun 2009, p.69), and the "The essayistic approach", which is "not to impose a definite meaning to the images, but to create an opening" (Tode 1997-1998, p.41, quoted in Rascaroli 2017, p.1), metabatic montage is perceived in this thesis as a creative practice for generating dialogue and instability in an open process of continuous meaning-making and meaning-breaking through disjunctions and in-betweenness within

the cinematic space of *Grand Tour*. It assembles, represents and contrasts multiple voices and unstable points of view within the film and creates a physical connection and bodily engagement with the viewer. Montage amplified by playful interactivity manifests in *Grand Tour* as a dialogic spark producing a multitude of associations, emerging like invisible fibres that traverse all the discrete concepts and elements of the film, making visible the imperceivable. This approach makes clear, at a cognitive level, the multiplicity of the Greek past and embodies Godard's theorem as expressed in the *Histoire(s)* (1998), that "The past is never dead. It's not even past" (quoted in Witt, 2013, p.i). The quote is from William Faulkner's *Requiem for a Nun* (1951).

Because of the multiple layers of images, social media feeds and interactivity that are so prominent in *Grand Tour*, it is important to review some appropriate discourses that will enable me to discuss this complex layering of multiple layers. In the next two chapters I will explore key concepts surrounding interactivity and social media in relation to my artistic practice. I will test and problematise the boundaries of these qualities with a focus on digital media theories in order to expand the definitions of essay film and embrace notions of interactivity and networked connectivity.

5. Oscillating between past and present

It is argued in this thesis that linear essay films are time-based and are constructed on the basis that the viewer will watch them in a sequential manner within a particular timeframe. *Grand Tour*, in contrast, through its metabatic montage plays with the sense of linear progression and constantly oscillates between intersected temporalities. It generates disjunctive in-between spaces that allow the viewer to engage in unpredicted and non-sequential ways. The focus in this chapter is on interactivity, particularly on discussing the dialectical relationships and spaces that open up in between the different, interrelated layers of *Grand Tour* when they are mobilised, tangled, merged and juxtaposed with viewers' actions and interweaved interactivity. The aim of this chapter is to depart from the heritage of film montage and the essayistic discourse and explore some of the ways interactivity can heighten and potentially generate in-between spaces and intensify dialectic tensions.

5.1 Attempting to define interactivity

Interactivity is one of the most frequently mentioned terms in digital media analysis. It became a significant buzzword during the late 1980s and 1990s. Many studies of the concept of interactivity have highlighted the difficulties of defining it (Hansen 2004; Lister 2009; Manovich 2001; Murray 2012), and despite some innovative research, a theoretical agreement regarding the concept has not been reached. Manovich (2001) finds that the term 'interactivity' is too generic to be used in the analysis of new media and questions the very concept that new digital media is interactive. He argues that "As with digital I avoid using interactive in this book without qualifying it, for

the same reason – I find the concept to be too broad to be truly useful” (Manovich 2001, p.55). However, Lister defines interactivity, as “the user’s ability to directly intervene in and change the images and texts that they access” (Lister et al. 2009, p.22). Murray (2012) examines interactivity in the context of interactive design and notes that “the structures by which we script computers with behaviours that accommodate and respond to the actions of human beings” (Murray 2012, p.12). The starting point for how interactivity is understood in this thesis incorporates elements of the previous definitions and is broadly based on two key conceptual axes: Gaudenzi’s (2013) conceptualisation of interactivity in the context of interactive documentaries (idocs) as an open and relational process where “The user is not “observing” the digital artefact, not ‘controlling’ it, but ‘being transformed’ by it” (Gaudenzi 2013, p.75); and Andersen’s extensive classification that “An interactive work is a work where the reader can physically change the discourse in a way that is interpretable and produces meaning within the discourse itself” (Andersen 1990, p.89). Gaudenzi, following second order cybernetic theories, suggests an interactivity that is not the result of a reciprocal two-way action/reaction exchange between the user and the computer, but rather an autopoietic assemblage that entangles viewers/users, digital technologies and their creators. Gaudenzi describes this complex and open autopoietic assemblage as “living entities” (Gaudenzi 2013, p.80), stating that “interacting with them is a way to relate, and construct, our world” (Gaudenzi 2013, p.80). Anderson argues that for any work to be defined as interactive requires a meaning making process that results from the user's active physical input. Manovich (2001) defines active engagement as a key quality of digital media. Manovich argues that “The new media image is something the user actively goes into, zooming in or clicking on individual parts with the assumption that

they contain hyperlinks . . .” (2001, p.180). Hansen (2004) emphasises the strong link between digital media and physicality and argues, “[t]he image can no longer be restricted to the level of surface appearance but must be extended to encompass the entire process by which information is made perceivable through embodied experience.” (2004, p.10). Barry (2001), explores interactivity as a concept related to politics and active citizenship, arguing that “Today, interactivity has come to be the dominant model of how objects can be used to produce subjects. In an interactive model, subjects are not disciplined, they are allowed” (2001, p.129). Expanding Barry’s thinking, the viewer’s experience in *Grand Tour* can be described as a cinematic experience that is defined by its ability to allow them to bring together and hold apart, restrict and open up, exclude and include within and around the limits of the film. In *Grand Tour* the viewer is an essential element of the film. The film does not exist without direct engagement and physical manipulation from the viewer. The viewer performs the film and at the same time is “being transformed by it” (Gaudenzi 2013, p.75) as she constructs new levels of interpretation and new meanings. The notion of positioning the user of an interactive work as a performer is suggested by Marsha Kinder (2002). She proposes perceiving the user or player “like an actor interpreting a role or a musician playing a score, contributing her own idiosyncratic inflections and absorbing the experience into her own personal database of memories” (2002, pp.5-6). In this sense, *Grand tour* is an interactive work because viewers’ physical interactions are integrated as part of the film and their actions produce multiple exchanges in-between the layers and temporalities of the film and generate meanings within the film. A consequence of this is an added emphasis on the process of interaction from the perspective of the viewer and what the viewer does in relation to the interactive elements of the film

(Gaudenzi 2013; Andersen 1990). However, focusing on viewers' experiences highlights an interesting question: how can an interactive essay film such as *Grand Tour* be experienced and performed to create a unique dialogue between the text, the filmmaker and the audience of the film? I will address this question by discussing and exploring parts of *Grand Tour* in the next part of this chapter. In this example taken from the film I will focus on the interactive aspects of *Grand Tour*. However, the dialectic qualities of *Grand Tour* will be examined further in the following chapters. It is important to note, here, that I am isolating interactivity purely for analytical reasons, as all the film's interactive, networked and audio-visual layers are connected as one online cinematic experience.

5.2 Excavating the past

The scene starts at 00:46 and opens with a short text-based description on the screen explaining what the term ‘grand tour’ meant in the 18th and 19th centuries (figure 24). In a couple of short paragraphs, the viewer is introduced to the meaning and significance of the Grand Tour.



Figure 24 - Screenshot from *Grand Tour* (00:46mins).

A vertical white line appears on the right edge within the cinematic frame and a small flashing arrow located in the lower middle part of the frame indicates and invites the viewer to scroll down and explore the concealed layer buried outside the cinematic frame of the film. The moment the viewer starts interacting with the film the linear flow of the film pauses and the viewer can slowly “excavate” and bring to the surface of the film the submerged fragmented images of ancient broken artefacts that exist within the buried layer. Scrolling further down, the viewer excavates more ancient broken artefacts. Scrolling promotes a kind of free-flowing movement and encounter

in the space in between the linear (but now lingering) film and the interactive layers. Murray (1997), in her discussion of online games and immersive environments, argues that viewers experience a sense of agency when what they do within the environments creates tangible results. She states that “Agency is the satisfying power to take meaningful action and see the results of our decision and choices” (1997, p.126). In line with Murray’s argument, *Grand Tour* gives viewers agency to experience the film, be transformed by it (Gaudenzi 2013), and perform it (Kinder 2002) by disrupting its linearity and carving into the surface of the film, excavating the buried layers as ancient artefacts in a way that mirrors the physicality of the archaeological excavations as a metaphor for the interactive performance of the viewer. It challenges viewers to try to understand how the disjunctive cut-out images work, explore the in-between cracks in an open dialogue with the narration layer of the film, making their own mental connections between the generated juxtapositions of the emerging images (Andersen 1990). It also triggers the viewer's curiosity, encouraging them to explore the intersected layers more deeply, reveal more buried elements and produce further in-between fissures and combinations. Interactive scrolling is equated to excavating and highlights active engagement of the viewer (Manovich 2001; Hansen 2004) but can also be perceived as oscillating between past and present or getting deeper or closer to the subject, revealing all the different folded layers of the film. From the perception of the viewer, the playful up and down scrolling of the interactive interwoven layers, is where the in-between spaces surface and the potentials for montage and the emergence of new meanings “within the discourse itself” develops (Andersen 1990, p.89).



Figure 25 - Screenshots of the interactive layers of Grand Tour.

The figure 25 visually demonstrates how the interactive intersected layers are connected with the narration layer. The intersected layer is relatively long and includes many snippets of interactive JavaScript and HTML code. The layer is around five to six times higher than the actual size of the cinematic frame, approximately 4500 pixels. The vertical up and down movement of the page is entirely controlled and performed by the viewer. The JavaScript code, combined with the cut-out images, creates the impression of movement and the illusion of folding and unfolding of the visual elements within the frame of the film when the viewer uses her mouse to scroll up and down. The movement of the mouse folds and unfolds the visual elements within the filmic frame and produces gaps and spaces in between the intersected layers and entangled temporalities. These spaces that emerge through interactive

movement and disjunctions echo what Deleuze and Rascaroli describe as “in-between spaces”. For Rascaroli, in-between spaces are essential qualities of the essay film form (Rascaroli 2017, p.9). This in-betweenness and interactive fluidity of *Grand Tour* provides the foundations for what I defined in the introduction of this thesis as metabatic montage, and I explore further in the next two chapters.

5.3 The challenges of interactivity

Discontinuity, opening gaps and carving in-between spaces are the key dialogical methods in essayistic filmmaking, but are also key interactive embodied metaphors in *Grand Tour*. However, the discontinuity and inherited fragmentation of the film can potentially daunt and challenge viewers. The challenging experience of interacting with the film is reflected in the collected views analytics from VIMEO, the video platform on which *Grand Tour* is hosted (figure 26).

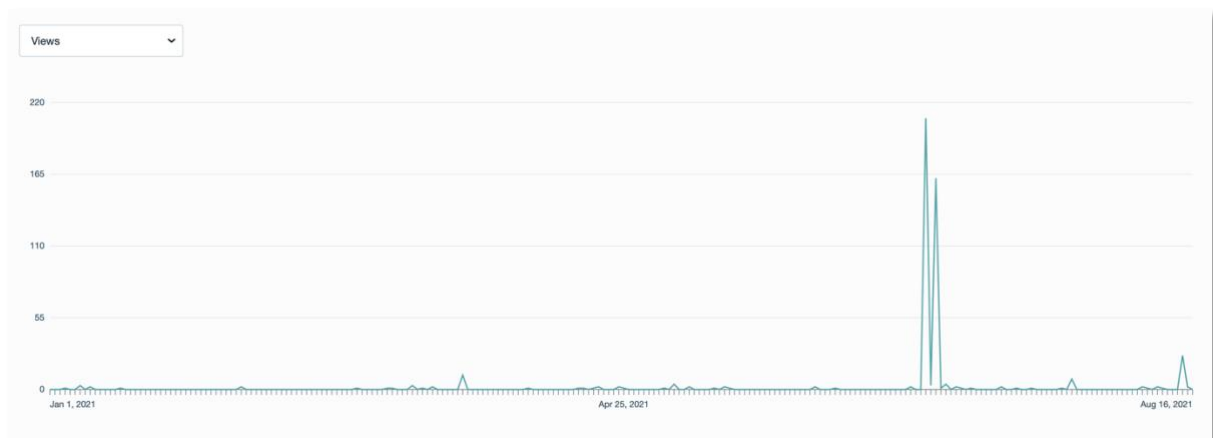


Figure 26 - Screenshot of *Grand Tour*'s VIMEO analytics page.

The graph in figure 26 demonstrates that overall, the film attracted a relatively substantial number of visitors, especially around the period when the film was part of the Thessaloniki Film Festival in June 2021. However, a relatively small

number of the viewers succeeded in watching the whole 30 minute narration layer which is the only part of *Grand Tour* is tracked by the VIMEO online platform. This is indicated by the number of views and finishes. *Grand Tour* had, in total, more than 550 views but only a small number of finishes. I was aware of the deterring potentials of the challenging nature and the possible difficulties arising from viewing *Grand Tour*. However, I decided, in my creative practice, to explore “poeticizing” the gaps between viewers and *Grand Tour*, through “estrangement” and “alienation” as “an aesthetic approach” (Dunne 2008, p. 24). Dunne states that “In design, the main aim of interactivity has become user-friendliness” (2008, p.21) and argues that user-friendliness and transparent, seamless interfaces help naturalise digital objects and the values and ideas they represent. Many of the interactive elements of *Grand Tour* are intended to communicate ideas and implicit meanings rather than offer practicality and navigation. My key aim is not to create a user-friendly interactive experience, but to provoke thinking and engage viewers in consonance with Godards’ poetico-historical montage in an open essayistic dialogue with the film. In line with the research of Antony Dunne, who, with Fiona Raby, established the term ‘critical design’, I developed *Grand Tour* not for interactive user-friendliness but to “seduce the viewer into the world of ideas rather than objects” (2008, p.147) and perceive the imperceptible (Alter 1996). Dunne explains critical design as a way “to make us think. But also raising awareness, exposing assumptions, provoking action, sparking debate, even entertaining in an intellectual sort of way, like literature or film” (2008, p.17). Dunne devised another term called “para-functionality” (2008, p.43). Para-functionality describes art and design projects that exemplify functional estrangement. Dunne states that “The term means here a form of design where function is used to encourage reflection on how electronic products

condition our behaviour” and “go beyond conventional definitions of functionalism to include the poetic” (2008, p.43). Paraphrasing Dunnes’s definition, I suggest viewing the notion of para-interactivity as one conceptual axis, along with the concepts of interactivity I discussed earlier in this chapter, to expand the essayistic qualities of *Grand Tour*. The prefix *para* (παρά) has Greek origins and means multiple things, such as ‘proximity’, ‘from’, ‘before’, ‘beside’, and stresses closeness. Such a view considers para-interactivity as a carrier of expression woven into the fabric of the film, and not just as a carrier of functionality.

5.4 *Grand Tour’s* hybridity

Grand Tour is an essay film with interwoven interactive and para-interactive and networked layers and can be described as a hybrid essay film. Its hybridity is explained by the borrowing of essayistic practices and the remediations of other media within the film (Bolter & Grusin 2000). *Grand Tour’s* hybridity is suggested by its embedded social media feeds, and its interactive intersected layers but also by the blending of different styles, for example the extensive use of motion graphics, animations and visual collages in the narration layer. Furthermore, because all the layers of *Grand Tour* are based on digital data, they can easily be isolated, alternated and combined with new digital data in many different ways that expand the expressive potential and contribute to the open and fluid character of the film; as Manovich claims, “A new media object is subject to algorithmic manipulation” (Manovich 2001, p.49). The representation of digital media in digital code generates another unique feature which is that “they can be interfaced with one another, and be connected through networks” (Gane & Beer 2008, p.7), and also that

“information in digital form can be shared and exchanged by large numbers of users simultaneously” (Feldman 1997, p.6). According to Jenkins’s (2006) media convergence theory, the old media are not just disappearing but rather are altered and forced to coexist with the new emerging media and new technologies. Jenkins argues that “Each of us constructs our own personal mythology from bits and fragments of information extracted from the media flow and transformed into resources through which we make sense of our everyday lives” (Jenkins 2006, p.3). In *Grand Tour*, the convergence and remediation of photos, visual collages and interactive animations of statues and ancient artefacts is used as part of the broader conversation with the past and present. Photos of statues are visual evidence of the ancient past, serving as an alternative mode of representation, in clear contrast to how they were used by the early travellers mainly as a proof of having been there (Angelomatis-Tsougarakis 1990). However, *Grand Tour* does not reconstruct past events or truthfully represent the past. *Grand Tour*, through the remediation and digital manipulation of multiple layers of images, “becomes a mosaic in which we are simultaneously aware of the individual pieces and their new, inappropriate setting” (Bolter & Grusin 2000, p.47). The essayistic intention behind this fragmented remediation of digital images is to create the illusion of historical continuity that is constantly disrupted and interrupted by other temporalities, that in turn generate questions and reveal other forms of poetico-historical continuities, and soft and metabatic montages such as debt and political dependence.

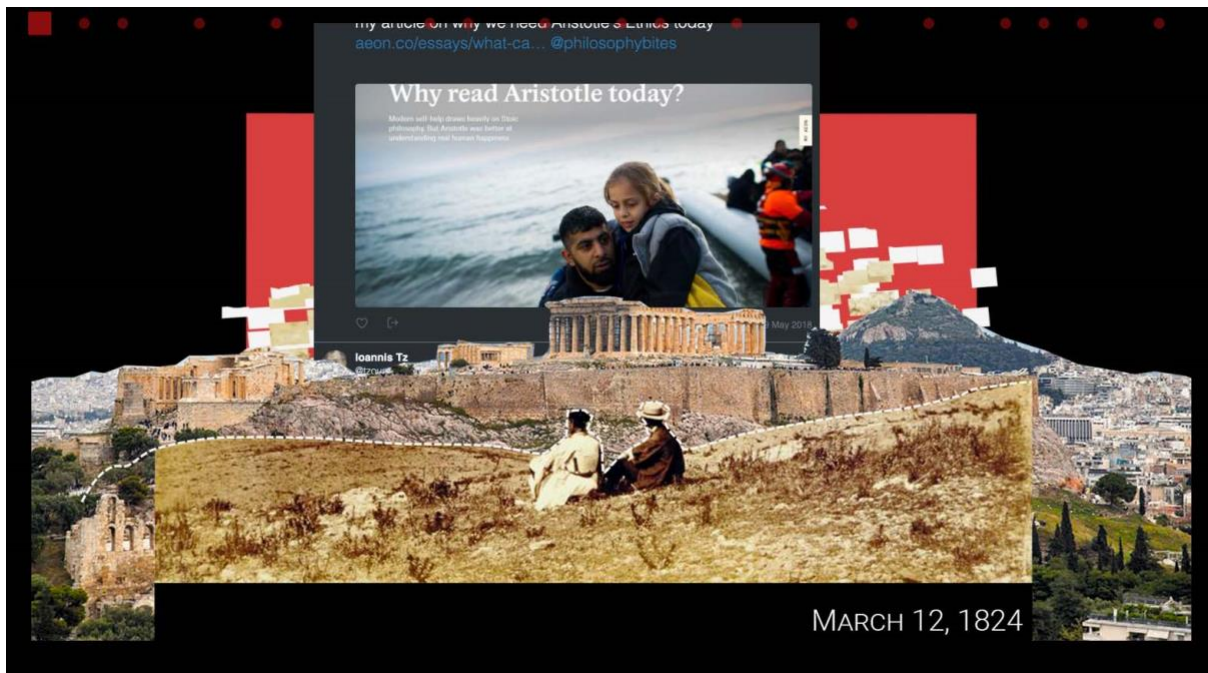


Figure 27 - Screenshot from *Grand Tour* (03:50mins).

5.5 *Grand Tour's* playfulness

In this part of the chapter, I will explore the concept of playfulness, a concept used frequently in this thesis. ‘Playfulness’ and ‘playful’ are two terms often used in describing and defining essay films and in discussions about interactivity and interface design. In the 1940s, avant-garde filmmaker Hans Richter explained why he used the term ‘essay’: “The term essay is used because it signifies a composition that is in between categories and as such is transgressive, digressive, playful, contradictory, and political” (Alter and Corrigan 2017, p. 91). Papazian and Eades (2016) define the essay film as a distinct form of filmmaking “characterised by a loose, fragmentary, *playful*, even ironic approach the essay film raises new questions about the construction of the subject, the relationship of the subject to the world and the aesthetic possibilities of cinema” (2016, p.1). Harun Farocki, in his response to a question about the use of commentary in his films, stated: “I make such playful use of the commentary, I propose this meaning and then another

meaning, and then exchange them, as one does when playing cards in a game” (Elsaesser 2004, p.187). Ha and James (1998) argue that interactivity is “the extent to which the communicator and the audience respond to, or are willing to facilitate each other’s communication needs” (1998, p.462), involving: “playfulness; choice; connectedness; information collection; and reciprocal communication” (1998, p.462). Murray states that “new technologies trigger a state of playful exploration when they afford direct manipulation with immediate feedback” (2012, p.380). Playful exploration is a key part of my filmmaking approach. Through a mixture of scrolling, simple interactions and unexpected visual disjunctions and juxtapositions, I try to stimulate the viewer to play, explore and manipulate the temporal dimensions of the film in order to experience agency, develop a playful physical attachment and engage in a dialogic exchange with the text.

Grand Tour’s playful montage, which is mainly expressed through the use of a scrolling mouse, echoes game designer Paul Pethick’s (2021) proposition about play, that “the appeal lies not in any wild freedom it seems to offer, but in the very nature of its limits.” Furthermore, “It’s these strict limitations which draw you in and make it satisfying” (Pethick 2012, p.29). Pethick’s comments refer to his discussion about play and playfulness, an attitude, he argues, that we can apply to everything (Pethick 2012, p.26). Pethick points out that a few years ago, the US National Museum of Play introduced a new toy as part of its Hall of Fame section. Usually, they include commercially produced toys, but the new toy was a humble wooden stick. The curator decided to include it because of its imaginative simplicity. Its power lies in its inventive unsophistication. It can be “a wild west horse, a medieval knight’s sword, a boat on a stream, or a slingshot with a rubber band” (Curator Chris Bensch, cited by Pethick 2021, p.30). Playfulness in *Grand Tour* is inspired by the imaginative potentials of the

wooden stick and takes advantage of the simplicity of scrolling to intensify dialectical tensions, inviting the emergence of new meanings and thoughts. It traverses the fabric of the film as another essayistic thread in an attempt to extend interactions and challenge viewers' interpretive ability in a stimulating feedback loop between past and present, stillness and movement.

Paraphrasing Bazin's famous quote in his review of Chris Marker's montage in his film *Letters from Siberia* (Marker 1957), for a montage "from the ear to the eye" (as cited in Stob 2012, p.37), in *Grand Tour* interactive scrolling is used to reveal and create new mental connections and understandings "from the finger to the eye". The online space of *Grand Tour* functions as an echo of the connection between what the viewer sees and touches, a co-occurrence of the two senses of touching and seeing. Through the interactive actions and reactions of the viewer, these two different dimensions, in a physical and visual way, come together to unify space and time and engage viewers in a dialogical relationship with the spatial and temporal dimensions of the film. John Berger and Jean Mohr, in their visual essay book *Another Way of Telling* (1982), argued that their book, even if it looks cinematic, works very differently from cinema because it allows readers to pause, go back one or more pages and jump forward through the pages in the book. This type of "hypertextuality" allows readers to expand their understanding of the text and the photographs and can result in a number of different readings of the same text. They argue that a key difference between viewing images in a book and watching a film is the forward temporal force of the filmic apparatus, which Berger describes as producing a kind of "temporal anxiety" caused by the constant forward movement of the film. Berger writes: "In a film ... there is always a third energy in play: that of the reel, that of the film's running through time" (1982, pp.288–289). *Grand Tour* invites users, unrestrained by

temporal anxiety, to navigate among the threads of the film, para-interact with the images, explore new associations and meanings and be changed by the film (Gaudenzi 2013; Andersen 1990).

5.6 Interactive documentaries - idocs

As I stated in the introduction of the thesis, because of the limited literature and the few interactive essay film paradigms, I have expanded the research area of my study to the scholarship of interactive documentaries (idocs). My motivation to explore the literature related to idocs, apart from their historical and genealogical affinity to the essay film and documentary genres which I explored in previous chapter, is that idocs have become an established area of research and practice over the last 10 years. Scholars of the field (Judith Aston (2012); Jon Dovey (2008), Kate Nash (2021); Sandra Gaudenzi (2013)) and interactive documentary practitioners (Katerina Cizek; Florian Thalhofer; UPIAN) have researched and explored concepts related to my practice and thesis research questions. This thesis builds on that body of research and draw in particular on the concept of interactivity.

