

## The Living and the Dead - Masternarrative, Narrative Frames and Collective Identity in Dust

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The film "Dust" can be seen as opening-speech in a dialogue about a revision of collective cultural identity. My theses, then, are a first response:

Film is always a momentum mori – it can bridge the gap of time between us and the dead. In "Dust" this dimension of mortality is important because central themes of the film are memory and history. "Dust" cannot only be likened to cubist painting, but also to music in structure; the composition - consisting here of varying visual elements in an unfolding span of time - frees the different sequences from the chronological order of a curriculum vitae or a remembered life, a traditional history. It puts them together anew, thereby creating a new narrative. The unfolding in time is a filmic device which not only aids the narration of a story, but – if used creatively as in "Dust" – reflects on the nature of story-telling.

The mutual knowledge of a collective – history i.e. – can be seen as conventional knowledge. The filmic genre, likewise, is conventional knowledge shared by audience, filmmakers and mainstream cinema culture. In "Dust" there are references to genres, mainly the Western and the Buddy-Buddy-Story. By playing with genre-expectations and breaking genre-schemes there is a new space created for alternative narrative structures. At the same time, "Dust" questions the ruling "paradigm" of the master-narrative: The seeming master narrative with a narrator is cracked open, using visual, but also story-structural tools.

A narrative frame with a dialogue structure replaces the authority of the master narrative. The main purpose of the narration of history is the goal it serves for the narrator in the present. Yet, only when there is a new agreement between audience (Edge) and narrator (Angela), this story can be told and comes to a conclusion.

Historical documents, or so says "Dust", are meaningless without interpretation. And the interpretation in a narration serves the purpose of creating a collective identification with a history (or story) – to build new goals for the future, to revise our old self-image in light of a new we-identity. Then, past and present are visually perfectly merged (as in the last image of "Dust") – they make sense.

The change of narrator-perspective (from Angela to Edge) is crucial: the catharsis and conclusion of the film relies on the identification of Edge with the story to such a degree that it becomes "his" story and can continuously be told.

Whether this identification with the story is good or bad – that is: whether i.e. identifying with Luke's redemption and his fight against the Turkish army – remains a question. "Dust" shows the mechanisms of a process of finding a collective identity, on the one hand, and the complexity of a history which cannot simply be reconstructed by looking at archival materials (photos, films), on the other. It states that telling a story is always the construction of a new "we". What and how we want to continue to construct this identity in taking into consideration the difficult stories the dead leave as our heritage, is a question to the audience of the film.