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The majority of home movies contain pictures of people, they are filmic human portraits and – to use Hans Belting’s terms – a medium of the body (Belting 2005). The family films portray human figures and faces whose realism is further enhanced by the fact that the pictures themselves are in motion. According to Belting, “images live from the paradox of the presence of an absence. When absent bodies become visible, they use a vicarious visibility. […] Images are present in their media, but they perform an absence which they make visible. Animation means that we open the opacity of a medium for the transmission of images” (emphasis in the original, 2005, 312–313). If the medium of the moving picture functions as a kind of artificial body, in which the images of the family members are animated, then it would be interesting to examine how this animation is related to the portraiture of the person represented in the picture. It is common knowledge that most home movies are focused on children and their life within the family. Using this myth of childhood attached to home visual media as a point of departure, this essay will focus on the filmic portraits of children and childhood as seen in local (Transylvanian) home movies from the 1930s.

The analysis of scenes from home movies will be preceded by a discussion of theories regarding the interrelation between children and moving images in general, and of the specificities of children’s performances in home movies, with emphasis on the moments of direct camera address. Putting the earliest Transylvanian home movies into this theoretical framework is an attempt to build a discourse beyond the localities and idiosyncrasies of the collection and to reveal the way home movies function as an artificial body of childhood. The aim of this paper is to explore the mechanisms working behind children’s performances, 1) In similar terms, the accounts of film history’s first movie-going experiences draw attention to the fact that the moving image, the new medium of film was experienced as “a moment when cinematic experience collapses perceptual distance and brings images almost unbearably close to the viewers” (Margitházi 2012).
for the movie camera, and to reveal how the seemingly transparent images of reality are constructed in the process of mediation.

**Animating the Image of the Child**

Children have had a special relationship with the camera ever since the inception of cinema. As Vicky Lebeau puts it: “the new phenomenon of the moving pictures moved in on the child and the infant: with its pictures of Child Life, one of the most popular genres of Victorian film, cinema proffered its first contributions to the ongoing project of visualizing childhood, of giving image to the child” (emphasis in the original, 2008, 7–8). The history of the visual representation of childhood is inseparable from the changing role of children in our society. Ever since the 18th century, the social construction of childhood has been under constant change (Aries 1973); correspondingly, in visual arts and, later, in photography children were no longer pictured as adults, but as innocent and distinct individuals (Higonnet 1998, Bown 2001). “Children are our others” – as Heather Norris Nicholson investigates this idea in the context of home movies: “from an adult’s perspective, children seem to inhabit a diferent realm where, for a brief time, they do things diferently” (2001, 128). The concept of the otherness of childhood coincided with the drive to know and to perceive the child visually (and, in this sense, the emergence of moving images offered an enhanced perceptual access to childhood). Still in a half-conscious state and without any linguistic ability, the young child tends to be discovered through visual culture, through the corporeal image of her body, of her movements and facial expressions (cf. Lebeau 2008, 16–17). In a similar vein, Hans Belting analyses Gerhard Richter’s photo of a toddler that appeared on the cover of Lettre International (1997, March, fig. 1), concluding that this is a body which is not yet in control of its image, of its representation (2003, 106). Thus, the image of the child represents or, to use Hans Belting’s terms, produces the visual excess that is embodied in the medium of the moving image.

In the context of “the modern tendency to visualize existence” (Mirzoeff 1999, 5), at the end of the 19th century, the spectacle of the child in motion became an emblem of the cinema as the new technology of vision. The unruly performance of a child recorded on celluloid was used to demonstrate the specificity of the new medium: the most famous example is the Lumière brothers’ 1895 film Le Repas de bébé (Baby’s Breakfast), which was included in the film selection to be projected on the first public screening of films on Dec. 28th 1895 (fig. 2).

Recording and presented in order to promote the cinematograph, this 50-second long recording, showing Auguste Lumière with his wife Marguerite feeding their baby girl (Andrée Lumière) in their garden, is often described in “first contact” narratives and in more recent theoretical interpretations.