5.7 Alma - A tale of violence

I would like to start my exploration of some key idocs concepts by reviewing an important source of inspiration for the development of *Grand Tour*, namely an interactive documentary (idoc) by Miquel Dewever-Plana and Isabelle Fougère, *Alma - A tale of violence* (2012). This idoc tells the story of Alma, who was a member of a notoriously violent Guatemalan gang. The film is a testimony to the gang violence in Guatemala, was included in many documentary festivals around the world and collected a number of awards, such as the IDFA Award

for digital storytelling (2012) and the innovation Award in Sheffield Doc festival (2013) (docubase 2012). *Alma* tells the story in a confessional style, with Alma looking straight at the camera and talking directly to us. It is filmed and edited in a simple but powerful way, focussing on Alma's face and voice, highlighting the authenticity of her confessions. What I find particularly inspiring in this idoc is the subtle use of interactivity. Throughout the duration of the film there is a hidden layer that plays simultaneously with the actual film. The hidden layer is located on the top of the frame and can be activated only if the viewer moves her mouse close to top edge of the screen. The concealed top layer includes mainly static photos (Miquel Dewever-Plana, one of the directors of the film, is an independent photographer). The images are directly linked to and support Alma's testimony. The idoc enables the viewer to watch and at the same time to switch between the two visual layers that run in parallel. The first layer is created from Alma's personal confessions, in which she tells her story facing the camera. The second layer, which runs in a parallel level, is created from photos and drawings which blend together and bring Alma's violent past to real life. The subtle interactive revealing of the hidden layer creates a horizontal split screen effect that produces juxtapositions by allowing the viewer to access parts of Alma's painful past memories while she watches the film. Although *Grand Tour* is a very different film, there is a functional affinity between *Grand Tour's* playful and fragmented configuration and *Alma's* dual screen interface design. However, *Alma* is an idoc grounded in reality with strong affinity to documentary genre. Alma's real and honest first-person testimony produces a space for an explicit understanding of her past and of her interpretation of time. Her story is real and authentic, and as the directors state, "this web-documentary is her path to redemption" (docubase 2012). All the elements of the interactive experience support the reality of her

life, the truthfulness of her testimony and the real consequences of her past actions. *Alma* is an idoc rooted in the documentary tradition. In contrast, *Grand Tour*'s aim is to create ambiguities and suggest in-between spaces that offer opportunities to reimagine past and historic time in the context of Greece and the journeys of the European travellers. *Grand Tour* is speculative and within the filmic space there is no linear time of reality but a fluid poético-historical thread that connects past and present. *Grand Tour* teases the viewer's imagination in playful ways by letting them take control of the interplay between spatial and temporal proximity and distance. The dialectic between proximity and distance is an interface design approach in both *Grand Tour* and *Alma*. In *Alma* it is used as a device to support the truthfulness of Alma's testimony, while in *Grand Tour* it is used as a key conceptual metaphor to amplify dialectic tensions between past and present and to playfully invite the viewer to 'excavate' buried ancient relics that are hidden outside the filmic screen. For example, a scene in *Grand Tour* that starts at 03:50 (figure 28) captures the open and disjunctive relationship between past and present. The scene starts with an animated sequence of cut-out graphics that slowly come together and reconstruct an old image of the Acropolis and Athens.



Figure 28 - Screenshot from *Grand Tour* (03:50mins).

The photo is an old photo taken from far away. The landscape around the Acropolis is clearly visible and depicts Athens as it was 150 years ago. In the foreground two figures sit on top of a hill. Their faces are not visible, as they are both looking at the Acropolis. The figure on the left is dressed in the traditional Greek white fustanella (Greek: φουστανέλα) and the other in a typical 19th century western type dark suit. This digitally reconstructed image sets the ambiguous sentiment of the film and highlights the main thematic juxtapositions that run throughout the film: the ancient and the modern, West and East, past and present. Both are looking at the Acropolis, both are situated in the present of the photo, looking at the past, placed within the fluid present reality of *Grand Tour*. The figure on the right looks like a European traveller, peacefully envisaging the next entry to his journal, and the Greek in the fustanella is perhaps his guide or servant. Travel writing about Greece after the early 19th century played an important role in constructing how modern Greeks were perceived in Europe (Hanink 2017; Tziovas 2014; Roessel 2002;

Eisner 1993; Angelomatis-Tsougarakis 1990). The travellers were inspired by their own classical education and a desire to visit the land that produced so many great thinkers and raised human civilization to such great intellectual heights. However, as Kolocotroni & Mitesi argues, “Travel writing on Greece reflects the ambiguous position of the nation itself. Situated at the threshold between past and present, East and West, Greece for the traveller questions the opposition between Europe and the Orient, but is also divided between its idealised timeless image and its modern incarnation” (Kolocotroni & Mitesi 2008, p.xi). In line with this uncertain location of Greece, *Grand Tour’s* disjunctive nature is shaped by these ambiguities and the ambivalent perception of both past and recent European travellers.

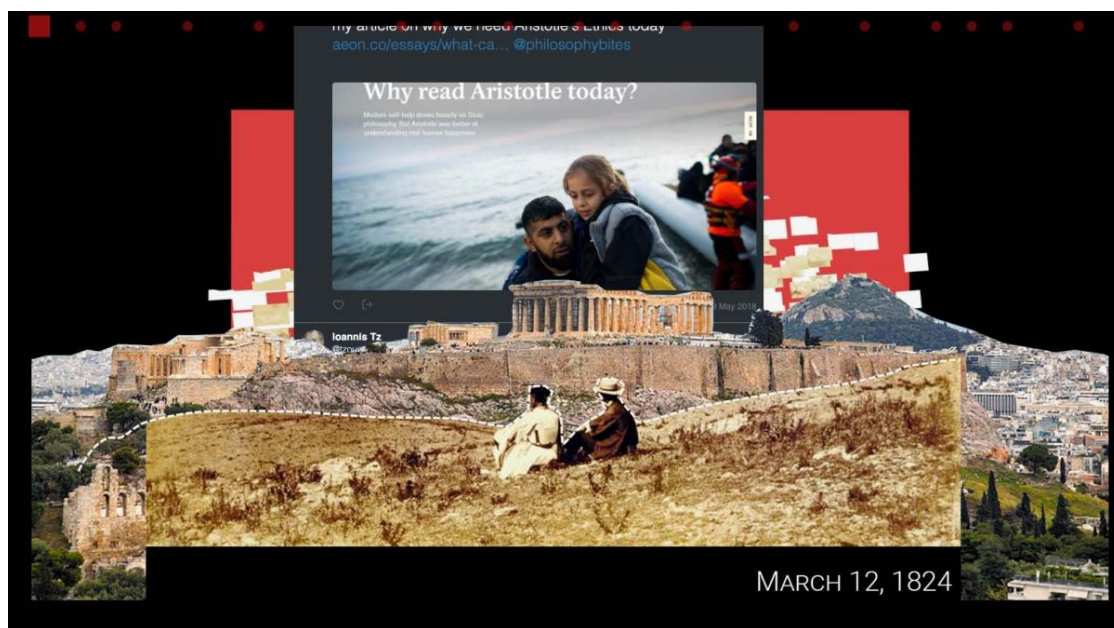


Figure 29 - Screenshot from *Grand Tour* with embedded Twitter feeds (03:50mins).

The viewer’s interactive scrolling brings together images of the Acropolis as it was 150 years ago and as it looks today. Thus, within the frame of the film, multiple uneven temporalities intersect in some kind of disjunctive order. At the same, the juxtaposed Twitter feeds recontextualise these temporalities as

part of the present (figure 29). The viewer, through her constant playful movement, continually estimates her position and reimagines and negotiates the dialectic associations between the images. She can playfully move further away from the frozen narration layer, and in a sense, she can become absent, lost and disconnected. She does not have a fixed position within the film, she exists in the in-between space and is detached from the certainty of reality and stable meanings and reality. *Grand Tour* resembles Corrigan's description of Alain Rensais's *Night and Fog* (1956) as a film that "drifts through horizontal tracks, punctured by archival stills" (Alter & Corrigan, 2018 p.210). However, its direction is not only sequential and horizontal but unstable, unpredictable, and ambiguous. This ambiguity of the film invites the viewer to constantly reposition herself within the space of the film and ask what is hidden beyond the frame and under the surface. *Grand Tour* viewer's ambiguous and unanchored position within the film continually subverts the assumption that there is one objective reality.

5.8 *Grand Tour* as idoc

One of the first researchers who studied the interactive documentary as an independent form is Sandra Gaudenzi in her thesis *The Living Documentary: from representing reality to co-creating reality in digital interactive documentary* (Gaudenzi 2013). One of Gaudenzi's key arguments is that idocs are not just the digital extensions of traditional documentaries but are "something else" (Gaudenzi 2013, p.73). This argument resonates with how I locate *Grand Tour* in relation to the essayistic filmmaking discourse and I will explore it in more detail in this part of this chapter. Gaudenzi proposes four modes of interactive documentaries, based on key conceptualisations of

interactivity that expand Bill Nichol's documentary modes of representation (Nichols 2002): the conversational mode; the hitchhiking (or hypertext) mode; the participative mode; and the experiential mode (Gaudenzi 2013). Similarly, Nash (2012) offers another classification of interactive documentaries that defines them as "webdocs". Nash defines three types of webdocs: narrative, categorical and collaborative. (Nash 2012, p.203). From the different classifications of interactive documentaries, *Grand Tour* is closest to Gaudenzi's hitchhiking or hypertext mode, since this mode is primarily characterised by a more or less defined set of interactive elements and options for the viewer. Gaudenzi argues that in hypertext idocs, their interactive structures "guarantee a dynamic relation between the interactive product and its environment (user, platform, author) that do not exist in linear film" (Gaudenzi 2013, p.88). In *Grand Tour*, viewers have a degree of freedom to decide what parts of the film to access and interact with, although the actual parts they can access and interact with are specific and definite. However, within the interactive layers of the film, several social media feeds are embedded. These feeds are constantly being updated, as they continually draw live information, posts and external real-time content from the web. In *Grand Tour*, viewers can potentially like, comment and retweet any embedded posts. Viewers' contributions will be automatically amalgamated in real-time by the embedded social media feeds in the film. Therefore, viewers can influence the film and in a limited way change it. This limited participatory aspect of *Grand Tour* bears some similarity to Gaudenzi's participative mode, where the content of the idoc is open to constant change because users can upload new material. However, as I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter about the networked connectivity of the film, this is not my primary motivation for embedding social media feeds. Grouping *Grand Tour* under the hitchhiking or

hypertext idoc mode raises the question of whether *Grand Tour* can be classified as an idoc. To answer this question we need to step back and explore the key definition of what an idoc is. Gaudenzi and Aston define idocs as “any project that starts with the intention to engage with the ‘real’, and that uses interactive digital technology to realise this intention” (Aston & Gaudenzi 2012, p.125). This definition is very broad and potentially includes many digital based projects. However, Nash (2012) argues “that the webdoc can and should be situated within the documentary tradition” (Nash 2012, p.208). She points out webdocs have a number of characteristics that form a “family resemblance with the traditional documentary” (p.197). These affinities start with the organisations that produce and fund traditional documentaries, and who also produce and fund webdocs. Furthermore, many webdocs follow the representational logic and techniques of traditional linear documentaries. For example, the idoc *Alma - A Tale of Violence*, which I discussed earlier in this chapter, is based on traditional documentary conventions and with “an intention to document the real” (Aston & Gaudenzi 2012, p.125). Finally, Nash identifies continuity with the traditional forms of documentary in terms of purpose and the similar structural, narrative and thematic patterns established in linear broadcasted documentaries, and argues that “The content and approach of webdocs can often be indistinguishable from television documentary” (Nash 2012, p.198). Drawing on Gaudenzi’s definition, *Grand Tour* can generally be categorised as an idoc, as her definition is very broad, potentially including a vast range of digital projects. However, following Nash’s argumentation about the “family resemblance” with the documentary tradition and the suffix doc of webdocs and idocs highlight some form, link or continuity with the documentary tradition, I would hesitate to clearly define *Grand Tour* as an idoc or webdoc. Also, as I stated in the introduction, the key

point of departure of this thesis is the intention in this PaR project to explore specifically the addition of interactivity to the context of essayistic filmmaking, and *Grand Tour* is a film defined by its essayistic heritage. Moreover, as Montero argues that in order to explore the complexities of essayistic filmmaking “is essential to go beyond documentary” (Montero 2012, p.53). *Grand Tour* is an essay film that incorporates other forms, styles and genres and is situated “between fact and fiction, between the documentary and the experimental” (Alter & Corrigan 2017, p.198). *Grand Tour* emerges “out of those documentary and avant-garde traditions” and it develops the notion that “the essayistic should not necessarily be seen simply as an alternative to either of these practices (or to narrative cinema); rather it rhymes with and retimes them as counterpoints within and to them” (Alter & Corrigan 2017, p. 198). This PaR project echoes Rascaroli’s claims that “essay film is an open field of experimentation, sited at the crossroads of fiction, nonfiction, and experimental film”, and, “although sitting at a crossroads ... occupies its own place” (Rascaroli 2008 p.43). In line with Alter’s argument that “The form of the essay film is characteristically unpredictable because it does not follow conventional rules” (2018, p.5), and consistent with the essayistic tradition of avoiding classifications and definitions (Alter & Corrigan 2017; Rascaroli 2008), I locate *Grand Tour* primarily as an online essay film situated in the in-between space of non-fiction essayistic filmmaking traditions and online digital media practices.

5.9 Final thoughts

In line with the dialogic qualities of the essay film, I discussed in Chapter three, I argued in this chapter that *Grand Tour’s* playful trial-and-error interactivity

and para-interactivity amplify dialogic tensions, generate gaps and in-betweenness and give agency to the viewer to create openings and disjunctions between her and the film (Rascaroli 2017; Deleuze 1997b; Gaudenzi 2013; Andersen 1990). The interactive elements of *Grand Tour* are intended to provoke thinking and engage viewers in a dialogic tension with the film, rather than offer practicality and ease of navigation (Dunne 2008). Interactivity in *Grand Tour* is woven into the fabric of the film and its dialogic configuration is intended to summon the in-between spaces defined by the cinematic frame, interactive movement, fluid layers and viewers' physical engagement. In *Grand Tour*, the nature of viewers' experience is not only related to the linearity of the film but also to the interwoven interactive elements of the film. *Grand Tour* invites the viewer to interact and reposition herself within the multiple temporalities of the film. The conceptualisation behind this approach is to create the illusion of historical continuity, using a linear thread that is constantly disrupted and interrupted by the interwoven layers, that in turn oscillate and reveal other forms of continuities, such as financial and cultural debt that I will explore in the next two chapters of the thesis.

6. Living dialogic shards in *Grand Tour*

In this chapter I will focus my exploration on the networked elements of the film. The networked connectivity of *Grand Tour* is expressed through its online space and its social media presence. Viewers can visit the online *Grand Tour* web site, experience and interact with the film and at the same time engage with it through popular social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest (see Appendix 2 for the links to social media platforms). While having a dedicated web URL and web space on the internet is crucial in making *Grand Tour* active and visible, its social media presence gives viewers the opportunity to feel part of something thriving, alive, reactive and tangible.

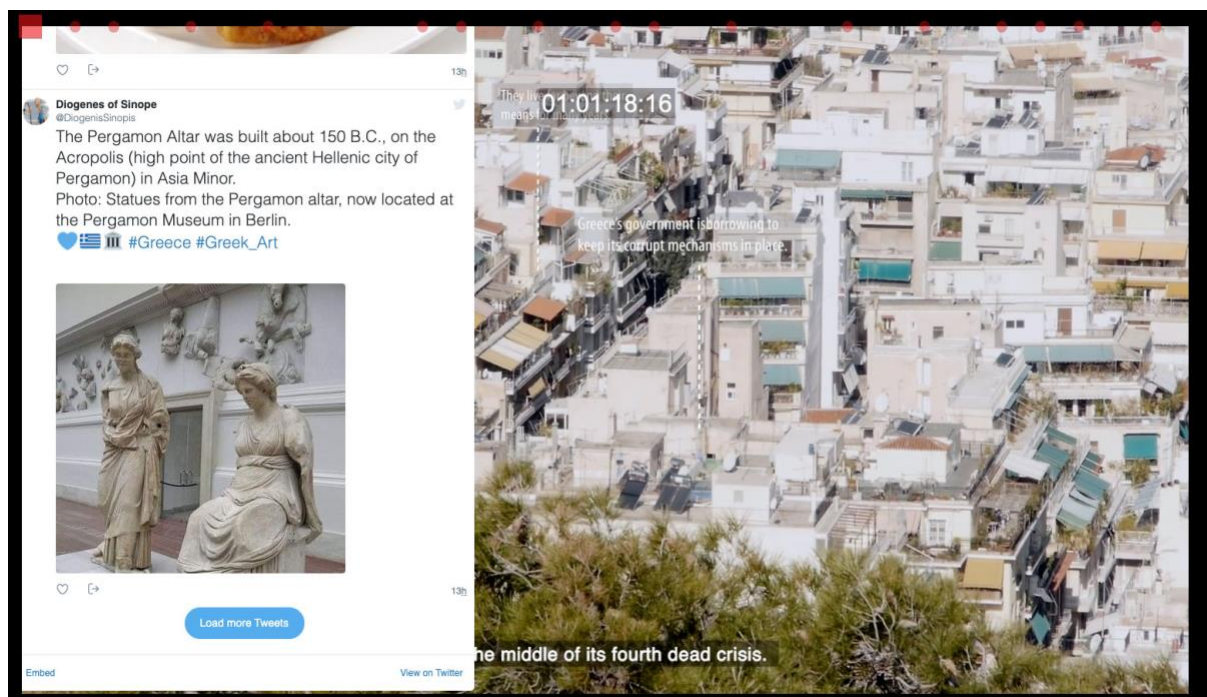


Figure 30 - Twitter feed screenshot from *Grand Tour* (01:18mins).

Grand Tour's social media presence is rendered within the film through interweaving social media fluid feeds, capturing, in real time, social

experiences that allow a co-existence and a simultaneous presentation of multiple voices. In this chapter the emphasis is on how *Grand Tour* renders real time social experiences within the fabric of the film and in the dialogue between the film's multi layered subjectivity and the captured social media voices within the space of the film. In particular, it explores how the fluid voices conveyed by the social media feeds clash at multiple levels with the stable voices in the narration layer, generating disjunctions and unexpected dialectic tensions. The conceptualisation of social media in this chapter builds upon the notions of gaps, fissures and in-between spaces that I explored in chapters three and four (Rascaroli 2017). It also follows on from Corrigan's notion that the "essayistic describes the many-layered activities of personal point of view as public experience" (Corrigan 2011, p.13) and expands his definition that the essay film is a "tripartite structure of subjectivity, public experience, and thinking" (Corrigan 2011, p.63). Following these notions, I could suggest that in an online essay film such as *Grand Tour*, the embedded social media feeds define and form this tripartite space where the author's subjectivity encounters many public voices within the dialogic space of the film. Within this framework, I will explore how *Grand Tour's* interwoven social media layers, and the fluid visual and textual juxtapositions they generate within the film, are indicative of the ways in which this form of online essay film can foster dialogic tensions and reach far beyond the cinematic space of the film.

6.1 Multiple voices of social media

The social media feeds in *Grand Tour* can be understood as utterances, following Bakhtin's notions of heteroglossia and dialogism and Montero's

(2012) discussion emphasising the presence of multiple voices in essay films. As I discussed in chapter three, Montero argues that essay films are based on two of Bakhtin's notions: the notion of "heteroglossia", seen as the "multiple" voices present in a language, and of "dialogism", understood as the different ways that "heteroglotic" voices relate within texts (2012). The social media feeds interwoven into the fabric of the film, enriched by the online discussions that develop around them and amplified by interactions such as likes and reposts, present a multitude of voices relate within *Grand Tour*. However, there are more reasons why *Grand Tour* may be considered dialogic in Bakhtinian terms. *Grand Tour* does not answer questions on the issues it explores. It unfolds conceptual associations and raises questions for the viewers to answer themselves. Viewers can interact with the social media feeds within and outside *Grand Tour's* filmic space. Exchanges and open dialogue between many voices are inscribed into the very fabric of the film. In this sense, *Grand Tour* can be understood as a Bakhtinian "rejoinder" (1982). Bakhtin argues that a work should be "determined by its interrelationship with other rejoinders in the same dialogue (in the totality of the conversation)" (1982, p.274). The social media feeds add layers of visual and textual complexity that grow and expand within the cinematic space and expand beyond the confined filmic frame. Figure 31 demonstrates how generally Twitter feeds are presented and integrated within the cinematic frame of *Grand Tour*.

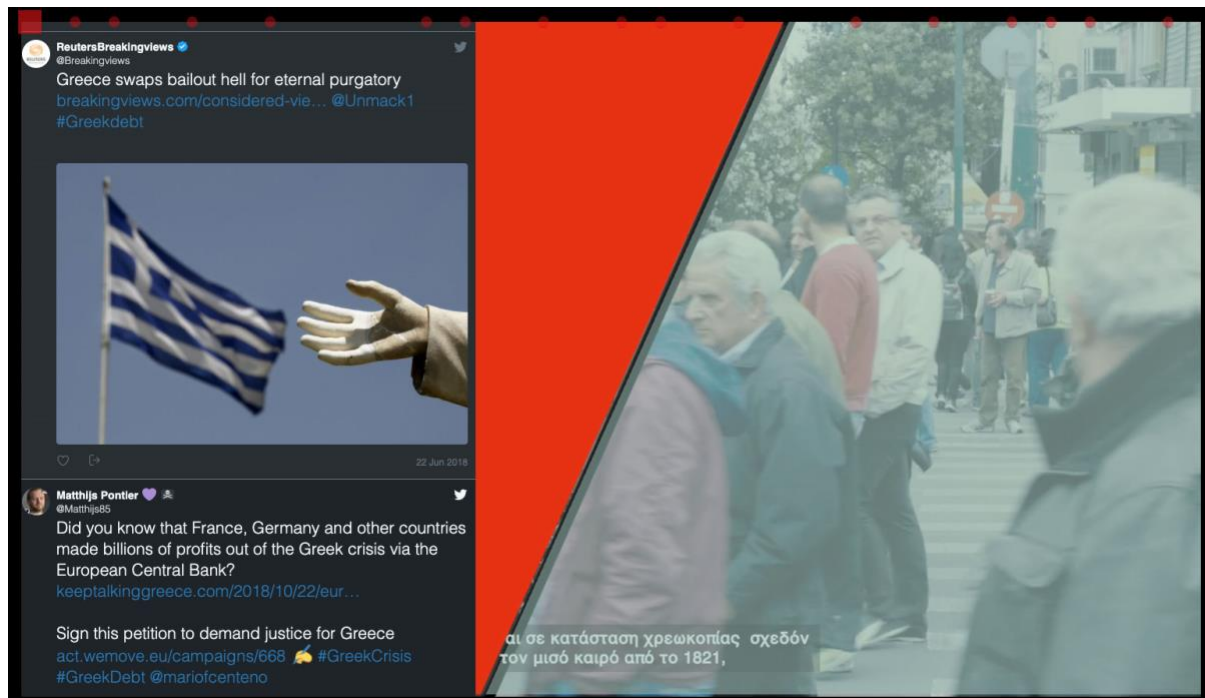


Figure 31 - Embedded Twitter feed.

6.2 Twittersphere

Grand Tour exists as an online public virtual space, as a technology, as a medium and engine of and for online interactions. The sense of space for the interactions is defined by the technical possibilities of the digital network, the social media platforms, the author and the viewers. For Castells (2009), distant interactive communication does not eliminate space. It transforms the sense of space to something new, which he calls “the space of flows”. The space of flows is an assemblage of digital and electronic networks and information systems, but it also “has taken over the logic of the space of places, ushering in a global spatial architecture of interconnected mega-cities, while people continue to find meaning in places and to create their own networks in the space of flows” (Castells 2009, p.xliv). *Grand Tour* is part of this changing and constantly shifting topology that people and texts experience in network driven societies. According to Castells, “networks constitute the new social

morphology of our societies, and the diffusion of networking logic substantially modifies the operation and outcomes in process of production, experience, power and culture.” (Castells 2009, p.500). *Grand Tour*’s multiple layers of social media connectivity expand the film beyond its specific temporality and offer opportunities for the film and viewers to connect, engage and situate themselves in relation to the world around them in a fluid online space of interlinked space of flows. There is a body of literature that defines social media areas of online activities as virtual spaces that resemble the notion of public and social spheres (Shirky 2008, El-Nawawy & Khamis 2010) and it is common in the literature discussing social media to label the areas of online interactions as spheres, such as “Twittersphere” (Ausserhofer & Maireder 2013). The term “public sphere” was first coined by Jürgen Habermas (1964). The notion of the public sphere emerged in early capitalism as a socially common area between state and society. It can broadly be defined as the area of social life where common political activity takes place, where concerns for public welfare are debated and public opinion is formed and expressed (Hohendahl & Russian 1974). Peter Dahlgren (2005) argues that the public sphere functions as a “constellation of communicative spaces in society that permit the circulation of information, ideas, debates—ideally in an unfettered manner—and also the formation of political will” (Dahlgren 2005, p.148). Shirky (2008) observes that new participatory media have been given many names, such as “social software”, “social computing” and “social media”, and he argues that social media are tools that “increase our ability to share, to cooperate, with one another, and to take collective action” (Shirky 2008, pp.20-21).

