Narrating the 1960s via The '60s: Television's Representation of the Past between History and Memory

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The representation of the past via popular culture, and especially on television has attracted significant scholarly attention in the last two decades.¹ This fascination, and at times anxiety of academics dealing with the ways in which television narrates the past evolves from several interrelated reasons. First, there is the question of sheer quantity: a growing number of television productions - varying from highbrow PBS documentaries to conspiracy-driven explorations of American history - offer a multitude of available and often contrasting pasts.² Moreover, the past, at least according to the broadcasting industry is a lucrative business that demands relatively low-cost resources and yields reasonable ratings. Second, there is the question of social impact. Academics probe the ways in which television constructs the past since it seems impossible to ignore it:

Television is the principal means by which most people learn about history today… Just as television has profoundly affected and altered every aspect of contemporary life - from the family to education, government, business and religion - the medium's nonfictional and fictional portrayals have similarly transformed the way tens of millions of viewers think about historical figures.³

Finally, academics explore the ways in which television operates as a popular historian because it reflects on their own assessments of how academic-analytical examinations of the past ought to be conducted and narrated: the positioning of television, or for that matter popular culture in general, on the spectrum of possible representations of the past helps clarify and
triangulate the various approaches of scholars toward their own academic endeavors and disciplines.

Therefore, this article offers a contextualization of the abovementioned television-as-historian theme within the larger framework of the academic discourse of the characteristics and validity of various representations of the past. More specifically, the article aims to position the question of how television narrates the past within the context of the debate over the differences, or rather overlaps between history and memory. The approach to this task unfolds via two complementing trajectories. The first, discusses several fundamental academic approaches towards the possible relations between history and memory. Within this context, I suggest the concept of the "realm of memory," first developed by the French scholar Pierre Nora as a productive way of explaining why televised representations of the past have such a profound cultural resonance. Adopting Nora's conceptual framework, I argue that the much-noted effectiveness of televised representations of the past (and especially those that combine fictional and non-fictional components) evolves from their use of storytelling strategies that bestow upon such productions the qualities of both memory and history.

The second trajectory of the article explores the "realm of memory" concept through its implementation in one paradigmatic example in which television took an active role in constructing the public perception of the American past - the miniseries *The '60s*, which was aired on NBC in 1999. My argument is that *The '60s* - and by extension, other historical television movies - are created and consumed as constructed realms of memory that are shaped and amplified by the conventions of popular culture. When *The '60s* was aired on American television it aimed to constitute a popular meeting point between history and memory: it
established its status as a valid and even documentary representation of the past through various "historical" means that are explored in this study. At the same time, through the utilization of dramatic conventions and common images that are embedded within American collective memory The ’60s offered its viewers a sense of a live past that they could experience as members of an imagined intimate community.

In order to explore the complex interplay between history and memory within this specific case study, I return to literature that looks at the shared qualities of all narrations of the past - both analytical and popular. And so, I probe the ways by which The ’60s shaped a narrative that is both authoritative and emotionally potent via some of the fundamental concepts offered by Hayden White in his analysis of historical accounts: the construction of The ’60s' narrative through a process of selection and omission; the means through which the storytellers of the narrative established their own authority; and the morals or messages that emerge from the narrative.  

History, Memory and the Popular Representation of the Past

In order to explore the characteristics of made-for-television historical movies it is first necessary do define our area of inquiry. In this article the "historical television movie" genre is defined, following Zemon Davis as "those [movies] having as their central plot documentable events, such as a person's life or a war or a revolution, and those with fictional plots but with a historical setting intrinsic to the action." The exploration of how televised representations of the past operate as junctures between history and memory is embedded within three interrelated theoretical questions: what are the differences between the ways in which historical movies and
historical research represent the past? What are the limitations and advantages of each mode? And, can fictional or even documentary representations of the past be understood and treated as historical research?

The relations, or rather tensions, between historical research and historical movies may be conceptualized through three fundamental approaches. The first approach, which may be defined as the traditional historical perspective, contends that the implementation of certain analytical and empirical methods towards the study of the past could validate the accuracy of such representations; moreover, according to this approach such analytical and factual academic accounts narrate the past "as it really was." What stands at the heart of this approach is a certain concept of objectivity:

The assumptions on which it [the objectivist doctrine] rests include a commitment to the reality of the past and to truth as correspondence to that reality; a sharp separation between knower and known, between fact and value, and, above all, between history and fiction. Historical facts are seen as prior to and independent from interpretation: the value of an interpretation is judged by how well it accounts for the facts; if contradicted by the facts, it must be abandoned. Truth is one, not perspectival. Whatever patterns exist in history are "found," not "made"... The objective historian's role is that of a neutral or disinterested judge; it must never degenerate into that of advocate or, even worse, propagandist. The historian's conclusions are expected to display the standard judicial qualities of balance and evenhandedness... Objectivity is held to be at grave risk when history is written for utilitarian purposes.