One of the first subjective accounts of the film emphasizes the naturalism of the shot:
“suddenly a strange flicker passes through the screen, and the picture stirs to life” – wrote Maxim Gorky on the first viewing of the film (Gorky 1896, quoted by Lebeau 2008, 23). The cinematographic naturalism discovered in this film by the practitioner of literary naturalism is even more relevant in the context of Gorky’s widely known objections to the Cinématographe Lumière, which he considered a rather un-naturalistic form of representation: “It is no life, but its shadow, it is not motion, but its soundless spectre” (1960, 407). The reception of the Le Repas de bébé suggests that this film became an epitome of the 19th century efforts to duplicate life, to accomplish the perfect illusion of the real world, or the Frankensteinian ideology, as Noël Burch calls it. The suppression of death through the medium of the moving image was a preoccupation of the 19th century bourgeoisie; later on, André Bazin named it the “embalming of time” in his concept of realism. In these endeavors to reproduce life, to constitute an analogue of reality, the recurring image of the child can be viewed as a figure, as Vicky Lebau convincingly argues: “the image of the child on screen is an object to think with, an idea through which to encounter the institution of cinema – its historical and social placement, certainly, but also what has been described as its ‘mental machinery’, its forms of address to the spectators ranged before its screens” (emphasis in the original, 2008, 13). Early concerns regarding the animation of images and the concept of immediacy are thus embodied in the figure of the child: images of children were animated through the technological vision of the cinema; in the meantime, the specificity of the new medium was instituted through the figure of the child.

In the case of Le Repas de bébé, the concept of immediacy is achieved not solely through the image of the child, but through the filmmaker’s choice of framing as well. Noël Burch explains Gorky’s enthusiasm for this particular Lumière picture with the relative closer framing (medium shot) of the scene: “probably the first film to catch faces ‘from life’ in and for themselves, on a scale allowing a close reading of those constantly evolving fields of signs” (Burch 1990, 24). Thus, the individuality of a face, the liveliness (of a person) is embodied in the medium shot (fig. 3). As Paul Arthur consistently concludes: “It is the only scene from the early roster of Lumière films whose aura of familiarity deflects the clinical chill of historical distance. Where other scenes are populated by indistinct, albeit highly animated figures, the family in Le Repas de bébé creates an impression of particularized identity grounded in corporeal fullness and immediacy” (Arthur 2005, 24). As this quote suggests, the enhanced immediacy achieved through the reduction of the distance between the movie camera and the profilmic reality might be representative for the distinction between the perspective of factual history and that of the history of everyday life. The sensory, almost tactile spectacle of the child’s body (used here as figuration of raw reality) viewed from up close emblematizes the overall perception of human bodies as individuals (faces). Moreover, it shows the “big” processes as “coming alive” and, as such, can be used as a source for an individual-oriented micro-history.

Framing is a crucial decision in the construction of the spectacle in this actuality film as it creates the illusion of raw reality, but there is more to it. As noted by

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6) He considers part of the Frankensteinian tradition all those 19th century representational and technological endeavours that aimed at recreating the three dimensional perceptual world in its totality. He mentions Daguerre’s Diorama, photography, the Stereoscope and other optical toys as carriers of the naturalistic ideology of representation (see Burch 1990, 6–12).

7) Noël Burch tracks down this type of interest regarding cinema in a journal article announcing the first public screening at the Salon Indien: when everyone can photograph their dear ones, no longer in motionless form, but in their movements, their activity, their familiar gestures, with words on their lips, death will have ceased to be absolute” (quoted by Burch 1990, 21).