6.3 Grand Tour's social media presence

Building upon Castells' (2009) ideas about the new networked social morphology and following Barry's (2001) exploration of interactivity as a concept related to politics and active citizenship, Shirky's (2008), and Corrigan's (2011) arguments, my key approach, from the start of assembling *Grand Tour's* social media presence back in 2016, was to interact and engage with the complexity of everyday life by gradually building links with the wider community of active users within social media networks related to: Greece in general; ancient Greece; the celebrations of 200 years since the Greek revolution; and the economic crisis that started in 2010.

The active presence and participation of social media are key expressions of the networked nature of *Grand Tour* and are assembled by multiple online platforms. The key social media platform used in *Grand Tour* is Twitter. Additionally, a Facebook page, an Instagram account and a number of Pinterest boards form its social media online presence. I am the single owner, author and moderator of all the social media accounts. *Grand Tour's* social media presence creates a shared online filmic space for viewers to explore, follow and potentially form virtual relationships with other users through the technical infrastructure affordances of the social media platforms (Rathnayake & Suthers 2018). *Grand Tour's* multiple social media outlets allow viewers to engage with the film in several ways, by interacting with the embedded feeds, following threads and searching for relevant topics, liking, linking and sharing. Although Greece, ancient Greece and the crisis are the central themes of *Grand Tour's* social media focus and presence, gradually more themes emerged through reaching out and interacting with the social media sphere, such as democracy, economy, migration, BLM, and even Brexit and the political

crisis in UK. This reflects Hinton and Hjorth's observations that "Social media bleeds across platforms (desktop computers, mobile phones, tablets and on modern network-capable televisions), across social and media contexts, and creates various forms of presence" (Hinton & Hjorth 2013, p.1). However, this "bleeding" and omnipresence of social media in the context of *Grand Tour* deepens its essayistic qualities and emphasises its Bakhtinian living utterance dimensions, opening closed and fixed meanings, and expanding further Rascaroli's argument that "the essay film is a fragile field because it must accept and welcome the ultimate instability of meaning and embrace openness as its unreserved ethos" (Rascaroli 2017, p.16).

6.4 Twitter feeds

Grand Tour's most active social media presence is through Twitter. I decided to use Twitter as the main social medial platform because of its open architecture, its flexibility with sharing content, its easy interface for embedding feeds and hashtags, and its ability to support conversations (Hinton & Hjorth 2013, Rathnayake & Suthers 2018). For example, the Greek crisis that started in 2010 dramatically unfolded day by day in real life but also, post by post and tweet by tweet, and through retweets and likes across multiple Twitter accounts, posts and feeds (Ferra 2019). In particular, Twitter hasn't only mirrored and reproduced the dramatic events of the Greek crisis but in many instances has influenced or even created them. As *The Guardian* reported about the Greek crisis, "Twitter actively shapes fast-moving events" (Harding 2015, para. 1). The Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras and his Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis used Twitter to gain the initiative in their negotiations against the old fashioned non-tweeters, German Prime Minister

Angela Merkel and her Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble, and attracted thousands of likes and retweets. In the screenshots taken from Twitter during the summer of 2015 in figure 32, BBC journalist Ros Atkins reported that the Greek government imposed a withdrawal limit in the banks. In the same period, Lithuania’s Foreign Minister, Antanas Linkevičius, laments Greece and criticises the Greek government that “lives in a parallel world”.

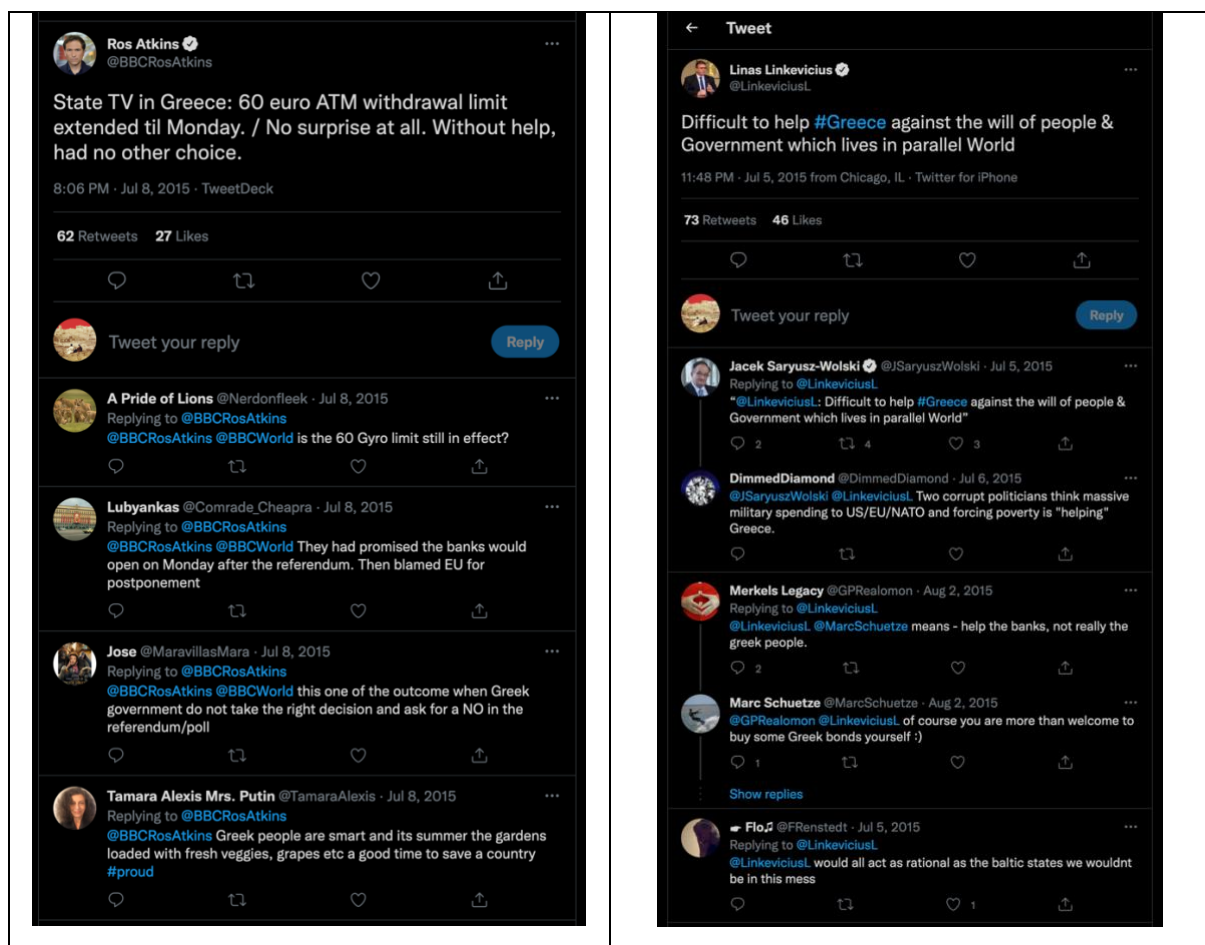


Figure 32 - The Twitter feeds of BBC journalist Ros Atkins and Lithuania’s Foreign Minister Antanas Linkevičius.

In contrast, Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras and Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis used Twitter to summon the progressive political forces of Europe to support Greece and to expose the EU’s plans to enforce new austerity programmes on the Greek people (figure 33). This was crucial period for Greece, as the just elected leftish government led by Alexis Tsipras was

negotiating the terms of the second bailout. *Grand Tour* captures in real-time all these interactions and incorporates them as part of the fabric of the film. This interrelation between the feeds and the layers of the film yields gaps and juxtapositions that form in-between dialogic spaces and promote exchanges between the “utterances” of many voices and produce new meanings.



Figure 33 - The Twitter feeds of the Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras and Minister Yanis Varoufakis.

6.5 *Grand Tour's* Twitter account

Grand Tour's Twitter profile has gathered more than 600 followers and shared more than 2200 tweets and retweets over the last five years. In the context of *Grand Tour*, Twitter is used in three different ways: to post and share content; to retweet posts from other users that *Grand Tour's* Twitter avatar follows; and to bookmark and moderate feeds and posts. The tweets are incorporated into different parts of the film through TweetDeck, Twitter's specialised sharing and publishing platform.

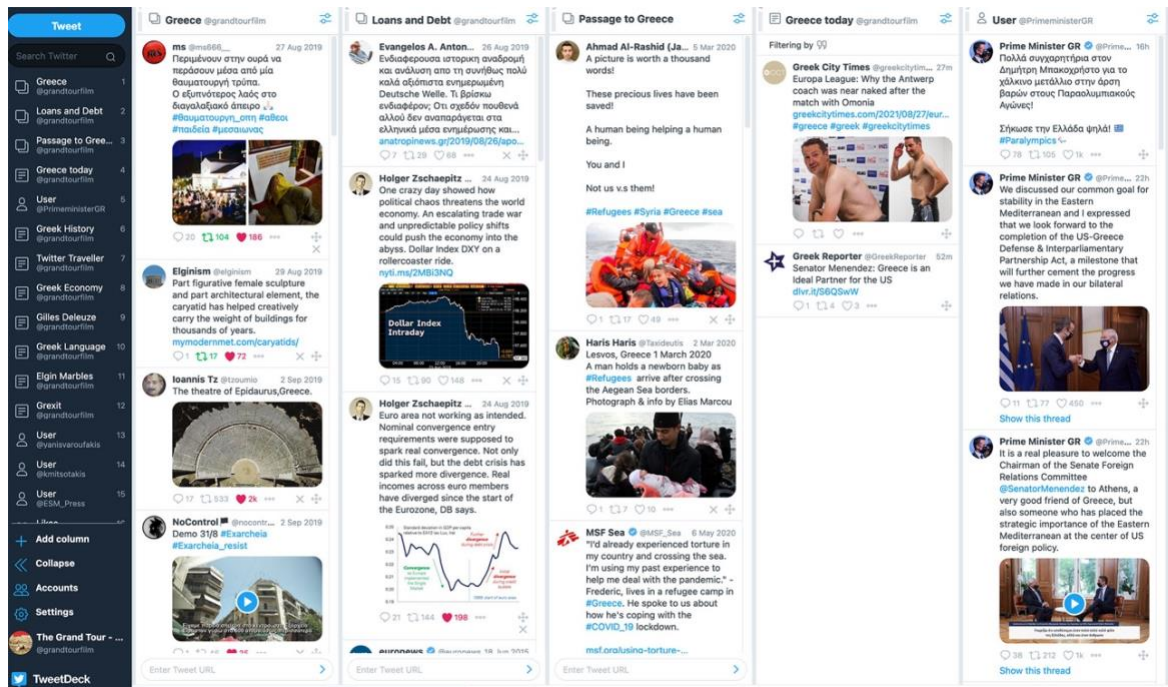


Figure 34 - Grand Tour's TweetDeck and walls (25 June 2020).

TweetDeck allows users to view multiple timelines in one unified online interface and is used to create Twitter walls. Twitter walls allow users to capture and visualise real time updates based on key algorithmic parameters such as themes, users, popular topics and likes (Rathnayake & Suthers 2018). TweetDeck's lists and feeds are constantly active and are formed in real time by the online activity (likes, retweets etc.) of Twitter users such as Greek ministers, the Greek Foreign Office and the EU Commission, and themes are sourced through Twitter hashtags such as: #greekcrisis, #greekdebtcrisis, #ancientgreece, #greekhistory, #europeantravellers and #greekeconomy. A Twitter hashtag is a very useful functionality that is used to catalogue and organise keywords, themes, ideas and words in posts to make it easy for Twitter users to find, follow and get the latest updates about topics and issues they are interested in. All these algorithmically driven updates capture users' interactions and are instantly reflected and included intrinsically in *Grand Tour's* film fabric through the addition of a standard piece of HTML code.

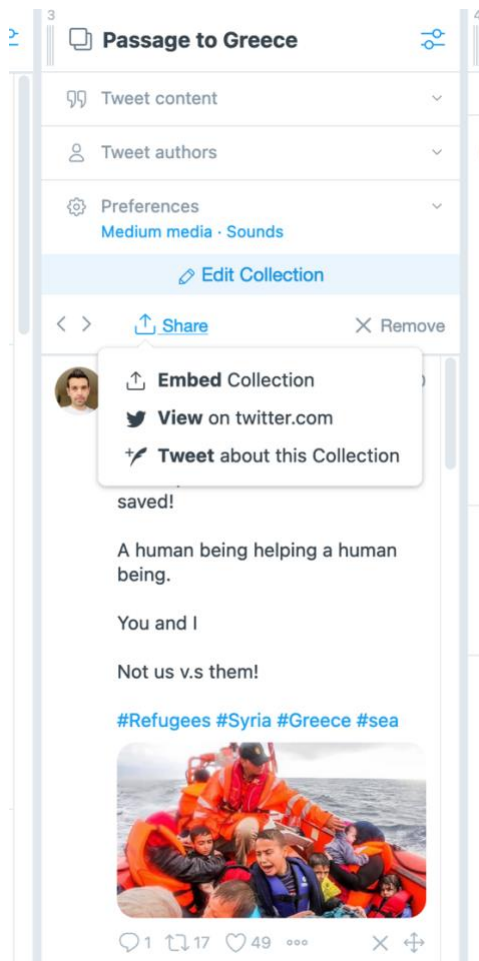


Figure 35 - Grand Tour's Twitter wall (25 June 2020).

These web pages are part of the wide nexus of remediating videos, sounds, images, code JavaScript snippets and social media that live under *Grand Tour's* space of flows. Any updates on *Grand Tour's* embedded social media walls, feeds and posts are automatically remediating and mirrored inside the cinematic frame without my intervention or input.

6.6 *Grand Tour's* social media curation

The social media feeds are curated by me and updated daily, and to some extent are another voice among all the other voices, but are also my own subjective voice. The social media strategy of the film is inclusive and mixes personal observations and comments on political and social issues that are

related to *Grand Tour's* political and philosophical point of view. In that respect the social media feeds are not very different from the voice-over of a traditional essay film. However, the social media engagement captured within *Grand Tour* is also formed through algorithms that I have limited moderating control of. As a result, most of the multiple textual and visual juxtapositions between the fluid real time feeds and the more stable elements of the film are completely unintentional, introducing temporal gaps and unpredictability. Terranova and Donovan (2013) describe this nexus of networked and remediated elements as "A new topology of distribution of information ... based in 'real' social networks, but also enhanced by causal and algorithmic connections" (2013, p.297). Therefore, one key difference between the voice of sequential essay films and *Grand Tour* is that the social media feeds operating as multiple interlinked voices of *Grand Tour* are fluid and constantly changing, based on algorithms that the film and the author do not have total control of. The feeds in *Grand Tour* do not have a final and stable form like an essay film does, where the voice-over is meticulously constructed and stays stable and unchanged throughout the life of the film. The feeds take the form of a dialogue within the film, with my online exchanges, with parts of the film and with the world, and address key social and political issues including Greek history, economics, political movements and democracy. For example, the Twitter feed includes a post (on 26 August 2021) by the ex-Greek finance minister Yianis Varoufakis that comments (in Greek) about the evacuation of Western forces from Afghanistan. Yianis Varoufakis is followed by *Grand Tour's* Twitter account and because of his proliferate and dynamic online presence appears frequently in *Grand Tour's* feeds. Varoufakis' Twitter post is momentarily juxtaposed with the part of the film picturing the size of the loans the European Commission provided to Greece and the timeline of the bailout.



Figure 36 - Screenshot from Grand Tour (01:16mins).

Scrolling further down the Twitter feed, there is a review of a Greek film and a discussion, in Greek, about the film. The post about the Greek film is from the user Diogenes of Sinope, a user *Grand Tour* is actively following on Twitter. Diogenes' post is fleetingly juxtaposed with a public debt clock and the images of modern Athens from the narration layer, which is constantly updated and presents in real-time the expansion of the Greek total national debt and the progression of Greece's gross domestic product (GDP).

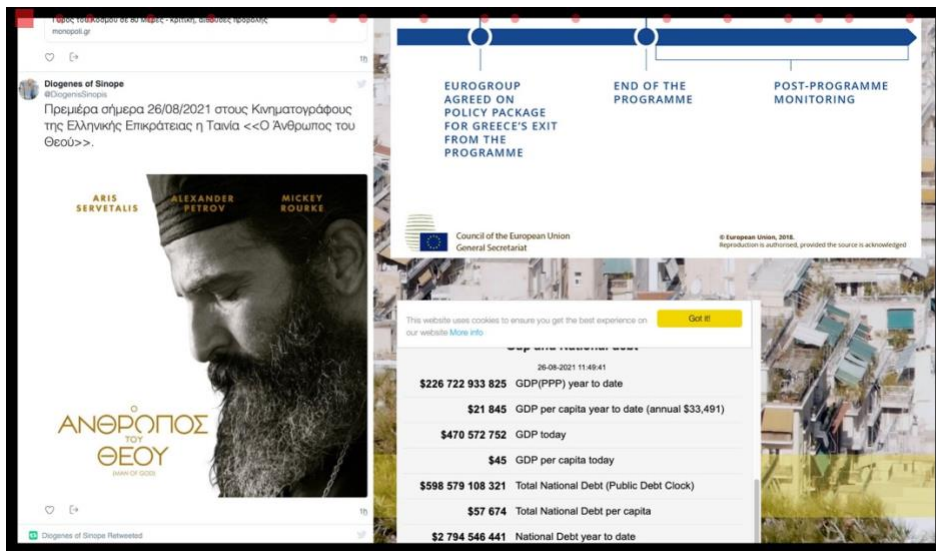


Figure 37 - Screenshot from *Grand Tour* (01:15mins).

The dialogue between the two voices is formed in the gaps and cracks in between the social media feeds and the film, and is shaped and maintained by the social media contributions, sharing and discussions that transpire within the cinematic space of the film. However, the feeds are fluid and unstable; they do not have a firm visual and contextual form like a linear essay film does and they continually shift form every minute. They ascend and descend through viewers' interactions as threads of the present, generating temporal gaps and disjunctions by penetrating the fabric of the film and disrupting its linearity. Diogenes of Sinope's post about the film mirrors the social now of Greece and reflects the reality of the living experience outside the film; however, it might not appear again within the film. The embedded social media feeds and *Grand Tour's* overall online presence capture and remediate in real time the social present of Greece. Bakhtin, in his critical essay *Discourse in the novel* (1981), argued for artists to overcome the divide between style and formalism and reach beyond the social boundaries of the arts. Bakhtin advocates for an art that does not ignore "the social life of discourse outside the artist's study, discourse in the open spaces of public squares, streets, cities

and villages, of social groups, generations and epochs” (1981, p.259). Bakhtin, in his effort to reintroduce discourse into everyday social life, established the notion that living utterances always exist in a social dialogue with other utterances as part of a web of living dialogic threads. Bakhtin explains:

The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue. (Bakhtin 1981, p.276).

In embedding social media feeds, *Grand Tour* anchors the essayistic discourse into fluid everyday life “in organic unity with a work's semantic components” (1981, p.259). Corrigan argues that essay films are “first, practices that undo and redo film form, visual perspectives, public geographies, temporal organizations, and notions of truth and judgment within the complexity of experience” (Corrigan 2011, p.3). Expanding Corrigan’s position, the interwoven layers of social media feeds present a dynamic web of multiple subjectivities, or voices, that are in a constant interconnected fluid movement that continually fluctuates through the online engagement of the author and the viewers within the complexities of the experience.

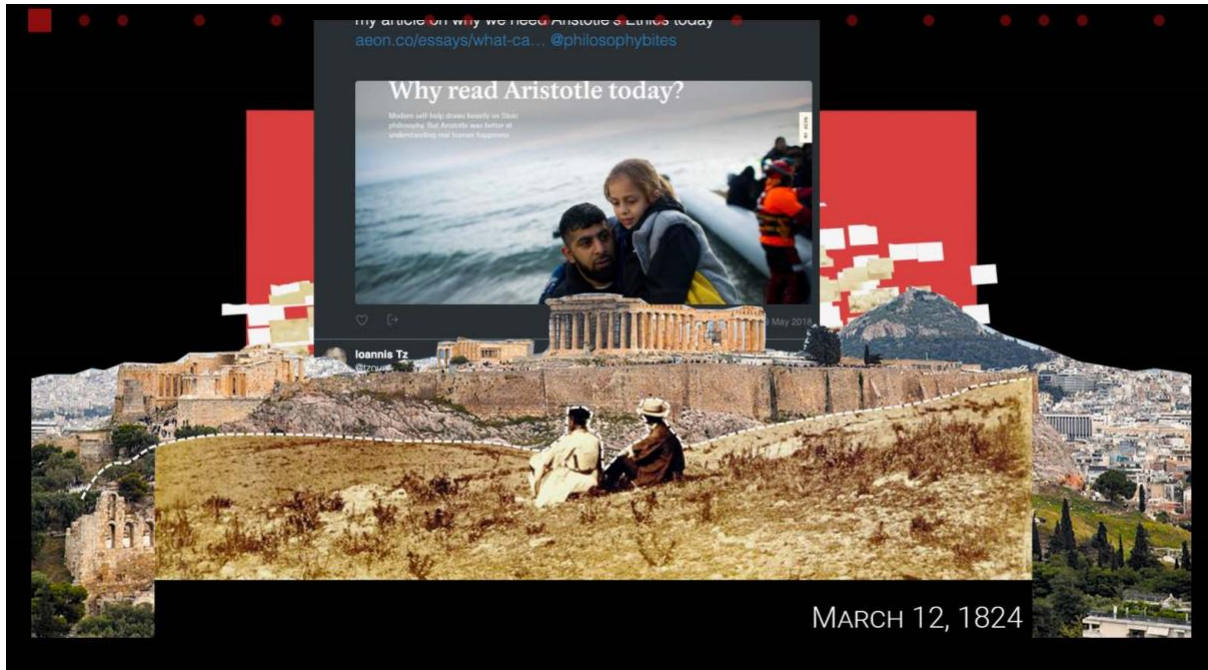


Figure 38 - Screenshot from *Grand Tour* (04:30mins).

