City-Symphonies-in-Reverse:

Urban Historical Consciousness through the Baroque Moving Image Archive

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ABSTRACT

City-Symphonies-in-Reverse: Urban Historical Consciousness through the Baroque Moving Image Archive

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In this dissertation, I argue that twenty-first century urban archival montage films eschew the dominant historiographical strategies of documentary film and encourage the development of a historically conscious spectatorship. The thesis examines three North American city-symphonies-in-reverse, *Los Angeles Plays Itself* (Thom Andersen, 2003), the *Lost Landscapes* film programs (Rick Prelinger, 2006-2017), and *My Winnipeg* (Guy Maddin, 2007). Each film takes as its explicit subject a North American city significant to its author—Detroit, Winnipeg, San Francisco, and Los Angeles—as seen through specific types of archival material. These particular cities have had geographically unique film cultures, and the archival material related to those film cultures shows the importance of investing in and recognizing local film cultures and histories. These films demonstrate that we have been alienated from our local histories in North America, and they provide key strategies to create historical consciousnesses. Each film in this corpus aims to persuade audiences to deal with local pasts themselves without the aid of an infallible historian to create a narrative that assembles and motivates moving image fragments to cohere with other documents into a coherent, plausible, and complete narrative. City-symphonies-in-reverse use the baroque critical methodologies of essay, anamorphosis, and reflective nostalgia to combat the effects of the abstraction of time and space. Such abstractions began to disrupt social structures and subjectivity in Western cultures some 500 years ago with central perspective and the standardization of time. I argue that these critical methodologies help to us to reconsider relationships to time and space within dominant historiographical discourse in documentary by emphasizing subjective embodied experiences of the archive. The films under analysis in this dissertation articulate valuable ways of addressing current crises in historiography, the urban imaginary, and the moving image archive, precisely through their strategic engagement with archival materials.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Michael and Nancy Robbins, without whose love of ideas, history, politics, aesthetics, and big-picture thinking as an influence, it would not have been possible. In these acknowledgements, the word "inspire" and its derivations will be much overused. Without the inspiration from these individuals, to whom I owe a great debt, I would not have found my intellectual passions, nor would I have learned how to plumb their depths. I have been very lucky to find myself in contact with such brilliant and supportive communities.

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I am indebted to Joan Wilson, who was my Advanced Composition teacher at City College of San Francisco. She gave me the writing skills I needed at just the right time to get out of my math and science comfort zones and make me believe that I could pursue writing-intensive humanities disciplines. I want to acknowledge the excellent education I received in the University of California, Santa Cruz philosophy department. My professors, Jocelyn Hoy, David Hoy, and Alva Noe were so inspiring that I could not imagine not continuing to delve deeper into the big theoretical questions in graduate school after taking their classes. I must thank Mieke Bal for devising such a stimulating methodology for interdisciplinary work and for inspiring me to continue in academia. I also thank Sudeep Dasgupta for inspiring my love of Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt School. Thanks to Sophie Berrebi for introducing me to Catherine Russell's

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Introduction

History decays into images, not into stories. –Walter Benjamin[1]

In "Konvolut N: the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress," Walter Benjamin provides five points to summarize his theory of historical materialism, which he puts forward as a corrective to "old historicism".[2] The epigraph is the second:

> (1) An object of history is that through which knowledge is constituted as the object's rescue. (2) History decays into images, not into stories. (3) Wherever a dialectical process is realized, we are dealing with a monad. (4) The materialist presentation of history carries along with it an immanent critique of the concept of progress. (5) Historical materialism bases its procedures on long experience, common sense, presence of mind, and dialectics.[3]

The first point emphasizes the redemption of material reality; the third, the fullness of the dialectical process; the fourth, the need to challenge notions of automatic progress; and the fifth, the primacy of experience and inquisitiveness in historical consciousness. The second reframes the notion of the historical from a linguistic endeavor to an aesthetic experience, emphasizing the perceptual and affective over the narratological. For Benjamin, the image (*Bild*) that he refers to here is not a representational form, but rather "a likeness, similitude, or resemblance (*Ähnlichkeit*)".[4] The image that Benjamin sees as the primary expression of history is an allegorical relationship between current and past experiences.

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[1] Walter Benjamin, "Konvolut N: the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress," [N11, 4] in *The Arcades Project*, Rolf Tiedemann, ed., and Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, trans. (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 1999), 476.

[2] Benjamin's notion of historical materialism stems from Marx's theory as it was re-presented by György Lukács' in his 1923 *History and Class Consciousness*. However, Benjamin's theory of historical materialism breaks with Marx's in many significant ways and should be thought of throughout this study as a distinct articulation. Benjamin emphasizes aesthetics, experience, a "weak messianic power", the *myth* of automatic progress, and allegory, to name a few of his priorities that do not appear in Marx's work.

[3] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project,* 476.

[4] Sigrid Weigel, *Body- and Image-space: Re-reading Walter Benjamin* (London: Routledge, 1996), 23.

Benjamin's theory of historical materialism guides my study of North American anglophone "city-symphonies-in-reverse"—those city-centered essay films that dialectically blend an avant-garde exuberance for the modern with an archive-based retrospective. The term city-symphonies-in-reverse originates in Thom Andersen's voice-over narration for *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, as a description of his own methodology in that film. The various meanings of "reversal" will be discussed further in Chapter II. I seek to answer two main research questions in this study, one theoretical and one disciplinary, respectively: What are the consequences for film spectatorship and historiography when we take the question of historical consciousness away from narratology and into aesthetics? What can city-symphonies-in-reverse contribute to our current understanding of archiveology[5] and the value of local film cultures? This dissertation examines several films that call attention to the over-reliance on totalizing narratives to create historical understanding and prioritize instead local archival experience as a path to historical consciousness.

The turn of the millennium marked the end of a century that was largely documented and expressed through the photographic and moving image—the first of its kind. A shift to digital technology has made analogue photographic mediums nearly obsolete while simultaneously, and ironically, providing the public more access to the images analogue photography and film have produced. The shift to the digital has resulted in an overabundance of images, overloading already bursting and underfunded archives and putting the preservation of existing and future images on shaky ground. In light of this recent technological shift, filmmakers have become motivated to make more critical use of archival materials to establish their value not only as objects of preservation, but also as culturally relevant objects in the present. Critical archive-based filmmaking, what Catherine Russell calls "archiveology", in the digital era creates experiential opportunities to understand the media we are losing and the historiographical effects of reusing what remains. This reuse of archival material at the beginning of the twenty-first century commences a redemptive project of the twentieth century, much like Walter Benjamin's "Arcades Project" did for the nineteenth century. What these early-twenty-first century

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[5] "Archiveology" is a neologism Catherine Russell created to "[refer] to the reuse, recycling, appropriation, and borrowing of archival material that filmmakers have been doing for decades, in found-footage filmmaking, compilation films, and collage and essay modes." See, Catherine Russell, "*Paris 1900*: Archiveology and the Compilation Film," *New Silent Cinema*, Katherine Groo and Paul Flaig, eds., (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016) 93.

experiments with archive-based creation have already shown is that the richness and variety of the twentieth century's remaining visible evidence provide opportunities for, as well as limitations to, historical thinking that have yet to be fully investigated.

A cinematic art of returns is emerging to address crises in historiography and the archive[6]. City-symphonies-in-reverse demonstrate the current potential of archiveology to motivate the historical consciousness of the spectator. They accomplish this, I argue, by providing archival and evidentiary experiences that both complicate larger historical paradigms and narratives in new ways, and enrich the scope of historical reflection. Reusing the moving image archive in this way has important consequences for the future of documentary, nonfiction film, essay film, and avant-garde film, as well as for the relevance of celluloid and video in the digital age. Film is far from dead when it is only just beginning to enter into its first stage as an art of returns, both in terms of form and content. The power of the archive is now poised to enter the vernacular with a greater force than previously imagined. The overwhelming abundance of the archive and archives can no longer be contained and filmmakers have become responsible for re-presenting and making sense of its overflow for a public who have already begun to take the media into their own hands, but need more motivation to meet the urgency of the crises.

This dissertation explores what local, archive-based filmmaking tells us about how people at the turn of the twenty-first century are mobilizing particular types of moving image archives, collections, and found material to address crises in historical consciousness[7] locally and globally. What city-symphonies-in-reverse have in common is an explicit fascination with the interpretive and experiential dimensions of particular urban moving image archives. I take as my case studies, two twenty-first century archival films and one film series that are highly anchored to the most recognizable spaces, technologies and eras of high modernity (that is, mid-twentieth century cities and cinema): *Los Angeles Plays Itself* (Thom Andersen, 2003), the *Lost*

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[6] The notion of "the archive" will be developed in Chapter I. I take a broad approach to "the archive" as a concept that engages the notion that all human made objects contain traces of the past that can be analyzed, preserved, and shared, or, alternatively, ignored, destroyed, and privatized. The moving image archive, I argue, provides clues to how "the archive" functions. Moving images can be thought of as archives themselves.