8) The cinematic record of children can be considered figurative in later non-theatrical examples as well, such as the practice of the developmental psychologist, Arnold Gesell, who from 1924 to 1948 used film to collect data on infant behaviour. He considered film a scientific tool, which could turn the ephemeral event into evidence: “the cinema registers the behavioural events in such coherent, authentic and measurable detail that for purposes of psychological study and clinical research, the reaction patterns of infant and child become almost as tangible as tissue” (my emphasis, Gesell 1952, 132, quoted by Curtis 2011, 432).
many film historians, framing is borrowed from the conventions of Victorian family photography or from the practice of still life painting. Moving images animate more than just images of children; they surpass their media predecessors as well (recasting them as a form of artifice, see Lebeau 2008, 31). In this respect, the film is an example of remediation, a demonstration of how the new medium of film (re)animates the stillness of the photographic image.

In this animation of images there is a twist that has been seldom mentioned in the descriptions of the movie: the baby makes an unexpected, undirected move when she offers a biscuit from her breakfast to the man with the movie camera (Louis Lumière) or to someone standing beside the camera (fig. 4).

While the adults in this picture, the parents of the baby, are trying to avoid direct eye contact with the camera all along, their gaze is directed towards the center of the scene, i.e. the baby, although this central character doesn't seem to acknowledge this rule. The baby's look, albeit for a few moments, is slightly directed towards the camera, as she addresses her uncle. The direction of this look suggests an intimacy between the filmmaker and its subject and the continuity of representation caused by the emergence of cinema (1990, 16–17).

The term remediation is defined by Paul Levenson as the “anthropotopic process by which new media technologies remedy prior technologies. Bolter–Grusin defines it differently, as “a formal logic by which new media refashion prior media forms” (Bolter–Grusin 1999, 273). The theory of remediation examines the interdependence of media: a medium is never isolated; it exists in relationships of respect and rivalry with other media: “a medium is that which remedies” (Bolter–Grusin 1999, 65).

One of the few descriptions of the baby addressing the camera can be found in the entry about the film in Who's Who in Victorian Cinema (1996). This oversight is represented by the illustrations of the film: most of the snapshots show the baby looking away from the camera. The difference in the infant's behaviour might have a different effect: when the actors' gaze is directed inside the filmic space, it creates a diegetic reality, but the look out of the frame discloses the world behind the camera and acknowledges the presence of an observer.

A large number of the early Lumière-films feature the private life of the Lumière-family; among them are the abovementioned ones, and better known titles as well.

9) George Sadoul observes the framing of the early Lumière films as showing similarities with the 19th century photographs of his uncle (1966, 60), and compares the mise-en-scène of Le Repas de bébé to still nature paintings (1966, 58). In a similar manner, Noël Burch addresses the transformations of the mode of photographic representation caused by the emergence of cinema (1990, 16–17).

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The History of the Complicity between Children and the Recording Process

With its promise of verisimilitude, the institution of the home movie can be a means to come closer to the child, to discover the child in her everyday world, to reconstruct a cultural history of childhood. At the same time, home movies are embedded in a visual culture, in a drive to perceive and to archive childhood photographically and cinematically; thus, childhood and family films are interrelated institutions. By perceiving childhood visually, we transform children into corporeal images, and archive these images in a medium. Images of children are mediated, and, thus, mediation becomes part of childhood as well. Many generations have grown up with camera lenses pointed at them, and various amounts of photographs and films have been accumulated throughout their lives. These private photographs and films have both reflected and influenced lifestyles, relationships, modalities of paying-attention-to-each-other, the culture of remembrance, identity, and the culture of visual and material objects. As Heather Norris Nicholson puts it: “only with changes in parental attitudes and camera technologies have children begun to picture themselves” (Norris Nicholson 2001, 130). Photographic cameras, video cameras, phones and other devices have become accomplices of the adult filmmaker, and, at the same time, they have influenced the experience of childhood as well. The camera has become a third party indeed: parents are perceiving, paying attention to their child medially, and children meet them, interact with them (and even imagine themselves) in an increasingly mediated environment. That is why the emphasis here will not be on the way children’s bodies are represented in home movies through the medium of film (the iconography of childhood), but rather on children’s performances before and for the camera. How do children participate in the creation and mediation of their own image?