6.7 *Grand Tour's* voice over: Coexistence of voices

As I discussed in previous chapters of this thesis, one of the key viewing modalities of *Grand Tour* is dialogic and includes an exchange between many voices in a dialogue with the interwoven layers of the film. However, before I explore how these gaps are produced and how new dialogic possibilities emerge, I will examine *Grand Tour's* voice over in the narration layer of the film. Rascaroli (2009), in her discussion about the role of the enunciator, states that the use of voice over in essay films is “first and foremost, a privileged tool for the author’s articulation of his or her thought (in conjunction with sound and image), and hence a prime location of the author’s subjectivity” (2009, p.38). Timothy Corrigan (2011) has suggested that voice-over and narration in essay film are related to the expressive subjectivity of the author and linked to the use of “I” in the voice-over of the films. Corrigan states that “An expressive subjectivity, commonly seen in the voice or actual presence of the film-maker

or a surrogate, has become one of the most recognizable signs of the essay film, sometimes quite visible in the film, sometimes not” (2011, p.30). The voice-over in *Grand Tour* is a collage of two voices, the Traveller’s voice, and the subjective voice of the filmmaker (see Appendix 3 for script). The use of two voices highlights the general dialectic tendency of the film, following Montero’s argument that the central viewing modality of the essay film is dialogic and includes an exchange between many voices and utterances in a multiple dialogue with other voices and images. (Montero 2012, p.3). The Traveller’s voice is a systematically selected collection of direct quotes from diaries, letters and memoires written by 18th and 19th centuries travellers to Greece. I researched and collected all this material myself from archives. Giving voice to the archive, and my considerations about how it is presented and performed, are key parts of my creative research. In the early iterations of the film my main consideration was how the archival material would be presented without losing the aura of authenticity, and without reducing it to simple fragments of information. In the early prototypes the archival texts were presented as images that looked like pages of old diaries. This approach was abandoned quickly, mainly because of the limitations of presenting long pieces of text as images inside the cinematic frame of the film. I asked British storyteller Sally Pomme Clayton to perform the Traveller’s voice. I wanted a British female voice to represent the Traveller’s voice in order to create a strong contrast between this and the in-between comments voiced over by a male voice with a Greek accent. I also felt a female voice would add another layer of dialectic tension and interest to the viewers as European travellers are usually imagined as white men and women are ignored (Kolocotroni & Mitsi, 2008). Her voice resembles what Corrigan describes as “a real fictional persona whose quests and questioning shape and direct the film in lieu of a

traditional narrative” (2011, p.30). I also made the choice to use a female narrator in order to destabilise the viewers’ connection with the text. The notion of travellers on a grand tour is strongly connected with male adventures (Kolocotroni & Mitsi, 2008). A female voice forces the viewer to perceive *Grand Tour* not as a reproduction of reality or a realistic film based on facts, but rather as its own work with its own meanings and purposes. The male voice, in contrast, is delivered in two languages, Greek and English (see Appendix 3 for the English and Greek scripts). It is a personal, reflective and subjective commentary on the history of Greece in the last 200 years. The delivery of the subjective comments is flat, almost boring, in contrast with the stylised and colourful delivery of the Traveller’s direct quotes. This decision was based on the key theme of the study, which is a montage of juxtapositions that highlight the inscribed dialectic fibres of the film. Both voices are personal and subjective and address the viewer directly. The Traveller’s voice speaks in the present tense using a strong “I” voice. In contrast, the historical time of the male voice is ambiguous. His voice originates from strong subjective recollections from undefined past moments, in particular from early school years, usually starting with phrases such as “my teacher told me”, “I learned” and “When I was in school”. The voice-over references to education are important in defining the contextual dimensions of the male voice. As I mentioned in chapter four, the notion of uninterrupted continuity has been taught in Greek schools, where it is propagated as the key national narrative (Κουλούρη 1988; Κουσερή 2015; Φραγκουδάκη 1997). The two voices do not always describe or explain the visual layers of *Grand Tour* but rather are tangled and multiple in their meanings. By deploying two discrete voices as narrators, *Grand Tour* introduces a “polyphony” of voices that breaks the conventions of the one authorial voice, instead interweaving multiple

perspectives, thoughts and meanings. The Traveller's female voice creates a historical counterpoint to the visual images. The elusive male voice does not offer any clarifications or explanations, but rather intensifies the juxtapositions and multiplies the meanings. The two voices are interlocked in a dialectic thread. The dialectic tensions are amplified by the presence of the interwoven social media feeds within the frame of *Grand Tour*. The suspension of the flow of the voice over (and the film) by the viewer enables the surface of the social media “utterances”. The stable voice-over of the narration layer becomes an echo of the past and the multiple utterances of the feeds become ripples of the present, penetrating the fabric of the film. Moreover, the gaps, tensions and disjunctions are intensified by the mingling and interaction of two languages in the voice-over of the film, Greek and English. The combination of two languages that alternate from Greek to English and back again, is magnified by the visual presence of subtitles, creating a heteroglossic audio-visual puzzle.

6.8 *Grand Tour* as a dialectic space of flows

In this part of this chapter I will examine in more detail a specific scene from *Grand Tour*. The scene starts at 05:20 and ends at 5:55, and establishes a certain dialogic approach to meaning creation as a result of the juxtapositions and disjunctions between the multiple voices of the social media feeds and the voice of the narration layer of the film.

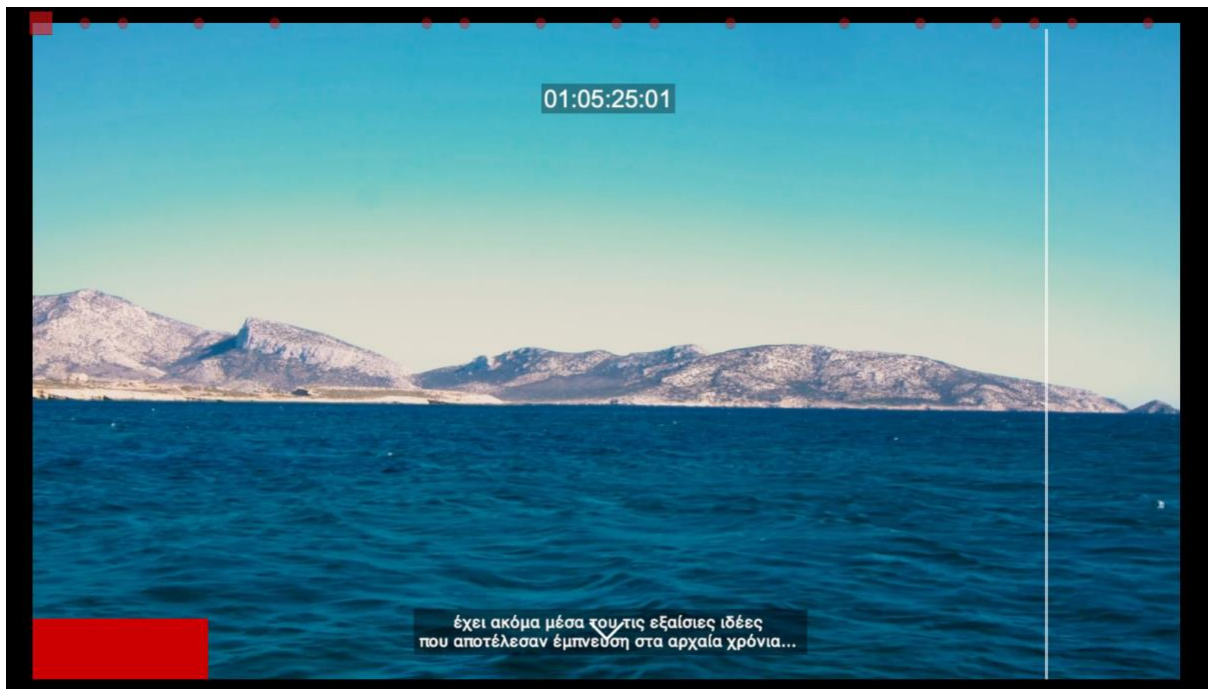


Figure 39 - Screenshot from *Grand Tour* (05:25mins).

Through the playful arrangement of social media feeds within the filmic frame, *Grand Tour* shifts the viewer beyond the cinematic space. This new space, out of the frame, is interactive and inactive, absent and present, simultaneously echoing the past, which is absent and present at same time. It emerges from the interwoven presence of social media, reflecting in real-time the myriad voices in a network that spans the world and incorporates social experiences that potentially create an “ecosystem of connective media” (Van Dijck 2013, p.4). These absent-present voices from the social media feeds take form within the film and are shaped by the juxtapositions of the multiple layers and fragments of social media feeds. The scene of the film I intend to discuss presents the typical journey of a European traveller to Greece in the 19th century. Most of the travellers arrived in Greece by sea, usually after a long trip by boat. This scene serves as an interactive and visual metaphor of this journey and of the passage from Europe to Greece (figure 40).

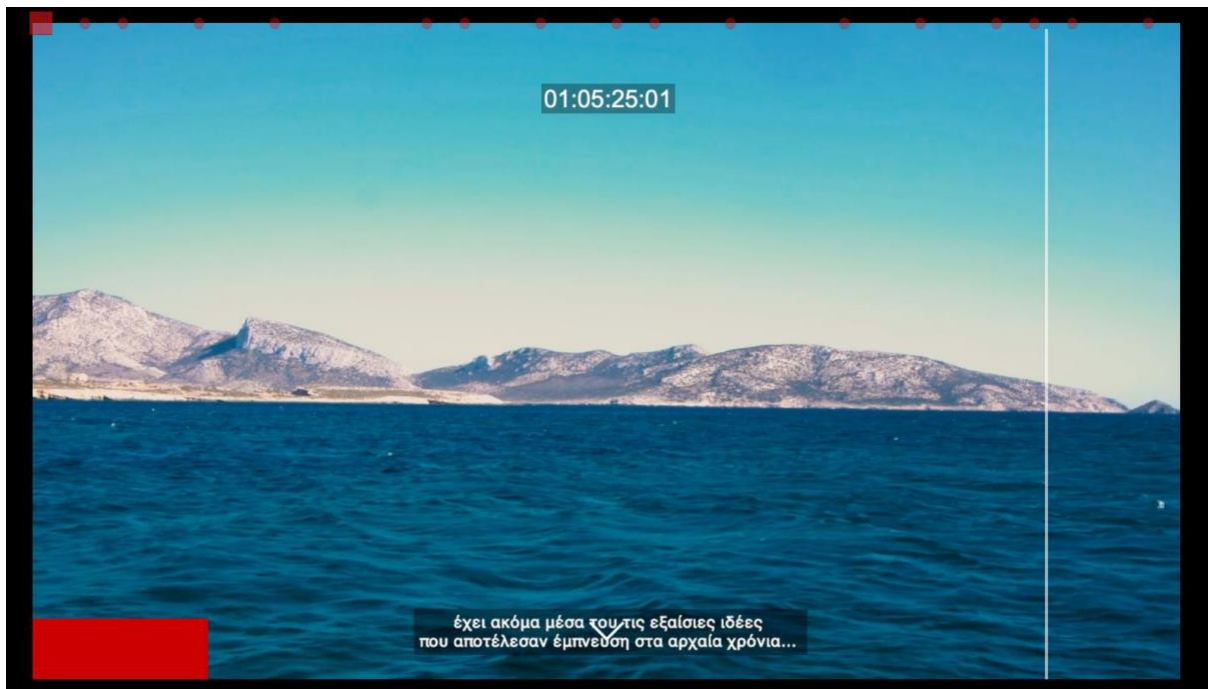


Figure 40 - Screenshot from *Grand Tour* (05:25mins).

In the narration layer, Greece is presented as a foreign and faraway place, accessed by a difficult boat journey that only brave and passionate travellers are willing to take. Images of the barren Greek land, sounds of the sea and the voice-over all come together to depict the difficult journey. The rectangular border of the film constrains all the elements within the frame and creates the illusion of a cinematic experience. The voice-over and images of open sea and remote land are used to emphasise the marginal status of Greece and the distance between Greece and the rest of western world. However, within the frame, the viewer can use scrolling to reveal hidden layers that form fleeting associations, disjunctions and new layers of meanings (figure 41).



Figure 41 - Screenshot from Grand Tour (05:25mins).

The narration layer pauses, and the social media feeds follow the interactive graphics, the feeds visually occupying a substantial part of the screen and covering almost half of it (figure 42). The paused background landscape image of Greece is replaced by a similar interactive image but positioned upside-down. The upside-down images emphasise and define the position of the social media feeds as the contrasting pole of the scene. They traverse the film and reside in a mutual dialectic coexistence with the “I” of the film, and also highlight the interactive process of how, within the film, other voices are folded and unfolded. These particular embedded feeds are generated by a moderated Twitter deck. It is assembled based on hashtags and the themes of migration to Europe and refugees crossing to Greece.

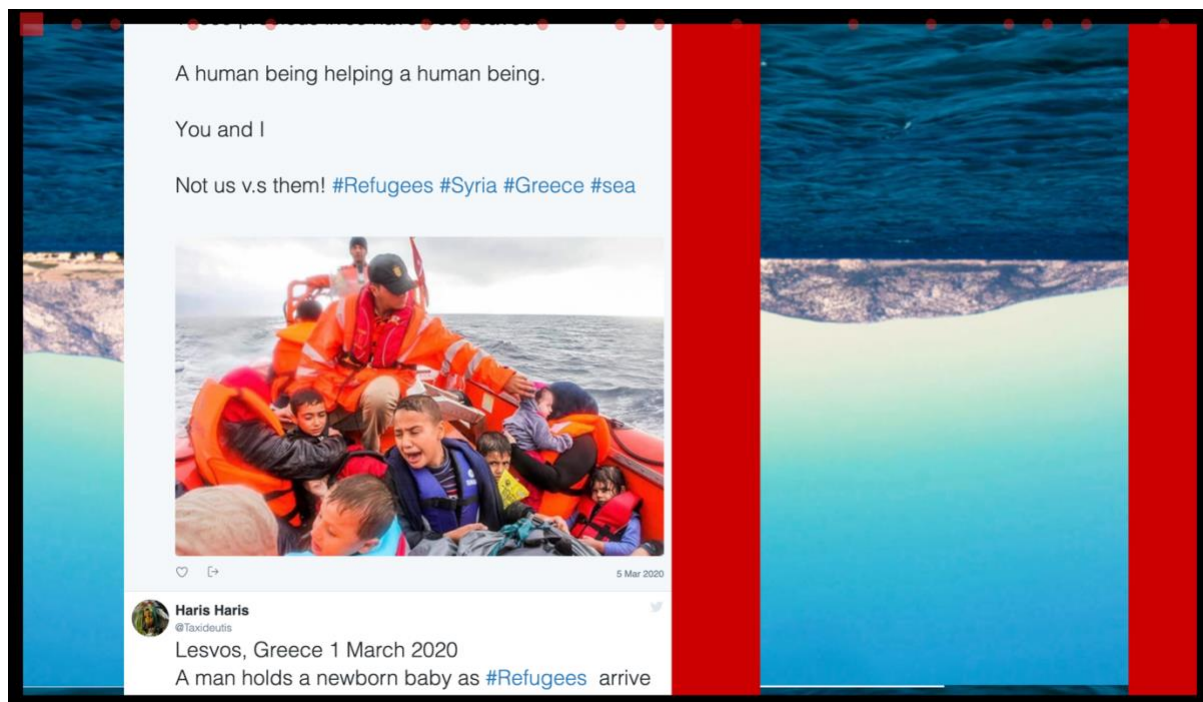


Figure 42 - Screenshot from *Grand Tour* (05:25mins).

The tweets (figure 42) include multiple voices that depict another difficult sea journey that thousands of immigrants take every year, crossing the Aegean Sea from Turkey to the Greek islands. Both the journeys of the Travellers and of the refugees are equally difficult, but they take place in two completely different temporalities. The powerful poético-historical juxtaposition of past and present locates Greece as an in-between space where European travellers from the past and migrants heading to Europe from the present, both departing from different realms and temporalities, cross paths and coexist. The scene is a collage of multiple dislocated temporalities and voices. The voices of the feeds are reconstructed piece by piece, tweet by tweet, as the fragmented Greek past, and the fragmented existences of the refugees, trying to cross the same waters in the present. These dislocated temporalities exist in *Grand Tour* through the use of metabatic montage and invite the viewer to re-think and re-imagine the history of modern Greece, not as a linear narrative of past moments, but more as an amalgamation of gaps and fissures shaped by the

tensions between past and present, ancient and modern, East and West, Greece and Europe. The visuals of the narration layer, in contrast, are less fragmented and related to the voice-over, which is written as a personal experience or diary entry. The narration layer attempts a reconstruction of the subjective experience of an early traveller who, against all difficulties, finally arrives in Greece. What looks simple and closed in the linear narration layer becomes more complex and reveals new engagement possibilities as viewers reveal the social media feeds hidden beyond the frame of the scene. This playful visual ambiguity directs viewers' gaze at the Twitter feed, breaking perspectival relations and highlighting the disjunctive and fragmented nature of the film.

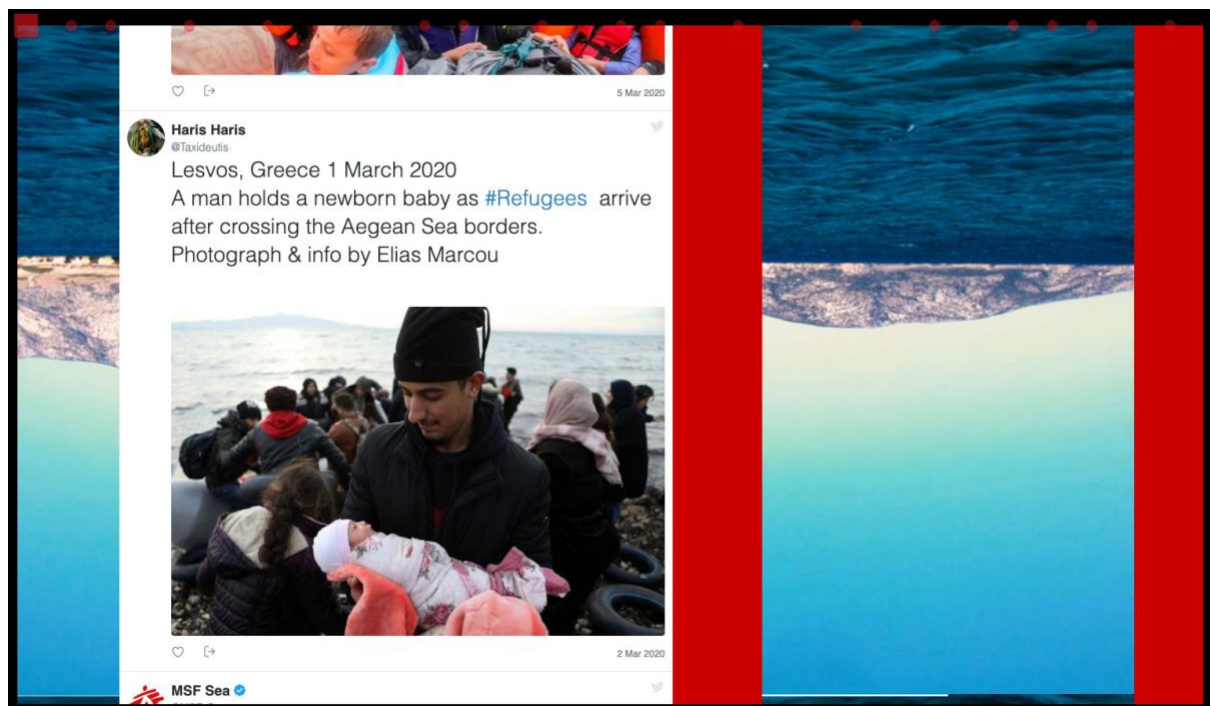


Figure 43 - Screenshot from *Grand Tour* (05:25mins).

The interactive vertical layers often digress and ramble rather than advance the film, moving outward rather than in a linear direction (figure 43). Through the social media feeds, hidden threads and voices emerge and come together

and coexist in a mutual balance. In the narration layer the viewer can enter the world of the Traveller. The space between the screen and the viewer fades, and for a moment the film is experienced as a unified space. However, the images are not stable like traditional linear essay films; the visuals move in tandem with the viewer's mouse movements. Unanticipated fragments of feeds, posts, visuals, the "I" enunciator, the viewer, and the unexpected juxtapositions and disjunctions of unstable images and texts within the frame are all linked together in a fluid movement. If the viewer scrolls up she moves towards the present and closer to herself, if she scrolls down, she moves back to the past and further away from herself (figure 44).

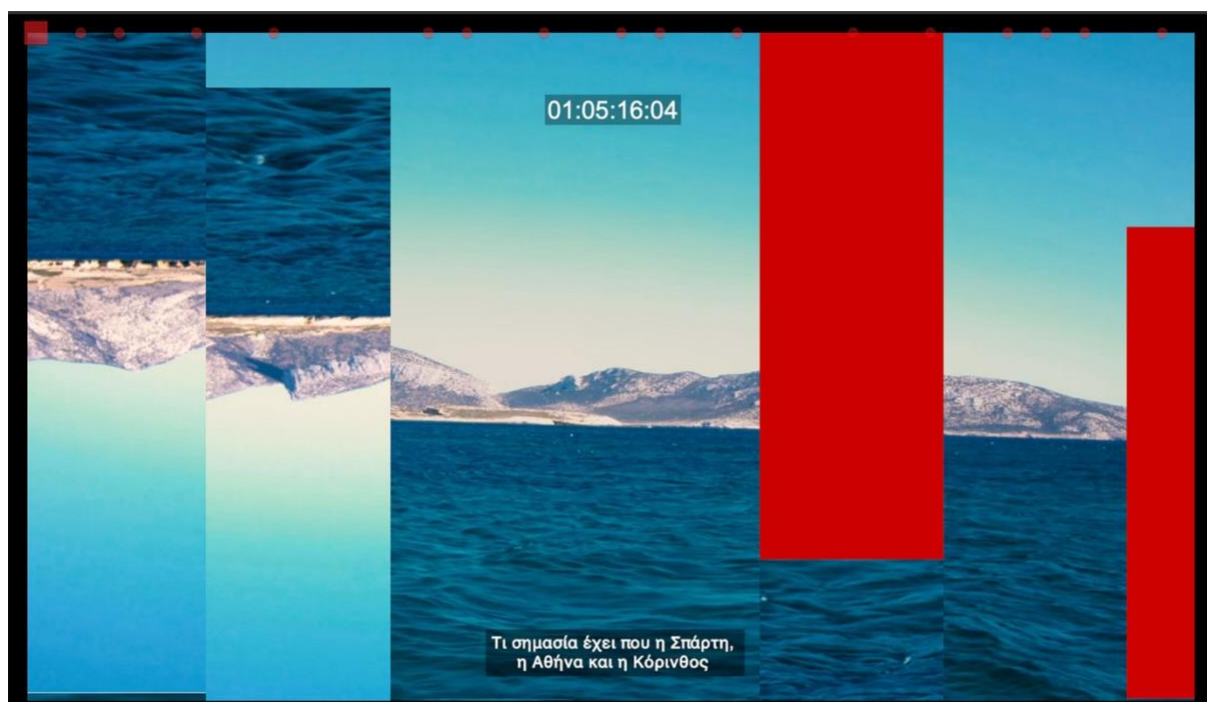


Figure 44 - Screenshot from *Grand Tour* (05:25mins).

The dialectic tensions in *Grand Tour* emerge and are amplified by the lack of stable form and fluidity generated by the presence of embedded social media feeds. The tandem flow from one point of view to another, and the clash of multiple voices, creates gaps and in-between spaces that invite the viewer into

a dialogue with and within the film. In other words, *Grand Tour* is in a state that Rascaroli describes as “a constant interpellation” (2009, p.35). Rascaroli claims that “each spectator ... is called upon to engage in a dialogical relationship with the enunciator, hence to become active, intellectually and emotionally, and interact with the text” (2009, p.35). Rather than being a stable film that runs outside and independently from the viewer, *Grand Tour* is a digital object in a constant fluid state, controlled and shaped in real time by its viewers through interactive and participatory structures. This lack of stability destabilises the viewer's connection with the text, challenges her perception of reality, and creates stronger dialogic tensions between the viewer and the text, creating more opportunities for more questions to emerge. This approach recognises viewers as active participants who engage with the multiple layers and authorial subjectivity of the film in a transformative discussion about Greece’s past and present and the possible social and cultural conditions that produced the recent financial and political crisis.

6.9 Final thoughts

Grand Tour is designed to absorb traces of fluid everyday life, social dialogue and “thousands of living dialogic threads” that are created on the web (Bakhtin 1981, p.276). It captures and incorporates in real time the transient and ephemeral interactions of everyday life through embedded social media feeds. This sociality emerges from the living utterances on social media, reflecting real-time, live dynamic content and social experiences that can potentially create the conditions for a dialogic relationship between the film, the author, the viewers, and the viewers with each other, within the cinematic space of the film. As I argued in earlier parts of the thesis, the embedded social media feeds are shaped to some extent by my online activities and choices. They also erect an unstable grid of connections that highlight the presence of multiple voices within the film and the fluid and ephemeral modality of the film itself. Therefore, they give access to parts of me by collecting individual moments of me noticing and encountering the world in an open dialogue with the other public voices within the film. Corrigan introduces the dialogic relationship between the subjective experience and the public and claims that “the essay presses itself as a dialogue and reflective communal experience, stretched between the intimate other of self and the public Other that surround a self” (2011, p.55). Capitalising on Montero’s argument that the essay film represents an “attempt to situate ourselves in relation to the world around us” (Montero 2012, pp.1-20), I have argued that *Grand Tour’s* social media presence exists as a stream of multiple voices in a fluid interconnected space, evolving through online social networks and viewers’ actions beyond the traditional cinematic frame, to become situated in the world and reflect the fluidity of everyday social life.

7 Unfuck Greece



Figure 45 - Screenshot from *Grand Tour* (2:15mins).

