

Chapter 11

Buried Land: Filming the Bosnian Pyramids

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In 2005, the small Bosnian town of Visoko underwent a huge transformation following the public proclamation that ancient pyramids lay buried beneath the surrounding hills. At the behest of amateur archaeologist Semir Osmanagich, and in spite of widespread scientific rejection of the claims, the local community formed a pyramid foundation and began digging. After several small excavations on the slopes of Visociča – the large and unusually triangular hill which has become the emblem of the project – Osmanagich published his book *The Bosnian Pyramid of the Sun*, hosting an international press event at which he claimed Visociča and several other surrounding hills concealed the largest and oldest manmade structures in the world (Woodward 2009). Changes on the ground and to the community of Visoko were fast and dramatic. Thousands of tourists flocked to the sites, partially regenerating the local economy. Murals, models and visualisations of the pyramids were created, drawing upon images of terraced ruins in South America, with the purposes of marketing Visoko as ‘Pyramid town’. Hotel Hollywood, the town’s only hotel, was renamed The Pyramid of the Sun Hotel. Although the geometric hills were physically unchanged to the naked eye, the significance of their shape took on a new aura of mystical history, national pride and international importance. In the minds of the local faithful the landscape of Visoko was transformed.

Over five weeks in 2008, Steven Eastwood and Geoffrey Alan Rhodes shot the feature film *Buried Land* (2010), in collaboration with the people of Visoko. The filmmakers sought to capture on film the transformation of this landscape within the consciousness of the community and to investigate the inherent play between representation and misrepresentation. The method adopted was to deliberately introduce artifice to the events in Visoko, so that scripted scenarios and fabricated landscapes would commingle with actual people, places and events. Reflecting on the process of making the film, the filmmakers will, in this chapter, explore the social and cultural construction of the Visoko landscape and the ways in which this method of filmmaking approached and articulated that community and geography.

Visociča – a majestic, unusually pyramidal hill with façades aligned to the cardinal directions – has always been central to Visoko’s identity and there is a history of ideologies being mapped onto it. In the middle ages it was the seat of the Bosnian kingship, and features prominently in ancient maps, antique photos, postcards, paintings and drawings. During the Bosnian war (1992 to 1995) the neighbouring hill – now called The Pyramid of the Moon – was the site of the Bosnian–Serbian frontline; mortar stands and minefields still dot its plateau. But the claims since 2005 that Visociča in fact hides a new icon of history have raised this hill to international importance, even if most of the international attention focuses on the spuriousness of the claims. ABC, BBC and CNN broadcast the story faithfully, along with national news throughout the Balkans. The Pyramid of the Sun Foundation has declared that the site is larger than the biggest Egyptian pyramids, more than ten thousand years old, and therefore, axiomatically, the cradle of human civilisation. For the first time since the Balkan war, the region has gained global attention. Tourist shops selling depictions of the valley as imagined have flourished; restaurants sell pyramid-shaped pizzas; the mayor has a sphinx miniature on his desk; cafés have pyramid-themed chairs, food and condiments; local traders sell trinkets and

souvenirs; local legends (such as one where the hill is an aid to fertility) have taken on new import. Across Bosnia, sides have been chosen between believers and cynics.



Figure 11.1. The Bosnian pyramid

The charismatic leader of the effort, Bosnian émigré Semir Osmanagich, has marshalled a group of amateur researchers, mystical-minded converts and young entrepreneurs, earning him the mantle of the 'Indiana Jones of Bosnia'.¹ His books mix first hand studies of Aztec and Egyptian pyramids with savvy uses of satellite photography, thermal imaging and radiocarbon dating. Theories of pre-Ice Age civilisations, Atlantis and supernatural techniques of construction (including the sonic levitation of rock) are also co-opted into his scheme. The Foundation's campaign involves a constant stream of fantastic statements and partial evidence released to help make this new version of history take root. Against allegations of fraudulence, Osmanagich defends himself as a New Age archaeologist, one who does not respect the colonial traditions of a western and therefore non-Bosnian, non-Muslim archaeological establishment, which to him is an orthodoxy unjustly retaining the final authority over what constitutes historical truth. He holds the archaeological establishment in contempt for its conservatism, saying the scientists are restricted by rationalism and empiricism. Instead, Osmanagich is on the side of those there on the ground who want to dig.² To date, he has excavated local labyrinthine tunnels (many say these were dug in the middle ages for the purposes of smuggling) and sections of the pyramidal hills, exposing sandstone and conglomerate rock unusual in appearance but explained by critics as typical of the geology of the region.

