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Remembering, Repeating, Working through

Remembering, repeating, working through. This is an outline of Tim Sharp's methodological principle. The way the film is constructed and its effects are entirely dependent on this analytical process and its complex intermeshing. First of all *remembering*: the raw material for *The Trapdoor* consists of a colourful mix of amateur film sequences shot over seventy years (1920–90). They have one thing in common despite their heterogeneity and the political vicissitudes of the periods in which they were made: they intentionally (and at times naively) record scenes from private life that can only always be seen—unintentionally and at times collusively—within a wider framework. Whether of a social, milieu-determined, gender-specific or political nature these private views have always begun with framing. *The Trapdoor* is concerned with forming a narrative from private fragments such as this and, in the process, to slowly shift prevailing conditions into the field of vision that at the time were inconspicuous. The method is the *repetition*: out of these fragmentary family images, predominantly shot in the country or provinces, a pictorial idiom gradually develops that rests primarily on recurring elements, their new combinations and extensions. In this way the protagonists of the montage-like family novel, as well as the elements (water, mountains, housework, holiday activities), appear repeatedly only to find themselves involved in an a slightly altered context of atmosphere or meaning. The soundtrack, that uses music composed by Iva Zabkar, intensifies this when the film plays through a rich spectrum of these moments of modification: from dreamy idyllic, threatening, uncanny and gradual relaxation through to renewed tension and forced dissonance. Finally there is the *working through* aspect: each repetition of a sequence succeeds in bringing to light new details: suddenly forebodings are confirmed, wider correspondences revealed and what had been suppressed is made perceptible. Here there are not only numerous children whose presence—at first almost unnoticed—becomes increasingly important in the narrative (without them having a voice of their own or authoritative control over the way they are depicted), there are signs of political disaster that intensify as the film progresses here too. Initially they are decently hidden off screen but towards the end they unavoidably push their way into the centres of the images. What is being worked through here on the basis of this (perspectival) shift is not only the general insight that images are first readable from their edges or frames. What *The Trapdoor* digressively but consistently works through is significantly more: that historical memory, whether political or personal in nature, is only possible at a the cost of a media realisation. A realisation that the film cautiously undertakes using the raw material. But in that realisation the identity of neither the viewer nor what is viewed is left untouched.

Wien, 2006