Traditional academic criticisms of popular historical movies focus on the goals and means of such movies. The main claim here is that the very nature of historical movies (or for that matter, all forms of popular culture memory) prevents them from being able to describe the past in an accurate manner: the fact that such artifacts are assembly line products designed to attract mass audiences in order to ensure maximized profits obligates their creators to emphasize banal and superficial themes. And, while historical research offers knowledge about the past,
popular culture products use the past in order to narrate tales. Historical research is sensitive to gaps, conflicts, and contrasting perceptions, all of which can be mentioned in the text. In contrast, historical movies do not encourage critical thinking, but rather promote passive acceptance. The success of popular movies depends on their ability to affect the viewers through the suspension of disbelief. The viewers are supposed to be taken in by the plot, in a way that makes them believe it is absolutely accurate. This condition requires that the representation of the past be as simple as possible and so it can not include any inner-conflicts. Or as Herlihy put it: "footnotes can not be filmed … [and] doubt is not visual."

The second approach, which could be defined as the new historical perspective, evolves from the notion that historiography can not be separated from other modes of representation of the past. Historians, like all other interpreters, structure their understanding of the world, and more specifically their understanding of the past, through narratives. Thus, this stream of thought that evolves from within the historical discipline does not undermine the need to conduct historical research, but rather demands that historians take on the responsibility of being more self-reflective in regard to their own motives and methods. Hayden White is one of the researchers most identified with the argument that the narrative is the way by which we transform our "knowing" into "telling." The demand of traditional historiography to tell the past "just as it was" in an objective manner best demonstrates the process of structuring the past: the past as a chronological flow has no meaning or use, and telling all things "just as they happened" is both impossible and counter-productive. In a deeper sense, White contends, the need to structure life into a narrative reflects the human struggle against the arbitrariness of our existence: arranging the past through a narrative can justify our former activities and reinforce
our present goals. Finally, upholders of the newer historical perspective dismiss the assumed
dichotomy between historians that supposedly act as evenhanded judges of the past in and
producers of popular memory who utilize the representation of the past in order to achieve
current goals. Rather, the critics of the objectivist doctrine point at the utilitarian role played by
academic historiography through the years. Hence, for instance, historians of the last 200 years
were, in many ways, the agents of the national project, or as Stefan Tanaka argues: "the praxis -
science - excused the historian from a national bias by making the nation the criteria for
determining objectivity".

The third approach may be broadly defined as the collective memory perspective. Although the term "collective memory" was first coined by Hugo Van Hofmannsthal in 1902, the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs is usually recognized as the founder of the field of
collective memory research. As a devoted follower of the Durkheimian school, Halbwachs
identified individual memories and collective memories as tools through which the social group
establishes its centrality in the individual's life. In the years since Halbwachs published his
semital studies, the field of collective memory has been researched in a variety of ways and by
many scholars, who disagree with Halbwachs on various issues. But, his basic arguments still
serve as the guidelines for any collective memory study. That is, social groups construct their
own images of the world by establishing an agreed version of the past. This defines groups and
enables them to create boundaries that separate them from others that share different memories
of the past, or rather, different interpretations of the same past.

The perceptions of collective memory scholars regarding the representation of the past
are structured through the following scheme: the initial element of the scheme is the real-life
event that took place in the past. Beyond this point, the sphere of possible interpretations is somewhat similar to a marketplace or rather a wrestling ring in which various interpreters offer multiple narratives of the past, while aspiring to establish their authority as valid storytellers. This process of ongoing struggle over the story and its meaning is shared by many participants at any given moment, and the most prominent among them are official state agencies, historians, journalists, and creators of popular culture products. In many respects, this third perspective is similar to the new historical approach, but it varies from it in two major ways: first, collective memory scholars are usually not historians and so their investigations of representations of the past might emerge from their interest in other fields of knowledge such as sociology, cultural studies, or semiotics. Second, collective memory scholars tend to emphasize the social influence of images and messages that are mediated through mass media. The fact that popular culture products and especially television productions are accessible to mass audiences make them the most influential shapers of collective memory in our era, and thus there is a need to study the unique means through which such products construct our understanding of the past.