In family films the human figures very often turn to the camera and look at the camera, as if this makes them even more alive and more visible. According to my own research, the look into the camera occurs more often when children are pictured. The look into the camera does not only enhance the immediacy effect, but, in the meantime, it reflects on the process of how the film has been made. While there is a large body of literature discussing the images of children as figurations of life caught unaware, in home movies one encounters a large number of images of self-awareness in front of the camera. The recurrence of this behavior was noticed by the first how-to-do-it manuals, and, later, in the 1980s by research as well. Roger Odin (1995) considers the frequent look into the camera a figure, a trope of home movies, and uses it as an argument to explain that home movies are fragmentary and “bad films” on a textual level. Richard Chalfen describes it as “a repetitive pattern in the on-camera performance” (1987, 67). His description includes much more than the look into the camera: the frontality of the pose, the walk toward the camera or directly into the lens (mostly done by children), striking a pose, the “camera face”, waving or hiding faces.

The almost continuous acknowledgement of the camera was recently reevaluated by Liz Czach as a distinctive feature of the

13) Up until the recent past, the dominant form of amateur filmmaking was represented by family filmmaking. The term “home movie” is used less and less often as a synonym of amateur filmmaking in new media culture, as it is increasingly replaced by the term “user-generated content”. It is as if the concept of home movie is no longer sufficient to be used as a metaphor of amateur filmmaking in new media culture, as it is increasingly replaced by the term “user-generated content”. The institution of the family has changed, films have left the social space of the home, technologies have changed, and the ways of usage have multiplied as well (cf. Blos-Jáni 2012).
home movie performance aesthetic (2006, 2012). Through a survey of the ameliorative literature of home movies, which (in former times) negatively interpreted direct address as “poor acting” or “acting unnaturally”, Czach reevaluates it as a unique attribute of home movies, a sign of crafted behavior, of “acting naturally” (cf. Czach 2012, 154). As home movie-makers do not try to hide the traces of this awareness, but rather tend to accentuate and celebrate them, home movie performances need to be considered presentational performances (Waugh 1993, 71–74; Czach 2012, 162–164), and, in this sense, they are genealogically linked to the presentational mode of early cinema (cf. Gunning 1986). Furthermore, Liz Czach (referring to Paul Arthur) emphasizes the “complicity between the social actors and the recording process” (2012, 164). Familial intimacy and proximity between subject and filmmaker characterizes this different kind of address: “thus, it isn’t uncommon to feel like an interloper when watching the home movies of strangers” – concludes Liz Czach (2012, 164). As I see it, direct address reveals more than just a type of performativity / acting, a way of breaking the fourth wall into the lives of people. Looking into the camera includes the viewer in the familial intimacy between people and their media. The viewer gets invited into the way others experience media and feels included as a part of this media.

Pursuing these ideas, the following analysis looks into children’s portraiture, stressing details that come to the fore when the actors are facing the camera, or address it with their gestures. The essay will examine what has become of the performative exchange of the primal home movie 30 years later, when the Cine Kodak, specialized home movie technology, was introduced to the market in 1923. The appearance of the new technology marks the emergence of a home media culture as well; in this paper this moment of transition will be exemplified by a Transylvanian home movie collection from the 1930s.

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**Children Performing Photographically for the Movie Camera in the 1930s**

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, home movies became “a private version of modern visual memory making” – as Susan Asman puts it (Asman 2009, 48), one at whose center was the image of the child. The production of a family history, including the recording of happy moments from one’s childhood, became part of the child-raising practice. The earliest Transylvanian home movie collection14 dates back to this period; the films of the Orbán family were made in the interwar period in Cluj-Napoca, in the late 1920s and at the beginning of the 1930s. In conformity with the new ideology of domesticity, the medium of film got attached to the idea of fatherhood15, as it was the father of the family who domesticated the 16mm Cine Kodak equipment (distributed worldwide since 1923 and destined for amateurs, a kind of propagator of home movie-making). Lajos Orbán (1897–1972) was the person who adopted the locally scarcely known amateur cine-technology, brought it home to the courtyard of his bourgeois family home in order to record the three generations of his family and a few outstanding events of his city.

