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Personal and Cultural Memories in War Tourism

Abstract

The history and memories of past events are relayed through popular culture, the media and the public sphere. City tours organized for tourists can be said to be a special part of popular culture and the public sphere. Since 2006 there has been an organised war tour in the City of Dubrovnik which follows the "routes" of war aggression and the devastation of the town. In this paper, one such specific route The Story about the War is analysed. The main aim of the analysis is to understand the discursive construction and narrative production of memories of war and aggression and how they are embedded in the popularized narrative with a special purpose and target group in mind, namely to inform and to entertain tourists. The personal and collective memories of troubling events and how they are produced and reproduced, and even performed in such a narrative are important elements of the analysis as well. We try to understand how personal memory can be located not only in a place itself but also within a particular narrative and constructed in a specific form (for/with a special purpose) of interpretation of the past events.

Keywords: Dubrovnik, war memories, narrative analysis, city tours, dark tourism

Introduction

Croatia is traditionally a tourism-oriented country where tourism presents a rather important and active part of the country's economic development as well as an important part of the gross domestic product (GDP) and comprises between 15% (Šutalo et al, 283) and 22% of it (Strategy report 4). The National Tourism Board tries to develop different types of tourism, e.g. cultural

tourism, which “is more and more becoming a significant part of the supply” (Strategy report 9) in order to answer to the needs of the market and recent growing trends in tourism.

One aspect of cultural tourism is the so-called “historical tourism”, focused on historical sites (both visual and non-visual) of a region or country. A variety of labels are used to describe tourism which focuses on places with a troubled period in their history, e.g. dark tourism, black-spot tourism, thanatourism, trauma tourism, heritage atrocity tourism and contested heritage, to mention only a few of the terms. Dark tourism is usually associated with visiting sites that are in some way connected to death (battlefields, cemeteries, mausoleums, former prisons, concentration camps, etc.) (c.f. Braithwaite, Lee). The term thanatourism (derived from the Greek term for the personification of death, c.f. Clark) was developed in response to tourists’ increasing interest in visiting or consuming and experiencing places where death, disasters, and natural and un-natural tragedies have occurred. This paper uses the term dark tourism, when dealing with some general questions about this niche of tourism, and war tourism as a more precise and narrower term when focusing on a specific war tour.

Why tourists have a desire to visit and experience places with a troubled and even violent history, where past conflicts were rather difficult and strongly marked the place as a contested historical site, is an interesting question. According to different researchers, the reasons are numerous and varied. Some of the answers are connected to tourists and visitors and others arise from the needs and desires of the hosts and local community. Some tourists travel for the purpose of connecting personal thoughts, memories (e.g. veterans), and emotions with the site, while some travel to such sites for the purpose of entertainment, pleasure and excitement. (C.f. Best) The reasons why a community might put such historically contested sites in its tourist offer may be of an economic nature. It can help the local community to recover in the aftermath of the difficult event (war, disaster, etc.), by answering the increasing global demand for this niche of tourism. Sometimes the development of dark tourism in an area could be driven by the demands of the tourists and visitors. Dark tourism can be used as “a means of capitalising on local tragedies, by embracing and incorporating them into elements of local history and culture through museum displays, visitation to sites and providing both on and off-site interpretation” (Best 31). Another reason may be seen in the use of the past to help build a national identity and answer the question: Who are we and

where have we come from? (c.f. Braithwaite, Lee). According to Palmer (315), nationality is “one of the principle colourings of the tourist vision” and in the tourism industry some aspects of history are selected, e.g. nostalgic and historic events, legacies which are rather frequently used in tourism promotional materials. The past is used as a “potent marketing strategy because it can define a national identity through a few selected stereotypes of people, places and mythologies – references to heritage are used as the hook to bring people” (Palmer 315). By using history and heritage, the tourism industry has an influence on culture that goes beyond economic benefits. Through the use of national history and symbols, a sense of nationhood is created not only for tourists, but also for the hosts themselves. According to Palmer (318), “the heritage industry continually emphasises specific aspects of the past as being representative of what the nation is really all about, or perhaps, what it should be about.”