In order to explore the way in which historical television movies figure within the context of the aforementioned possible conceptualizations of the relations between history and memory it might be useful to consider Pierre Nora's idea of the realms of memory. In their monumental study, Nora and his colleagues aimed to codify and analyze the corpus of geographical locations, historical figures, monuments, buildings, literary works, and artistic objects that constitute and symbolize French national identity. Their fundamental argument was that these realms of memory enabled the French throughout the years to imagine their shared belonging to a tightly-knit national community. At the same time, these realms of memory remain flexible in their
meaning, in a way that fosters the existence of challenging readings by various interpreters of France's past and present. Hence, for instance, the image of Joan of Arc has been appropriated through the years by both the political left and the right.  

However, these realms of memory do not only bring together political rivals, they also form a bridge between memory and history. According to Nora, these are two distinct dichotomies: memory is the significant product of a traditional society in which people lived "inside" the past through long-existing traditions and shared values. In contrast, a historical perception of the past is a significant product of a secular, analytical and critical society, in which the past is viewed from the "outside," and without any real ability to share it with previous generations. The only points in which history and memory intersect are realms of memory that contain both symbolic and functional meanings. These realms of memory - an old history schoolbook, a yearly meeting of veteran war comrades, or the Eiffel Tower - are historical since they provide sites for empirical explorations of the French past. But, at the same time, they are also spaces of memory that enable the French to relive this past communally, and to feel - at least partially - as an integral part of it.

In view of Nora's distinctions, it seems as if made-for-television historical movies and series such as *Roots, Holocaust, or Uprising* do not fit into the definitions of either history or memory. Such movies are not academic, distant, critical, rational or "dead" as suggested by Nora's conceptualization of history. At the same time, such television productions are not aimed at intimate communities, but rather they are specifically constructed to be viewed by mass audiences who are, in most cases not directly related to the events that are depicted in such movies. Thus, the circumstances and characteristics of
popular culture production have created a distinct type of representation of the past: historical movies are located between memory and history and thus they offer in some contexts, a unique version of constructed realms of memory. That is, the fact that television historical movies can not be easily defined as either history or memory suggests that they are shaped in such a way that they encompass the duality of both memory and history. On the one hand, they offer narratives that are embedded within actual, documentable historical events, and claim to reflect the past "as it was." On the other hand, such constructed televised realms of memory craft narratives that offer audiences a sense of a shared past. That is, the relations between the movies and the viewers' memories through this medium illustrate the more general process of creating social (mostly national) groups: the movies, as realms of memory, materialize the abstract notion of an "imagined community."22 Through the use of various storytelling strategies, such televised realms of memory create the teleological impression that social groups move jointly through time, sharing a narrative that tells the group where it came from and what is the meaning of its voyage.

*The '60s as a Constructed Realm of Memory*

The following section further investigates the ways in which historical television movies are shaped as constructed realms of memory. In order to do so I decided to focus my exploration on one salient example - the miniseries *The '60s*, that aired on NBC on February 7 and 8, 1999. The two-part made-for-television movie achieved the highest ratings for a miniseries for that television season and, in the week that followed the airing, NBC sold 35,000 soundtracks and
videotapes of the miniseries. The '60s narrated the story of two fictional American families - the Herlihys, a white family from a Chicago suburb, and the Taylors, a black family from Mississippi. Throughout the four-hour miniseries the plot depicted the members of the two families as they took part in some of the best known events of the decade such as the Vietnam War, the Woodstock music festival, the Watts riots and more.

In order to operationalize the realm of memory concept within the context of the investigation of The '60s I decided to utilize White's assertions regarding the essential elements of all narrations of the past. According to White, social groups and individuals (including historians) use the past as a resource, and thus the struggle over the right to retell the past always reflects real-life conflicts over the understanding of the present. Thus, every telling of the past involves three fundamental features:

* Historical accounts, of all sorts reflect selectivity. The past is never told just it is happened, but rather through a process whereby some events are stressed while others are downplayed or omitted.

* Historical accounts, of all sorts are embedded within questions of authority – which is to say, that most narrations of the past aim to establish the narrators' authority to account for the story. On another level, historical narratives usually aim to reinforce some authority that is closely related to the choices made throughout the process of telling.