[7] The concept of "historical consciousness" will be developed in Chapter I. I follow Benjamin's theory of historical materialism in my definition of historical consciousness throughout the dissertation. Even more generally, the notion of historical consciousness refers to a reflexive understanding of how we create relationships with the past both personally and collectively.

Landscapes film series (Rick Prelinger, 2006-2017),[8] and *My Winnipeg* (Guy Maddin, 2007). These city-symphonies-in-reverse pursue the aims of historical consciousness by circumscribing the limits of historiography through the discourse of the moving image archive. They also represent the intersection of three currents in experimental documentary filmmaking today—the essayistic, archival montage, and the city film. My aim is to identify the critical methodologies these films use, theorize their significance within a larger representational and historical context, and analyze their relevance to contemporary issues surrounding the moving image archive, especially as a tool for resistance to status quo historiography.

By focusing on the strategies of representation, construction of spectatorship, and historiographical tensions in my corpus, this dissertation examines how these city-symphonies-in-reverse exceed the bounds of both experimental and documentary practices. Unlike found-footage experimental films, the films I analyze here depend on the realism of the documentary evidence, even when it is sourced from fiction films (*Los Angeles Plays Itself*), sponsored films (the *Lost Landscapes* films), or faked (*My Winnipeg*). The visual material is always approached as visible evidence and never as just another image, as is common in found-footage filmmaking. Conversely, any of the case studies in this dissertation could be excluded from a narrowed definition of documentary film that relies on the notion of narrative construction, or storytelling, but what cannot be denied is that all of the case studies present a challenge to documentary film spectatorship through their treatment of the realism and historiographical potential of the reuse of the moving image archive. That is, each case study provides an opportunity to evaluate the effects of the re-presentation of archival footage as documentary evidence of the past, but does not attempt to narrativize this past as a part of a larger coherent historical narrative.

Another distinctive quality of my corpus is that the films are grounded in the particularity of the source of their archival materials, and the localized geographical, political, and social spaces they represent. When making a city the subject of an archive based film, there is a narrowing of historical scope from the often unfathomably abstract idea of an entire nation, or culture, to the more concrete. These city-symphonies-in-reverse seem to proclaim that history is where we live every day, not outside of us, not locked away or distant.

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[8] This includes: *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco* (2006-2017), *Lost Landscapes of Detroit* (2010-2011), *Lost Landscapes of Oakland* (2014), *Yesterday and Tomorrow in Detroit* (2014-2015), and *Lost Landscapes of Los Angeles* (2015).

None of the films in my corpus are interested in providing comprehensive accounts of local histories that proceed as linear narratives, as we might expect an expository documentary to do. The hand of the "old historicist" that seeks coherence and logical progression towards the summit of the present is noticeably absent in these films. What we get instead is the provocation to deal with our own local pasts ourselves without the aid of a reliable historian to create a narrative that assembles and motivates the moving image fragments to cohere with other documents into a consistent, plausible, and complete narrative. These films do little to help construct narrative histories of their respective cities; they are in this sense meta-historiographical. Rather they critique the limitations of employing the moving image archive to write history, focusing on its power to provoke deeper levels of historical consciousness by pulling the spectator into an arena of personal reflection and speculation in the face of the archive. These films share the premise that having a history is not the same as having a historical consciousness, and it is the latter that needs to be fostered within the populace in order to combat the perpetually unfolding catastrophes of history. This move towards placing more accountability on the spectator to make sense of the traces of the past is a radical move against historicism, and contributes to an artistic tradition of historiographical critique aimed at the power of the ordinary people to make social change. What these films show is that we have been alienated from our local histories in North America, and the key to creating historical consciousnesses that are able to critique and challenge grand narratives is in (re)connecting to localized pasts.

City-symphonies-in-reverse are North American and European phenomena of the 2000s.[9] I have chosen to focus on English language North American city-symphonies-in-reverse because they must make a more urgent case for a local retrospective view than the less reflectively nostalgic European (and Québécois) examples that emerge from small relatively stable national identities.[10] Svetlana Boym writes: "Nostalgia was perceived as a European disease. Hence

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[9] In addition to the case studies I analyze in here, there are three other city-symphonies-in-reverse that came out in 2008: *Of Time and the City* (Terrence Davies, Liverpool), *Helsinki, ikuisesti* [Helsinki, Forever] (Peter von Bagh, Helsinki) and *La Mémoire des anges* [The Memories of Angels] (Luc Bourdon, Montreal). Of course, the possibility exists that an example could be found outside of Europe and North America, but I have not found it in my research.

[10] In an earlier version of this dissertation, I had included a chapter on *La Memoire des Anges*, but I decided to remove that chapter for two main reasons. First, the Québécois national identity it presents is much more cohesive than the Anglo-American national identities of the other films, making the city itself, Montreal, less of a unifying principle than the national identity. And second, its use and celebration of institutional archives distinguishes it from the other North American films, which eschew and critique institutional archives in favor of alternative archival sources. When I expand this research into a book, I will include chapters on *La Mémoire des anges,* as well as the European cases.

nations that came of age late and wished to distinguish themselves from aging Europe developed their identity on an anti-nostalgic premise; for better or for worse they claimed to have managed to escape the burden of historical time."[11] The North American anglophone aversion to historical consciousness, characterized by its "eternal optimism"[12] is taken as a challenge in the city-symphonies-in-reverse approached in this study. This dissertation argues that the city-symphonies-in-reverse analyzed here propose an intervention into the American "dream of transcending history and memory"[13] by making the case that this is a view we cannot afford to maintain, despite the relative newness of Anglo American culture.

As diverse and proliferate as cinema has become, filmmakers are continually finding "new" modes of address for *film* spectators that draw upon prior representational forms. The possibilities of film spectatorship are multiplied when filmmakers appropriate strategies of representation that have long existed in other mediums to reenergize the film form. While these experiments with the transformative power of persistent radical formal strategies were employed sporadically within filmmaking throughout the twentieth century, especially in the mid-century when medium specificity was the dominant aesthetic paradigm, unprecedented access to an extraordinary quantity of archival material has inspired many more such explorations for amateurs and professionals alike.

This dissertation argues that several intermedial critical methodologies—essay, anamorphosis, and nostalgia[14]—originated as strategies for a reintegration of conceptual binaries of mind and body, subject and object, the universal and the concrete, lived experience and representation. These methods can provide essential pathways for the reuse of the moving image archive in the twenty-first century by addressing current crises in film and archive studies, and challenging the positivistic status quo of nonfiction representation. A cognate method in film studies is the early film strategy that Tom Gunning has theorized as a "cinema of attractions" to disrupt narrative and focus the spectator on examining the image.[15] These critical methodologies, whether they are used intentionally or not, and whether they are effective in breaking down

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[11] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, New York: Basic Books, 2001, 17.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Essay, anamorphosis, and nostalgia will each be developed separately in Chapter I.

[15] The concept of the "cinema of attractions" will be developed in Chapter I along with attendant notions of spectatorship.

established binaries for a few or many spectators, are resurfacing in the digital era for a reason. It is the goal of this dissertation to identify and understand some of the historical conditions under which strategies for shifting the perspective of a text away from a dominant paradigm emerged, and continued to be used in some cases, such that we may understand better which crises their resurfacing may address, particularly in relation to the archive, historical consciousness, and the city.

In the recent scholarship around archive-based film practices, historiography, and cities, Walter Benjamin's oeuvre has been a guiding light to many. Since these are the three main interstices that my case studies occupy, I see Benjamin's work as integral to any discussion of such films. He is relevant to these explorations not only because of his own particular avant-garde understanding of modernity and its particular challenge to our understanding of history, the archive, cities, and cinema, but also because he brings a *baroque*[16] understanding to these modern challenges that is rare in twentieth century thought. Furthermore, Benjamin's method of "literary montage" correlates well with found-footage cinematic montage, both of which place the emphasis on showing, not telling.[17] Benjamin writes, "Method of [the Arcades] project: literary montage. I needn't *say* anything. Merely show. … the rags, the refuse—these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to come into their own: by making use of them."[18] Benjamin's *Arcades Project* has helped scholars in diverse disciplines to see the archival capacity of a multiplicity of everyday materials. The city-symphonies-in-reverse examined here continue his project by reclaiming the archival capacity of film materials particularly rich and relevant to a unique city's historical consciousness that the public had not seen in terms of its visible evidence and had not had the opportunity to experience within a critical context.