Aside from a handful of digs, Osmanagich's study has been conducted predominantly in theories and visualisations. A plethora of pyramid images exist in the public domain, some enhanced, many entirely imagined and fabricated, proposing extraordinary vistas. Osmanagich has no way of controlling the viral bandwagon of Orgone-energy followers and UFO spotters uploading digitally rendered visions of a techno-utopia to conspiracy theory blogs and mysticism websites.³ Some say the Pyramid of the Sun was once a giant gold reflector disc that dazzled the valley, others that the whole of Bosnia is one gigantic sacral geometry. The project is a recipe for

hyperbolic speculation about that which lies underneath but cannot be verified or denied within standard taxonomies.

In his 1979 lecture 'Landscapes as Theatre', J.B. Jackson outlines how landscape can be regarded as socially constructed for the purposes of staging human dramas. Jackson (1979: 4) first establishes that theatre is, 'a staged production with a set of socially and artistically determined rules', then describes how 'humans control and design the landscape as if it were a theatrical stage', capping this with the observation that, 'theatre imparts the human ability to see ourselves as occupying the centre of the stage'. The hills surrounding Visoko have certainly been host to human drama and conflict. Influenced and invaded from all sides during its checkered history of cultural conflict, Bosnia remains highly complex in its demarcations, as a political landscape, a religious and cultural landscape, and material, nonhuman landscape. Of course any geography can be contested, its territories politically drawn and redrawn, or manipulated to dubious ethnic ends, but, according to those backing the pyramid project, Bosnia in particular now deserves to be reconfigured in the minds of others. Supporters of the pyramid reject the right of remote academics in other cities and countries to tell them what their land is and means. The pyramid has taken on totemic value, as a symbol for Bosnia as a place of majesty, mystery and transcendence rather than an area of trauma. This sentiment is articulated by a tour guide in one of the opening scenes of *Buried Land* who offers that, 'People will no longer think of Bosnia as a place of genocide or war'.

Depictions of the multiple pyramids in the Visoko valley have a benign and near hallucinogenic value, adopting an aesthetic easily identifiable as New Age, complete with spectral light emanations. Often the geometric lines of the hills are enhanced or perfected, or stripped back to reveal the sacred architecture imagined to lie beneath. Visociča becomes an Eden, or nirvana (many testify to its healing properties and its magnetic affect over electronic devices – the filmmakers were warned by several people not to use cameras on the hill). For local painters, Visociča has become an evocative backdrop, reminiscent of the exotic panoramas favoured by Victorian portrait painters and photographers (like Frederick Edwin Church of the Hudson River School, Anton Hasch, and Albert Bierstadt, or the photographs taken of Yosemite Valley by Carleton Watkins). Where landscape painting was once a key player in colonial power, conveying economic might and asserting the social values of the coloniser, now comes the Pyramid of the Sun Foundation's anti-colonial rhetoric, where the visage of the pyramid flattens all prior hegemonies. Bosnia can now be the originator of all cultures (although one might easily argue that Osmanagich is fabricating a past in order to define a new cultural identity with its own rules).⁴ These new images of The Pyramid of the Sun are ubiquitous. They are central to the collective cultural imaginary of the town and of numerous Internet communities. 'Could we fill up the grand canyon with its representations?' asks W.J.T. Mitchell in 'Imperial Landscape', the opening chapter to *Landscape and Power* (Mitchell 1995: 14). Like images of Stonehenge, Victoria Falls and the Grand Canyon, Visociča has become a fetishised commodity, presented and re-presented in packaged tours, an emblem of the power struggles, ideations and social relations it conceals. It is as though some secret order wishes to imprint a belief on the town's inhabitants and its visitors, through every outlet possible. Visoko, once known for its leather goods, is now Pyramid Town, boomtown.

For Mitchell (ibid.), 'Landscape is already artifice in the moment of its beholding, long before it becomes the subject of pictorial representation'. Depicted landscapes are always already ascribed, often symbolic, and never neutral in their intention or reception. They may, to our human temporality, seem concretely immutable but they are never fixed in our ideation.