Dark tourism can have different effects not only on tourists, but on hosts and the local community as well. According to Best (31), it may negatively impact upon locals “in that it has the ability to glorify past tragedies. (...) could also limit communities from moving on from disasters.” On the other hand, the impact of it may be therapeutic, both for the visitors and for locals, in that it can help to eliminate hatreds and enable them to achieve reconciliation. According to Braithwaite and Lee, historical tourism is broadly and importantly therapeutic. However, these effects of this specific niche of tourism are not the theme of our paper.[1]

The Corpus

The corpus for analysis is in the form of a recorded walking war tour in Dubrovnik which took place on May 5, 2012. The tour lasted around one hour and it was given in English. The other part of the corpus includes a short interview with the tour guide in Croatian, his mother tongue, aimed at learning about his experiences with the particular kinds of tourist audiences who choose to participate in this war-based walking tour, about their interests, questions and stories they had shared with the guide. The main questions in the interview were e.g. What types of tourists are interested in this form of tourism? Where are they from? How much do they already know about the Croatian War for Independence or about the history of the area? How such a specific tour started to be organized in the first place? The particular tour started to be held in 2006 as an

answer to the interest of the tourists participating in historical tours who had questions about the recent war in Croatia; as an answer to these inquiries the tourist agency and the interviewed tourist guide organized the war tour according to the main questions raised by the tourists and following the demands imposed by them[2] .

It is rather interesting to note who are the tourists interested in participating in the war tour.[3] Do they belong, as Jelinčić (43-45) claims, to the primary, accidental or casual group of the cultural tourists? From the tour guide's experience they are of rather diverse interest and knowledge about the past of the area but most of them could be seen as belonging to the groups with accidental or casual cultural interests and motivations, not to the group of the cultural tourists visiting the destinations with an interest primarily in its culture. It is not possible to draw exact conclusions about the type of tourists based only on one specific tour and interview with only one tour guide, but it seems that we cannot assume Dubrovnik to be a destination with "developed" dark tourism visited mostly by the "real" cultural tourists i.e. tourists primarily interested in culture.

The Method of Analysis

The main analytic approach chosen here is a narrative analysis, which is considered to be of great significance not only for the purpose of analysing the presented data, but also for tourism, and memory research. The recorded walking tour is considered to be a narrative due to the manner in which some of its characteristics, e.g. sequences and consequences are presented in the story; events are selected, organised and evaluated having in mind a particular audience. In narrative theories it is seen as a social act which is dependent on its production, the cognition of the narrator and audience, the norms of performance and the content that makes a story specific. Narratives are situationally produced meanings depending on circumstances and historical, interactional, institutional (including local) contexts, and they may be used as a method of research that provides a window through which it is possible to study social life, as well as individual and collective identities. They are told for a variety of reasons, to different audiences and with different effects on the narrator him/herself and the audience. (c.f. Riesman; Ewick and Silbwy; Ganz) This specific narrative is of special interest here because it is a narrative about the war, the "bad" events and traumatic experiences (including personal ones) offered in story form, with some of the individual

and collective memory elements as important parts of it. According to Sturken (7) “memory is a narrative rather than a replica of an experience that can be retrieved and relived”, so the narrative The Story about the War could be broadly analysed not only as a narrative, but as a special kind of narrative. How these different memories are conveyed and organized in a particular narrative is focused on in this paper.

There are different kinds of narrative analyses concentrating on the theme, structure, interaction, performance of the narrator or visual elements of the story. Here some elements of structural analysis are given, primarily following Labov’s and Labov and Waletzky’s manner of narrative analysis.

The Goal of the Analysis

In this paper we concentrate on war tourism in Dubrovnik and we only analyse data gathered from the local community and the local tourism board, attempting to gain a kind of “inside” perspective. “Outside” perspectives, information from the tourists and visitors and their ideas, opinions, etc. are not included in this analysis. The main aim of the analysis is to understand the narrative production of memories (personal and cultural ones) of war and aggression and how they are embedded in the narrative with special purposes and special target groups in mind.

The Context (The War for Independence and Consequences for Tourism)

Dubrovnik was chosen for this analysis because it is seen as a symbol of Croatian tourism within the national tourism organization, and because it experienced a rather difficult period during the 1990s war for independence. Dubrovnik has been included in numerous charts of top destinations by different organizations, journalists and magazines, including the UNESCO list on which it is listed as a historical site. It is the town poetically described by George Bernard Shaw: “Those who seek paradise on earth should come to Dubrovnik.” (“Dalmatia-Dubrovnik”). Clancy (11) stated that “outsiders frequently ‘know’ nations largely through constructs experienced by tourism…[thus] we

may not know very much about Croatia but we might likely construct Croatia through the knowledge of the beauty of the Dalmatian coast and the Old City of Dubrovnik".