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[16] In Chapter I, I will develop the concept of "the baroque" for use in this dissertation. The baroque shall be seen as a persistent conceptual technology, as opposed to a period, that runs interference against the totalizing affects of classicist paradigms and their legacy.

[17] Recent attention to the collection principles at play in Benjamin's contemporary Aby M. Warburg has drawn parallels between *The Arcades Project* [*Passagen-Werk*] and Warburg's *Mnemosyne-Atlas*: "the *Mnemosyne-Atlas* finds a concrete analogue in Walter Benjamin's unfinished *Passagen-Werk* —for it, too, collects history's artifacts to furnish a now material, now metaphoric archaeology of modernity," and "just as Benjamin grounds the *Passagen-Werk* in dialectical images, Warburg's metaphoric pathos formulas determine the content and direction of *Mnemosyne*," writes Christopher Johnson in his monograph on Warburg's work. Christopher D. Johnson, *Memory, Metaphor, and Aby Warburg's Atlas of Images* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2016), x, 18.

[18] Walter Benjamin, "Konvolut N: On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress," in the *The Arcades Project*. Howard Eiland, and Kevin McLaughlin, eds. Cambridge (Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003). 460. [N1a, 8]

The films in this study manifest and hold reviewable the two clearest reflections of late modernity, according to Walter Benjamin—the city and film. More specifically, each film takes as its explicit subject a North American city significant to its author, Detroit, Winnipeg, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, as seen through particular types of archival material. They cull most, if not all, of their archival reference points from the mid-century period, moving back and forth within this era of "high modernity," characterized by an obsession with technological progress, the ordering of urban space and time, and the idea that experts could find ways to control human nature. But cinema, as Paula Amad argues, has the unique capacity to show always more than what filmmakers precisely intend. Too much in fact, and in doing so, it has the unique capacity to aid memory in a manner that throws into question the demand for transparency, certainty, order, clarity, and totality that the positivistic approach to archival appraisal has established.[19] When such absolutist values are privileged over all else, points of contestation in the archive will be suppressed. The notion of the "counter-archive" helps us to account for what may be disappeared because it does not conform to a totalizing narrative, or because it creates doubt around automatic progress.

Each of my case studies, made after the turn of the millennium, displays a fascination with archives, and their concomitant revelatory possibilities, and contain a strong yet *implicit* argument that this material deserves to be recuperated and redeemed at a time when film archives are so vulnerable to defunding and obsolescence due to changing technology and values. These films can therefore help us to understand the promise of modernity the moving image archive of the twentieth century once held, and still does, and how that promise might be reevaluated in, and relevant to, the present. By reevaluating the views of progress localized to particular cities, each of these films theorizes the notion of progress found within their respective archival material by proposing a way to mythologize the view of that city based on its current relationship to its past.

André Bazin saw realism as grounded in specific perceptual and social realities. This orientation paved the way for him to theorize realism as "not so much a style that one can apply or an effect induced in the spectator, but rather an attitude or stance that the filmmaker adopts

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[19] Paula Amad, *Counter-archive: Film, the Everyday, and Albert Kahn's Archives De La Planète* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 4.

vis-à-vis the world he encounters, his material, so to speak."[20] City-symphony-in-reverse filmmakers take a playful yet contemplative attitude towards their source material. The world that their source material evokes is gleaned through the sidelong gaze, and as such, is both actual and a creation of the imagination. Each filmic quote is a bracketed piece of visible evidence that must be fit into imperfect and incomplete historical views. The filmmaker cannot control the historical or interpretive horizons of the spectator, but he or she can establish and maintain a position on the potentials and limits of his or her material.

Each chapter focuses on the impetus of a particular individual to use the moving image archive to consider the state of the city, the archive, and cinema. Each filmmaker in this study is seen both as a particular subject with his own historicity, as well as a figure who might characterize the urban archival impulse in the early millennial period. These are psychogeographical projects in which the filmmaker invites the spectator to join him on an intersubjective *dérive*[21] through the cityscape as experienced through a particular archive. I have thus organized my chapters around the figure of the filmmaker presented in each film. Following in the steps of Walter Benjamin's strategy of using obscure figures to articulate new concepts in urban modernity, like the *flâneur*, the ragpicker, and the gambler, my chapters will each focus on a different figure using the archival evidence of the city from a particular source in the millennial period to create baroque urban archival films: the essayist for *Los Angeles Plays Itself*; the collector for the *Lost Landscapes* series; and the charlatan for *My Winnipeg*. Furthermore, in a similar fashion to Benjamin's mapping of *The Arcades Project* at the crossroads of the birth of European civilization (Naples), Europe's modern articulation of (anti)bourgeois subjectivity (Paris and Moscow), and his own situation in Europe (Berlin),[22] this dissertation will be located spatially between North American coordinates relevant to the transformation of modernity through the moving image and urban subjectivity, as well as my own situation within the geography, creating intellectual compass points linking Los Angeles, San Francisco, Detroit, and Winnipeg through the city-symphony-in-reverse.

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[20] Thomas Elsaesser, and Malte Hagener, *Film Theory: An Introduction Through the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 2010) 30.

[21] *Dérives* were a technique of psychogeographical exploration in 1950s-70s French Situationism. Together in groups, they allowed themselves to float through the city, in whichever way it seemed to pull of push them, in order to discover the mechanisms and flow of the city, understood as an organism.

[22] Buck-Morss, *Dialectics of Seeing*, 25.

This dissertation also confronts the question of how and why these filmmakers are appropriating the particular "archives" they do. In all cases, the films in this study are archival film sources that eschew the notion that institutionalized archives are the sole path through which we can discover surprising urban pasts, and an understanding of our historical limits. The particular cities represented in these films have, and have had, geographically unique film cultures, and archives and collections related to those film cultures, that show the importance of investing in and recognizing local film cultures. Thus, a historicization of the archival footage, strategies of representation, and the film cultures they inhabit make up a large part of each chapter. Cities have regional cultures that are not necessarily consistent with that of the national identities of the countries of which they are a part, especially in the vast countries of North America. The filmmakers in this study should be considered together because each one has an interest in examining particular urban cultures through very particular archives, while questioning the historiographical tendencies that efface inconsistencies within the archive. By placing these inconsistencies front and center, the films in this study offer a counter-archival experience of the typical urban historical narrative. In each chapter, I will examine each case study film's position within film culture, strategies of representation, and filmmaker/spectator relationships that contribute to the cultivation of historical consciousness through the cinematic experience.

Why should we be thinking about cities, the moving image archive, and historical consciousness now? First, crises around archive funding, appraisal and preservation are increasingly motivating people to display materials that are at risk of falling into obsolescence and disappearing. Second, as a result of increasing urban populations, and increased study of urban life, there is an emergent fascination with the city as a locus of social, geographical, and historical intelligibility going into the twenty-first century. Third, increased migration between cities are making city histories vulnerable to collective amnesia. The Benjaminian local storyteller, or chronicler, who transmits experiential knowledge rather than information based narratives needs to be valued or we could lose their knowledge.

Cities, like archives, are amazingly heterogeneous and paradoxical units of social organization. They can be alienating and homey, unfathomably large yet strangely navigable. They are small enough for identification and personal associations and affiliations, but big enough that they must be shared with others that have different experiences and associations of

the space. That is, the perceptions of one's urban environment are more grounded in lived experience, and thus more personalized, than those of one's nation, state or province, yet, less personal and intimate than those of one's neighborhood or family home. The master narratives that help build states and larger cultural paradigms at the national level can be in conflict with experience-based narratives at the individual and at the urban level. Nationalism can be, and is, challenged by the specificity of everyday life and the inconsistencies, diversities and fragmentariness of lived experience, if and when theses localized experiences are held reviewable. The city as a unit of social organization is not quite as idiosyncratic in its representation as smaller units, however. The tourist, the visitor, the immigrant, and the foreigner are important figures in the urban representation precisely because they add checks to how local people see themselves, which can be more diverse already than they realize. Cities are too large for any one inhabitant to believe their own experience is shared by all. Zoom in to smaller units, however, and one's sense of propriety over the character of the place increases to the point that there is little that can be told over which the inhabitant does not already feel mastery.