What differentiates *Grand Tour* from other essay films is its disjunctive openness and dialogic potentials, amplified by its interwoven fluid social media layers and interactive and para-interactive qualities. *Grand Tour's* surreal and tapestry-like disjunctive structure resembles an excavation site full of building materials and rubble scattered with fragmented and broken ancient artifacts all muddled up with modern-day materials. Some fragments are pushed deep, and other fragments are broken into smaller pieces, all together a swarm of new remains that change shape all the time. *Grand Tour* represents a substantial shift from previous encounters with essay films because it gives metabatic montage amplified by networked connectivity, interactivity and user engagement a vital role in the dialogic formation of the film. Where traditional essay films can be accessed and watched as autonomous sequential texts, an

online film such as *Grand Tour* invites viewers to freeze, scroll, play and physically interact and para-interact with the film.

7.1 The crisis (Greek: Η Κρίση)

The consequences of the global economic crisis that began in 2008 were extremely severe for Greece. Borrowing costs rose sharply and Greece faced extremely hostile financial markets and lack of trust from major lenders, financial bodies and the world (Simitis 2012; Tsafos 2013; Palaiologos 2014). Because of the big accounting revisions of the budget deficit from 3.7% to 12.5%, and past 15% of the GDP (Vayanos 2017, pp.14-15), financial markets lost trust and stopped lending to Greece. The themes of the Greek crisis and the financial dimensions of the debt accumulation keep coming back in *Grand Tour*. The themes are introduced in the playful title of the film *Grand Tour A film In-Debt(ed)* and in the scene just after the opening section “The *Grand Tour*” screen at 01:13 (figure 46). The voice-over in the narration layer initiates the section: “The history of Greece is a narrative of external political dependence and debt. The country has been in a state of default about 50 percent of the time since 1821, the year of Greece’s independence.” And “In total Greece has resulted in four major episodes of default, and Greeks have suffered a series of devastating foreign debt crisis.” (see Appendix 3 for script).



Figure 46 - Screenshot from Grand Tour (01:13mins).

The interactive vertical layer includes numbers, graphs and facts relating to the financial assistance to Greece from Europe and social media feeds. The social media feeds are labelled “Greek economy” and “Greek debt” and draw from several news and finance related Twitter users. The colourful official graphs, statistics, and numbers included in the feeds unfold in strong contrast with the linear narration layer. The narration layer depicts a grey and blurry image of Athens from above overlaid with animated thought bubbles of people reflecting on the financial and social crisis: “I want to go abroad”, “The situations is unbearable” and “There is a lot of anger ...” (figure 46). The embedded Twitter feeds linger outside and playfully intrude into the frame, complicating the matter of perception and representation within the film. The unstable and fleeting content of the feeds, interlaced with the narration layer, produces traumatic discontinuities (Aumont 2013), disjunctions and creative associations by contrasting linear progression with vertical movement. Tziouvas argues that “The crisis has generated a retrospective discourse of cultural trauma, which is the process of re-working earlier traumatic events ingrained

in the collective memory” (Tziovas 2017, p.21). Vradis and Dalakoglou describe the crisis as “the precise moment when an entire generation awoke to the realization that the muted stories of the past have always been part of the present” (Vradis & Dalakoglou 2011, p.14).

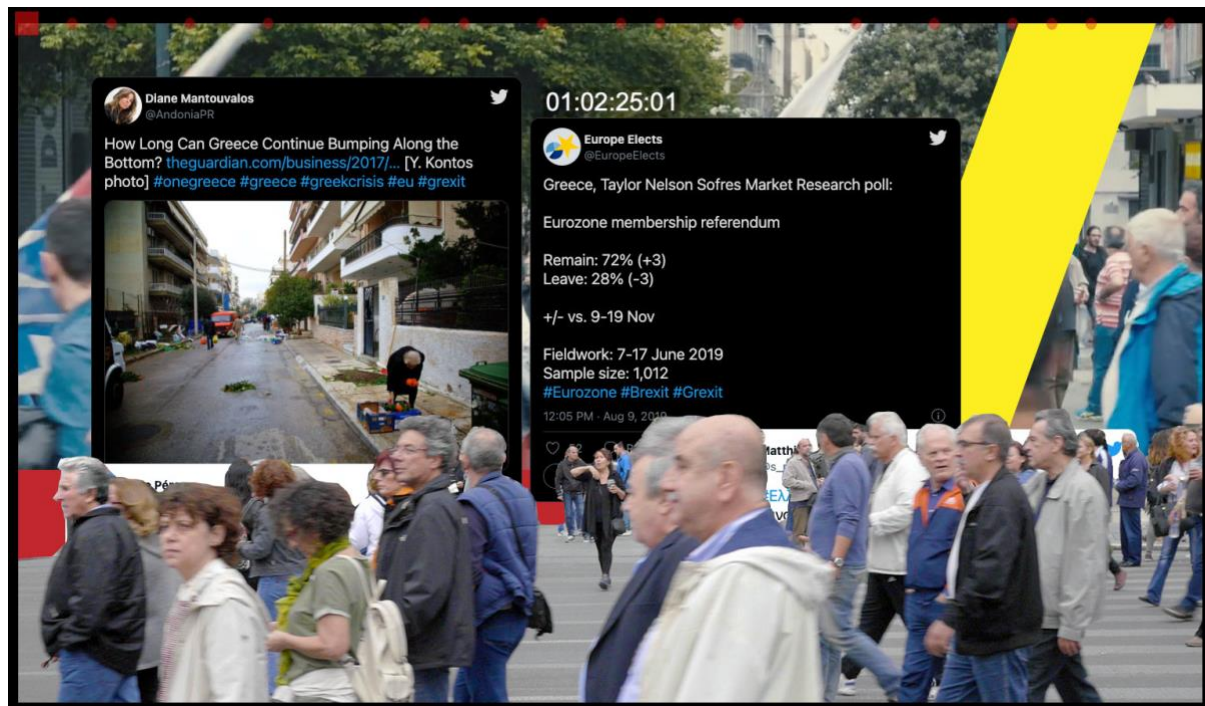


Figure 47 - Screenshot from Grand Tour (02:25mins).

7.2 Greece: a crypto-colony



Figure 48 - Screenshot from *Grand Tour* (24:48mins).

The voice-over in this scene (figure 48), in English with Greek subtitles, says: “Greece is not a country that was ever formally colonized but its antiquity has been invaded, colonized and claimed by Europe. Not by physically occupying Greek soil and Greek territories but by a form of crypto-colonialism intellectually claiming ownership of Greece’s ancient classical past.” The viewers can playfully excavate the hidden layer and oscillate in-between fleeting images of transparent statues juxtaposed and contrasted with narration layer’s sounds and visuals of a typical Greek landscape: dry land, a shrine, blue waters and skies, barren mountains and grasshoppers. The intersected transient layer through metabatic montage operates as an offscreen force that breaks the temporality of the film and enables the formation of disjunctions and new meanings. This shifts the film toward a dialectic alignment and, to some extent, what Godard describes as a historical

montage, where meaning is constructed between disparate and disconnected voices and exchanges articulated by the notion of crypto-colonialism, the fleeting images of ancient statues and the barren Greek landscape (figure 49). Michael Herzfeld (2002) suggested the term “crypto-colonialism”, to describe the state of Greece from the day of its independence until recently, under constant financial and political interventions and interferences from Europe. Herzfeld constructed the term to refer to modern Greece by drawing parallels with former Asian colonised countries. Herzfeld defines it as the state of certain countries that were compelled to acquire their political independence at the expense of massive economic dependence. Such countries were and are living paradoxes: they are nominally independent, but that independence comes at the price of a sometimes humiliating form of effective dependence (Herzfeld 2002, p.901). Crypto-colonialism is a contested term in Greek literature. Sotiropoulos argues that Greece has never been either a colony or a crypto-colony and rejects the comparisons Herzfeld made between Greece, and other formally colonised Asian countries (Panagiotopoulos & Sotiropoulos 2014). However, I believe that the etymological amalgamation of the words “crypto” and “colonialism” is powerful. In the context of the film, crypto-colonialism describes and reflects the reality the Greek society experiences and how Greeks perceive their relationship with the European Union today: a harsh reality primarily defined by the decisions of the unelected Troika and European bureaucrats who in practically colonial ways govern the country and justify the description of Greece as “crypto-colony”.



Figure 49 - Screenshot from *Grand Tour* (24:58mins).

7.3 A dream amongst splendid ruins

As I mentioned in the introduction of the thesis, the title of the film *Grand Tour* refers to the 18th and 19th centuries customary trip, mainly of young wealthy men, across the European continent. Travelling to the continent was seen as an essential preparation for a wealthy young person. Hanink describes the grand tour as “a rite of passage for wealthy northern Europeans, especially those freshly graduated from Oxford and Cambridge” (Hanink 2017, p.94). Greece was still part of the Ottoman Empire and was one popular destination (Angelomatis-Tsougarakis 1990; Hanink 2017). The main aim of visiting Greece was to expose travellers to the cultural legacy of ancient classical antiquity. Dodwell (1819a) comments admiringly, in his book *A Classical and Topographical Tour Through Greece*: “The whole locality is consecrated by the memory of statesmen and warriors, of historians and poets, of critics and philosophers, sages and legislators, of whom not only Athens but the world

may be proud” (Dodwell 1819a, p.50). Dodwell’s commentary is part of the scene’s voice-over (figure 50). The scene is intersected by layers of visual and fleeting social media posts. The social media feed is labelled as Twitter traveller, and is a moderated feed that follows several Twitter users related to the themes of Greece, ancient Greece and Athens. The feed coexists within a transient fragmented layer of cut out images that are controlled by the viewer’s scrolling up and down mouse movement.



Figure 50 - Screenshot from *Grand Tour* (00:55mins).

While the cut-out images concealed in the vertical layer do not directly belong to the diegetic cinematic space, they are intertwined with it. The cut-out images and the feeds are stuck together with pieces of duct tape (figure 51). The visual metaphor of the duct tape and the interactive flow of the cut-out shards of archive images is a recurrent visual theme in *Grand Tour*. They create the sense of a fabricated image assembled from discrete fragmented objects that belong to the past. This metabatic montage mirrors the fragmentation and the ways the historical past of Greece was constructed shard by shard, and

marble by marble. It also emphasises the importance of the presence and materiality of the ancient fragments in Greece, as Voutsaki argues that “The ancient monuments, the material traces of the past, played a very important role in this process of creation of modern identities” (Cartledge & Voutsaki 2017, p.4).

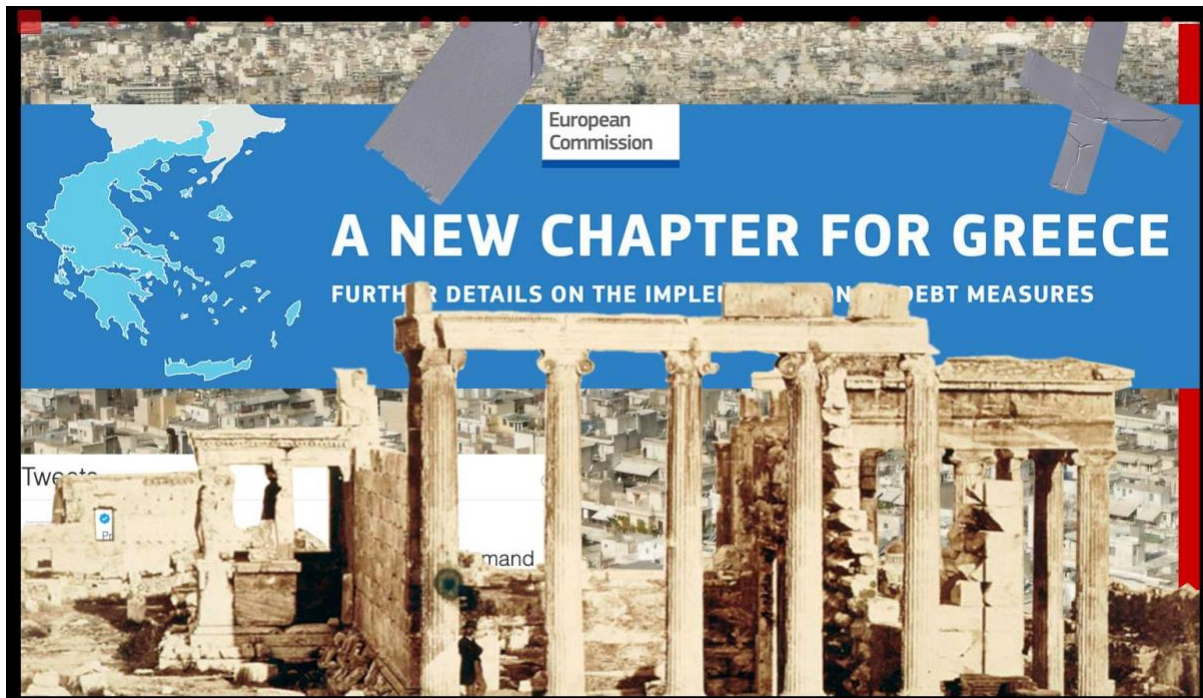


Figure 51 - Screenshot from Grand Tour (27:30mins).

7.4 Let's start again

In order to prevent the immediate collapse of the Greek economy (and the global economy) and the threat of disorderly bankruptcy, a “Troika” consisting of the European Commission (EC), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Central Bank (ECB) formulated and agreed with the Greek government a “rescue” bailout plan (Henning 2017). In total the Troika provided Greece with 245 billion euros in rescue loans. However, in order for Greece to access the rescue loans, it had to reform many sectors of its

economy and society first (Simitis 2013; Palaiologos 2014). The reforms the Troika demanded for the “rescue” bailout plan and the conditions attached to the new loans have shocking similarities with the bailout of the new Greek nation after its first official default in 1827. In 1826, the Greek government suspended debt payments to British banks on two loans arranged just a couple of years earlier in order to continue the war of independence against the Ottomans (Σκληράκη 2015, pp.18-19). The provisional and unelected Greek government took out two loans from the London Stock Exchange, one in 1824 and the other in 1825 (Bartle 1962). The two loans of 1824 and 1825 amounted to a total of £2.8 million, which was approximately 120% of the Greece’s annual gross domestic product at that period of time (Bartle 1962, p.62). The real value of the loan was £1,100,000 and only £232,558 ever reached Greece (Bartle 1962, pp.62-63). However, for the banks to lend this amount of money to an unelected and provisional government of a new and unstable state, and in the midst of a continuing war against the Ottoman Empire, was a very big risk. Their willingness to lend to Greece was a clear indication of the intentions of the British banks and government to control the fragile new Greek state both financially and politically (Chatziioannou 2013). After the suspension of the loans payment in 1826, British banks stopped lending money to Greece, similarly to what happened in 2010 before the European powers decided to bailout Greece (Simitis 2012, pp.53-55). In 1832, the United Kingdom, France and Russia formed the first, and original, “Troika”. The Troika bailed Greece out with another loan of 60 million French francs. Exactly as in the bailout of 2010, this loan from French banks was mainly issued in order to repay the previous British loans that the provisional government had signed in 1824 and 1825 (Reinhart & Trebesch 2015). And as in 2010, the Troika demanded harsh control over the Greek state, its fiscal policies and its

revenue collection, and frequently required tax increases and spending cuts. Stavrianos noted that, since the war of independence started in 1821, Greeks “have had to bear a crushing foreign debt that has literally sucked their lifeblood” (Stavrianos 1952, p.25). The Troika also decided that Greece should be a monarchy and that the 13 year old German Prince Otto von Wittelsbach should be its first King. Troika negotiated with King Otto of Bavaria, the father of the future King of Greece, an agreement that made very clear that the new independent Greek state had to give priority to the repayment of all previous loans (Chatziioannou 2013, p.53).

7.5 Some debts can never be repaid

As European travellers in the 18th and 19th centuries were dismayed and disappointed with Greeks and blamed them for not being Greek enough, once more the Greek people, the corrupt Greek political system and the special ‘Greek case’ (Simitis 2012) were blamed for the recent financial crisis. Paul Thomsen, the IMF director of European Affairs in charge of managing the Greek debt crisis argued that the severity of the Greek financial crisis was the result of the lack of strong political backing by the dubious Greek politicians, “Contrary to other crisis-hit countries, there was no broad political support for the program from the outset. It was opposed from the start by the main opposition party, and soon also by the old-guard within the ruling party.” (Thomsen 2019, para. 31). In his regular IMF reports Paul Thomsen consistently reproduced the narrative about generous Greek pensions and endemic corruption and that “Greeks still retire much earlier than Germans and that Germany is much better at collecting social security contributions.” (Thomsen 2016, para. 12). During the same period the majority of the German media started reporting similar negative narratives about the sustainability of the

Greek debt, the perilous state of the Greek economy and the widespread corruption of the Greeks. (Tziovas 2017). *Der Spiegel* reported that “the Greek citizens had deposited 600 billion Euros in Swiss banks accounts” (as quoted by Palaeologus 2014 p.30). And the *Bild* announced "The dream is over" (as cited in BBC News 2015, para.1). Angela Merkel reported saying that because of Greece’s looming financial collapse “Europe's future is at stake,” (Augstein 2015, para.1). Greeks once again, with their irresponsible behaviour disappointed and troubled the European powers. The once universal symbol of culture and democracy became as in 1823 and 1827 once again a European outcast. (Jusdanis 1991; Glykofrydi-Leontsini 2016; Tziovas 2017).

In reality though, in a very similar way to the events following the Greek defaults in the 19th century, almost 90% of the emergency loans given to the Greek governments in 2012 and 2015 ended up back with the creditors who originally provided the loans before the crisis during the booming period of the Greek economy. (Mouzakis 2015; Bortz 2015). As a result of the conflicted narratives, Greek society was once more divided between accepting a new humiliating default or leaving the European Union and following the Grexit dream (Varoufakis 2017). *Grand Tour’s* split screen at 02:25 and the interactive layers and feeds here are an attempt to visualise this division in Greek society (figure 52). The narration layer is divided into two fluid diagonal parts. On the left side there is footage of a static demonstration outside the Greek parliament. The demonstrators are holding a banner that says, “All of us we are Greeks – Merkel and Sarkozy are freaks” (figure 52). The static demonstration is visually juxtaposed with footage from another walking demonstration on the right side of the split screen.



Figure 52 - Screenshot from *Grand Tour* (01:40mins).

The voice-over in this section, in Greek with English subtitles, says “This account describes Greece in 2020, in the middle of its fourth debt crisis. It also describes Greece 200 years earlier, on the eve of its first ever default. These events are neither new nor unique in Greek history and bring remarkable historical parallels between past and present.” In the narration layer and the interweaved layers, the glorious ancient past is contrasted and set against the catastrophes of Greek modernity. This trope is evident in the writings of many 18th and 19th centuries travellers to Greece and also in the recent international media coverage and overall political and economic attention Greece has recently been attracting (Tziovas 2014, Beaton 2019, Hanink 2017). These two notions - of financial and ancient cultural debt - are the invisible conceptual threads in *Grand Tour*. The playful subheading of the title, “a film in-debt(ed)”, illustrates the importance of the notion of debt in the film. However, *Grand Tour* does so through imaginative threads that open up alternative ways of thinking that counteract the dominant narratives – narratives that are incapable of perceiving and describing the modern Greek nation without

resentment and judging and comparing it to the glorious ancient Greek past and Hellenic ideal. The intersected layer ruptures the linear progression of the film and incorporates a curated feed that includes posts related to #Greekdebt and graphic visualisations that explain visually how Greece is affected by these reforms compared with the rest of the Eurozone. As a result of the reforms, Greece's GDP per capita (real gross domestic product) declined a staggering 25% in six years, plunging from €22,600 in 2008 to €17,000 by 2014.

Unemployment skyrocketed from 7.8% in 2008 to 26.6% in 2014, and in young people under 25 it jumped above 50% (Gourinchas, Philippon & Vayanos 2016). The total amount of rescue loans that Greece received was the largest in world history. Even for a country that has spent 50% of its time since the year of its independence in default or rescheduling (Reinhart & Rogoff, 2011 p.99), this bailout was huge. In Reinhart and Rogoff's table of cumulative scores of defaults and rescheduling, only two countries are below Greece, Ecuador (58%) and Honduras (64%). The selected posts are all related to #Greekdebt. The aim here is, because of the visual complexity of the scene, to develop strong visual disjunctions between the split screen and the voice-over, with the social media feeds incorporating symbolically powerful posts such as "Cancel the Greek debt" and "Unfuck Greece". The intersecting layers and the split screen narration layer are conceptually arranged in a para-interactive process of uncovering by opening gaps, in-between spaces within the fabric of the film. However, this scene also has similarities to Farocki's concept of soft montage that I discussed in chapter four. According to Farocki, this type of montage does not "predetermine how the two images are to be connected" (Farocki & Silverman 1998, p.142), and the viewer is allowed space to construct associations and meanings more freely by exploring the disjunctive fractures in-between the interweaved tiers of the film. In *Grand Tour*, these

interweaved tiers are not simply images, but splinters and shavings embedded into the fabric of the film. The splinters surface only if the viewers consciously cut through the fabric of the film and actively engage and para-interact with the vertical threads. Their fragmented and unstable complexity is folded within the surface of the film and their continuous para-interactive scrolling creates cracks and fissures. These threads are designed to produce softness and open up gaps and in-between spaces, as Farocki describes his montage in his double projection video installation *I Thought I Was Seeing Convicts* (2000): “One image doesn’t take the place of the previous one, but supplements it, re-evaluates it, balances it” (Elsaesser 2004, p.302). However, in *Grand Tour*, this is a process with multiple tangled temporal dimensions that belong to different time scales. It is a type of reverse elliptical film editing that instead of removing unnecessary temporal information adds time and new intensities to the in-between cracks of the cinematic frames. The notion of Greece’s past, historical progress, and a conception of continuity, become tangibly visible in a historical montage of movement, ephemeral images and sounds triggered by scrolling (Suhr & Willerslev 2013; Smith 1996; Godard 2014). Past and present are absent and present, and at the same time in-between, the burden of the classical past and the financial ruins of modern Greece in order to embrace essayistic expression, uncertainty and discontinuity (Gourgouris 1996; Hamilakis 2009).

7.6 This is hell. Come away!

In *Grand Tour* the cyclical drama of the loans of independence and the recurring defaults coexists in a disjunctive dialogue between the multiple voices of the images from the archaeological site of Delphi, where tourists

stroll amongst the ruins of the site, the voice-over and the intersecting interactive layers. I want to note here that *Grand Tour* incorporates many visuals and social media feeds directly linked to tourism, travel brochures and the Greek tourist industry. The widely accepted international image of modern Greece as the cradle of civilisation and democracy was not formed only at the archaeological excavation sites across Greece and in the journeys of the early Travellers (Kolocotroni & Mitsi 2008, p.xi). It is also invented through travel brochures, tourist campaigns and glossy TV advertisements funded by the Greek Organization of Tourism (EOT). As a channel of representation, tourism has had a profound effect on how Greece is symbolised and represented. The travel industry offers not only touristic packages and products but also real experiences. These experiences are marketed based on idealised representations of places, cultures and local people. Greece has been promoted as the idealised ancient destination, where Western civilisation, art, theatre and democracy were invented and where the land and its inhabitants still preserve something of its glorious past (Kolocotroni & Mitsi 2008, p.xii). The Greek Organization of Tourism (EOT), through multimillion euro advertising campaigns, has been directly reproducing narratives introduced by the early 19th century travellers, while at the same the modern Greek nation suffers the effects of the tension of this exact representation of modern Greece. In this sense, the ubiquitous presence of hashtags, themes and posts about visiting Greece and Greek tourism in the embedded social media feeds and the dialogue they generate within the film make visible and emphasise these tensions (figure 53).



Figure 53 - Screenshots with Twitter feeds from Grand Tour (23:30mins).

The intersecting layers about the first Greek default follow the “This is hell” section in the narration layer. The expression “This is hell” is attributed to Shelley in a discussion with Edward Trelawny stated in Eisner (1993, p.101).

Does this realize your idea of Hellenism Shelley?” I asked. ‘No! but it does of hell ... Come away!’ Said Shelley, “There is not a drop of the old Hellenic blood here. These are not the men to rekindle the ancient Greek fire; their souls are extinguished by traffic and superstition. Come Away! (Trelawny as quoted in Eisner 1993, p.101)

The power of Shelley’s expression - amplified by the notion that Shelley is the originator of another celebrated expression “We are all Greeks” (Shelley, 1866) - produces clear and convincing meanings and emotional associations that reflect the ‘hellish’ reality Greek society experiences today. The intersecting layers incorporate cut-out images and long paragraphs of text about the loans, presented as inscribed words on rock surfaces: an emblematic image of any archaeological site in Greece. However, the text is faint and barely readable. I followed this approach to highlight the lack of transparency of the terms and conditions of the contracted loans and the lack of clarity around the implications of agreeing to these conditions for Greek people (figure 54). This presentation also suggests that they were literally written in stone, that their

existence and consequences are still visible and that their burden on the Greek people is still sustained today.