* Historical accounts, of all sorts incorporate explicit or implicit morals. History is always told within a context and the act of transforming historical data into a narrative always reflects some kind of judgment or preference.
My argument is that tracking the ways in which the three elements, offered by White, shaped the narrative of *The '60s* points at how the miniseries was positioned, simultaneously, as a reflection of both history and memory.

**Selection**

By referring to the term "selection" I address the selection of historical events that appear in *The '60s* while other events are omitted or downplayed; the selection of the means, or rather the storytelling genre, through which the plot is told; and the selection of real life and fictional figures through which the narrative is conveyed.

*Defining a timeframe:* the most fundamental thematic choice regarding the construction of *The '60s* historical narrative was, of course, the decision to focus the miniseries on one decade. This decision reflects an underlying assumption that history can be perceived and categorized on the basis of distinct decades, and that every decade has its traits and characteristics. Further evidence of the centrality of this conception of history can be found in NBC's later decision to produce and air a follow-up miniseries *The'70s*, and the discussions about future productions that would be devoted to the 1980s and the 1990s. Obviously, the creators of *The '60s* did not invent the concept of chronicling history through decades, but their choice of this convention amplified the notion of the miniseries as a popular culture product that is detached from long term historical perspectives. The miniseries opens in 1960 and ends in 1969, and tells a story that does not have either a clear exposition or a continuation beyond the "1960s universe." Thus, the chronologically restricted framework of the miniseries prevents it from discussing enduring themes or long time processes. Thus, the decision to end *The '60s* at the end of the decade conflicts with the mere notion of the 1960s as an era that had a distinct
character: this is evident from the fact that key events that took place in the 1970s - such as the demonstrations and shootings at Kent State University or the American withdrawal from Vietnam - are not mentioned in the movie. And, although those events occurred outside of the timeframe of the miniseries, they are crucial for an understanding of the major events portrayed in the miniseries.

*Personification and symbolism:* a similarly fundamental choice made by the creators of *The '60s* was to portray the decade's dramatic events through the stories of two families - the Herlihys, and the Taylors. This decision represents the most essential conventions of the popular culture industry: every story has to be narrated through several well-defined characters that attract the attention and win the affection of the audience. This convention is common in most forms of storytelling, but in this case, it is taken to an extreme: even when the proclaimed intention was to tell the story of a whole nation through a whole decade, this could only be done by reducing the story to its smallest components. This approach confronted the creators of *The '60s* with a fundamental conflict: on the one hand, they had to focus the audience's attention on a very limited number of people while, on the other hand they aspired to narrate a historical narrative in its entirety.

*The '60s* resolution of this conflict reflects the inherent tensions between historical movies and historical research and stresses the traits of the miniseries as a constructed realm of memory: the attempt to portray a full historical panorama through two families led to the creation of a story in which all of the characters and all of the plot developments are symbols of broader phenomena. And so, for instance the two Herlihy parents symbolize the Second World War generation through the portrayal of the father (Bill Stimrovich) as a veteran of the Marines
and the mother (Annie Corley) as a homemaker. Their three children symbolize three of the salient "options" of the 60s: Brian (Jerry O'Connell), the older son, who follows his father's footsteps and joins the Marines, represents the acceptance of the values of the "Greatest Generation." Later, when Brian returns from Vietnam, he symbolizes the nation's painful awakening from the illusions that stem from those ideals. The two other Herlihy children symbolize the revolt of the younger generation - Michael (Josh Hamilton) is an antiwar protester, and Katie (Julia Stiles) gets pregnant, runs away from home and becomes a hippie. Following the same pattern, the Taylors symbolize the civil rights struggle: the father, Willie (Charles S. Dutton), is a moderate minister and a Martin Luther King Jr. follower, while his son Emmett (Leonard Roberts) becomes a Black Panther. This intentional positioning of the heroes of The '60s as personifications of subjects and processes schematizes their characters: they all have to bear the burden of their symbolic destinations, and so they can not deviate from their "public roles." This symbolic presentation led to a somewhat paradoxical criticism arguing that the characters were "too representative" and that real people who lived during the 1960s did not embody so intensively each and every characteristic of the era.26

Contrasts: beyond the decision to portray the miniseries heroes as symbols of the era, the dramatic structure of The '60s positions them as binary oppositions. Hence, the figures do not only personify subjects and processes, but also symbolize - through the tensions that develop between them - the cultural and political rifts that divided America, at the time. Each conflict is portrayed through two protagonists embodying two possible options: while Brian is fighting in Vietnam, his brother Michael protests against the war. At the same time, Michael also represents the moderate protest while Kenny Klein (Jeremy Sisto), a SDS activist turned "Weatherman"
symbolizes the violent protest option. This construction of dramatic opposites serves the methodical intent of representing contrasting trends in the American culture, but it fails to reveal any kind of internal contradictions, gray areas, or real-life complexities.