The story of the Lajos Orbán’s home movie collection represents a singular case rather than a typical one, which offers an opportunity to examine the emergence of (new) amateur media practices. The appearance of the Cine Kodak camera doesn’t indicate in itself the emergence of a new practice: it also takes the decision of people to use it in a certain way16; it represents the appropriation of the new device to the existing media practices17, and there are the relations between the filmmaker and his social world, which influence this practice. In this case, the brand new technology arrived in Cluj-Napoca sometime around 1927, in the Kováts P. Fiai photography

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14) It is by this date the earliest and the sole home movie collection made in the interwar period in Cluj-Napoca by a member of the bourgeoisie. Research has revealed that a member of the Transylvanian aristocracy, Baron János Kemény (1903–1971), also made home movies in the same period, but the whereabouts of these films are yet unknown.

15) Susan Asman goes further by stating that home movies actually stimulated a new kind of fatherhood that was more involved with family life (Asman 2009, 47). This can’t be applied to this example, because amateur filmmaking wasn’t a widespread practice in this region at that time, thus, it couldn’t have triggered such change in social roles.

16) The researchers of media domestication study the process in which information and communication technologies become part of the intimate space of the home and household. Domestication, therefore, is a process in which man and technology meet, thus making many “things” part of the home life: appliances, ideas, values and information. I have discussed the potential of this approach in respect to home movies in a previous article: Blos-Jáni 2013.

17) The media practices of the home movie makers differ from the habits of the former generation: the already internalized habits and routines will change together with the media, as will the family histories. Media genealogy is an approach conceived by André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion to study the genealogy of media in their dynamics. In my previous papers I have tried to apply the interpretive model

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Children are shown playing in the snow, with a rattle, with dolls and kitchen accessories, with a dog or within a group of kids, corresponding to the genre types of the “romantic child” described by Anne Higonnet, dating back to mid-19th century. Their elegant outdoor clothing suggests that the situation they are participating in is an artificial one, directed by the filmmaker (fig. 7). There is a recurrent scene in the home movie collection: children, accompanied by an adult, walk along a path near the house, and the shooting starts when they are at a point of view the film is meant for these people: the movie shows a group of people taking a walk in the city, and then taking a break on a meadow to make photographs. Thus the film actually reveals a paradoxical situation: moving images about people showing enthusiasm for photography. From this point of view the film reveals a media practice subordinated to the photographic practice of the period. For an in-depth analysis of the film cf. Blos-Jáni 2014, 141–143.

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17) Of media genealogy to home movies and videos (cf. Blos-Jáni 2013) and I have analyzed one of Lajos Orbán’s films based on its theoretical conclusions (cf. Blos-Jáni 2014).

18) Besides working at the photography shop, Lajos Orbán was often invited to give lectures on photography; he organized local photo-contests and was member of a society of amateur photographers named the Tessar Teke Society. He had also won several international amateur photography contests.

19) The short clip entitled The Walk of Photography Apprentices exemplifies what the medium of the film meant for these people: the movie shows a group of people taking a walk in the city, and then taking a break on a meadow to make photographs. Thus the film actually reveals a paradoxical situation: moving images about people showing enthusiasm for photography. From this point of view the film reveals a media practice subordinated to the photographic practice of the period. For an in-depth analysis of the film cf. Blos-Jáni 2014, 141–143.

20) When home movie-makers do not try to hide the traces of the camera awareness, but rather tend to highlight and celebrate them, home movie performances need to be considered presentational performances (cf. Waugh 1993, 71–74).