Arguments over the contents of Visoko's hills tend towards discourses of ethics, power and ontology (in that order). In a Foucauldian mode, parties subdivide around the question of who gets to say what might be true: who gets to decide where to dig, firstly agreeing what might be found, thereby deciding what can be found. The Foundation privileges the voice of the locals loyal to the cause over experts in other cities and countries. This methodology is of course strongly in contrast to traditional (and perhaps somewhat colonial) sciences, such as archaeology. We might think of it as 'belief archaeology', the mining of imaginations; a jigsaw that cannot and need never be completed. Ultimately, the people of Visoko are searching for a shape, a pyramid within a hill, and if they successfully excavate all that is not pyramid, they will have sculpted into the surrounding landscape the image from their minds. Visociča, hill or otherwise, is an index for the plethora of myths and ideologies ascribed to it and the imaginations of what lies beneath. This, then, is a postmodern land-battle, fought not for actual land but for the map of the land. It was in this contested landscape that the film *Buried Land* was made.



Figure 11.2. *Buried Land*

Normative documentary film operates from a dialectics of the objective real originated in the perceived capture of the natural in indexical photography. Although it is constantly noted that the photographic analogue is open to manipulations by the maker and never the unfettered real itself, documentary, in particular ethnographic documentary and the wildlife film, still seeks to maintain the illusion of capturing reality and uses numerous rhetorical devices to do so, most notably the repression of the camera and its operator. Certainly, there is little or no place for subjectivity – except, perhaps, in the God-perspective of the narrator – and no license for performativity: the pre-filmic fact of an alteration should not be evident. However, the carefully constructed placement of the spear in *Nanook of the North* (Flaherty 1922), for example, has always been a sticking point in terms of documentary cinema's claims to veracity.⁵ BBC wildlife camera operators recount buying supermarket honey to goad and situate wild bears for their

pre-scripted shots.⁶ The varying practices of forty-eight documentary makers catalogued in the Centre for Social Media (CSM) study *Honest Truths: Documentary Filmmakers on Ethical Challenges in Their Work* show a variety of complex ethical practices relating to the representation of subjects, where filmmakers were willing to mislead people and manipulate events if this served a 'higher truth', one ultimately based on the judgment of the filmmaker (Aufderheide, Jaszi and Chandra 2009). The fact that standard documentary practices often involve coercion, staging, reenactment and biased selection, as evinced from the CSM study, makes for striking parallels between the Foundation's pyramid project and the rhetorical devices adopted by factual filmmakers.

Rather than make any truth claims of its own, the film *Buried Land* focuses on how individuals, groups and films construct and maintain truths, just as they construct and maintain landscapes. The pyramid project would fail if disproved but survives if it is neither proved nor disproved. This Schrödinger's cat type of proposition became the rationale for producing a film that challenges the semantic and ethical lines between fact and fiction, landscape and meaning. *Buried Land* does not offer knowledge, solve the problem and deliver a pyramid or a hill. Were the film to conclude, hill or pyramid, it would overlook the essentially undecipherable nature of the subject. If it is central to the Foundation's existence that the pyramid not be uncovered (or *not-yet* uncovered), then on a formal level the film must not have the objective of telling or describing, but rather should mimic or duplicate the 'not-yet' central to the scenario. This reflexive, ambiguous area between actuality and imposed fictions reflects the cultural phenomena of Visociča (hill or pyramid?) and the town (mystically transformed or cynically cashing in?). Normative documentary encounters the limits of its own modes of representation when the environment in question comprises of images and concepts that cannot be objectively recorded but instead are mental projections. The heart of the Visoko story is a virtual image and not an actual one. What could a factual film describe in Visoko other than the surface of the hill? If there was a truth to uncover – for example, a conspiracy – then it seemed to be a truth with many sides. A hybrid form was needed to reflect and refract the manifold discourses.

Buried Land, the title itself is both tautological and oxymoronic, seeks to destabilise the relationship of trust between audience and documentary film. It does so in a transparent, self-reflexive way, with the intention of critiquing ethnographic film practices, and with the aim of reflecting the macro and micro-ontologies of the Visoko pyramids. *Buried Land* is a document of a group of filmmakers and the Bosnian actor they hired to coax a real community into telling an imagined story.⁷ The production, like the formation of the Pyramid of the Sun Foundation, was a process of convincing others to participate and then facilitating in the minds of those participants a vision, in this case a vision of a film, that did not yet exist.⁸ Incidents from the daily reality of the production determined much of the fiction within the story, so much so that boundaries inevitably blurred. For example, the diasporic experiences of film student and Bosnian returnee Dalibor Stare, who had accompanied the filmmakers as a translator during research and found his cultural identity challenged by his return, formed the basis of the central character.⁹ A tour operator and a local screenwriter, both of whom were contacted during research, became key players in the production, one as a performer, the other a co-writer. Even the idiosyncratic shape of Visociča (an imperfect triangle that plateaus halfway down one of its sides) helped form the dramatic arc of the film – in essence a rise and partial fall of a protagonist returning to a culture and encountering a landscape. This combination of fiction and reality, and filmic manipulations by the actors and directors, with candid engagements with the real players in the community drama brought about both participation and anxiety. Just as the Pyramid Foundation had been accused of spurious invention, cynical manipulation and media whoring in