Selection of Events: the need of the miniseries to present a historic era through the stories of two families not only affects the interactions between the characters, but also the choice of historical events in which those figures take part. Here again, the limitations of popular culture conventions are overcome through accelerated symbolism: once the characters are all symbols of significant themes, the plot constantly positions them at the epicenter of the decade's most important events. Thus, through the four hours of The ‘60s the plot manages to position its protagonists in the center of (partial list) the summer of love in Haight-Ashbury, the march on Washington, the Democratic Convention in Chicago, the invasion of the office of the President of Columbia University, the Newport and Woodstock music festivals, the Watts riots and much more. Since the main characters of The ‘60s bear the burden of representing large-scale "subjects" they constantly appear in all the right places at exactly the right time. Hence again, in a paradoxical way the attempt to gain historical credibility leads to a weakening of the movie's reliability as a reflection of what American families actually went through in the 1960s. Or as one critic put it:

All of these choices are made [by The ‘60s protagonists. O.M] against the backdrop of momentous 60s events - the assassinations, the peace movement, the war - as if to suggest everyone was consciously pacing his life to the steady drumbeat of history. While presidents and generals might live that way, most people, even activists who think they will change the world, spend a lot of time living against a backdrop far more mundane.27
Authority

By referring to the term "authority" I address the means - mainly, choices of footage, editing techniques, and casting - through which the validity and authenticity of The '60s' narrative and its narrators were established. This inquiry is supplemented by data gathered from the journalistic discourse generated by the airing of The '60s.

Establishing authority through the creators: in order to establish the authority of the miniseries as a credible historical narrative its creators presented themselves, mainly through journalistic interviews, as valid storytellers of the era. This point was emphasized by Linda Obst, the executive producer of The '60s, who in several interviews mentioned the fact that as a baby boomer she experienced the 1960s first hand, and so she charged the movie with her own real life recollections. Furthermore, according to Obst, she was not only a witness to the era, but also a participant in major events such as the students' strike at Columbia University, which is portrayed in The '60s. Moreover, Obst argued that she enjoyed the status of a "'60s professional" since her previous professional experience included the editing of a book about the sixties. Similarly, The '60s' senior scriptwriter, Bill Couterie, gained his "professional" status on the basis of his role as editor of the documentary Dear America: Letters from Vietnam.

Interestingly, in accordance with this tendency to establish the historical credibility of the miniseries through its creators' personal background, some writers validated their criticism of The '60s in a similar manner. Hence, for instance Tony Kornheiser, of the Washington Post backed his criticism by citing his personal experiences at Woodstock and Haight-Ashbury: "I don't want to be too hard on The '60s, but there's just some stuff that they had in there that I don't see as completely realistic. Like the stuff from 1960 to 1969." On another level, the validation
of *The '60s* as a reliable historical source on the basis of the background of its creators was claimed through their positioning of the miniseries in terms of genre and context. One of the most illuminating examples of this phenomenon was Obst's description of herself as a person who "worked previously in news." That is, her former professional journalistic experience assisted her in dealing with fictionalized versions of history. Furthermore, Obst claimed that she originally planned to produce a documentary about the 1960s but eventually decided to create a "symbolic story." This intentional blur between the documentary and the fictional was also evident through Obst's claim that "we felt that we weren't corny and just tried to get the details right, and tried to recapture what that time felt like, so that the story would tell itself." The presumption that a meticulous reconstruction of the era could create a situation in which the "story would tell itself" corresponds with the conventions of the traditional historical approach. Following the same pattern, the ongoing references to Obst's journalistic background or to the original intention to film a documentary aimed to position the discourse surrounding the validity of the miniseries in the realm of traditional positivist historical approach.