What are now referred to as "city symphonies" are those Constructivist and Surrealist influenced documentary experiments that broke with the "bourgeois art and cultural tradition"[23] of the 1920s, which include: *Manhatta* (Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand, 1921, 10 mins); *Rien que les heures* [Nothing But Time] (Alberto Cavalcanti, 1926, 45 mins); *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großstadt* [Berlin: Symphony of a Great City] (Walter Ruttmann, 1927, 79 mins); *Moskva* [Moscow] (Mikhail Kaufman, 1927, 60 mins); *De Brug* [The Bridge] and *Regen* [Rain] (Joris Ivens, 1928 and 1929, and 15 mins and 14 mins, respectively); *Chelovek s kinoapparatom* [Man with a Movie Camera] (Dziga Vertov, 1929, 80 mins); *Skyscraper Symphony* (Robert Florey, 1929, 8 mins); *Images d'Ostende* [Scenes of Ostend] (Henri Storck, 1929, 12 mins); *À Propos de Nice* [Concerning Nice] (Jean Vigo, 1930, 45 mins); and *Rhapsody in Two Languages* (Gordon Sparling, 1934, 10 mins), to name a few of the most influential. The musical form of the symphony as a formalist strategy for representing the city is the strongest artistic influence suggested by the designation "city symphony." Because only two films explicitly reference the symphony in their titles, and the other films were not intentionally made as part of any city symphony movement, since no such movement had been established at the time, the symphonic

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[23] Vlada Petric, *Constructivism in Film: The Man with the Movie Camera: a Cinematic Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 85.

refs to a more diffuse lyrical and harmonic spirit common to the films, as opposed to an explicit influence that collects them. Indeed, the aesthetic and philosophical principles of contemporaneous art movements were far more central to the formal effects on the spectatorship of city symphonies than the Western classical musical tradition was. Futurism and its art historical offsprings (especially Constructivism), Surrealism, Precisionism, and Suprematism combined to comprise the necessary art historical preconditions for the city symphony in the 1920s.[24] A fascination with urban modernity in the late 1920s did not only overtake Western filmmakers, but Benjamin, as well. In 1929 Benjamin moved from writing portraits of the cities he traveled to, Naples (1925), Moscow (1927), and Marseilles (1929), to writing a reminiscence of his hometown, Berlin.[25]

City symphonies endure within film history for several reasons. First, they embrace their historical moment by combining a utopian excitement for technology with an avant-garde exuberance for the new. Second, they explore everydayness and lived experience through cinema in new ways that begin a certain strain of the documentary tradition that anticipates the immediacy and intimacy of direct cinema. Third, they are effective in the cinema of attractions, captivating spectators, and capturing their attention often for visual pleasure only. Fourth, they manage to be very distinct about particular urban experiences and locations, and at the same time, they show what is universal about urban situatedness within their particular times. And fifth, they break with tradition by presenting avant-garde views of the city "to give film artistic and educational values," according to Joris Ivens.[26]

Beyond the perennial fascination with the city symphonies of the 1920s, late-twentieth century and early twenty-first century literature abounds on cinema and the city within film studies and outside of it. A dominant theme of literature on the cinema and the city is that the cultural form and the unit of social organization together display the best view of twentieth-century modernity. Mark Shiel writes,

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[24] Martin F. Norden, "The Avant-Garde Cinema of the 1920s: Connections to Futurism, Precisionism, and Suprematism," *Leonardo*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (1984), 108-112.

[25] Peter Szondi, "Walter Benjamin's City Portraits," in *On Walter Benjamin: Critical Essays and Recollections,* Gary Smith, ed. (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1988), 18.

[26] Joris Ivens, "Documentary: Subjectivity and Montage," Lecture at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, December 13, 1939. Reprinted in Kees Bakker, ed. *Joris Ivens and the Documentary Context* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 1999), 250.

Thematically, the cinema has, since its inception, been constantly fascinated with the representation of the distinctive spaces, lifestyles, and human conditions of the city … Formally, the cinema has long had a striking and distinctive ability to capture and express the spatial complexity, diversity, and social dynamism of the city through mise-en-scène, location filming, lighting, cinematography, and editing[27]

Sheil seeks here to bring film studies together with sociology. Another oft-repeated claim about the city and cinema is that, since the city has been the prime subject of cinema from its origins in the Lumiére Brothers actualities, cinema has shaped how we experience urban life. Such a claim has been popular since it issued from sociologist Georg Simmel in his 1903 *Metropolis and Mental Life*, which characterized the media strategies that were under development to help people adapt to a time of rapid urban growth. James Donald explains that in the early twentieth century cinema and other mass media "provided, as it were, a mediating pedagogy between the reality of the metropolis and its imaginary place in mental life."[28] In the first anthology on cinema and the city in English, *The Cinematic City* (1997), David B. Clarke's stated aim is to fill a gap in the literature in which "relatively little theoretical attention has been directed towards understanding the relationship between urban and cinematic space."[29] Since the publication of Clarke's book, architectural and visual studies scholars have been active in the question of the spatial relations between the city and the cinema, for example Giuliana Bruno's monograph *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture and Film* (2002); Linda Krause, and Patrice Petro's anthology *Global Cities: Cinema, Architecture, and Urbanism in a Digital Age* (2003); and Julia Hallam and Les Roberts' anthology *Locating the Moving Image: New Approaches to Film and Place* (2011). Charlotte Brunsdon observes an influx of multidisciplinary texts on cinema and the city in the 2000s just as film studies has begun to reckon with "cinema's declining significance as a mass urban entertainment" and she wonders what scholars outside of film studies might want from cinema.[30] As Brunsdon notes, the sociological and spatial studies of cinema and the

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[27] Mark Shiel, "Cinema and the City in History and Theory," in *Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context*. Mark Shiel, and Tony Fitzmaurice, eds. (New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 1.

[28] James Donald, "Light and Dark Spaces: Cinema and the City," in *Imagining the Modern City* (Minneapolis, Minn: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 63

[29] David B. Clarke, ed. *The Cinematic City* (London: Routledge, 1997), 1.

[30] Charlotte Brunsdon, "The Attractions of the Cinematic City," *Screen*, 53:3 (Autumn, 2012): 209.

city dominate the subfield.[31] Thus, a study of city-symphonies-in-reverse that shows not only the spatial but also the temporal and historical relationships between cinema and the city is a necessary addition to the existing scholarship.

Bruno's *Atlas of Emotion*, a book that takes embodied city cinema spectatorship seriously, especially inspires me. Bruno approaches the analysis of cinema and the city from an architectural perspective, challenging the model of film spectatorship that derives straight from Renaissance perspective, which positions the spectator always as the holder of the traditional transcendental, disembodied gaze, eliding the many "displacements that are represented, conveyed, and negotiated in the moving image."[32] She places an emphasis on erring, which she defines as wandering or straying from a path; the voyager over the voyeur; the site over sight; the haptic over the optic. She misspells, without mispronouncing, the rather redundant term for taking in the city, "sightseeing," as "site-seeing," which for her places the emphasis less on the witnessing of the spectacle of the city and more on the movement and emotion experienced by traversing through it. She thus reframes the film spectator of classical film theory as a film *voyageur*, and ultimately, a *voyageuse*, as a feminist critical strategy.[33]

In his study of avant-garde feature films, William Verrone identifies the existence of what he calls a "modern city symphony" with the 2008 Finnish film by Peter von Bagh, *Helsinki, Forever*, but does not mention any of its American or Canadian contemporary counterparts that appear in this study. Nevertheless, he points to several characteristics of *Helsinki, Forever* that are consistent with its city symphony predecessors from the 1920s: "they create senses of rhythm and abstraction" from external city life; they "show the city as a vibrant entity unto itself"; and they "shun a recognizable narrative, though there are often guiding motifs".[34] He also acknowledges that *Helsinki, Forever* differs "a bit" (an understatement in my view) from the earlier films "because von Bagh has fashioned his portrait mostly out of old movie clips; Vertov and Ruttmann take their cameras to the streets and document the immediacy".[35] Verrone identifies *Helsinki, Forever* as an essay film, writing that it entirely "revolves around the revealing of the city through the archives"; "its images speak making it lyrical … and

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[31] Ibid., 216.

[32] Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film* (London: Verso, 2002), 16.

[33] Ibid.

[34] William Verrone, *The Avant-Garde Feature Film: A Critical History* (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland, 2012), 127.

[35] Ibid.

personal".[36] Although he sees *Helsinki, Forever* as "remarkable" for its "collage-like construction" and "essayistic tone", he does not go into any depth around the consequences of these diversions from the 1920s city symphonies. In identifying *Helsinki, Forever* with the city symphony tradition, he calls it a film that "is about the city as an art form, and aesthetic thing unto itself that is revealed in multiple layers," Verrone misses an opportunity to theorize the effects of the archival strategy on both urban spectatorship and historiography. Furthermore, he does not connect *Helsinki, Forever* to other films that take on a similar strategy, avant-garde urban montage, within the same period, such as *Of Time and the City* (Davies, 2008) or *La Mémoire des anges* (Bourdon, 2008), focusing on the 1920s antecedents and mentioning "experimental collages of city life" such as *Baraka* (Fricke, 1992) and *Koyaanisqatsi* (Reggio, 1982),[37] instead.