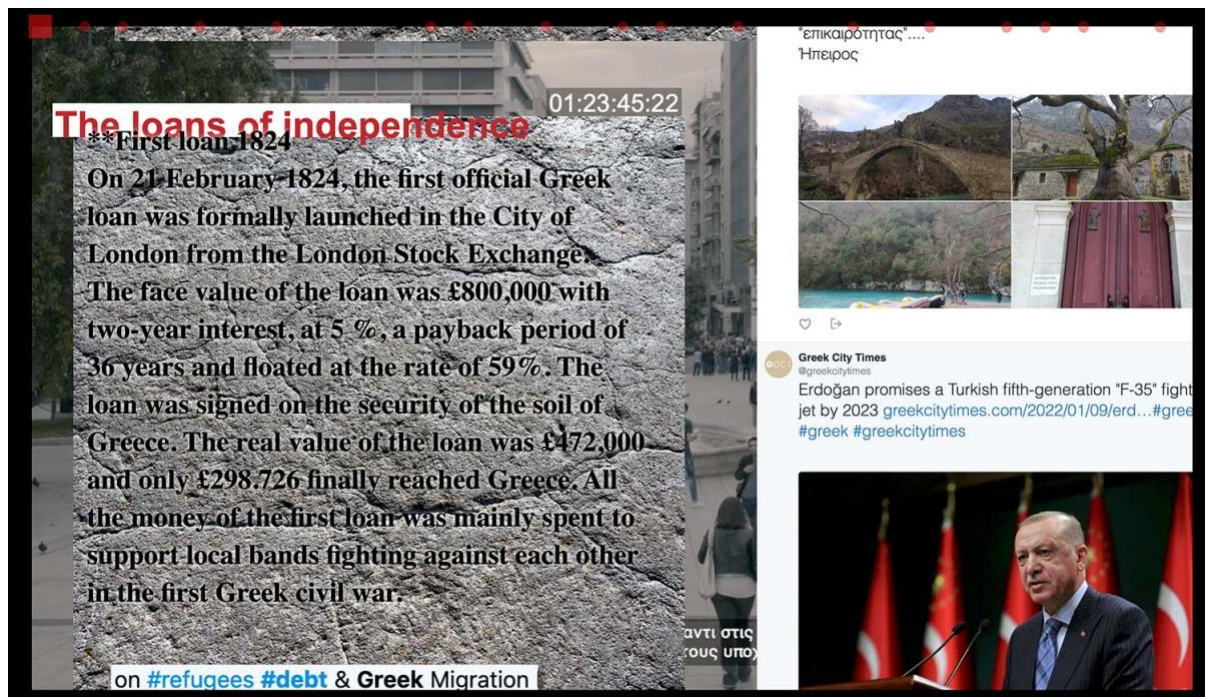


Figure 54 -- Screenshot from Grand Tour (23:50mins).

Through metabatic montage and movement, the inscribed words develop a textual mobility when confronted with the audio and visual tracks, whose arrangement is interdependent, as if they are conversing with each other. Scrolling further down the page there is an image of the archaeological site of Filopapou, located at the foot of Acropolis. Parts of the images are missing, leaving gaps and holes. Through the fluid scrolling movement the viewer fills the gaps with missing parts of the images, which are ancient artefacts such as statues, marbles and epigraphs (figure 55).



Figure 55 - Screenshot from *Grand Tour* (23:50mins).

The movement creates and fills the gaps; however, there is always something absent from the image. This montage of fragments of presence and absence metaphorically signifies the cultural and social holes the missing artefacts left behind once they were removed from the ground (figure 55). These holes and instability of the film invite viewers to find and create meanings and an order which the film does not provide for them. Viewers need to act, and through their fluid movement of the mouse and selection of the images the fabric of the film cracks, folds and unfolds into in-between spaces. *Grand Tour* is not functioning as a traditional linear, unchanging essay film, but rather what Godard calls a “constellation” that is formed when “certain things and thoughts approach one another to form one or more images” (Godard, cited in Witt 2013, p.183). *Grand Tour* holds together many disparate parts in a disjunctive web of multiple layers associated with interactions and para-interactions that invites viewers to reconstruct and reimagine a fragmented past. The metabatic montage of this scene echoes with the conception of the

essayistic film form as open and incomplete, and expands Rascaroli's argument that the essay film is a method of in-betweenness (Rascaroli 2017). Lopate describes the essayistic mode of thinking as "continues asking of questions – not necessarily finding solutions" (Lopate 1992, p.19). The essayistic essence of this scene is inspired by a diary entry by the British traveller Edward Daniel Clarke, who witnessed the removal of metopes from the Acropolis by Lord Elgin and his team. In his book *Travels Part II* wrote:

We saw this fine piece of sculpture raised from its station between the triglyphs: but while the workmen were endeavouring to give it a position adapted to the line of descent, a part of adjoining masonry was loosened by the machinery; and down came the fine masses of Pentelican marble, scattering their white fragments with thundering noise among the ruins. The Disdar, seeing this, could no longer restrain his emotions; but actually took his pipe from his mouth, and, letting fall a tear, said in a most emphatic tone of voice 'Telos!' ['Enough!']
(Clarke 1812, pp.224-226)

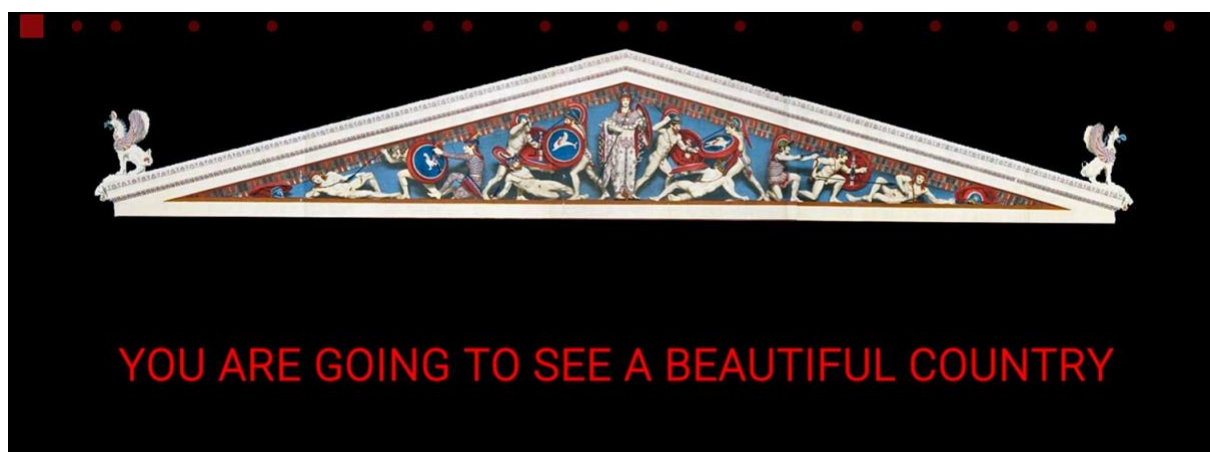


Figure 56 - Reconstruction of Acropolis metopi. Screenshot from *Grand Tour* (03:21mins).

In line with the Bakhtinian notion of dialogism, Farocki's coexistence of several images linked in a soft montage, and Godard's historic montage, I could propose that the meaning in the scene emerges from the "the coexistence of different socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present" (Bakhtin 1981, p.291).

7.7 Who knows better?

A recurring theme of *Grand Tour* is the reimagination of Greece in ancient Greek terms and the appropriations of the ancient past by travellers. In many sections of the film the viewer takes control of the progression of the film through her interaction with intersecting sequences of frame by frame images. The interactive intersecting layers resemble a linear progression of film sequences; however, the viewer controls the progression with her mouse. This is a metabatic montage technique I developed in the second prototype of the film and discussed in chapter two of the thesis. The viewer folds and unfolds the film itself under the effect of two entangled temporal forces, the linear horizontal progression of the film and the vertical scrolling movement of the mouse. The fluidity and instability of the film, combined with the fact that the viewer, through the interactive elements, can pause the film and thus the narration layer and linearity, expresses the subjectivity of the enunciator, undermining her authority and destabilising the coherent linearity and temporality of the film. *Grand Tour's* interactivity blurs the boundaries between author/filmmaker and viewers. It is no longer only the filmmaker who controls the sequential flow of the film and the experience of the viewer, but also the interaction and displacement of the viewer within the cinematic space

of the film. *Grand Tour* operates as if the viewer is tearing apart and displacing the thoughts and the ideas presented in the film from their source, where the voice of the author is located. This profoundly changes the relationship of the viewer with the images and further undermines the author's status in the film. The distortion of the filmic frame, instigated by the interactive fluid movement, amplifies this separation. It frees the film from the limitations of linearity whilst blending it with interactivity and connectivity affordances, carving in-between spaces. Expanding further Rascaroli's notion of in-between spaces, the interactive elements of *Grand Tour* are created not just to aid error-free optimised navigational performance, but are carriers of expressions filled with intersubjective relationships that need to be interpreted by the viewer. For example, in the section "Who knows better?" the sequence of images depicts a beautiful sunny day under the Acropolis, where modern Athenians walk up and down the street (figure 57).

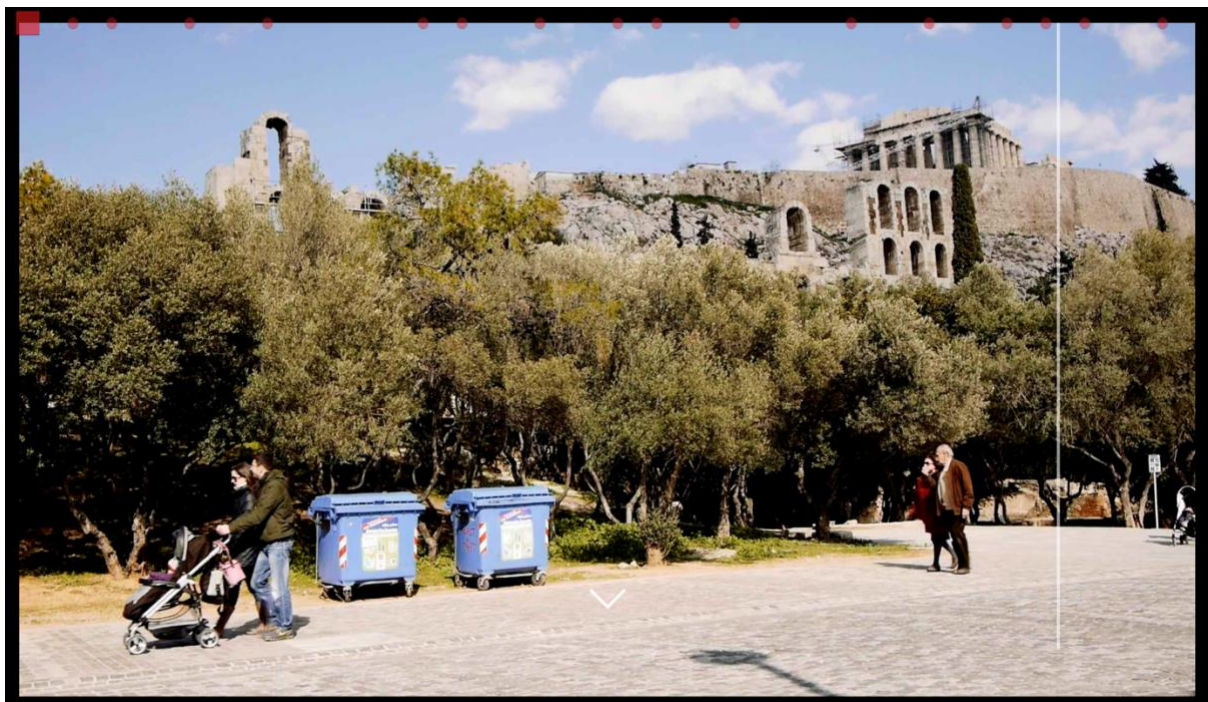


Figure 57 - Screenshot from *Grand Tour* (26:50mins).

This specific view of Acropolis is very famous, and many European travellers have commented on it, painted it and photographed it in the past. It is the same view depicted on the screen I explored in earlier chapter (figure 58).

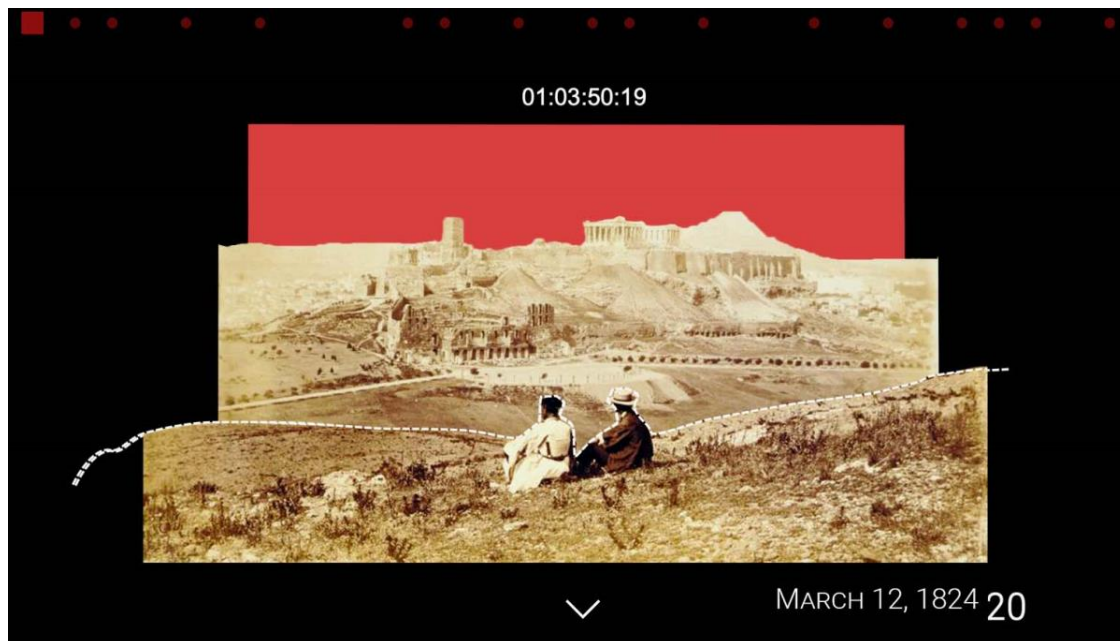


Figure 58 - Screenshot from Grand Tour (03:21mins).

In this type of metabatic montage, the viewer's choices are presented as part of a seemingly continuous image within the cinematic space. Through scrolling, the viewer takes control of the images and metaphorically of the people walking in front of the Acropolis and moves them up and down as automata. The reason I decided to follow this approach was because I wanted to surprise the viewers. I wanted to make them suddenly feel perplexed, mirroring the conditions Greeks felt during the crisis, unable to control their lives, as Helena Smith reported for *The Guardian* back in 2015, "After five months of bungled handling of negotiations under Tsipras, all they know is that any deal is going to be much, much tougher than originally thought given the Greek economy's freefall following the closure of Greek banks." (Smith 2015). This is a conceptual leap that generates metabatic montage associations augmented by

interactivity. In *Grand Tour* the vertical layers and back and forth scrolling to some extent control and reverse time, echoing Vertov's film *Kino Eye* (1924). In *Kino Eye*, Vertov filmed a sequence that documents how a cow is killed and sliced into pieces for meat, then the cow is brought back to life by reversing the film sequence in editing. In the final form of the film, Vertov added the intertitle "The cinema eye reverses time". In *Grand Tour* this reverse movement or return to the film is used as a conceptual transition, suggesting looking at the footage with a new perspective and therefore inviting the viewer to consider new interpretations of the images. The fluid para-interactivity evokes the temporal layers and linearity that are accumulated underneath them in the way that, within the virtual cinematic frame of the film, time is unfolded and reversed. In this way *Grand Tour* constructs a metaphor and metabatic montage associations between the modern Greeks walking in front of the Acropolis and the past, existing without agency, and incapable of appreciating their glorious past and unable to take control of the direction of their life.

7.8 Final thoughts

Let's be a classic country let's make an exhibition in the British Museum of which Britons could be fantastically proud which shows our curation of these extraordinary marbles and also shows their transportation back to the magnificent new Acropolis Museum where they can be reunited not in the same temple because that can never happen but within through the glass in the blue light of Greece a country struggling desperately under debt we can show them that no matter how much their sovereign debt crisis means they owe us we will never ever be able to repay the debt that we owe Greece.

Stephen Fry (11th June 2012 at Cadogan Hall)

Stephen Fry's comments echo the recent discussions about the Greek financial crisis, in which the notion of the cultural debt of Europe to ancient Greece has often been raised (Beaton 2019; Hamilakis 2016; Hanink 2017; Tziouvas 2014). This dialectic of debt associates the financial debt of modern Greece with the indebtedness of modern Europe to classical Greece. Therefore, this complicates further the role and the symbolic significance of the ancient past in the discourse about the recent Greek crisis. Historian Roderick Beaton describes how modern Greeks "experience a sense of kinship with those they call 'our ancient ancestors'. The phrase has become something a cliché in recent decades and is widely acknowledged as such. Even so, it sums up a great deal of what continues to define the Greek nation in the modern world" (Beaton 2019, p.3). It is evident in this final chapter that the ancient past of Greece operates as a key symbolic approach in the description of the Greeks and the modern Greek nation. However, *Grand Tour* describes Greece as a place in constant fragmented motion, where symbols and signs and their associated meanings continually interact and embrace new meanings, as viewers interact and discover the film. Through the use of metabatic montage techniques, dialectical tensions in between past and present are produced, creating a surreal and bizarre disjunctive tapestry of ephemeral layers of images that serve as an essayistic poetico-historical articulation of the disputed notion of uninterrupted continuity from ancient Greece to modern Greece. However, *Grand Tour's* disjunctive montage and playful configuration is also shaped by alternative ways of thinking about why Greece's economic and political disasters keep reoccurring, and how the discussions about the fundamental causes of the crisis have not moved on for over two hundred

years. *Grand Tour* opens up questions and invites imaginative essayistic interpretations framed by the notion of crypto-colonialism. A notion established by the visits of the Europeans travellers in the 18th and 19th centuries and originated by their dismay and deep disappointment in meeting the Greek inhabitants because they were not enough like the glorious ancient Greeks they imagined and subsequently they were not worthy of embodying anything, let alone the Hellenic ideal.

Conclusion

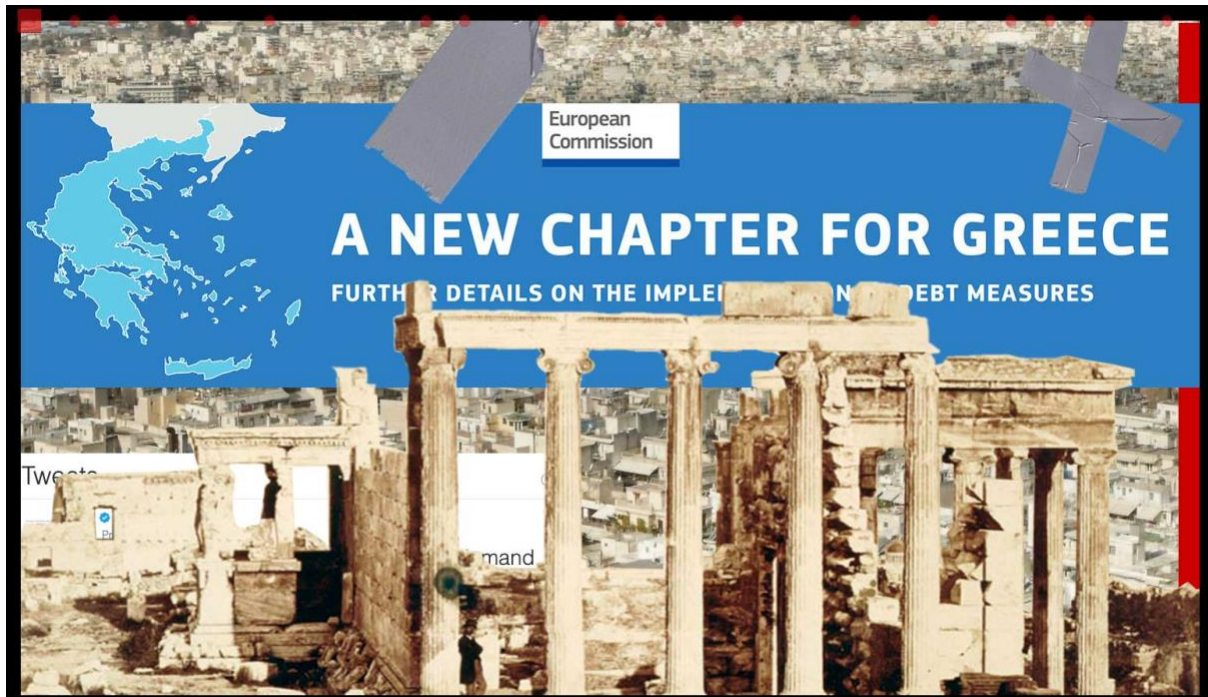


Figure 59 - Screenshot from Grand Tour (27:30mins).

We who started out on this pilgrimage
looked at the broken statues
we lost ourselves and said life is not easily lost
that death has unfathomable ways
and his own special justice;

that when we died standing on our feet
like brothers inside the stone
united in toughness and weakness
the ancient dead have escaped the circle and have
been reborn
and smile in a peculiar silence (Seferis 2018, p.46).

8.1 Return to normality

Grand Tour was officially launched in the year 2021. The year 2021 also marks 200 years from the start of the Greek revolution and the war of independence against the Ottomans. The Greek conservative government and Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis decided to celebrate the anniversary with a number of grand events and celebrations. The Prime Minister believed that 2021 is a milestone anniversary for Greece that “offers the country the opportunity to re-establish itself in the international community after a crisis of several years” (ANA-MPA 2019, para.4). Mitsotakis’ comment refers to Greece’s return to financial normality after the collapse of the Greek economy in 2010 (Tsafos 2013; Simitis 2014). The Greek government appointed Gianna Angelopoulos-Daskalaki to lead the charity Greece 2021, the organisation responsible for the celebrations. The goals of Greece 2021 are on the official website:

To show what Greece truly is: a modern state, democratic and contemporary, a country that imposes no discriminations or exclusions, an integral part of the Europe that we always illuminated and by which we were illuminated in return. (Angelopoulos-Daskalaki 2021)

Gianna Angelopoulos-Daskalaki was also, coincidentally, the president of the organisation Athens 2004 and had overall control of organizing and running the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens. The 2004 Olympic Games were an extravaganza that overextended the capabilities of the Greek economy and for many they were one of the underlying reasons for the collapse of the Greek economy in 2010 (Sanburn 2012; Berlin 2015). One of the key themes of the 2004 Olympic Games was the “return” of the games to its natural home.

Besides the obvious symbolic value of the “return” of the games, they also symbolised the return of Greece as an independent, organised, modern nation capable of coordinating a big international event such as the Olympic Games. The return to normality, modernity and integration with Europe were key themes in both of the above statements by Gianna Angelopoulos-Daskalaki and the Greek Prime Minister. The theme of the return is recurring in Greek culture and history. The return home of Ulysses. The return to the pure realms of ancient Greece for the European traveller. The return of the Elgin marbles. The return of the Olympic Games to Greece. The return of the financial markets. The return to normality. The return indicates a movement, a journey of something that leaves and then comes back again. In *Grand Tour* the theme of the return is embodied by its metabatic montage of the multiple visual, interactive, and networked elements presented within the cinematic space. *Grand Tour* is based on the dialogic relationships of arriving, leaving, and returning, of past and present.