21) Anne Higonnet differentiates the following genre types in the visual illustrations of Romantic childhood: costumed children, children with pets, fairy children derived from earlier cupid figures, babies with mothers and children playing at adult roles (Higonnet 1998).
distant angle. As they approach the camera, their absorptive performance changes when they start to interact with the filmmaker / technical apparatus, thus performing camera-awareness (fig. 8). As they stop performing their everyday roles, their movement halts as well, as long as they are making eye contact with the camera. Rarely do even adults behave like this in front of the camera: the mother walking, feeding her baby, playing with her child stops and looks into the camera as if waiting for some kind of acknowledgment.

This on-off state of performing camera consciousness or performing non-awareness is simultaneously present in a scene depicting the filmmaker-father with his wife and daughter. Probably made with the assistance of the filmmaker’s brother, the couple with their child is framed in front of a neutral wall, facing the camera, but not looking at it (fig. 9). As the film rolls up, the father starts looking and waving at the camera, in order to catch his daughter’s attention, and convince her to imitate his gesture and address the camera as well (fig. 10). In the meantime, the mother starts to throw a little ball, hoping to catch the child’s attention to playing with her (and not looking out of the frame).

This gesture of waving often returns on the screen, even when infants are shown alone, presumably because they are imitating the filmmaker’s hand movements, who tries to attract their direct look from behind the camera (fig. 11). All the scenes featuring children contain the moment of addressing the camera: either performed out of sheer curiosity, or responding to the interpellation of the father / cameraman.

In the moments of camera consciousness, the movement of the body is restricted, and this stillness seems to affect the medium as well. The eye contact with the camera withholds the flow of everyday life, foregrounding the spectacle of the face, becoming an example of haptic visuality. The look of the subject in a photograph is
an image where the portrayed person takes over and refuses to become an object to be looked at. According to Charles Wolfe, “this effect depends upon the affective power of a medium, on its negative dimension, with the capacity to generate impressions, through a process of optical reversals, long after a subject has vanished” (Wolfe 1987, 69). One might say that children’s look in home movies reveals, discloses their character the most; these are instances when the embodiment reaches its maximum (in the sense that Hans Belting uses this term cf. Belting 2005), and moving images become an analogue of children’s being and personality (not fully comprehensible otherwise).

But children’s faces directed towards the camera are more than convincing examples of the presentational mode of home movies; furthermore, they are those instants when everyday people stop in order to become and to perform an image of themselves. The convention of presenting oneself explicitly for the camera is a presentational performance rooted in photography, as Thomas Waugh suggests (1993, 68). The experience of being looked at through the photographic lens is described by Roland Barthes in *Camera Lucida* as follows: “once I feel myself observed by the lens, everything changes: I constitute myself in the process of ‘posing,’ I instantaneously make another body for myself, I transform myself in advance into an image” [...] In other words, a strange action: I do not stop imitating myself” (Barthes 1981, 10–13). But are children capable of constructing a pose, of projecting an image of themselves? Hans Belting’s answer is negative: the child whose sense of self is not yet formed cannot play himself; thus, his body cannot represent a self-image, it is merely blunt, defenseless (Belting 2003, 106). And yet, these home movies show children performing a pose.

There is a sequence in the Orbán family film collection, which can be viewed as a theatrical version of the enactment of the self. Starting with a title card bearing the words “Öcskö és Csibu” (the children’s names) and the date of the recording (1932. 1. 17.), we become the spectators of the theatre of the family: the mother’s face and those of her children appear behind a miniature curtain and they start to perform their everyday roles (fig. 12-13).

The little boy and girl are shown sitting at their table handcrafting, but they suspend their activity in order to look at the camera.
Afterwards, they play in their room – strongly lit by two lamps – performing direct address multiple times as they present their toys for the camera (fig. 14-15). The mother and the father step into the frame and the father occupies a large armchair, while his wife stands by his shoulders and looks into the camera, as if posing for a studio photograph of a married couple. Their children enter the frame too (fig. 16-17). The scene looks like an anticipation of being photographed, as a rehearsal of a family pose. The family portrait is completed (fig. 18).