The war began in the region in September 1991. Between October and December, the town was bombed several times and some parts of the historical centre were destroyed. In spite of international reactions, the attacks continued at more or less the same intensity, with the strongest ones taking place on December 6, 1991, when around 2000 bombshells fell on the Old Town. This date is rather important for locals and their memories because 14 civilians died that day and more than 50 were wounded. This day was also the "D-day" of the war in Dubrovnik and its surroundings, because it served as a milestone in the defence of the city. (C.f. Raguž; "Grad je i to izdržao") The siege and blockade of the town ended in May 1992, but military operations in nearby areas continued until the end of 1995.

During the war period between 1991 and 1995, tourism was virtually nonexistent. After the war, Croatia had to reposition its image, change its promotional methods, and develop new kinds of services in order to answer the demands of the tourist market, as well as to create a positive image of being a safe country. The re-branding of its image was undertaken to make the country as different and distinct from the former federation. There was "the need to dissociate from the recent past and from the regional instability and to emphasise an 'Europeanness'" (Hall 326) as one of the most prominent elements in building the identity of Croatia. In this early post-war period, together with the processes of building the national identity of the country, it was important to present Croatia as a desirable tourist destination. As mentioned earlier, history and turbulent events are frequently used as important tools for establishing a sense of national identity and the feeling of national selfhood. However, tourism promotion activities in Croatia had a different strategy and tried to make a kind of 'break with the past', aiming to create a positive self-image and distance the country from the war. One of the important elements in tourism promotion was selling the country as a safe destination, promoting it as an island of calm set apart from the troubled Balkans. According to Rivera (27), the Croatian Tourist Board adopted the "strategy of 'passing' as a response to the stigma of war" while analyses of other promotional materials (primarily guide books both from Croatian and "outside" authors) showed a somewhat different picture, where the war for independence has rather extensive dimensions (c.f. Muhvić-Dimanovski, Skelin Horvat).

It is important to stress that even though the Croatian Tourist Board, as a primary organization for tourism promotion established by the Ministry of Tourism, does not use the recent war in its promotional materials; data collected in the field show a different situation. This is in accordance with the statement of Strange and Kempa (397) that: “state heritage agencies are rarely the prime shapers of dark tourism, a field most governments prefer to avoid”. The same can be said of Croatia; e.g. in Dubrovnik a lot of references to the war are presented (i.e. the Memorial Room of the killed Dubrovnik defenders; The Croatian War of Independence Museum - Dubrovnik situated on the top of the hill; the Memorial to the defenders situated in front of the main entrance to the Old Town), made on initiatives of the local community members, its representatives and associations of Croatian war veterans.[4]

The Analysis of the War Walking Tour

The Story about the War Tour or War Walk Tour is organized by a tourist agency in Dubrovnik[5] . This tour is strongly dependent on its place, quite simply because it is a tour through the town, including moving from one place or spot to another (describing and explaining what is what on which spot);[6] and this strong connection with a particular place and region (including the visual discourses embedded in it) is an essential element of it. Through such a strong connection with a particular place, the individuality of the troubled event is maintained. On the other hand, this tour is connected with different memorial sites in the town and especially around specific places or spots in the Old Town that were destroyed or damaged during the war. At the same time, the metaphor of spatiality is connected with memory as such; Whitehead (10) stated that a “strong affiliation between memory and place where the memory is itself a place wherein the past can revive and survive”, or, according to Nora, that memory attaches itself to sites; and that is rather pronounced in a tour narrative about the war.