My intervention into the literature on archival city films is that I theorize them as baroque dialectical film objects that promote historical consciousness. They are at once a continuation of the city symphony tradition and a reversal of it. While the retrospective urban montage films of the 2000s, some of which I discuss in this dissertation, have often been identified with the city symphony tradition, their use of location-specific archival materials, their place in film history as original expressions of their film cultures and historical moments, and their theoretical underpinnings in baroque conceptual technologies have never been analyzed anywhere else.

There are many differences between the city symphonies of the 1920s and the "city-symphonies-in-reverse" of the 2000s, but there are also a few significant similarities that provide a sound rational for including them within the same tradition despite the vast gap in time between the two. First, the city is the primary subject: a particular city must be the central focus above all—its urban modernity, its everyday city life, or its representation through a specific local archival collection. Second, novelty and originality in cinematic expression are valued above film forms familiar to the audience. The city symphonies of the 1920s were in many cases some of the first attempts to represent cities as multifaceted living organisms with movement and duration through new editing techniques and principles of organization. Similarly, the city-symphonies-in-reverse of the 2000s are the first, since *Paris 1900*, I argue, to assemble site-specific archival fragments to create spectacles of particular cities' attempts at twentieth century

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[36] Ibid., 128.

[37] Ibid.

modernity. Third, medium specificity *and* hybridity coexist happily in the filmic text: city symphonies were concerned both with the capabilities of cinema that were uniquely its own (medium specificity), as well as what cinema could do with borrowed forms (like the symphony). *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, for example, borrows not from the symphonic tradition, or even the Constructivist tradition, but the essayistic form, with its chapters, strong subjective enunciator, and open-ended questioning. Andersen combines the essayistic with two other written traditions—film historiography and film criticism—to show how film as a medium can quote and critique itself, as well as contribute more generally to historical consciousness. Fourth, city symphonies have distinctively avant-garde objectives that go beyond novelty and are concerned with the perceptual and intellectual development of the spectator: the city symphony tradition, then and now, is focused on creating new subjectivities through a détourned[38] spectatorship. Fifth, the openness and risk of play take precedence over other teleologies: the mood of the city symphony tradition is a decidedly ludic praxis. The spectatorial experience is the goal and the end of the film does not provide more insight than any other part. And sixth, like their city symphony predecessors, city-symphonies-in-reverse were not intentionally made to be part of any movement, but can be seen in retrospect for their similar responses to the zeitgeists, technological openings, and crises of their respective periods. City symphonies in their reversed mode are dialectical film historical objects in themselves. They are a synthesis of the forward-facing exuberant spirit of the city symphonies of the 1920s and their antithesis, a retrospective contemplative gaze. They expose and explore the limits of urban representation and historiography, and at the same time exhibit a fascination and redemptive attitude towards the city in cinema.

Just as there were a very unique set of political, philosophical, economic, aesthetic, and technological conditions that made the "city symphonies" of the 1920s possible, so too for the "city-symphonies-in-reverse" that have emerged in the 2000s, such as *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, the *Lost Landscapes* films, and *My Winnipeg*. As global urban populations exceeded nonurban populations for the first time ever in 2007, the turn of the twenty-first century was also seeing renewed focus on urban theory and interest in the future of cities. At the same time, the

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[38] Those writing about détournement in English use the verb form "to détourn" (with or without an accent) as well as its derivatives like "détournability" and "détournable" without italics. The Situationist concept and practice of détournement will be discussed in Chapter 1.

postmodern destabilization of historical narratives, information overload, and *fin-de-siècle* proclamations that we are approaching the "end of history," capitalism's *fait accompli* (Fukuyama), have thrown us into a panic around our own abilities to understand ourselves historically. Furthermore, globalization has undercut national identities and the narrative strategies that uphold them, making the city a more apposite locus of intelligibility and identification.[39]

With the *fin-de-siècle* "death of cinema," or more precisely, the transition from analogue to digital formats, celluloid, along with its archival visions, is in need of recovery and revaluation in the twenty-first century. The turn of the century has provoked a moment of reflection on the dreams of the previous century, dreams that have become more visible through archive-based cinema. At the same time, the neoliberal encroachment on archives, and the crisis of major material losses during the transition to digital formats, have pushed archivists and filmmakers to find new ways of making publics aware of their heritage through moving image archive materials, and of encouraging them to care for their continued funding. Local treatments of archival materials draw people into a more intimate experience with the archive, as does the essayistic subjective approach, making the combination of the two an exciting turn to help filmmakers, archivists, scholars, and publics understand the value and potential of cinema for historical consciousness in the twenty-first century. In distinguishing one set of city-focused film work from another, the notion of reversals that Andersen suggests helps to establish the divergent theoretical background of city symphonies and city-symphonies-in-reverse that emerge from their respective art historical and cultural contexts. In Chapter II, on Andersen's *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, I theorize the reversals that differentiate the city-symphonies-in-reverse from their 1920s predecessors, starting with the conceptually simpler and more immediately apparent, and moving to the more complex and curious.

In 1947, two city-as-subject nonfiction films were released in Europe. Both received many accolades. Both were fairly quickly forgotten by film history. The first, *Människor i stad* [Symphony of a City] (Arne Sucksdorff, Stockholm, 18 minutes) won an Academy Award in the

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[39] In his monograph, *Romance of Transgression in Canada*, Thomas Waugh makes a similar point about the relevance of localized urban perspectives over national ones in his discussion of Richard Fung's *Fighting Chance* (1990): Thomas Waugh, *Romance of Transgression in Canada: Queering Sexualities, Nations, Cinemas* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 310-312.

category of "Best Short Subject, One-reel" in 1949.[40] *Människor i stad*, a typical, perhaps too typical, city symphony was forgotten, I contend, because of its passé pastiche of particular 1920s city symphonies that brought little innovation to the art form. The second, *Paris 1900* won the prestigious Prix Louis Delluc for the best French film of 1947. *Paris 1900* (Nicole Védrès, Paris, 74 mins), a city-symphony-in-reverse, the first of its kind, was forgotten, I contend, because it was a film ahead of its time, and as such the discourse to discuss its features had not yet been invented. I will return to *Paris 1900* in the "Prelude" section of this dissertation immediately following the introduction to briefly trace its journey through film history in an attempt to understand why such an innovative film might be forgotten and what the early impressions of it were, as well as what it might contribute to our understanding of city-symphonies-in-reverse. But first, a few quick notes about why *Människor i stad*, a delightful and well-made film, has not been canonized along with the earlier city symphonies, or as a new form.

Arriving about two decades after the most influential "city symphonies", *Människor i stad* replicates the iconic elements of the city symphony cycle before a few very loose episodic narratives that follow several sets of people—an ill *flâneur* exchanging glances with a young woman; some children who wander into in a church; and a fisherman and his son bringing up their net—as they inhabit public spaces in Stockholm over the course of a day. The film begins, much like *À Propos de Nice*, with aerial shots of the waterways that divide the islands of Stockholm. Images of machines churning away at full-speed dissolve into each other very strongly resembling *Man with a Movie Camera*'s constructivist sensibilities. At one point it starts to rain and all the umbrellas come out, evoking Ivens' *Regen*; and following *Regen* precisely, the people stand quietly, watching the rain, and waiting for the shower to pass. Shots of mannequins, signage, streetcars, a military parade, and bustling streets recall *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City*. There is no voiceover, and very little diegetic sound—an essentially silent work with a light musical soundtrack like its antecedents. *Människor i stad* recalls many of the stylistic tropes of the 1920s city symphonies, but lacks the most crucial elements that might allow it to be, even belatedly, included in the pantheon of city symphonies. The film is not an original expression of the city's zeitgeist, and it celebrates Stockholm without even wondering what is unique about it. Its lateness could have been forgiven had it considered the urban modernity of a post-war

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[40] Available to watch streaming here: http://www.filmarkivet.se/movies/manniskor-i-stad/ (Last accessed, 9 May 2017.)

Stockholm in its own way, but the derivative character makes it very hard to see the film as contributing its own vision of a timely expression of the city's character, especially given the historical trauma it follows. Moreover, unlike the city symphonies of the 1920s, the film feels overly contrived, neither documentary nor essay, but rather a fictional Stockholm filmed as an homage to its most recognizable and influential city symphony predecessors. An against-the-grain reading of the film might see its stiffness and unwillingness to divert from the signifiers of the 1920s city symphonies as an expression of aesthetic paralysis stemming from postwar trauma.