8.2 Return to Greek crisis

One of the aims of this PaR project and creating *Grand Tour* was to develop a research artefact that would support my research objectives, expanding the creative possibilities of essayistic filmmaking, but also exist as an online essay film that would have a life of its own, reach wider audiences and contribute to the demand for debate about the economic crisis that has devastated Greek society beyond the reductive and limiting narrative of crisis (Glykofrydi-Leontsini 2016; Hamilakis 2016). I have argued in this thesis that *Grand Tour* suggests a unique way of thinking about the recent financial Greek crisis. It does so without explicitly addressing the ‘crisis’ but, in line with the essayistic

tradition, as a disjunctive tangible thread that links with the past, opening up the present and the future to modes of in-between thinking that counteract the current limited dominant narratives (Rascaroli 2017). *Grand Tour's* essayistic attitude is moulded by the tension between European travellers' unattainable ideal of ancient Greece and their desire for ownership of ancient Greek culture (Tziouvas 2014; Hanink 2017). *Grand Tour's* poetic-historical metabatic montage associates the accumulation of debt and resulting defaults with the early grand tours of European travellers to Greece in the 18th and 19th centuries and their crypto-colonialist attitudes towards the unworthy holders of the ancient Greek cultural heritage (Herzfeld 2002).

8.3 Return to Greek past and present

Grand Tour is shaped by dialectically interwoven continuities and discontinuities. It floats in a disjunctive state between the digital and the physical, the past and the present, and the uncertainty created by the fluidity of the images and the unreliability and instability of what the viewers experience and see on the screen. *Grand Tour's* disjunctive configuration is metaphorically shaped by archaeological excavations and by the ambiguities around the disputed notion of uninterrupted continuity from ancient Greece to modern Greece (Herzfeld 1986). The fluidity of scrolling invites the viewer to para-interact with the film and slip into an unstable past and to explore multiple variations of the past produced by the temporal gaps and the in-between dialectic tensions of images, text and social media feeds (Dunne 2008). Through metabatic montage amplified by interactivity, the film turns against the prevailing historical narrative, undermining the notion of linearity and the constructed concept of filmic and historical linear progression. *Grand*

Tour goes beyond the linear historical narratives. It invites viewers in an open interchange that cultivate new insights, create new connections and encourage fresh understandings from multiple dialogic disjunctions and interactions (Andersen 1990; Bakhtin 1981; Montero 2012).

8.4 Return to film montage

What this study brings into focus is a renewed research interest in film montage. The search for a particular juncture in the process of making *Grand Tour*, in which concepts and theory turn into practice and practice feeds back into theory, is its disjunctive state and the montage of the film. The biggest challenge of making an interactive networked essay film such as *Grand Tour* is how to assemble all the audio-visual layers sequentially and spatially and create an open dialogic essayistic filmic space. In this thesis I argue for the centrality of montage in online essay films such as *Grand Tour* and the need to expand the scope and explore new conceptualisations of film montage. This PaR project is an attempt to rethink the conventions of film montage through the new conceptualisation of metabatic montage. Metabatic montage builds upon Godard's historical montage (Smith 1996) and Farocki's soft montage (Ehmann & Eshun 2009) and manifests more clearly when the viewer interacts with the film. In metabatic montage the viewer is required to physically engage with the film and change the sequential frame by frame or pixel by pixel direction of the film. The moment the viewer starts scrolling, images and interactive elements begin folding and unfolding as a result of the fragmented and disjunctive nature of the film. The off-screen incursions extend the film beyond the cinematic frame and suggest possibilities that viewers do not see and need to imagine. Therefore, metabatic montage is about the malleability

and inconsistency of the film and operates as a thread that motivates the dialogic tensions of the multiple emerging temporalities, opens gaps and creates cracks within the film “through which the invisible emerges” (Suhr & Willerslev 2013, p.1), (Godard 2014; Hudson & Zimmerman 2015).

8.5 Return to essayistic filmmaking practice

This project has been an investigation to expand the essay film. *Grand Tour* is an attempt to explore the space in-between the affordances offered by digital interactive media and the conventions of essayistic filmmaking traditions (Rascaroli 2017). My research highlights the importance of the latest digital media technologies and their practical application in essayistic filmmaking. *Grand Tour* represents a substantial shift from previous encounters with essay films because it makes networked connectivity and interactivity parts in the formation of the film. Traditional films offer a linear view of an already defined reality. Unlike a traditional film, where the 24 images appear and disappear every second, in *Grand Tour* viewers can experience the film by para-interacting dialogically with the spatial and temporal dimensions of the film (Gaudenzi 2013; Dunne 2008). *Grand Tour* offers a very different way of engaging with essay films, in which viewers are personally invited to playfully perform and interact in an open dialogue with the film and potentially transformed by the film and create their own unique meanings interpretations and associations (Gaudenzi 2013). Through the imaginative metabatic montage of interactivity, and networked connectivity, *Grand Tour* progresses the understanding of what an essay film can be, expanding essayistic filmmaking practice and making it relevant to today, a continuation of the cutting-edge

essay film making tradition, maintaining its legacy of experimentation with the form and the latest technological developments (Alter 2018; Rascaroli 2017).

8.6 *Grand Tour's* online presence

Grand Tour was officially launched on 1st January 2021 in an attempt to synchronise its release and online presence with the celebrations of the 200th anniversary of the Greek revolution in 1821. The video components of *Grand Tour* are hosted on VIMEO, a platform which produces accurate real time analytics about how many views the film has had and when the film is viewed. Overall, the film had a very positive response. Based on the VIMEO analytics, *Grand Tour* had a total of 568 views from 1st January 2021 to 1 January 2022. *Grand Tour's* social media Twitter and Facebook accounts have also been very active and have contributed to the rich online manifestation of the film. It is interesting that the vast majority of the VIMEO views were recorded in two specific periods, June and December 2021, when *Grand Tour* was part of two festivals. *Grand Tour* was accepted for the 2021 Thessaloniki Documentary Festival, which started in March 2021, with the online section of the festival taking place in June 2021. It was so exciting to see *Grand Tour* participating in one of the biggest Greek film festivals and it was also an emotional and personal return to the Greek city that I was born in; I used to go to the Thessaloniki Documentary Festival every year when I lived in Greece. *Grand Tour* was also accepted as part of the Acropolis Remix art exhibition with the theme of Embraces: Utopian Proximities. Acropolis Remix is an online art exhibition with video artists from around the world who all share and embrace utopian visions. I was very proud that *Grand Tour* was recognised as a political piece of work and exhibited amongst some great political artists from around

the world. The overall positive response to *Grand Tour* guides my creative plans for next year. I aim to submit the film to more film festivals and art exhibitions, and engage in collaborative political actions with artists across the world. However, my key priority after the completion of this project is to write and submit papers around the themes of metabatic montage and the possibilities of digital filmmaking practice as research. Finally, I aim to apply for funding to develop the next iteration of the film. In particular, I want to make *Grand Tour's* online platform mobile compatible and offer it as an interactive app via the Apple and Google stores.

8.7 Further research

This PaR project sought to stress the creative potential of adding interactive and networked elements to essay films, and to define what metabatic montage is. However, the research limits its scope to the context of montage and essayistic filmmaking. There is scope to explore the film through research within a multimodal analysis framework and explain *Grand Tour* as a semiotic text with multiple modes of communication. There is scope to expand further the practical film montage method I experimented with and developed in making *Grand Tour* to the wider essayistic filmmaking community and to other genres of online filmmaking practices. There is also space to explore further the conceptualisation of metabatic montage and its potentials applications in online and digital filmmaking practice. Furthermore, there is great potential for further research in the use of analytics that track viewer behaviour, and how parts of essay films might change or respond based on viewers' choices or even detect shuttle online activities such as eye tracking and biometric information. Finally, there is scope for a textual analysis of the social media

feeds and, building on the research I have done here, to further explore the online patterns of the social media contributions.

8.8 Final thoughts

Concluding a piece of work suggests some form of closure and ending. However, in the context of essay films, finishing goes against the fundamental notion of essayistic filmmaking, which is to open questions and not to offer definite closed answers. *Grand Tour's* disjunctive metabatic montage of interwoven networked digital layers constantly interrupts the linearity of the narration layer. What looks closed in the linear narration layer becomes more complex and reveals new engagement possibilities as viewers unfold the film and create cracks in the interwoven interactive layers and ephemeral social media feeds hidden within the fabric of the film. In *Grand Tour* viewers constantly engage in a continuous open dialogue with the multiple layers and the polyphony of clashing voices through the interactive and playful elements that emerge and collide within and beyond the cinematic frame. In this thesis I argued that online essay films such as *Grand Tour* should be conceived as disjunctive, unstable and the source of multiple dialogic tensions, suggesting the potential for new essayistic practices that incorporate layers of multiple temporalities and interactive networked openness to create a unique dialogic space in-between the text, the film maker and the viewer of the film. *Grand Tour's* metabatic montage interweaves past and present and metaphorically associates ancient cultural debt with modern financial debt, endeavouring to illuminate how a small country like Greece has generated such massive international attention over the last two centuries.

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Appendices

APPENDIX 1: *Grand Tour's* prototypes links

First prototype: <http://thegrandtourfilm.uk/prototype01/>

Second prototype: http://thegrandtourfilm.uk/prototype_04/

Final prototype: http://thegrandtourfilm.uk/grandtourfilm_Ph.d.html

Experiments:

<http://thegrandtourfilm.uk/prototype03>

http://thegrandtourfilm.uk/prototype04/#scene_02

http://thegrandtourfilm.uk/prototype04/#scene_04

http://thegrandtourfilm.uk/prototype05/#The_first_view

APPENDIX 2: *Grand Tour's* social media links

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/grandtourfilm>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/grandtourfilm>

Pinterest: <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/thegrandtourfilm>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/grandtourfilm>

APPENDIX 3: *Grand Tour's* voice-over script in English and Greek

English Voice Over Script: *Grand Tour* – A film in-debt(ed)

TRAVELLER 1: You are going to see a beautiful country.

You are going to see a beautiful country. This was what I was repeating to myself at the same time. The name of Greece, even more than that of Spain or Italy, is full of promise.

TRAVELLER 2: The history of Greece is a narrative of external political dependence and debt. The country has been in a state of default about 50 percent of the time since 1821, the year of Greece's independence. In total Greece has resulted in four major episodes of default, and Greeks have suffered a series of devastating foreign debt crisis.

This account describes Greece in 2020, in the middle of its fourth debt crisis. It also describes Greece 200 years earlier, on the eve of its first ever default. These events are neither new nor unique in Greek history and bring remarkable historical parallels between past and present. (Reinhart and Trebesch 2015, Stavrianos 1952 p. 25).

TRAVELLER 1: You are going to see a beautiful country. You are going to see a beautiful country. You are going to see a beautiful country this was what I was repeating to myself at the same time. The name of Greece, even more than that of Spain or Italy, is full of promise. You will not meet with a young man in whom that name does not awaken ideas of beauty, of light, and of quiet happiness. The least studious school-boys, who inveigh most eloquently against Greek history and Greek translations, even if they fall asleep over their lexicon, they dream of Greece. (About, 1857 p.5)

TRAVELLER 1: So there is Greece! For her I have crossed this vast expanse of sea, abandoned my country, my parents and my friends; all for this land! And why could I not make this journey in my own study? Could I not have read the ancient and modern travellers, and learned painlessly about times? Yes ..., I could have done; but then I wanted to make it in order to feel ... What does it matter that Sparta, Athens and Corinth are gone for ever? The soil where they stood still holds in its breast the sublime ideas that it inspired in ancient times ... And the silence! It will allow me to be moved and to breathe freely in this majestic theatre where so many glorious deeds were done. (quoted by Saverio Scrofani (1799) in Tsigakou, 1981 p.9)

TRAVELLER 1: The following plan for the disposal of 4 days in Athena and its vicinity may facilitate the traveller in his selection: Sunrise from the Acropolis; visit the monuments there: then the Areopagus, Pnyx, Temple of Theseus, Odeum, Dionysiac Theatre (under a cavern in the south side of the Acropolis, with 2 pillars above it), Temple of Jupiter, Fountain of Callirrhoe, Panathenaic Stadium, Arch of Hadrian, Monument of Lyacrates, Tower of the Winds, Agora, Stoa of Hadrian. These objects lie within a short distance of each other; and there is little of modern or medieval interest to withdraw the attention from the antiquities. (Murray 1854 p.136)

TRAVELLER 2: Travel writing about Greece, after the early 17th century, played an important role in constructing how modern Greeks were perceived in Europe. Views of nineteenth century Greece have been deeply influenced by the writings of Lord Byron and his description of modern Greece as a land haunted by its ancient past. (Roessel, 2002)

TRAVELLER 1: As a land haunted by its ancient past.

TRAVELLER 1: No country in Europe abounds with so many spots, which teem with the most captivating associations and there is hardly a locality which is not consecrated by some attractive circumstance; or which some trait of heroism, of greatness, and of genius, has not signalized and adorned. (Dodwell, 1819b p.2)

TRAVELLER 2: For the European traveller, Greece represented more than a location. Greece inspired intellectual and emotional associations on which European culture, and the whole civilized western world, is based. The Greek ideal of beauty was an aesthetic inspiration during the Renaissance and Enlightenment, profoundly influencing European societies.

TRAVELLER 1: We are all Greeks – our laws, our literature, our religion, our arts have their roots in Greece. They live in the imagination; their presence is breathed over the hills and the rocks it haunts the dells and the groves and animates every part of the panoramic view. The whole locality is consecrated by the memory of statesmen and warriors of historians and poets, of critics and philosophers, sages and legislators, of whom not only Athens but the world may be proud. (Shelley, 1866 preface)

TRAVELLER 2: In the imaginary realm that was the European vision of Greece in the 18th century ancient Greek life was pure simple and moral. Classical Hellas was the source to which they had to look for the ideas of noble simplicity and grandeur. When European travellers arrived in Greek territories looking for ancient classical beauty, they didn't find, to their astonishment any living remains of Antiquity. They found Greeks leaving under the oppressive rule of the Ottomans. It was not uncommon practice, for travellers to erase the

contemporary Greece in favour of the ancient past, including literature, politics, art, and even landscape.

TRAVELLER 1: The sentiment, indeed, with which I feel myself most constantly affected, since I came within sight of Greece, and particularly since I landed, has a strong resemblance to that which I experienced in walking over a country churchyard. Everything reminds me of the departed. The works of the living serve only to inform us of the virtues and excellence of the dead. Almost every rock, every promontory, every river, is haunted by the shadows of the mighty dead. (Dodwell, 1819b)

TRAVELLER 2: Throughout the eighteenth-century Greece's antiquities were the magnet which attracted a large number of travellers. Throughout this period many travellers visiting Greece lamented the dreadful state of the ancient ruins, and how they were used as drinking troughs and building materials, by the ignorant inhabitants. In most accounts, the actual local people were excluded. Instead travellers wrote in great detail about classical ruins and the surrounding natural landscape. Many travellers had very little sympathy for the descendants of the Hellenes. These classically trained European travellers, idealized the mythical history of ancient Greece, creating a Hellenic dream in which they lived. They erased the Greece that confronted them, in favour of the ancient past. They were convinced that they understood and valued Greece more than the Greeks.

TRAVELLER 1: A few days ago a head of Athene came to light that exceeds in beauty anything a human being can ever have seen or felt or thought. I stood as if turned to stone when I saw it. You will laugh at me when I tell you that it had no head, and its arms were broken; however, it was a female figure, and the drapery and attitude pleased me so much that I took the trouble of packing it off on mule for Corinth. At least, it was not expensive, for giving half a crown to a priest that belonged to a chapel near it and carried it off from the Greeks in triumph. And carried it off from the Greeks in triumph. (Eisner, 1993 p.86)

TRAVELLER 2: Most early travellers to Greece had taken an opportunistic attitude toward the antiquities. They would take away whatever the local

villagers and the Ottoman governs could bribed and pressurised into allowing them to have. Relatively small items were in high demand and the Turks started breaking big statues into many smaller pieces to make them more profitable.

TRAVELLER 1: Our great work was not finished until the 16th day after our arrival, when, besides having collected sixteen statues, we completed our researches, drawings, and measurements of the temple, which have enabled us to make some very important discoveries in architecture. It was impossible to be engaged in a more interesting undertaking. Every hour produced some new discovery and the whole time was a continued succession of surprises. (Hughes, 1820 pp. 282-285)

TRAVELLER 2: At the turn of the 19th century, archaeological and topological research became more systematic. Collecting ancient relics, previously the privilege of kings and noblemen, became a fashion that developed into a mania, in which every traveler indulged. (Angelomatis-Tsougarakis, 1990 p.3)

TRAVELLER 1: We discovered some remains of the temple of Apollo at Delphi, a wall of large stones filled with inscription rather too large to take away. (Stuart and Revett, 1762 p. vii)

TRAVELLER 2: Along with material relics, travellers has also taken the right to understanding and defining the Classical past. The acquisition of architectural fragments of the Parthenon and the Erechtheium by Lord Elgin, was an inspiration to everybody. They "saved" the Elgin Marbles, then completed the process by naming them after their possessor.

TRAVELLER 2: Equipped with ancient texts, and Greek dictionaries, these travellers discovered and explored, not the Greece they encountered but a hidden, idealized, ancient Greek civilization. Greeks caught between a western vision of the classical ideal and the impossibility of an unmediated Greek conception of self, stranded in no-man's land. (Herzfeld and Absent, 2002)

TRAVELLER 1: Rambling through the streets of Athens, one seeks in vain, in the faces of the Greeks, those majestic features which characterise the sculptures of the ancients. Jet black and glossy hair; sharp, diminutive eyes, shaded by thick brows, meeting in the middle of a high forehead ; hooked nose ; thick lips ; dirty stunted teeth ; narrow chin ; a skin tawny and coarse ; such is the general portrait of a modern Athenian.

(Laurent, 1821 p.111)

TRAVELLER 2: The omnipresence of material fragments of ancient Greek antiquity enabled the past to coexist side by side with the present. Material antiquities, activate and re-enact multiple temporalities. These temporalities were experiential and non-chronological, and they were embedded in the fabric of Greek social life. (Hamilakis, 2008)

TRAVELLER 2: Greeks came to experience the tension of seeing whatever was ordinary, familiar, and unexceptional in their daily lives treated as sacred relics of an idealized exotic past.

TRAVELLER 1: How miserably were we disappointed in our expectations! Instead of that beautiful country, which juvenile imagination figures to itself existing in Greece, we saw nothing but a sandy marsh and some barren rocks, covered with a stunted and parched heath. Instead of those sumptuous edifices, which one can hardly help representing to oneself, as still adorning this classic land, a few ruined huts, without windows or chimneys, stood before us. In vain we sought in the features of the miserable wretches who crawled on the shore, traces of those manly features which characterized their ancestors. Although not unacquainted with the account of former travellers, such was the force of early and habitual ideas, that we stared in astonishment, and involuntarily exclaimed, "Is that Greece?" (Laurent, 1821 p.19)

TRAVELLER 2: The new Greek kingdom was trapped between these two oppositional models: a familiar ordered European state replete with European institutions, and at the same time an uncivilized exotic country. Lingering over the margins of the western civilization and at the same time at the centre of it as the theoretical founders of western civilization.

TRAVELLER 1: I took Shelley down to the docs at the Leghorn and introduce him to some Greek sailors. The Greeks squatted about the decks in small knots, shrieking, gesticulating, smoking, eating and gambling like savages. “Does this realize your idea of Hellenism Shelley?” I asked. ‘No! but it does of hell ... Come away!’ Said Shelley, “There is not a drop of the old Hellenic blood here. These are not the men to rekindle the ancient Greek fire; their souls are extinguished by traffic and superstition. Come Away!” (as quoted in Eisner 1993, p.101).

TRAVELLER 2: Over 200 years since the initial proclamation of the independent nation-state in 1821, Greeks were required to leave this ambivalence. From one side fit their culture to the antiquarian nostalgia of Europe and as a result found themselves detached from the European modernity and at the same time banished to the geopolitical margins as corrupted, politically immature, undeveloped and irresponsible to their international commitments and debt obligations.

TRAVELLER 2: Modern Greeks were appalling; culturally and biologically corrupted descendants of their ancient forefathers; wicked, lazy and feckless, lacking any decency, ignorant and superstitious. For European travellers modern Greeks form a completely different nation that has nothing to do with the ancient Greek virtue that they expected to find. (Koundoura, 2004 p.257).

TRAVELLER 1: No one can blame this people for wishing to become a nation. But their ambition to become ancient Greeks, and to make the Athens of Otho identical with that of Pericles, is fraught with embarrassment and hopeless difficulty. (Warburton, 1848 p.398)

TRAVELLER 2: Greece is not a country that was ever formally colonized but its antiquity has been invaded, colonized and claimed by Europe. Not by physically occupying Greek soil and Greek territories but by a form of crypto – colonialism intellectually claiming ownership of Greece’s ancient classical past. (Herzfeld 2002).

TRAVELLER 1: A curious notion prevailing amongst the common Athenians, with respect to the ancient statues, is, that they are real body, mutilated and enchanted into their present state of petrification by magicians, who will have power over them as long as the Turks are master of Greece, when they will be transformed into their former bodies.

The spirit within them is called Arabim and is not unfrequently heard to moan and bewail its condition. Some Greeks, in our time, conveying a chest from Athena to Piraeus, containing part of the Elgin marbles, threw it down, and could not for some time be prevailed upon to touch it, again affirming, they heard the Arabim crying out, and groaning for his fellow-spirits detained in bondage in the Acropolis. (Hobhouse, 1815 p.288).

TRAVELLER 2: Travellers not only saw themselves as the only individuals able to appreciate their aesthetic, philosophical and historical value of Ancient Greece, but also saw themselves as the direct descendants of the ancient Greeks who had originally created these highly praised ancient Greek classical artefacts.

The Greek past instead of being destroyed and diminished as in many previous colonialization cases, it was rather glorified and at the same time was appropriated and adopted by the colonisers as their own ideological heritage.

TRAVELLER 1: My last evening at Athens was come and I repaired to the ruins of Jupiter's temple, when the magical glow of a Grecian sunset was bathing those immortal hills in a violet or purple light. The majestic columns of the Temple towered into the ambrosial air, pale, but flushed with the deep radiance of a sky that softened down all thought of ruin from the scene, and left it only reverence.
(Warburton, 1848 p.305).

TRAVELLER 2: Greeks cannot escape this dream, they are caught, like shadows, empty of their own agency, doomed to live like ancient artefacts found in an excavation site, trapped between the historic past and the dream of the past. This can be interpreted as a different type of colonization, in which history and culture, rather land and people, have been invaded and occupied.

TRAVELLER 1: Reader! you have been my only fellow-traveller through many lands. Wherever I have wandered you have been. Whatever I have learned you have known yet I scarcely venture to hope that you will share in the regret with which I say to you, Farewell. (Warburton, 1848 p.145).

Greek Voice Over Script: Grand Tour – A film in-debt(ed)

TRAVELLER 1: Θα δεις μια πανέμορφη χώρα.

TRAVELLER 1: Θα δεις μια πανέμορφη χώρα.

TRAVELLER 1: Αυτά τα λόγια έλεγα μέσα μου ξανά και ξανά. Το όνομα της Ελλάδας, περισσότερο κι απ' αυτό της Ισπανίας ή της Ιταλίας, είναι γεμάτο υποσχέσεις.

TRAVELLER 2: Η ιστορία της Ελλάδας είναι μια εξιστόρηση εξωτερικής πολιτικής εξάρτησης και χρέους. Η χώρα είναι σε κατάσταση αθέτησης πληρωμών (Χρεωκοπίας) σχεδόν τον μισό καιρό από το 1821, έτος της ελληνικής ανεξαρτησίας.

Συνολικά η Ελλάδα έχει οδηγηθεί σε τέσσερα μεγάλα επεισόδια χρεωκοπίας, και οι Έλληνες έχουν υποστεί μια σειρά από εξοντωτικές κρίσεις εξωτερικού χρέους.

Αυτή η αφήγηση περιγράφει την Ελλάδα το 2020, εν μέσω της τέταρτης κρίσης χρέους της. Περιγράφει επίσης την Ελλάδα 200 χρόνια νωρίτερα, λίγο πριν την πρώτη της αθέτηση πληρωμών. Αυτά τα γεγονότα δεν είναι ούτε πρωτόγνωρα ούτε ασυνήθιστα στην ελληνική ιστορία και φέρουν αξιοσημείωτες ιστορικές ομοιότητες ανάμεσα στο παρελθόν και το παρόν.

TRAVELLER 1: Θα δεις μια πανέμορφη χώρα.

TRAVELLER 1: Θα δεις μια πανέμορφη χώρα.

TRAVELLER 1: Θα δεις μια πανέμορφη χώρα. Αυτά τα λόγια έλεγα μέσα μου ξανά και ξανά. Το όνομα της Ελλάδας, περισσότερο κι απ' αυτό της Ισπανίας ή της Ιταλίας, είναι γεμάτο υποσχέσεις. Δε θα συναντήσεις ούτε έναν νέο στον οποίο αυτό το όνομα δεν ξυπνάει ιδέες ομορφιάς, φωτός, και ήρεμης ευτυχίας.