The Story about the War is primarily about the war in Dubrovnik; the guide offered some links with the war in other parts of Croatia, neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina, and with some prior and subsequent events, but in Labovian terms the most reportable event or the main event (the one that the story is about) in the narrative is the war in the town of Dubrovnik. The tour starts with a

short historical overview of the events in the area from the early history when the Slavonic people settled in the territory of today's Croatia, briefly passing over a long time between the 6th and 20th century (emphasising the Second World War and the post-war period in Yugoslavia) concentrating mostly on the 1990s war in Dubrovnik. The most reportable event here is not "singular" because it contains different parts; it is made of more events closely connected in time and space with the one most prominent. That is a story about D-Day, December 6th, when the heaviest attack on the city happened and how the course of the war changed after that day. Here is a brief extract of the description of D-Day:

D-day began early in the morning of the 6th of December 1991. Some 800 bombshells (?) right in the historic centre of Dubrovnik. (…) They could hear… what they heard were the sound of a bomb being dropped, of the bomb that was launched (?) and then you have to count, one... / counting using fingers / shhhhhhtsss / onomatopoeic imitation of the noise of the bomb/. That noise makes you nervous, makes you feel scared. You want to go away, you want to run away.

Some elements of memory are rather well displayed here. For example, the trope of body memory which according to Whitehead (12) has been central to Western conceptions of memory and its sensual basis lies in remembering the noise of the bombshells and the feelings of nervousness and shock experienced. According to Sturken (12), "the presence of bodies is essential to the production of cultural memory" as well, not only for personal memories where one's own feelings are recalled.

Some of the connected events are prior in the temporal sense, preceding the main event giving the cause or explication why and how it happened. According to Labov ("Narrative preconstruction"), there is an initiating event which initiates the chain that leads to the most reportable event and it may be viewed as mysterious and puzzling, trivial and unimportant. In our narrative this initiating event is also a kind of "ice breaking" and amusing one (in rhetoric this would correspond to the humorous spot usually given at the beginning) portrayed in the manner of a fairy tale:

Once upon a time there was a dark, moist, humid, wet and cold forest. It was situated in what's today Poland. That's where Croats lived before the 7th century (?). They didn't like it very much because it was raining all the time, and it was cold and dark, and they all got SAD, (Seasonal

Affective Disorder). (Laughter from the public.) The only way to get better was to expose their eyes to sunshine and that's why the Croats (?) left in the first place. They were still sitting on the plane waiting for the plane to take off (?) there were some other passengers across the aisle. You can probably expect this / assume who was there (?)

Such a formulaic opening (which could be used for different stories and is not exclusive for this kind of narrative) has the function of locating and setting up the audience; it serves to tell the audience that they are going to be involved in the world of the story, and in a way it prepares listeners for the new experience of another world.

Those events which are not the most reportable, but happen simultaneously with the main one, we can perhaps see as "contextual", because they give some information about the context and in a way broaden the story, but not only the story. These events may be seen as a kind of narrative strategy for giving credibility to both the story and the narrator himself. The next excerpt given in a pre-narrative part could be seen as a kind of narrator's strategy for assigning credibility to himself as well:

What you are going to hear right now will be true. Things (?) may be misinterpreted and history (?) changed over time (...) So sometimes I may have my voice low, 'cause, hmm... There are some... parts of this tour that I'm not... hmm … very easily... accepted or whatever. It's (?) Actually I'll try hard not to take sides. And you'll be the judge and make your own decision.

This quote could also be seen as an evaluating aspect of the narrative and a portrayal of the identity of the narrator. Stressing objectivity and truthfulness as an aim of his story, the narrator presents himself as an objective and trustworthy storyteller, but at the same time a national identity is negotiated here, because very often through one person or one narrative the recipient can build an image of the whole community or whole nation. A stronger emotional impact on the recipients could also be made by revealing more details and trying to project the right atmosphere.

Other important elements in the narrative construction are information about the main event, e.g. the time and place, the identity of the actors, their behaviour or orientation to the narrative. In this particular narrative, orientation to it is put forth in the form of the initiating event as can be seen from the opening of the story. More elements are given gradually as the story progresses. It is

important to stress that in this narrative some orientating elements are given in advance, because this is a thematic tour and the recipients are already familiar with some elements.

The narrator's viewpoint, which is very often reflected through the assignment of praise or blame, gives an ideological framework (and moral stance) within which narrated events are viewed as well. One evaluation of the narrative is information on the consequences of the event for human needs and desires (Labov, "Some further steps"). The viewpoint of the narrator is seen in his description of the people's shock when the attack on the town started:

But the most shocking thing was unfortunately only going to happen the next morning, right there. (...) They were all very certain about the fact that the Old City which was under UNESCO protection as a world heritage site would be safe. Well, then they had to find a safer place to hide.