the advancement of their cause, so too were the filmmakers for producing a film that sat neither in the camp of fiction nor of documentary, but rather attempted to conflate the two. Most notably, a few weeks before the arrival of the film crew for *Buried Land*, the national Bosnian media accused the filmmakers of planning a project like *Borat*. 'Buried Land comes to humiliate Bosnia again', announced the headlines of the national weekly *Weekend*, and the article continued with suspicions that the filmmakers were planning to inflict a Borat-like 'Kazakhstan' on Bosnia.¹⁰ This event came close to shutting down the production. Unlike *Borat*, however, the methodology adopted was inclusive rather than coercive. Thus, the subject of misrepresentation itself became one of the central themes of the film, and directly informed the trajectory of the central characters.

Buried Land tells a diasporic story about the difficulties of coming home, against the backdrop of a people sharing a new belief system and a reinvigorated sense of national identity. It uses these narrative devices as a means to articulate the inventiveness and the complexity of spirit of the town. The structure of the story also serves to foreground ethical issues with ethnographic film and the epistemological limitations of the documentary in general. The semi-improvised narrative follows Emir, a Bosnian emigré removed during the war (played by the film's sole actor, Emir Kapetanović) who has returned to his homeland to assist a western film director (played by one of the actual filmmakers, Geoffrey Alan Rhodes) on a somewhat vague, high-concept film, which they claim will embody the spirit of the Visoko community. Caught between states of patriotism and cynicism, Emir sets out to discover the truth behind the pyramidal claims, harnessing the hopes and imagination of the town in the pursuit of the proposed film. On his route Emir passes through a number of environments, including archaeological dig sites, active minefields (eerily reminiscent of the Zone in Tarkovsky's *Stalker*), hillside terraces, tunnels, plateaus and summits. As he does so, we are witness to a number of visions of the pyramids themselves, posited as imagined, firstly by Emir and then without the anchor of a character's psychology. Accused of making fun of the community, Emir's outlandish behaviour grows confused, until a grandiose shoot at the summit of the Moon Pyramid descends into chaos, and Emir is forced to confront his scepticism.

Every person in the film, aside from Kapetanović and Rhodes, appears as himself or herself, performing who they are in the space afforded to them by the film. *Buried Land* was shot chronologically and as a documentary, which left cast, non-actors and crew often unclear whether shooting was occurring or not. The attitude and delivery of the film extends the methodology of neorealism, Jean Rouch and (latterly) Iranian cinema through the use of free indirect discourse and by having an actor emerge from a documentary space and coexist in dramatic scenes with historical subjects.¹¹ The frame of the film and the agency of the (semi-)fictional central characters(s) acted as a means to collect and reframe what was already taking place.¹² This was done with the full knowledge of those involved. In response to the news article critical of the filmmakers, Radio Visoko wanted to record an interview with Eastwood and Rhodes in order to address the rumours of misrepresentation (and the Borat comparison) surrounding the film. Instead, in line with evolving reflexive methods, the interview was held with the characters and forms one of several pivotal scenes in the film. The stage of the production thus became a temporary site that the various players opted to make use of in their own way. This is how filmed representations can generate self-image for a community, who reimagine their streets and houses as scenes and themselves as now players within them. For example, Goran, an amateur archaeologist and one of the key players in the Pyramid Foundation, treated appearing in the film as a means to share stories of his experiences during the war, and as a platform for presenting philosophical ideas and observations about diaspora.