Structure of the Dissertation

The first chapter of this dissertation, "Contexts and Concepts," presents my methodology and breaks down my seven key concepts: historical consciousness, the baroque, essay, anamorphosis, nostalgia, the archive and "cinema of attractions". Each subsequent chapter addresses a case study that analyzes a North American "city-symphony-in-reverse," its maker, and the unique localized film culture from which they both emerge, all three of which are crucial to this project. I borrow Benjamin's baroque strategy of creating emblematic figures to interact with each other. The essayist, the collector, and the charlatan characterize the relationship to the archive of the filmmakers of the three main case studies I present here.

Los Angeles Plays Itself, the first twenty-first century case study in this dissertation, is not necessarily a direct inspiration to the films that follow it, but it has provided me with a road map to theorize my corpus within film history and theory. Various hermeneutic moves, such as designating the urban montage film as a "city-symphony-in-reverse," and Andersen's approach to its archival material as transforming "backgrounds-into-foregrounds," among other interpretive strategies have served as important guides in this process. Thus, in some key ways, *Los Angeles Plays Itself* can be seen as an Ur-text for the recent cinematic phenomenon that I chart here.

Los Angeles Plays Itself is a nearly three-hour compilation film excerpting around 200 (primarily) fiction films, shot predominantly in and around Los Angeles, California. Made in the early 2000s, just as the film industry had begun to move location shoots to cheaper cities and CGI stations, the subjective voiceover poses questions and provides commentary over location

shots and sequences of Los Angeles over the previous century. Andersen drew his material from home video versions of his selected films. For more than a decade after its release, *Los Angeles Plays Itself* could only be viewed at special screenings due to delays in distribution over potential copyright infringement issues. In the chapter on *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, Chapter II "The Essayist's Archive," I examine what is meant by Andersen's positioning of his film as a "city-symphony-in-reverse"; the essayistic commitments of the film; the film's emphasis on "psychophysical correspondences"; Andersen's previous work in essayistic archival redemption; Pop Art and kitsch as influential ideas in his work; currents in writing on Los Angeles architecture as influences on the film; the representation of historical municipal dramas; and Los Angeles as a dialectic of utopias and dystopias.

Chapter III, "The Collector's Archive," focuses on Prelinger's work as a collector, media theorist, and filmmaker to intervene in the "storytelling" discourses on the moving image archive. Prelinger's *Lost Landscapes* series, which includes *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco* (2006-2017), *Lost Landscapes of Detroit* (2010-2011), *Lost Landscapes of Oakland* (2014), *Yesterday and Tomorrow in Detroit* (2014-2015), and *Lost Landscapes of Los Angeles* (2015), represent a lengthy and original contribution to the city-symphony-in-reverse tradition. Composed from Prelinger's extensive collection of ephemeral films depicting exteriors of San Francisco, Oakland, Detroit and Los Angeles throughout the twentieth century, and presented as live interactive film events, the *Lost Landscapes* series provides insight into local baroque collecting paradigms, Bay Area film cultures, collective moves towards increasing historical consciousness, the value of evidentiary experience to film spectatorship, and the need to preserve and display "outmoded" film works.

In the Chapter IV, "The Charlatan's Archive," I explore Guy Maddin's *My Winnipeg* as a film that represents the city as a personal and collective dream. By faking the local moving image archive, Maddin takes the counter-archive into fantastical waters to discover its limits. Film becomes a tool for representing historical *un*consciousness. *My Winnipeg* presents a pastiche of film modes and genres that draws on the cinema of attractions to assemble opportunities for dialectical images and reflective nostalgia. Transgressive satire and burlesque combine with psychogeographical drifts through Winnipeg to question the typical pathways through which urban history and knowledge are transmitted and preserved. In this chapter, I analyze Maddin's use of reflexivity to trick the spectator into questioning documentary codes; I

theorize his use of the Nietzschean and Deleuzean "powers of the false" in the service of deeper truths; and I explore his use of the conditional tense provocation, "What if?", to create dialectical images.

All the films in my corpus are heavily praised, as were the city symphonies they recall, but little has been written theorizing the representational strategies and traditions of retrospective city symphonies, city-symphonies-in-reverse. Why are people so excited about these films? What do they bring to our sense of cinema and its role in representing or creating the historical? How do they recover the city symphony tradition? How do they distinguish themselves from it? How do they comment on current crises through this tradition? I argue that city-symphonies-in-reverse are so exciting because they address a current malaise in film history, and history in general, in an innovative and uncommon way: instead of going down the typical positivist storytelling route that composes the majority of the documentary mainstream today, they use the archive to pursue the goals of historical consciousness. They do this by cultivating three baroque critical methodologies, essay, anamorphosis, and reflective nostalgia, as well as the early film spectatorship of the cinema of attractions, which provoke a cathexis with and contemplation of the past in ways that are unique to film. This dissertation will fill in a gap in the literature on film and historiography by showing how an alternative, indeed a baroque, spectatorship can be achieved *vis a vis* the archive and why such a shift in spectatorship is relevant to current crises in film and archive studies.

Prelude

Paris 1900

To find the first feature-length city-symphony-in-reverse, we must go back to Europe and look two decades past the famed era of those avant-garde films first termed "city symphonies", to *Paris 1900* (Nicole Védrès, France, 1947). *Paris 1900* examines the twentieth century's early years, the *Belle Époque* as it was called in France, 1900-1914—a period of excitement for modernity, and especially city life, before two world wars would ravage France. (Figure 1) It draws from more than 700 films "sourced from diverse commercial (Pathé, Gaumont), state (Cinémathèque française, Musée Carnavalet, British Film Institute), and private archives (Boulogne),"[1] as well as "from personal collections, flea markets, and other sources including garrets, blockhouses, cellars, garbage bins, and even a rabbit hutch,"[2] employing a heterogeneity of film modes and styles, such as newsreel, fiction, and actuality.

Figure 1 Poster for *Paris 1900* (Nicole Védrès, 1947). Note the absence of the director's name. Claude Dauphin performed the voice-over narration.

Footage of some of the most celebrated luminaries of French art, literature and culture in the *Belle Époque*, such as Colette, André Gide, Paul Valéry, Jean Cocteau, Enrico Caruso, Sarah

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[1] Paula Amad, "Film as the 'Skin of History': André Bazin and the Specter of the Archive and Death in Nicole Védrès's *Paris 1900* (1947)," *Representations*, Vol. 130, No. 1 (Spring 2015), 95.

[2] Catherine Russell, "*Paris 1900*: Archiveology and the Compilation Film," *New Silent Cinema*, Katherine Groo and Paul Flaig, eds. (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 91.

Bernhardt, Maurice Chevalier, Auguste Rodin, Pierre Renoir, Claude Monet, Léon Blum, Buffalo Bill, and Charles Maurras, adds an air of glamour and excitement to the film.

Paris 1900 is an early attempt to regard film as both a window and a frame for historical contemplation. Védrès' stated goal was "to penetrate the cover of the pictures that have been selected and to capture, without particular emphasis, that special expression that is always hidden under the surface of the images."[3] In this way, *Paris 1900* performs the essayistic task of treating archival and found-footage images as both record and representation, but in the dearth of theory around essay film, collage, and compilation in English, it would remain largely peripheral for many decades. Certainly, there are examples of book-length Anglophone studies of the compilation film dating as far back as 1964 when Jay Leyda's *Film Begets Film: A Study of the Compilation Film* was published.[4]

Paris 1900 inspired its contemporaries, but largely fell out of film history until the 2000s when Anglophone film scholars began to theorize essay film. Until then it was difficult to categorize nonobjective compilation films. In the meantime, film theorists André Bazin and Siegfried Kracauer each found inspiration in *Paris 1900* that helped them to theorize film's capacity to enable "viewers to think the unthought of history."[5] I hope to help to recuperate the film further by placing it within a film history of the city-symphony-in-reverse as its first, yet forgotten, iteration, though I will not dedicate as much space to *Paris 1900* as the other case studies here due to its outlying geography and period. In studying how its innovative form was received upon its release and the years that followed, we can learn how theories of documentary realism influenced the viability of a city-symphony-in-reverse to be included in film historiography and theorized before the 2000s as well as how the film has been understood since the theorization of essay and compilation film. I argue here that *Paris 1900*'s relevance to film theory and historiography was apparent early on but could not be fully understood until essay and archive-based filmmaking began to be theorized, which has strongly contributed to the reemergence of the city-symphony-in-reverse in the 2000s, as well. The city-symphony-in-reverse had an early manifestation with *Paris 1900*, but due to the unique form of its address and

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[3] As quoted by Hilmar Hoffmann in *The Triumph of Propaganda: Film and National Socialism, 1933-1945* (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1996), 168.