This shock may be understood as the most prominent evaluating event, and its consequences and the reasons for it as being insane (here the element of comparing the narrated event with the earlier ones is found).

And the same leitmotif, the same pattern of the Second World War was being repeated over again. Civilians were supposed to be scared away to let others stay there. Who might have wanted to take away their place? It just so happens, A border with Bosnia is just 3 miles away from here and that area is populated by 95 or more percent of ethnic (?). (?) doesn't have an exit to the sea, so .. this getting rid of the narrow Dubrovnik stretch would have been a nice solution to that problem. That might have been one of the reasons why Dubrovnik was attacked. Other reasons include pure insanity because one of the generals who was accused of ordering the attack on Dubrovnik was diagnosed with mental illness. He is still in a mental institution.

From these excerpts we can see how personal and cultural memories are intertwined and mixed into the specific narrative. There are different definitions of cultural memory, but it is difficult to distinguish between different types or levels of memory; the line between cultural and personal memories is very often blurred. According to Assman, cultural memory is preserved by specific practices and institutions, and this walking war tour could be understood as a specific practice, and as a narrative it is also a social practice. The structure of cultural memory is not fixed but "permanently challenged and contested" (Assman 221), and this changeability is an important

element of the oral narrative which is changed slightly every time it is performed (e.g. in the interview the tour guide mentioned one detail from his personal memory about the war which he usually put in the narrative but that time he had forgotten to mention). According to Sturken (1), cultural memory "is a field of cultural negotiation through which different stories vie for a place in history" and the survivors of traumatic historical events often relate that, as time goes on, they have difficulty distinguishing their personal memories from those of popular culture (Sturken 6), which is seen in the analysed narrative in that there is no clear distinction between the reports about the war and personal memories. Cultural memory is produced through representation and cultural products (Sturken) and an oral narrative performed for tourists can be seen as a cultural product as well.

In the interview, the tour guide explained that this story is a kind of performance, because if he put his emotions into it, it would be too much for him and it would be impossible to narrate it so often with the same weight and impact on the tourists.

I often say to them: This what I am doing is just... a kind of acting. It is a performance. Because, because if I inscribed myself every time in what I was saying, I… where would I be!

The performative nature is seen also through the way this narrative is produced, e.g. in the entering or opening of the narrative with a fairy tale-like introduction, then in some of the subsequent typical elements of narrative, like defining the problem, finding the solution for it, explaining it or putting in context, and the coda. There are many elements which shape the narrative and are reflected in it, e.g. local and global contexts or historical, political, social and other circumstances, language ideologies and discourses in the narrator's community toward which narrator positions him/herself, settings where the narrated events were experienced, as well as settings where the narrative is produced, and finally the audience. These different elements are, at the same time, the ones that influence the form of the narrative, which as a type of genre needs to satisfy some specific conventions, social norms and an expected structure (Pavlenko 175).

The analysed narrative is a particular mixture of storytelling through past events and personal memories and experiences incorporated into some of the official history; it is partly official because the official history is mediated through the narrator and his own ideologies (as previously

mentioned regarding the narrator's viewpoint and evaluation). The narrative is, as well, an important tool used by the narrator for presenting him/herself as an individual, especially in the autobiographic narratives. Even though the analysed narrative is not primarily autobiographic, it still contains many autobiographical elements in the form of personal memories about the war and aggression. In narrating personal memories, the storyteller reveals some elements of his/her identity, but the narrative itself can be viewed as a discourse for negotiating the identities of the storyteller.[7] We can ask why a narrator would choose to convey this exact experience; to perform the role of a legitimate storyteller/survivor of the traumatic event; to make his position as the narrator more authentic and credible to the audience; or for some other reasons. Mostly these personal memories are connected to the emotions felt then, when the reportable event occurred:

My brother and I we were still thrilled. When the war started. We wanted to see the area where the shells (?) to see how our neighbours got the third window. We thought it was filmed. It was still surreal… Irrational to put war in this complex. Emotional wounds, for that reason, still remain.

Emotions are according Boudens (1288) "best understood as narrative emplotment" and a narrative is a discourse that allows us to see emotions in different forms of dynamic human actions and interactions, as events, plots, etc. In a narrative it is possible to identify sequences of emotions and how they are related to particular events and situations (Boudens 1288). Talking about negative emotions and trauma is seen as one of the important goals and purposes of a narrative (Adaire), making the narrative form especially important for reporting about a trauma.