Similarly, Avdija Buhić, the tour guide whose real character had evolved into a fictional character now romantically involved with Emir, took the opportunity to challenge the filmmakers about their intentions for the film. Filmed as an impromptu interview with Eastwood, Avdija's misgivings were cut into a scene between herself and Emir, in which she reprimands the central character for his poor representations and the short-sightedness of media-makers in general. The decision to execute the scene in this idiosyncratic way was arrived at as a result of a discussion with all those involved. And so characters introduced at the outset as historical subjects – Avdija the tour agent, 'Zombi' the head digger in the tunnels, Goran the amateur archeologist – move towards the limit of direct cinema, and then in turn towards the limit of docudrama ('based on a true story') until they are players in an entirely artificial rendering. This method is transparent – no person is tricked – but, in the end, no subject is ever totally complicit; the image each of these subjects had of their portrayal was based on vague outlines and, in this improvisational drama, not even the filmmakers knew precisely how the final film would be configured.

The notion of how truth and value are projected onto an image permeates *Buried Land*. When we first hear the filmmaker Adam (Rhodes) and his guide Emir (Kapetanović) speak, it is to announce the shot, directing the historical subject (Haris, a tour guide) to act naturally and behave as he would when giving an 'actual' tour. During the 'casting' of the miners who clear the tunnels beneath Visociča, a series of extreme facial close-up fills the screen, framed by soft-focused earth and fauna (much like photographs one might see in National Geographic). Each subject is directed by an offscreen voice (Emir's) to, 'Look up, down, to the camera', and to answer questions about what they believe they have uncovered in the tunnels. Several times the viewer is left in the discomfort of watching one of the miners wait to be directed, his gaze shifting awkwardly, looking into the lens. Returned looks of this kind are a recurring principal of ethnographic cinema, where the viewer is confronted by the face of the Other. The face is emblematic of the desire to know, gain knowledge of and have mastery over the Other. And yet, when magnified to cinematic proportions, the face as site of affect simply serves to articulate the inscrutability of a person. We cannot record the interiority of their thought, their cynicism or belief, their fluid subjectivity. What we can see are the external signs of discomfort. As Nichols (1991) writes, within ethnography there is the demand for diegetic coherence in the representation of the Other. There is an expectation of appropriateness of method and statement. We expect a landscape to be harmonious, self-contained, but in reality the vista is not what we desire. Following screenings of *Buried Land*, audience members (especially western ones) often rushed to the critique that the film should have told and shown more of the town and the town's people, of the pyramid and the pyramid project, of the truth behind the story. Instead, the film adopts an aesthetic of the inscrutable and of the irretrievable. In *Buried Land* repeated looking at and digging into and under the landscape fail to reveal an undeniable artefact or vista, for instance a golden tomb or hidden chamber, as imagined by the miners, instead presenting more and more strangely shaped rocks and landscapes with various attached claims. Dramatic scenes are book-ended by returning to the view of Visociča, looming above Visoko, unchanged and inscrutable. Sometimes redolent of the supernatural, like the mountains in Peter Weir's *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, Steven Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* or Roberto Rosellini's *Stromboli*; at other times merely tectonic, a vista for extrapolating cultural constructions and political struggles, like the landscapes in Patrick Keiller's *Robinson in Space* or the 'lakescapes' of James Benning.¹³ If anything, it is not the photographic process that captures the slippery changing identity of this landscape, but the effect of montage over duration. Like the Kuleshov effect, each time we return to the image of the Visociča, its meaning is changed by

what we have seen and heard in preceding scenes and sequences, so that in one instance it must be pyramid, only to later become merely hill.

Fabricated landscapes are inserted into this indexical geography, mimicking the efforts of the Foundation and its followers. Using South American extant pyramids as models, the filmmakers hired animators to insert composited pyramids into otherwise documentary scenes. Instead of the cutaway to the noted 'artists rendition', as is used frequently in television journalism, these virtual images are imposed within the frame without demarcated borders, so that the fabricated and the indexical exist together within the frame. These superimposed, and later animated, sequences progress from that which is seen by the psychology of a character to the 'seen' of the film itself. The first appearance of such magical realism, when Emir 'sees' pyramids suspended in the valley over the filmmaker's shoulders, creates a tear in the observational documentary frame: 'If I am seeing pyramids then this cannot be a documentary'. During the extended scene on the Pyramid of the Moon – the culmination of the efforts to gather the town to make a film – when Emir attempts to marshal the community in a poor symbolic representation of their spirit and belief, pyramids appear as a vision *behind* the people of the town, once again as though seen by Emir the ringmaster. These are images imposed on the real community who have been marshalled and manipulated by the actor within the documentary to make the film within the film. But the reverse shot of Emir's face has been eradicated. Without Emir to see, it can only be the audience perceiving the phantasmagorical pyramids, shapes that are not diegetically conjured but instead produced by the film and only for the space of the film. The ultimate objects of desire, the truth of the pyramids realised, are given only to the film audience, appearing behind the community who never turn to see them. They seem to represent the ambitions of the film and its desire to capture the self-image of the community, and at the same time this sequence foregrounds the filmic trick and our own aspirations.