*Establishing authority through real-life '60s' icons:* another means of establishing the authority of *The '60s* was the incorporation of real life '60s icons in the process of producing the miniseries. Hence, by gaining the approval or participation of such memory bearers of the 1960s some of their authority was projected on the miniseries. Bob Dylan whose songs were, naturally included in the soundtrack bestowed the most salient signature of approval upon *The '60s* as he recorded for *The '60s* a new version of his 1964 *Chimes of Freedom*. Similarly, prominent figures identified in American collective memory with the 1960s such as David Hilliard, a former Black Panther, were hired to serve as consultants to the miniseries.
Establishing authority through programming: NBC managed to focus audiences' attention on *The '60s* through the frequent airings of promos presenting the miniseries as "The movie event of a generation." But the extensive promotion of the *The '60s* was not limited to the show business aspect. And so, for example in the week that preceded the airing of *The '60s* the news department of the local NBC affiliate in Philadelphia aired a series of reports recalling the major historical events that took place in the city and region during the 1960s. The reports were produced by the station's news department and they were, of course, based on documentary footage. Following the same pattern, *TV Guide*'s coverage of the movie incorporated both interviews with *The '60s* actors and a review of the decade in the realms of politics, women, race, and more. Thus, it is clear that this promotional effort blurred the distinction between fact and fiction and sustained the claim that the movie was an authoritative historical account.

Establishing authority through music: the soundtrack of *The '60s* had an important role in the construction of its historical credibility. Hence, the producers of the movie allocated large sums of money to purchase the rights to use songs of the famous artists and bands of the 1960s such as Bob Dylan, *Jefferson's Airplane*, *Cream*, *the Beach Boys*, James Brown and others.\(^{34}\) The music on the soundtrack "authenticated" the movie by virtue of the fact that it was created during the 1960s, and also because of the juxtaposition between some of the scenes and the music that accompanied them. For instance, the first scene in which antiwar protest is shown was accompanied by Dylan's *The Times Are A-Changing*. In fact, several writers claimed that the music was among the more successful features of *The '60s*.\(^{35}\) Within this context, it is important to note that the soundtrack of the miniseries was released before the movie was aired on television,\(^{36}\) which highlights, again, the commercial mechanisms of popular culture production.
Establishing authority through a blur between documentary and fiction data: this is probably the most essential way through which the creators of *The '60s* established the authority of their narrative. All through the movie, there was a clear attempt to blur the difference between the documentary sequences and the realm of fiction through the following techniques:

* Integrating documentary and fictional footage: many of the central scenes of *The '60s* start with news footage that establishes the general framework of the historical occurrences. Then, there is a shift to fictional footage that presents the movie's protagonists in juxtaposition with the historical events. Finally, the news footage appears again and ends the scene. For instance, the 1968 Democratic convention scene is edited in a way that makes it very hard to distinguish between the real life footage of the convention and the protests and the fictional reenactments of these same events: at first, the viewer sees the real life protesters as they are dragged to the police cars while shouting "The whole world is watching." The next shot continues this narrative when it shows Michael - a fictional figure - as one of the protesters who are already in the police car. Michael, just like the actual protestors is still chanting, "The whole world is watching."

Following the same pattern, many of the scenes shift repeatedly between color and black and white footage. And, this is not only the case when the edited scenes go from fictional and thus color footage to documentary, and thus black and white footage. On the contrary, the shifts are in many cases inverse and so the edited scenes might show quick shifts from news footage that was filmed in color, to fictional black and white footage. Thus, for instance the scene that portrays the march on Washington starts with news footage in color from the Vietnam War and then shifts to black and white "Vietnam" footage of Brian, the soldier character. Afterwards, the
scene shifts back to "real" color news footage of Abby Hoffman and then to intertwined black and white and color footage of the fictional reenactment of the demonstration. In sum, *The '60s* uses four kinds of footage: fictional black and white and color and documentary black and white and color. This complex editing choice reflects the assumption that the use of black and white film can bestow an "aura" of authenticity upon fictional creations. But, while in cases such as *Schindler's List* it is possible to argue that the collective memory of the event - that is, the Second World War and the Holocaust - was engraved in memory in black and white, in the case of *The '60s* the actual news footage of the decade, and certainly the footage from the second half of it, was filmed, mostly in color. Thus, the use of black and white fictional footage in *The '60s* is not an attempt to recreate the era "as it was" but rather a strategic ritual designated to authenticate the fictional movie.

* Fictional reenactments of real events: In some cases, the imitation of historical events is not restricted to the scenery and the clothing, but rather there is an effort to completely reenact real life events that took place during the 1960s. For instance, in the march on Washington scene the hero, Michael is shown as he is shoving a flower into the barrel of a gun held by a soldier. This shot is an accurate reenactment of a famous photograph and it is imitated in such a precise manner to the extent that the sweater Michael is wearing in the scene is very similar to the one worn by the real protestor in the original photograph.