TRAVELLER 1: Οι λιγότερο μελετηροί μαθητές, αυτοί που καταφέρονται πιο εύγλωττα εναντίον της ελληνικής ιστορίας και των ελληνικών μεταφράσεων, ακόμα κι όταν τους παίρνει ο ύπνος πάνω στα λεξικά τους, ονειρεύονται την Ελλάδα.

TRAVELLER 1: Αυτή είναι λοιπόν η Ελλάδα! Για χάρη της διέσχισα τόσες θάλασσες, εγκατέλειψα την πατρίδα μου, τους γονείς μου, τους φίλους μου· όλα γι' αυτό τον τόπο! Δε θα μπορούσα άραγε να είχα κάνει το ταξίδι από τη βιβλιοθήκη μου; Δε θα μπορούσα να είχα διαβάσει τους αρχαίους και σύγχρονους ταξιδιώτες, να είχα μάθει χωρίς κόπο για κείνους τους καιρούς; Ναι, θα μπορούσα· ήθελα όμως να το κάνω για να νιώσω... Τι σημασία έχει που η Σπάρτη, η Αθήνα και η Κόρινθος έχουν χαθεί για πάντα; Το χώμα όπου στέκονταν κάποτε έχει ακόμα μέσα του τις εξάισιες ιδέες που αποτέλεσαν έμπνευση στα αρχαία χρόνια... Και η σιωπή! Θα μου επιτρέψει να συγκινηθώ και ν' ανασάνω ελεύθερα σε αυτό το μεγαλειώδες θέατρο όπου εκτυλίχτηκαν τόσες ένδοξες πράξεις.

TRAVELLER 1: Το ακόλουθο πρόγραμμα για μια περιήγηση τεσσάρων ημερών στην Αθήνα και τα περίχωρά της μπορεί να διευκολύνει τον ταξιδιώτη στις επιλογές του:

Ανατολή στην Ακρόπολη· επίσκεψη των εκεί μνημείων: έπειτα Άρειος Πάγος, Πνύκα, Θησείο, Ηρώδειο, Θέατρο του Διονύσου (κάτω από μια σπηλιά στους νότιους πρόποδες της Ακρόπολης, με δύο κίονες από πάνω του), Ναός του Ολυμπίου Διός, Κρήνη της Καλλιρρόης, Παναθηναϊκό Στάδιο, Πύλη του Αδριανού, Μνημείο Λυσικράτους, Πύργος των Ανέμων, Αρχαία Αγορά, Στοά του Αδριανού.

Βρίσκονται όλα σε κοντινή απόσταση μεταξύ τους· και δεν υπάρχουν πολλά στοιχεία σύγχρονου ή μεσαιωνικού ενδιαφέροντος για να τραβήξουν την προσοχή από τις αρχαιότητες.

TRAVELLER 2: Τα κείμενα των περιηγητών για την Ελλάδα, μετά τις αρχές του 17ου αιώνα, έπαιξαν σημαντικό ρόλο στο πώς έβλεπαν οι Ευρωπαίοι τους σύγχρονους Έλληνες. Η εικόνα της σύγχρονης Ελλάδας επηρεάστηκε βαθιά από τα γραπτά των Ευρωπαίων περιηγητών στην Ελλάδα, και κυρίως από τον

Λόρδο Βύρωνα που περιέγραφε την Ελλάδα ως έναν τόπο στοιχειωμένο από το αρχαίο του παρελθόν.

TRAVELLER 1: Ένας τόπος στοιχειωμένος από το αρχαίο του παρελθόν.

TRAVELLER 1: Σε καμία άλλη χώρα της Ευρώπης δεν υπάρχουν τόσα πολλά μέρη που να ανασύρουν τους πιο γοητευτικούς συνειρμούς, και ελάχιστες τοποθεσίες δεν έχουν ευλογηθεί από κάποια ελκυστική λεπτομέρεια, ή δεν έχουν ένα στοιχείο ηρωισμού, μεγαλείου και μεγαλοφυΐας να τις διακρίνει και να τις κοσμεί.

ΑΝ ΕΙΣΑΙ ΠΑΓΙΔΕΥΜΕΝΟΣ ΣΤΟ ΟΝΕΙΡΟ ΕΝΟΣ ΑΛΛΟΥ ΤΗΝ ΠΑΤΗΣΕΣ

TRAVELLER 2: Για τον Ευρωπαίο ταξιδιώτη, η Ελλάδα δεν ήταν απλώς μια τοποθεσία. Η Ελλάδα ενέπνευσε διανοητικούς και συναισθηματικούς συνειρμούς πάνω στους οποίους βασίστηκε η ευρωπαϊκή κουλτούρα και ολόκληρος ο πολιτισμένος δυτικός κόσμος. Το ελληνικό ιδανικό της ομορφιάς αποτέλεσε αισθητική έμπνευση στην Αναγέννηση και στο Διαφωτισμό, και επηρέασε βαθιά τις ευρωπαϊκές κοινωνίες.

TRAVELLER 1: Είμαστε όλοι Έλληνες – οι νόμοι μας, η λογοτεχνία μας, η θρησκεία μας, οι τέχνες μας έχουν τις ρίζες τους στην Ελλάδα. Ζουν στη φαντασία μας· η παρουσία τους πνέει πάνω από λόφους και πέτρες, στοιχειώνει λαγκάδια και δάση, δίνει ζωή σε κάθε σημείο της πανοραμικής θέας. Ολόκληρος ο τόπος είναι ευλογημένος από την ανάμνηση πολιτικών ανδρών και πολεμιστών, ιστορικών και ποιητών, κριτικών και φιλοσόφων, σοφών και νομοθετών, για τους οποίους όχι μόνο η Αθήνα αλλά ο κόσμος όλος μπορεί να είναι υπερήφανος.

TRAVELLER 2: Στο φανταστικό βασίλειο που ήταν το ευρωπαϊκό όραμα της Ελλάδας τον 18ο αιώνα, η αρχαιοελληνική ζωή ήταν αγνή, απλή και ηθική. Η Κλασική Ελλάδα ήταν η πηγή στην οποία στρέφονταν για τις ιδέες της ευγενούς απλότητας και του μεγαλείου. Όταν οι Ευρωπαίοι ταξιδιώτες έφτασαν στα ελληνικά εδάφη αναζητώντας την αρχαία κλασική ομορφιά, δε βρήκαν, προς μεγάλη τους έκπληξη, ζωντανά ίχνη της Αρχαιότητας. Βρήκαν Έλληνες που ζούσαν κάτω από τον οθωμανικό ζυγό. Δεν ήταν λίγοι οι

ταξιδιώτες που διέγραψαν τη σύγχρονη Ελλάδα προτιμώντας το αρχαίο παρελθόν, σε τομείς όπως η λογοτεχνία, η πολιτική, η τέχνη, ακόμα και το τοπίο.

TRAVELLER 1: Το συναίσθημα που διαπιστώνω ότι με πλημμυρίζει διαρκώς από τη στιγμή που αντίκρισα την Ελλάδα, και κυρίως από τη στιγμή που πάτησα εδώ το πόδι μου, μοιάζει πολύ μ' αυτό που ένιωσα περιδιαβάζοντας σ' ένα επαρχιακό κοιμητήριο. Όλα μου θυμίζουν τους πεθαμένους. Τα έργα των ζωντανών έχουν μοναδικό σκοπό να τονίζουν τις αρετές και την υπεροχή των νεκρών. Σχεδόν όλα τα βράχια, τα ακρωτήρια, τα ποτάμια, είναι στοιχειωμένα από τις σκιές των παντοδύναμων νεκρών.

TRAVELLER 2: Καθ' όλη τη διάρκεια του 18ου αιώνα οι ελληνικές αρχαιότητες λειτούργησαν σαν μαγνήτης που τράβηξε έναν μεγάλο αριθμό ταξιδιωτών. Όλο αυτό το διάστημα πολλοί ταξιδιώτες που επισκέπτονταν την Ελλάδα εξέφραζαν τη θλίψη τους για τα παραμελημένα αρχαία ερείπια και για τον τρόπο που οι αδαείς κάτοικοι τα χρησιμοποιούσαν ως ποτίστρες για τα ζώα τους ή ως οικοδομικά υλικά.

TRAVELLER 2: Οι ντόπιοι απουσίαζαν από τα περισσότερα κείμενα. Αντίθετα, οι ταξιδιώτες περιέγραφαν λεπτομερώς τα αρχαία ερείπια και το φυσικό τοπίο που τα περιέβαλλε. Πολλοί ταξιδιώτες έδειχναν ελάχιστη συμπάθεια για τους απογόνους των αρχαίων Ελλήνων.

TRAVELLER 2: Αυτοί οι Ευρωπαίοι ταξιδιώτες με την κλασική παιδεία εξιδανίκευαν τη μυθική ιστορία της αρχαίας Ελλάδας, πλάθοντας ένα αρχαιοελληνικό όνειρο μέσα στο οποίο ζούσαν. Διέγραφαν την Ελλάδα που είχαν μπροστά τους προτιμώντας το αρχαίο παρελθόν. Ήταν πεπεισμένοι ότι καταλάβαιναν και εκτιμούσαν την Ελλάδα περισσότερο κι από τους ίδιους τους Έλληνες.

TRAVELLER 1: Πριν λίγες μέρες ήρθε στο φως ένα άγαλμα της Αθηνάς που υπερβαίνει σε ομορφιά οτιδήποτε έχει δει, νιώσει ή σκεφτεί ποτέ άνθρωπος. Έμεινα σαν μαρμαρωμένος όταν το αντίκρισα. Θα με κοροϊδέψετε αν σας πω ότι ήταν ακέφαλο και τα χέρια του ήταν σπασμένα· ήταν όμως μια γυναικεία

μορφή, και οι πτυχές του ρούχου και η στάση του μου άρεσαν τόσο πολύ που μπήκα στον κόπο να το φορτώσω σ' ένα μουλάρι για την Κόρινθο. Τουλάχιστον δεν ήταν ακριβό, αφού έδωσα μισή κορώνα στον ιερέα από το κοντινό παρεκκλήσι που του ανήκε και το πήρα από τους Έλληνες εν θριάμβω. Και το πήρα από τους Έλληνες εν θριάμβω.

TRAVELLER 2: Οι περισσότεροι από τους πρώτους ταξιδιώτες στην Ελλάδα είχαν οπορτουριστική στάση απέναντι στις αρχαιότητες. Έπαιρναν ό,τι μπορούσαν δωροδοκώντας και πιέζοντας τους χωρικούς και τους Οθωμανούς αξιωματούχους. Τα μικρότερα σε μέγεθος κομμάτια είχαν μεγάλη ζήτηση και οι Τούρκοι άρχισαν να σπάνε μεγάλα αγάλματα σε πολλά μικρότερα κομμάτια για να αυξήσουν το κέρδος τους.

TRAVELLER 1: Το σπουδαίο έργο μας τελείωσε τη 16η μέρα μετά την άφιξή μας, όταν, πέρα από τα δεκαέξι αγάλματα που συλλέξαμε, ολοκληρώσαμε τις έρευνες, τα σχέδια και τις μετρήσεις μας στο ναό, που μας επέτρεψαν να κάνουμε κάποιες πολύ σημαντικές ανακαλύψεις στην αρχιτεκτονική. Δε θα μπορούσαμε να ασχοληθούμε με κάτι πιο ενδιαφέρον. Κάθε ώρα έφερνε μια καινούργια ανακάλυψη και η όλη διαδικασία ήταν μια αδιάκοπη σειρά εκπλήξεων.

TRAVELLER 2: Στις αρχές του 19ου αιώνα, οι αρχαιολογικές και τοπολογικές έρευνες έγιναν πιο συστηματικές. Η συλλογή αρχαιολογικών λειψάνων, που μέχρι τότε ήταν προνόμιο ευγενών και βασιλέων, έγινε μόδα που εξελίχθηκε σε μανία, στην οποία ενέδιδε κάθε ταξιδιώτης.

TRAVELLER 1: Ανακαλύψαμε κάποια ερείπια του ναού του Απόλλωνα στους Δελφούς, ένα τείχος από μεγάλες πέτρες γεμάτες επιγραφές, πολύ μεγάλες για να μπορέσουμε να τις πάρουμε.

TRAVELLER 2: Εκτός από τα υλικά λείψανα, οι ταξιδιώτες πήραν μαζί τους και το δικαίωμα να καταλαβαίνουν και να ορίζουν το κλασικό παρελθόν. Η απόκτηση αρχιτεκτονικών τμημάτων του Παρθενώνα και του Ερεχθείου από τον Λόρδο Έλγιν αποτέλεσε έμπνευση για τους πάντες.

TRAVELLER 2: Αφού «έσωσαν» τα Ελγίνεια Μάρμαρα, ολοκλήρωσαν τη διαδικασία δίνοντάς τους το όνομα του κατόχου τους.

TRAVELLER 2: Εξοπλισμένοι με αρχαία κείμενα και ελληνικά λεξικά, αυτοί οι ταξιδιώτες ανακάλυψαν και εξερεύνησαν, όχι την Ελλάδα που είχαν μπροστά τους, αλλά έναν κρυμμένο, εξιδανικευμένο αρχαιοελληνικό πολιτισμό.

TRAVELLER 2: Οι Έλληνες, παγιδευμένοι ανάμεσα στο δυτικό όραμα του κλασικού ιδεώδους και στο ανέφικτο μιας ελληνικής αυτοαντίληψης χωρίς μεσάζοντες, είναι αποκλεισμένοι σε μια ουδέτερη ζώνη.

TRAVELLER 1: Περπατώντας στους δρόμους της Αθήνας, μάταια ψάχνει κανείς στα πρόσωπα των Ελλήνων τα μεγαλειώδη χαρακτηριστικά που αποτυπώνονται στα αγάλματα των αρχαίων.

TRAVELLER 1: Κατάμαυρα και στιλπνά μαλλιά· διαπεραστικά, μικρά μάτια κάτω από πυκνά φρύδια που ενώνονται στο μέσο ενός ψηλού μετώπου· γαμψή μύτη· χοντρά χείλη· βρόμικα, ατροφικά δόντια· στενό πιγούνι· δέρμα σκούρο και τραχύ· αυτό είναι το γενικό πορτραίτο του σύγχρονου Αθηναίου.

TRAVELLER 2: Η πανταχού παρουσία υλικών ερειπίων της ελληνικής αρχαιότητας επέτρεψε στο παρελθόν και στο μέλλον να συνυπάρξουν δίπλα-δίπλα. Οι υλικές αρχαιότητες ενεργοποιούν και επαναφέρουν πολλαπλές παροδικότητες. Αυτές οι παροδικότητες ήταν βιωματικές και μη χρονολογικές, και είχαν ενσωματωθεί στον ιστό της ελληνικής κοινωνικής ζωής.

TRAVELLER 2: Οι Έλληνες βίωσαν την ένταση του να βλέπουν ό,τι ήταν κοινότοπο, οικείο και συνηθισμένο στην καθημερινή τους ζωή να αντιμετωπίζεται σαν ιερό λείψανο ενός εξιδανικευμένου εξωτικού παρελθόντος.

TRAVELLER 1: Πόσο οικτρά απογοητευτήκαμε στις προσδοκίες μας!

TRAVELLER 1: Αντί για την πανέμορφη χώρα που η νεανική φαντασία μας θεωρούσε πως θα υπήρχε στην Ελλάδα, δεν είδαμε παρά ένα αμμώδες έλος και μερικά άγονα βράχια, σκεπασμένα με καχεκτικά και διψασμένα ρείκια.

TRAVELLER 1: Αντί για τα μεγαλόπρεπα κτίσματα που δεν μπορεί να εμποδίσει κανείς τον εαυτό του να φανταστεί ότι κοσμούν ακόμα αυτό τον κλασικό τόπο, αντικρίσαμε μόνο λίγες ερειπωμένες καλύβες, δίχως παράθυρα ή καμινάδες.

TRAVELLER 1: Μάταια αναζητούσαμε στα χαρακτηριστικά των άθλιων φουκαράδων που περιφέρονταν στην ακτή, ίχνη της ανδροπρέπειας που χαρακτήριζε τους προγόνους τους. Παρόλο που δε μας ήταν άγνωστες οι περιγραφές προγενέστερων ταξιδιωτών, ήταν τέτοια η δύναμη των αρχικών κυρίαρχων ιδεών μας, που κοιτούσαμε γύρω μας κατάπληκτοι και αναφωνούσαμε άθελά μας: «Αυτή είναι η Ελλάδα;»

TRAVELLER 2: Το νέο ελληνικό βασίλειο ήταν παγιδευμένο ανάμεσα σ' αυτά τα δύο αντιθετικά μοντέλα: ένα οικείο οργανωμένο ευρωπαϊκό κράτος όπου αφθονούσαν οι ευρωπαϊκοί θεσμοί, και ταυτόχρονα μια απολίτιστη εξωτική χώρα. Έχοντας ξεμείνει στις παρυφές του δυτικού πολιτισμού και ταυτόχρονα στο κέντρο του, ως οι θεωρητικοί ιδρυτές του δυτικού πολιτισμού.

TRAVELLER 1: Πήρα τον Σέλλεϋ στην προκουμαία του Λιβόρνο και του γνώρισα μερικούς Έλληνες ναύτες. Οι Έλληνες κάθονταν οκλαδόν στα καταστρώματα σε μικρές παρέες, φωνάζοντας, χειρονομώντας, καπνίζοντας, τρώγοντας και χαρτοπαίζοντας σαν άγριοι.

«Αυτή είναι η εικόνα που έχεις για τον ελληνισμό, Σέλλεϋ;» τον ρώτησα. «Όχι! Είναι όμως η εικόνα που έχω για την κόλαση... Πάμε να φύγουμε!», είπε ο Σέλλεϋ.

«Δεν υπάρχει ούτε μία σταγόνα του παλαιού ελληνικού αίματος εδώ. Δεν είναι αυτοί οι άνθρωποι που θ' ανάψουν ξανά την αρχαία ελληνική φλόγα: οι ψυχές τους έχουν σβήσει από τη φασαρία και τη δεισιδαιμονία. Πάμε να φύγουμε!»

TRAVELLER 2: Στα 200 χρόνια που πέρασαν από την αρχική διακήρυξη του ανεξάρτητου εθνικού κράτους το 1821, οι Έλληνες αναγκάστηκαν να ζούνε αυτή την αμφιθυμία.

Χρειάστηκε να προσαρμόσουν την κουλτούρα τους στην αρχαιολατρική νοσταλγία της Ευρώπης, με αποτέλεσμα να βρεθούν αποκομμένοι από τον

ευρωπαϊκό μοντερνισμό και ταυτόχρονα εξόριστοι στο γεωπολιτικό περιθώριο ως διεφθαρμένοι, πολιτικά ανώριμοι, υποανάπτυκτοι και ανεύθυνοι απέναντι στις διεθνείς δεσμεύσεις τους και τις δανειακές τους υποχρεώσεις.

TRAVELLER 2: Οι σύγχρονοι Έλληνες ήταν φρικτοί: πνευματικά και βιολογικά διεφθαρμένοι απόγονοι των αρχαίων προγόνων τους: πονηροί, τεμπέληδες και ανίκανοι, χωρίς ίχνος αξιοπρέπειας, αδαείς και δεισιδαίμονες. Για τους Ευρωπαίους ταξιδιώτες, οι σύγχρονοι Έλληνες αποτελούν ένα τελείως διαφορετικό έθνος που δεν έχει καμία σχέση με την αρχαιοελληνική αρετή που περίμεναν να βρουν.

TRAVELLER 1: Κανείς δεν μπορεί να κατηγορήσει αυτόν το λαό για την επιθυμία του να αποτελέσει έθνος. Όμως η φιλοδοξία τους να γίνουν αρχαίοι Έλληνες, και να κάνουν την Αθήνα του Όθωνα ίδια με την Αθήνα του Περικλή, είναι ντροπιαστική και γεμάτη ανυπέμβλητες δυσκολίες.

TRAVELLER 2: Η Ελλάδα δεν είναι μια χώρα που αποικίστηκε ποτέ επίσημα, αλλά η αρχαιότητά της έχει καταπατηθεί, αποικιστεί και διεκδικηθεί από την Ευρώπη. Όχι με την κυριολεκτική κατοχή ελληνικής γης και ελληνικών εδαφών, αλλά με μια μορφή κρυφο-αποικιοκρατίας που οικειοποιήθηκε πνευματικά το αρχαίο κλασικό παρελθόν της Ελλάδας.

TRAVELLER 1: Μια παράξενη αντίληψη που κυριαρχεί στους απλούς Αθηναίους, αναφορικά με τα αρχαία αγάλματα, είναι ότι πρόκειται για αληθινά σώματα, που έχουν ακρωτηριαστεί και μετατραπεί σε μαρμάρινες μορφές από μάγους, που θα τα εξουσιάζουν για όσον καιρό οι Τούρκοι διαφεντεύουν την Ελλάδα, και μετά θα επανέλθουν στα προηγούμενα σώματά τους.

TRAVELLER 1: Το πνεύμα που τα διακατέχει ονομάζεται Αραμπίμ, και ακούγεται συχνά να στενάζει και να θρηνεί για την κατάστασή του. Κάποιοι Έλληνες, στην εποχή μας, που κουβαλούσαν από την Αθήνα στον Πειραιά μια κασέλα που περιείχε κομμάτια των Ελγινείων Μαρμάρων, την άφησαν καταγής και αρνούσαν για αρκετή ώρα να την ξαναπιιάσουν, λέγοντας ότι

άκουσαν το Αραμπίμ να βογκά και να καλεί τα άλλα πνεύματα που κρατούνταν δέσμια στην Ακρόπολη. Παρών

TRAVELLER 2: Οι ταξιδιώτες θεώρησαν τους εαυτούς τους όχι μόνο ως τους μόνους ανθρώπους που μπορούσαν να εκτιμήσουν την αισθητική, φιλοσοφική και ιστορική αξία της Αρχαίας Ελλάδας, αλλά και ως τους άμεσους απογόνους των αρχαίων Ελλήνων που είχαν δημιουργήσει αυτά τα λαμπρά αρχαιοελληνικά κλασικά αριστουργήματα.

TRAVELLER 2: Το ελληνικό παρελθόν, αντί να καταστραφεί και να υποβαθμιστεί όπως έγινε σε πολλές άλλες περιπτώσεις αποικισμού, δοξάστηκε και ταυτόχρονα κατασχέθηκε και υιοθετήθηκε από τους αποίκους σαν να ήταν δική τους ιδεολογική κληρονομιά.

TRAVELLER 1: Ήταν το τελευταίο μου βράδυ στην Αθήνα και αποσύρθηκα στα ερείπια του ναού του Ολυμπίου Διός, όπου η μαγευτική λάμψη του ελληνικού ηλιοβασιλέματος έλουζε τους αθάνατους λόφους μ' ένα μενεξεδένιο ή πορφυρό φως. Οι μεγαλειώδεις κίονες του ναού υψώνονταν στον αμβρόσιο αέρα, γλομοί αλλά ρόδινοι από τη βαθιά ακτινοβολία ενός ουρανού που έσβηνε από το τοπίο την αίσθηση της καταστροφής, και άφηνε μόνο δέος.

TRAVELLER 2: Οι Έλληνες δεν μπορούν να ξεφύγουν απ' αυτό το όνειρο. Είναι αιχμάλωτοι, σαν σκιές, άβουλοι, καταδικασμένοι να ζουν σαν αρχαία τεχνουργήματα που βρέθηκαν σε μια ανασκαφή, παγιδευμένοι ανάμεσα στο ιστορικό παρελθόν και στο όνειρο του παρελθόντος. Αυτό μπορεί κανείς να το ερμηνεύσει ως μια διαφορετική μορφή αποικισμού, στον οποίο είναι η ιστορία και η κουλτούρα, και όχι ο τόπος και οι άνθρωποι, που έχουν υποστεί την εισβολή και την κατοχή.

TRAVELLER 1: Αναγνώστη! Ήσουν ο μόνος συνταξιδιώτης μου σ' όλους αυτούς τους τόπους. Όπου περιπλανήθηκα εγώ, βρέθηκες κι εσύ. Ό,τι έμαθα εγώ, το ξέρεις κι εσύ. Κι ωστόσο δεν τολμώ να ελπίσω ότι θα μοιραστείς τη λύπη με την οποία σου λέω, Αντίο.



Figure 60 - Film poster of Grand Tour