Buried Land not only draws attention to the epistemological problems of the 'true' documentary image, but also repeatedly poses the problem of point of view (POV) in the documentary and of a factual film looking: precisely who is looking? What and where is the film 'Buried Land' that Emir refers to during the radio interview and to the mayor? Where is the film crew, wielding this unqualified camera? During the casting of the miners, Emir asks subjects to look straight ahead, into the lens, or to repeat actions, for a recording that is not diegetically taking place. In the plan-sequence at the Pyramid of the Moon dig site, Emir announces that the shoot will be conducted in a single continuous take. There has never been any mention or image of a film crew to help him realise his conceit, but nevertheless, there is a camera – the meta-camera – and it is to this camera the cast turns their gaze in increasing self-assurance. There is undeniably a force behind the camera, but it is not named or located. This impossible camera stands in for the real, offering a complex cinematic event that heralds the erasure of the internal monologue as the structural whole of the film in favour of a free indirect discourse, where, in other words, there is no longer a unity of discourse. The circus master becomes the clown, and the people direct their gaze to the camera, first as an aspect of Emir's delusional psychology, but secondly as the reestablishment of the gaze for the audience's benefit, as if to say, 'I am looking at you looking'. In this way *Buried Land* makes the viewer a voyeur via the first-person shot, then produces discomfort in this point of view during the casting of the miners and in the scene atop the Pyramid of the Moon, when the gaze is forcefully returned. The internal monologue of the film is replaced by the otherness of free indirect discourse. The result makes it difficult to discern non-actor from actor, hill from pyramid – so much so that finally, in the film's closing scene, Avdija Buhic, the historical subject, the tour agent who plays

herself (albeit in a fabricated romance with a fictional character) casts Emir, now portrayed (as the miners and townsfolk had been), directing him to look up, look down, look at her, her lines delivered as though quoting.

This use of reflexivity and unstable point of view is a deliberate counter to the trapdoors of ethnographic observational documentary. It is a form of ethnographic surrealism, whereby the film is able to tell the story of a community and a people not its own, through the lens of the story of outsiders misrepresenting a community. Here, a form of documentary looking gives way to a fictional looking, which in turn gives way to a document of looking at looking. A community excavating an imagined pyramid is not dissimilar to a group of people making a film. A film crew is also a group that comes together because of the hysterical notion that they share a vision and can realise it. In their mind's eye they imagine a vision before the camera. In the editing room all the filmmakers need do is cut away all that is not the image imagined. In *Buried Land*, fiction is to the documentary as imagined landscapes are to the real Visoko landscapes. The film and the Foundation have in common the scrutiny of a landmass that they cannot penetrate. To place a camera down on the ground and begin to describe observationally what can be indexically seen would be to push away the inscrutable. 'Landscape is not a genre of art but a medium. Landscape is a medium of exchange between the human and the natural, the self and the other', states Mitchell (1995: 14) in a series of emphatic remarks. 'Landscape is both a represented and presented space, both a signifier and a signified, both a frame and what a frame contains, both a real place and its simulacrum, both a package and the commodity inside the package.' So too is filmmaking. *Buried Land* became a temporary medium for conducting and transacting difference, for creating new formal relationships between figure and ground, between the actual and the invented.

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13 Lakes. Film [2004]. Directed by James Benning. German United Distributors.

Notes

¹ Though it is a mantel that Osmanagich says he dislikes, it has stuck. The comparison to Indiana Jones – inspired by Osmanagich's always present leather hat – and the detail of the Hotel Hollywood's sudden name change, implying a quick and spurious adoption of the pyramid claims

within Visoko, were part of the first BBC and ABC news stories and have been mentioned in most stories since.

² In the introduction to his book *Bosnian Valley of the Pyramids* (2006: 9), Osmanagich asks: 'If the opponents of the Pyramid are truly convinced that it does not exist, why do they try to prevent further digging? What are they afraid of?'