[4] See also, Patrik Sjöberg, *The World in Pieces: A Study of Compilation Film* (Stockholm: Aura Florlag, 2001).

[5] Amad, "Film as the 'Skin of History,' 109.

montage of its materials, it could not be actualized again for nearly another 60 years. The writing on *Paris 1900* in the decades after its release shows that film historians and theorists could appreciate the film and even be inspired to write about its innovation without finding a place for it in film history.

The original inspiration for *Paris 1900* is credited to Pierre Braunberger, a vital independent Parisian producer, who had commissioned journalist Nicole Védrès to direct the film using found and archival footage, coming largely from the *Pathé* film archives (*Pathé* invented the newsreel with its *Pathé-Journal* division), and loaned to them through the *Cinémathèque Française*. Védrès had already been working with Henri Langlois at the *Cinémathèque* on an experimental archive-based book, *Images du cinema francais* [*Images of French Cinema*], which was released two years before as *Paris 1900*. Braunberger himself got his start working with Alberto Cavalcanti (who made the 1926 Parisian city symphony, *Rien que les Heures*) and Jean Renoir in the late 1920s. Later he helped several principal auteurs of mid-century French cinema get their starts. Most notably, he produced the early works of Alain Resnais, Jean-Luc Godard, François Truffaut, and Jean-Pierre Melville, establishing key sites to exhibit their work, such as the Cinéma du Panthéon, which was also the first Parisian theater to show foreign films in *version originale*. A 24-year-old Alain Resnais worked as an assistant to the production supervisor on *Paris 1900* while he was making his 1948 Oscar winning short, *Van Gogh*, also produced by Braunberger.

As a post-war film about a city that had recently experienced a profound trauma within a culture and nation whose dreams of a progressive modernity were crushed by the catastrophe of genocide and occupation, *Paris 1900* both recalls and critiques the inter-war city symphony tradition. The film begins, as many city symphonies did, by establishing a diurnal chronological progression of time accompanied by a light-hearted musical score. The beginning of the day is signaled primarily through the vocal commentary over imagery that could have been captured at any time of day: "At daybreak, a kitchen garden opens on narrow cobble streets freighted with history. Out of the early morning mists, some questionable characters emerge. … The city's waking up. Life stirs first on the Seine."[6] Actuality footage of a Parisian market place is shown as a French song, reminiscent of the calls vendors make in the open-air stalls to attract customers

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[6] John Mason Brown is credited with the English translation of the narration for the American version of *Paris 1900*.

to their produce and flowers, plays on top of the images. (Figures 2-4) We know the footage is actuality because of the cinema of attractions direct address of the gaze of the social actors as they work, and the slow right to left pan of the camera that takes in the various scenes without the motivation to capture anything specific.

Figures 2-5 We see a bustling street-life of vendors who peer at the camera as they hawk their wares, (top two and bottom left) and hoodlums as they scramble over cobblestones to escape the police (bottom right).

Footage of our "questionable characters" comes from an early on-location fictional work. We can discern its mode through the editing of policemen chasing the two hoodlums, and, as Catherine Russell observes, its use of stop-motion special effects and a jaunty piano accompaniment that contrasts with the city symphony orchestral score laid over the actuality footage.[7] (Figure 5) Also typical of the city symphony tradition, the film opens with a bustling

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[7] Russell, "*Paris 1900*: Archiveology and the Compilation Film," 105-6.

street life among the more visible signs of Paris' urban specificity, some of the most recognizable monuments and symbols of French nationalism, such as the Moulin Rouge, the statue of Marianne (the national symbol of the French Republic) at the Place de la République, (Figure 6) and of course the Eiffel Tower. (Figure 7) The representational strategy of riding the flows of the rhythms of the day borrowed from the city symphony is quickly abandoned, however. The "chronicle" structure of traditional historicism with its attendant dependence on chronology and narrative coherence suggested by the beginning intertitle is quickly deprioritized in favor of baroque archival montage strategies that emphasize heterogeneity, fragmentation, and reflexivity.

Figures 6 & 7 The statue of Marianne at the Place de la République, symbolizing France and surrounded by the values of liberty, equality, and fraternity (left), and France's symbol of modernity, the Eiffel Tower (right).

Paris 1900 redeploys archival imagery to recall, re-create[8] and resuscitate the *Belle Époque*, "a mythical period"[9] before catastrophe, only to complicate and reflect upon the supposed naïveté and peace of that period after the tragedy of the wars into which it led. "*Paris 1900* is less a "symphony" than a kind of sugar-coated eulogy," writes Russell; "Instead of nostalgia, it exhibits an undercurrent of failure and false promise."[10] *Paris 1900* is a eulogy both for the city symphony and for the restorative nostalgic premise that a time before catastrophe existed, and further that this time can be discovered, accessed and even returned to. The notion

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[8] The first title after the film title reads, ""a re-creation of La Belle Epoque 1900-1914".

[9] Russell, "*Paris 1900*: Archiveology and the Compilation Film," 91.

[10] Ibid., 92.

that France could be rebuilt in its own image of pre-war modernity must have been an attractive idea in the years that followed the Second World War.

Paris 1900 evokes the rhetoric of restorative nostalgia in order to subvert its demands and demonstrate the potential of the moving image archive to provide reflective nostalgic experiences. Performed by prolific French actor Claude Dauphin in the French version, and Manhattan socialite and Yale drama professor Monty Woolley in the English language release, the vocal commentary follows documentary conventions of patriarchal confidence and comforting omniscience to establish a (false) sense of mastery over the material. Amad calls Dauphin's voice-over persona "grandfatherly"[11], though he was only 44 at the time; and the affected "high society" lavish tones and emphases in Woolley's performance similarly strike an experienced and established male presence. Initially, the voiceover appears to assure the French post-war spectator that looking back to a time when French political and cultural life was strong and flourishing will fortify them with the reminder that their "essential" national characteristics cannot help but endure into the present (post-war) era once the ugliness of war and occupation is put behind them. "Those, it seems, were the happy times. In Paris, or 'Par-ree,' no matter how you pronounce it, the magic is the same," coos Woolley as the film begins. A few minutes later as we look at images of President Armand Fallières (1906-1913) ("*le père Fallières*" as he was affectionately known by his subjects), the vocal commentary reinforces those "happy times" by insisting on the high spirits of the Île-de-France's public officials. (Figures 8-9) The vocal commentary's dogged presentation of the president's demeanor as optimistic and without a trace of anxiety anticipating the devastation to come becomes hyperbolic in both tone and content as he continues to speak:

> The new president is Monsieur Fallières —the embodiment of those prosperous unfrowning years—Santa Claus could not be more cheerful! He has become the symbol of a France contented, sentimental, and perhaps, a little smug. His amiability is indestructible. He welcomes; he presides; and yet, he is sometimes disturbed. Even at a hunt he can whisper, "My little business in the provinces, it isn't doing too well." He returns home. Then reassured, because he's nothing if not an optimist, he's off again on another tour. … In short, *le président est bien content*!

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[11] Amad, "Film as the 'Skin of History'," 97.

This last line becomes a refrain throughout the film, underscoring the obliviousness at best, and the opacity at worse, of the country's leadership before the First World War. We must wonder why M. Fallières is so cheerful according to the film. The sarcasm of Fallières' hagiography is applied rather thick, questioning, in hindsight, why Fallières' presidency was as *laissez-faire* as it was in a time when such a massive political storm was brewing for France. As the film proceeds, the cracks in the logic of restorative nostalgia rapidly begin to show as the vocal commentary appears progressively more ironic. The desire and demand for restorative nostalgia in the post-war era is, thus, contested in such a manner throughout the film. And in so contesting, an opportunity for reflective nostalgia is opened up instead.
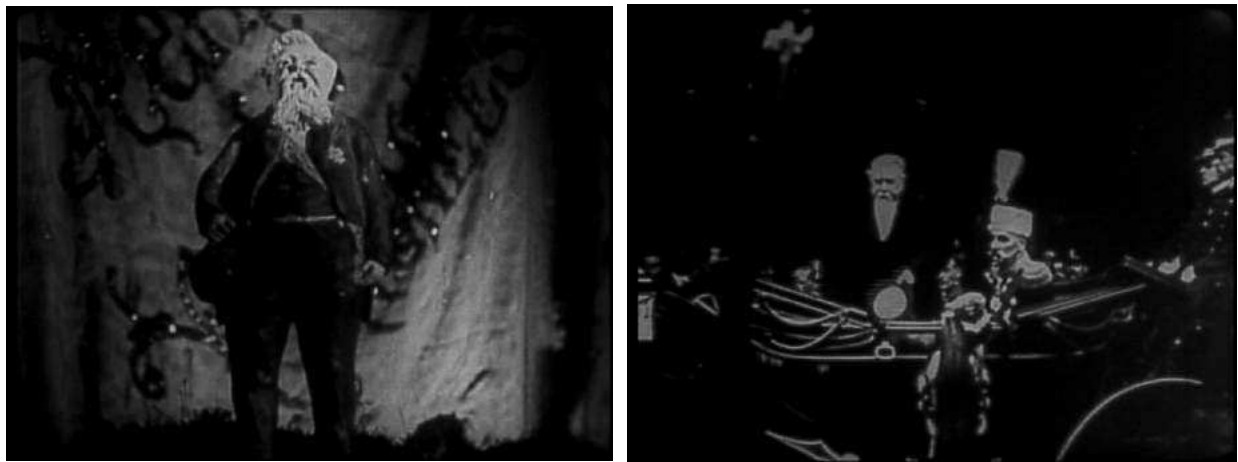
Figures 8 & 9 *Le père Fallières* as a rotating figurine (left) and receiving a foreign diplomat in archival footage (right).