To different degrees, the artificiality of the scene is detectable in all the films of the Orbán family. Moreover, this constructed-ness is multilayered: there is the production of the film, and there is the production of images to be filmed. While the members of the family collaborate in order to produce a film about themselves, there is another image production at the level of the actors, performing themselves photographically. Although these films contain scenes that show children acknowledging the filmmaking process, it is not a real collaboration; it is part of a choreographed performance (fig. 19). The performative exchange between children as subjects and the movie camera shows the signs of parental and directorial guidance. Their behavior suggests respect and subordination to the camera, as if to a father figure; the movie camera has paternal attributes.

Especially one photograph taken by Orbán Lajos is indicative of this relationship. The photograph shows a little girl handling a photo camera although she is too short for the tripod (fig. 20). She wears a bonnet and a coat, resembling a miniature adult. The artificiality of this mise-en-scène was confirmed by the interviews with family members: children were not allowed to handle or touch their father’s photo cameras; image-making machines were not to be used as child play. Thus, a child participating in the production of his or her image is a kind of fiction that resulted from the blending of
parental care and the photographer’s visual imagination. Their corporeality, the abrupt changes of mood, their facial expressions are tamed, domesticated in order to achieve the representation that their parents imagined for them. No tears were shed while the film was rolling. Their facial expressions and grimaces are restricted to a smile or a nod, there is no corporeality similar to the Lumière baby’s image depicting her unruly, not yet civilized facial transformations and carnality (eating, getting smeary).

Conclusions

Images of children are central to many aspects of understanding the symbiotic relationship between everyday life and the medium of the moving image as encountered in home movies. The Transylvanian movie collection from the 1930s examined in this article offers a glimpse into the childhood of the interwar period at the point when the institution of the home movie emerged. Photographic and movie cameras structured children’s lives, as taking their picture became the turning point where the experience of everyday life becomes a visual experience. The children of the Orbán family, as the analysis of the films has shown, were not in control of their representation rather their father was. In that position of authority, he directed them towards postures reminiscing photographs, and recorded these images on film. In the meantime, with his frontal compositions and imperatives that his children look into the camera, the filmmaker thrives at opening up the opacity of the medium: he makes his best to produce images as tangible as reality. Thus, paradoxically, immediacy is achieved through the intermedial relations of photography and film. Besides the cultural imagination and visual expectations of their parents, the direct address performed by children bears the traces of this mediality.

Although very similar to the Orbán children at a first glance, the performance of Andrée Lumière in front of her uncle’s camera discloses a different type of mediality and a different kind of “real”. While the photographic background is a common denominator of Louis Lumière and Lajos Orbán, their photographic skills influenced the outcome of their first moving images to different degrees. In the Lumière film, the choice of framing might have photographic origins, but the actors’ performances are not reminiscent of photographic poses. The parents are looking inside the frame, hiding their faces, thus performing non-awareness all along: this performance does not coincide with the 19th century photographic habits. The corporeality of the Lumière baby is cinematized in a distinct manner as well: she is not instructed to behave in a more civilized manner; her facial expressions seem to be devoid of any formality and are contingent. The baby and her parents’ performance supports, in fact, a performance on the level of the medium: they work together with the filmmaker in order to produce the effect of immediacy, they participate in the figuration of the “real”, demonstrating the possibilities of the new medium. In this case the “real” is remediated by the medium of film, foregrounded here as an authentic medium, and the corporeal image of the baby eating becomes a statement about this mediality. In this respect, the Orbán children do not
look into the camera like the Lumière baby. Their bodily performances, their corporeal image can be read as a site of intermedial relations between photography and film, characteristic to the early period of home movies.

Thus, this home movie collection is intriguing not because it is a representative case of home visual media usage in the region. It is rather a relevant case from the theoretical question of this article: what kind of mediality is revealed by the corporeal images of children from the first home movies? The Orbán home movies exemplify what the medium of the film meant when its uses started broadening, and the ways in which the dissemination of the medium did influence the idea of domesticity and the image of childhood.

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Fig. 20

Children Addressing the Camera. Performing Childhood in Transylvanian Home Movies from the 1930s