*Establishing authority through television:* as mentioned, the concept of *The '60s* is embedded in a paradox since the movie aspires to tell the story of whole decade through two families. The main means of resolving this tension is the positioning - through the plot - of the family members in the epicenter of many of the most significant events of the 1960s. But, this
solution is only partial because of practical problems - the characters could not be placed at all of the historical crossroads of the 1960s. And thus, I would contend that the second means of resolving this paradox, while establishing the authority of the miniseries, is the positioning of television as the storyteller of the decade. On many historical events, such as JFK's assassination and funeral, RFK's assassination and the moon landing the characters of The '60s are shown as they are simultaneously watching television, at very different locations. This bestowal of authority by and through television is reinforced in three ways: first, the creators of The '60s argued that television broadcasting had a major role in their production. Hence, for instance, Obst claims that "The '60s isn't just on TV, it looks like TV. We received the 1960s through television. The era was experienced in black and white, in our homes, watching television as a nation." Second, this claim of authority was reinforced through the plot itself, when in many cases, and especially during demonstrations and rallies, protagonists of the miniseries claim that what actually counts is not what is happening on the ground but rather the fact that it is going to be aired on television.

Finally, The '60s presents 1960s television as the conveyer of a definitive historical narrative through the elimination of all signs of inconsistency or incoherence in its broadcasts. Thus, for instance, when all of the main characters are shown as they are simultaneously watching the unfolding of major events they are somehow always watching the same channel and hence hearing the same broadcaster. Furthermore, when members of the two families are shown as they are watching the coverage of JFK's murder they are, in fact, viewing a fictional broadcast. That is, the complete narrative that they are watching includes items such as the amateurs' films that were only located later. This creates the illusion of the figures' sharing one
unified historical narrative at the same time, while the narrative they could have actually shared at that time was both incomplete and incoherent. But, since the presentation of a complete televised narrative serves the goals of *The '60s* there is no place in such presentation for gaps or inconsistencies.

**Morals**

Since the narration of the past is a tool through which history is constructed so it will "make sense" it is clear that this process of construction carries with it moral weight. In the case of *The '60s*, the narrative's lessons or morals can be located through, at least two sources: the public declarations of the miniseries' creators, and *The '60s* itself, as a unit of analysis. An exploration of those two elements reveals three spheres containing conflicting messages: the first kind of moral or message that can be traced in *The '60s* is one that is supposed to be absent. As noted previously, in some interviews the creators of *The '60s* relied on the rhetoric of transparency and claimed that their method of presenting the past enabled the story to "tell itself." Hence, if we follow this logic, based on the traditional ideal of "objective" historical research *The '60s*, has no moral, since it mirrors reality just as it was.

A second perspective is provided by other references made by the creators of the miniseries in which they addressed a more specific moral agenda. Hence, for instance, Jeffery Fiskin, one of the scriptwriters, explained:

> It is a very easy decade to make look silly. But we felt we wanted to rescue the decade from its ill use at the hands of others - everyone has been harping on the demons of *The '60s*. The fact is [that] there were demons - but there were angels too: the civil rights movement and the women's movement among them. White college kids getting beaten up and killed to register black voters is not self indulgence, it is part of being a larger human family - which is what America and democracy have always been
about… we threw ourselves into this with the conviction that we could make a difference.\textsuperscript{40}

Obst was even more specific on this point:

I wasn't telling Marilyn Quayle's story. It's the story of the counterculture, of the civil rights movement, of the antiwar movement, of the breaking apart of families and the coming together of families because they were able to transcend the polarities of the time, through their affection for one another, and they were able to grow.\textsuperscript{41}

This perspective, as characterized by \textit{The '60s} creators demonstrates the implementation of White's arguments in an overt manner: it is the creators of the movie who reveal that their presentation of the past through a specific lens is aimed to influence the way in which viewers assess the 1960s. Furthermore, their manner of narrating the past is supposed to affect the ways in which people judge a particular social group and its activities during those years. The argument that is made by the creators is ideological in nature and thus it reinforces its validity through references to consensual values and icons such as "America," "Democracy," and "Family." Moreover, this kind of argumentation reinforces the claim that every presentation of the past has implications vis-à-vis contemporary issues. And, in this sense the attempt to promote a reassessment of the 1960s counterculture shows that, in many ways the 1960s - or rather the dispute over them - are not over yet.\textsuperscript{42}

The third kind of moral judgments are evident in the text of the miniseries itself. The most salient morals that can be detected in \textit{The '60s} are the ones that are directly related to the tension between the traits of historical research and historical movies. That is, the messages of \textit{The '60s} that are embedded within this friction point are where the influence of popular culture conventions in the process of telling the past become most recognizable: \textit{The '60s} opens with a
typical 1950s all-American scene of a family dinner. The domestic tranquility is disrupted once Katie appears in her new "permissive" look that evokes the disapproval of her conservative parents. From this point onwards, the story of the decade unfolds through this fundamental cultural and political rift between the parents' and the children's generations.