Connected to the emotions embedded in the narrative is the question of the language, namely that the story is told in English rather than the mother tongue of the tour guide. We can assume that emotions are not only differently expressed but also felt in different languages (for example, it is much easier for some people to swear in a foreign language than in their mother tongue, as it is felt "less strongly"). Emotions are manifested in different ways and with different strengths connected to one's first or second language, so we can assume that it would be harder for the tour guide to perform this narrative in his mother tongue. On the other hand, according to Pavlenko (171), studies "show that stories told in the language in which the original events took place are higher in emotional intensity and amount of detail, while the storytelling in the other language may allow

speakers to discuss events that are too painful to reveal in the language in which they took place." This may be seen in connection with the tour guide's statement that what he is doing is a performance for an audience, and we can assume that the use of a foreign or second language makes it easier for him to perform. On the other hand, the intention of the tour guide to be as objective as possible is perhaps more easily gained through the use of a foreign language than through the use of his mother tongue, in which his emotions would be more deeply involved. Not only is it true that emotion is differently expressed in different languages, but the interpretation of narrated events varies greatly in accordance with the language. The act of narration transforms the reported event, and the use of the narrative does not merely change the event, but also allows to the narrator to impose meanings on experiences.

War or dark tourism can be seen as an element of different actions taken by tourists and hosts for different reasons, e.g. resolution of grief, understanding how terrible things could have happened, emotional experience, increasing the knowledge of history, culture, humans, etc. Dark tourism may be seen as facilitating the aim of memorials which is according to Clark, the conviction that we must remain vigilant so as not to repeat past atrocities. The idea of being awake is rather well uttered in the concluding words of the tour guide:

> *And... if you ask Orlando is the war going to happen again what might his answer be? Well, Orlando... still has a dagger with the (?) He's holding a shield in one hand and the sword in the another so, is the war going to happen again?... Orlando is going to keep close watch, just in case.*

The concluding words of the war tour can be understood as an evaluation in Labovian terms and also gives the narrative itself a point. According to Labov and Waletzky (22), a narrative has to have a point or significance; if the narrative contains an orientation, complication, result and other elements but has no point, it lacks significance. The conclusion of the analysed narrative not only gives it significance, it also rounds out the story, revealing the narrator's attitude and feelings toward the content of it (Boudens 1290).

Conclusion

We hope that through narrative analysis of the war tour it was seen how personal memories are intertwined with the cultural ones and how they are both embedded in the local community. The main goal of the analysis was to understand how memories are narratively produced aiming at the special audience and having a special purpose, namely to inform and to entertain the public even through sharing the negative and bad experience from the troubled history. Using some elements of narrative analysis, we believe, it is was possible to see how metaphor of spatiality, the trope of body and connection of emotions to particular events (only a few of the elements of memories) are embodied in a narrative and performed as such.

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[1]Here we should mention that from our data it can be inferred that the reasons why people like to visit “dark” places and why they are interested in learning more about problematic history are sometimes not only emotional but also therapeutic, e.g. the interviewed tourist guide explained that he usually asks tourists why they chose a war tour. Some of them were veterans who fought in the Second World War, one was a member of a UN military squad stationed in a neighbouring country during the 1990s Croatian war for independence and others had themselves endured the war.

[2] The tour is organized with a commercial purpose, according to the tourist guide.

[3] Even though this is not of primary interest in this paper, from the interview we can draw some conclusions about the motivation of the tourists for war tourism in the specific locality and about the implications for the tourist site.

[4] It would be of interest for this analysis to know did the authorities have any intention to satisfy the tourists’ demands while planning and making these memorials, but because of a lack of such information this cannot be discussed.

[5] Different tourist agencies organize similar walking war tours, but only this one is recorded and analysed here.

[6]Things could be seen differently in the way that the story or narrative is told as it uses different spots in town in order to emphasize a part of the story or to draw the story closer to the recipient and make a deeper impact on the recipient by connecting verbal and visual elements of the story.

[7] Personal experiences (e.g. reporting about the noise or emotions connected to the events) can also be seen as evaluation in Labovian terms.

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