³ <http://www.bosnianpyramid.com/> is the main Foundation website, host to an ongoing moderated forum of some sceptics and mostly believers.

⁴ On the role of invention in such matters as tradition and collective historical experience, see Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983). Social and political authorities invent rituals and memories of the past as a way of creating a new sense of identity for ruler and ruled, and the 'invention of tradition' as an instrument of rule.

⁵ On staging and 'fictionalisation' in *Nanook* see for example W. Rothman (1998).

⁶ See for example Mendick and Malnick (2011) and Palmer (2010).

⁷ The same technique is famously used by Kiarostami in *Close Up* (1990). The film exists as a document of the filmmaker coaxing a conman to replay his lie, thereby creating a film that is true in its fiction.

⁸ In fact, it was frequently a process of misrepresentation of the film-yet-to-be. To garner the support of the mayor's office, the filmmakers proposed a film that would be a large-scale land-art project involving the whole community passing a camera to the top of Visociča. To mollify the Foundation, Eastwood and Rhodes documented the foundation's 2008 conference and the Egyptian archaeologists brought in to announce their support of the excavations. None of these things were included in the final film.

⁹ 'National identity always involves narratives. Ours has become an era of a search for roots, of people trying to discover in the collective memory of their religion, race, community and family, a past that is entirely their own' (Said 2000, p.177).

¹⁰ During our time in Bosnia, the film *Borat* was still a point of comparison and fear. Many Bosnians were sensitive to the portrayal of Kazakhstan in *Borat* – they empathised with a small country being taken advantage of and represented to the world by outside media for outside audiences. See B. Svraga (2008): the reporter had gathered information from the film's development-stage website, which bannered a film 'combining fact and fiction', and 'a scripted actor with the real people and events'. In addition, there was a development trailer, compiled from footage from the initial research trip in 2007. The perception of this trailer suffered from a similar cultural divide as the scandal surrounding Michelangelo Antonioni's 1972 documentary, *Chung Kuo – Cina*. The trailer included young Romany gypsies who lived on the outskirts of Visoko and made a living as guides for the tourists who came for the pyramids. Though these facts in Bosnia were not repressed by a central government-led cultural revolution (as in 1970s China), nevertheless the trailer reflected aspects of the community that were repressed culturally, in a country struggling to reinvent its national image fifteen years after civil war. And, as is the nature of film and documentary, what appears within the frame and within the minutes of the film, becomes the representation of the world itself. By giving screen time to Osmanagich, his cronies and the Romany youths, the trailer had produced a meaning for certain Bosnian viewers (notably the reporter, and Osmanagich's team) that the Pyramid project was a Romany project. This convinced the reporter that the filmmakers had come to Bosnia to make fun of the

country, just as Sacha Baron Cohen had in Kazakhstan.

¹¹ Three predetermined camera modes were used: direct cinema (a hand held or fly-on-the-wall approach); self-conscious documentary (free indirect discourse); and wholly cinematic (blocked, composed, lyrical shots).

¹² This practice of using a performed semi-fictional character as a means to encounter a people and a place is a territory previously navigated by Roberto Rossellini, Werner Herzog, Agnes Varda and Abbas Kiarostami, among others. In Kiarostami's *Taste of Cherry* (1997) an actor plays a man driving around the outskirts of Tehran looking for a stranger to assist him in suicide. Each of the people he picks up is a non-actor and when they are in front of the lens it is Kiarostami standing-off camera, delivering the lines of the suicidal man. In *Life, And Nothing More* (1991), Kiarostami casts an actor to play a film director (based on Kiarostami) returning after an earthquake to the rural village where he had previously filmed *Where is the Friend's House?* (1987). This, the second film in the so-called Koker trilogy – the final being *Through The Olive Trees* (1994) – is shot as though a documentary. Each of the films in the series appears to shift in turn to a higher register of reality, thereby relegating the previous film to fiction. The filmmaker (Kiarostami) is fictionalised once in the second and twice in the third. In these examples it is the director as agency who bridges a fictional environment and a real situation. In each film the relationship between people (or a people) and place is acute.

¹³ In a similar vein, artist-filmmaker Marine Hugonnier tried but failed to represent a panorama of what some say is the most idyllic landscape on Earth, the Panjsher Valley north-east of Kabul, which has been circumnavigated by warring forces on all sides (*Ariana*, 2003). The film installation emerges as the 'making of' a film that was never made, and an essay on our desire to see, show and explicate.