In the closing scene of the miniseries, the whole family comes back to the center of their universe – the parents' suburban house. They forgive one another and, at the very end, they are united through a touch-football game on the lawn. This narrative structure is based on the most fundamental storytelling conventions that are characteristic of popular culture production: the movie follows the essential dramatic structure that shifts from cosmos (order) to chaos (disorder) and then back to cosmos - the crisis that is discussed through the plot is first exposed, then it is problematized, and finally it is resolved. Moreover, the story must have a happy ending that coincides with the end of the decade. And so the movie - even though it was presented as a "symbolic story" - has to ignore the fact that many American families never resolved their inner-tensions, as well as the fact that many of the issues that stood in the center of the miniseries were not suddenly resolved in December 1969.

Furthermore, a movie that discusses a whole nation starts and ends with one family. This dominant structure suggests a moral that blurs the boundaries between the private and the public: it is clear that families are essential and that they are the only means through which a nation can endure. The families of The '60s do not only symbolize the nation, but also suggest that the nation is one family. At this point, the thematic separation between the stories of the white and black families might reveal some bothersome questions regarding the family-nation metaphor. Finally, the aggressive marketing of The '60s - through promos, newspaper advertisements,
internet sites, and more - suggests the notion that the past is a product that can be consumed. This message is closely related to the tendency of popular culture to frame the past through a nostalgic lens.43 And so it is suggested to audiences that viewing The ’60s, or even better – purchasing the videotapes and CDs, can reconnect them to this cherished past and enable them to relive that period.

Conclusion

This article offers the concept of historical movies as constructed realms of memory that appropriate storytelling elements that are regularly tagged as either history or memory. The article also illustrates this discussion by investigating the miniseries The ’60s - a salient constructed realm of memory that strives to attain the status of both an authoritative historical account and a potent collective recollection.

In conclusion, it would be wrong, or at least disputable to use findings like those discussed in the article in order to charge movies of the historical genre of being dangerous or misleading. In line with White, I would argue that the mechanisms discussed in this study are not unique to The ’60s or to the genre in general. All the methods used through the struggle over the interpretation of the past - including academic accounts - always employ some means of selection, aim to establish authority, and present some kind of morals or messages. It is true that different representations of the past use such strategies to varying degrees, but this is not to say that a creation such as The ’60s is more manipulative than history schoolbooks, or government-sponsored war monuments. The difference between movies such as The ’60s and other, non-
commercial representations of the past is that in products of popular culture the manipulative stitches will always be more evident on the historical cloth.

Notes

1 See, for example the special two-issue edition of Film & History (30.1-2, 2000) dedicated to the investigation of the role of television as historian.
6 Natalie Zemon Davis, "'Any Resemblance to Persons Living or Dead': Movie and the Challenge of Authenticity," The Yale Review 76 (1987), 459.
It is interesting to note that in some cases academics also validate their authority as professionals through personal experience. Hence for example in the introduction to the book From Hanoi to Hollywood: The Vietnam War in American Movie the authors who contributed chapters to the book and fought in the war mention their ranks in the army units to which they belonged during the war. See: Linda Dittmar & Gene Michaud, ed. From Hanoi to Hollywood: The Vietnam War in American Movie (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990).

21 Nora, Realms of Memory, 14-15
33 Ibid.
34 King, F29
36 Donna Cathey, " Viewers Who Turn in to The '60s May be Turned Off by the TV Movie," The Sunday Oklahoman, February 7, 1999: 17.
38 Diane Werts, "War and Peace Signs:Passion Marks the 60s," Newsday, February 3, 1999, B3.
39 Barbie Zelizer, Covering the Body: the Kennedy Assassination, the Media (Chicago; Chicago University Press: 1992).
40 Mike Mason, "Tuning in to The '60s through Two Families," The Christian Science Monitor, February 5, 1999, 17.
41 Werts, B3.