Paris 1900 was thought to be amongst the most influential documentaries of the 1940s.[12] Védrès herself was as an early innovator in hybrid, experimental, compilation, and essay film forms, as can be seen through *Paris 1900* and her subsequent film, *La Vie commence demain* [Life Begins Tomorrow] (France, 1949), a film that is difficult to find today. *La Vie commence demain* combines a dramatic storyline with narration from prominent European intellectuals and artists of the period (Jean-Paul Sartre, Le Corbusier, and Pablo Picasso, to name a few of the most prominent), who meditate on the future of humanity after World War II. Paul Rotha called it "ambitious," yet declared that it "failed to give shape and force to its vitally important subject"

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[12] Hilmar Hoffmann, *The Triumph of Propaganda: Film and National Socialism, 1933-1945* (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1996), 168.

due to "confused editing and amateur camera interviews".[13] It may well have been ahead of its time, as was *Paris 1900*. Examining the literature on *Paris 1900* since its release reveals an initial fascination with the film that fades rather quickly only to be recovered decades later in the 2010s as the essay film begins to become part of the theoretical lexicon of film studies.

In the film literature written around its release, *Paris 1900* enjoyed a charmed, yet sparse and taciturn life due to its distinctive form. It is referenced in the first paragraph of Paul Rotha and Roger Manvell's chapter "Films of Fact" in their 1950 book *Movie Parade: 1888-1949, a Pictorial Survey of World Cinema*. Here, the authors credit the film as an exemplar of what was a rather new strategy for movie-making—archival compilation.[14] A few paragraphs later, writing about the value of "the newsreel compilation" or "the historical compilation" film—"now that the archives are beginning to show the result of many years' careful preservation"—they name *Paris 1900* as the sole example of an "individual and impressionistic" compilation film, as they call for more "experimental work" in this regard.[15] Later in the chapter, when the typical "city symphonies" are profiled simply as documentaries, *Paris 1900* is not included among them. Further, in a 1950 article for the *Hollywood Quarterly* about the nascent Edinburgh Documentary Film Festival (EDFF), British film critic and one of the EDFF's founders, Forsyth Hardy identifies *Paris 1900* as one of three films (Flaherty's *Louisiana Story*, and Rossellini's *Germany, Year Zero* were the other two) that "magnificently demonstrated the range of the realistic method of film making" at the time, standing out from the other 120 films shown in the festival's second year (1948).[16] American film critic and historian Georges Sadoul, also writing for *Hollywood Quarterly* in 1950, mentions *Paris 1900* as an exemplary of the poetic side of the "French documentary school" in his article "The Postwar French Cinema," calling it "a sly and charming montage."[17] Although *Paris 1900* was regarded as a triumph in the years following its release, it has been largely unseen and unanalyzed since. The exceptions to the lack of theoretical consideration of *Paris 1900* in the years that follow the film's release can be found in works of

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[13] Paul Rotha, *Documentary Film,* 3rd Edition (London: Faber and Faber LTD, 1958), 270.

[14] Paul Rotha, and Roger Manvell, *Movie Parade 1888-1949: A Pictorial Survey of World Cinema* (New York, NY: The Studio publications, 1950), 124. Moreover, *Paris 1900* is also included in Paul Rotha and Co.'s "List of 100 Important Documentary Films," which appears in the third edition of *Documentary Film* published in 1951 (the first edition came out in 1939). They do not include any other reference to this film in the body of the text. Paul Rotha, *Doumentary Film,* 3rd ed. (London: Faber and Faber, Limited, 1951), 372.

[15] Ibid., 125.

[16] Forsyth Hardy, "The Edinburgh Film Festival," *Hollywood Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Autumn, 1950): 37.

[17] Georges Sadoul, "The Postwar French Cinema," *Hollywood Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (Spring, 1950): 244.

Siegfried Kracauer, André Bazin and Sir Arthur Elton (president of the British Scientific Film Association and a producer-director in the British documentary film movement).

Kracauer and Bazin, in *Theory of Film* and "À la recherche du temps perdu: *Paris 1900*",[18] respectively, both establish *Paris 1900* as a relevant work for their ontological realist film theories. Bazin connects *Paris 1900* and Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* [*In Search of Lost Time*] (1913) through the title of his short (four paragraph) review of the film, originally published in *L'Écran français* on September 30, 1947. "À la recherche du temps perdu: *Paris 1900*" appears later in his *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?*, but not in its English translation, *What is Cinema?*, which may partially explain the lack of serious writing in Anglophone literature on *Paris 1900*, given that Bazin was the most influential film theorist to take a sustained interest in the film. But there is also little engagement with the film after Bazin in French, as well. Thus, the exclusion of "À la recherche du temps perdu: *Paris 1900*" from the English translation of *What is Cinema?* probably contributed less to the lack of Anglophone engagement with the film in the years that followed its release than the absence of theory around its compilation and essayistic strategies. In this very short review of *Paris 1900*, Bazin theorizes the limitations of, what the French called, *film de montage* and the limitations of film as a historiographical medium: "Le cinema est une machine à retrouver le temps pour mieux le perdre. *Paris 1900* marque l'apparition de la tragédie spécifiquement cinématographique, celle du Temps deux fois perdu. [The cinema is a machine that retrieves time only to lose it better. *Paris 1900* marks the appearance of the specifically cinematographic tragedy, that of Time twice lost.]"[19] Siegfried Kracauer's chapter, "The Establishment of Physical Existence," in his 1960 book, *Theory of Film: the Redemption of Physical Reality*, in which he cites *Paris 1900*, deals with film's "recording and revealing functions" as a photographic record that goes beyond photography to capture movement and duration. Kracauer's reference to *Paris 1900* situates it as an example of film's unique capacity for revelation in "those near and faraway days which mark the border region between the present and past."[20] When *Paris 1900* is included in twentieth-century Anglophone film texts, such as Jay Leyda's 1964 *Films Begets Films: A Study of the*

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[18] Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: the Redemption of Physical Reality* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960); and André Bazin, "*Paris 1900*: À la recherché du temps perdu," *L'Écran français* (30 September 1947).

[19] Bazin, "*Paris 1900*," 41, my translation.

[20] Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, 57.

Compilation Film and Erik Barnouw's 1974 *Documentary: A History of the Nonfiction Film*, as a rule, I have found that it is mentioned as an exemplar and only once within the text. Barnouw calls it a portrait of Parisian life before World War I, praising its "rich and diverse material" and ability to influence other work, but he does not comment on its biting critique of French society during the *Belle Époque*.[21] Elton spends comparatively more time with *Paris 1900* in his 1955 piece, "The Film as Source Material for History," in which he explores film as a historical medium, including *Paris 1900* as an exemplar of subjective compilation films. Ultimately, Elton concludes that compilation films are capable of provoking "questions of historical philosophy".[22] *Paris 1900*, according to Elton, however, is "evocative" but historically "incidental".[23] The only sustained analysis of *Paris 1900* before Amad's 2015 piece was Bazin's contemporaneous short article.[24]

The references to *Paris 1900* demonstrate a strong interest in the film's innovative and exploratory character in both Europe and America in the post-war period, which might leave us wondering why a film that inspired such excitement upon its release was so routinely left out of film studies exhibition canons and literature until some 60 years after it was made. Amid current interest in archive-based film practices and essay film in film studies, only within the 2010s have scholars, such as Paula Amad, Christa Blümlinger, Catherine Russell and Steven Ungar, given serious attention to *Paris 1900* since the years following its release. Notably, film scholars Christa Blümlinger and Paula Amad both position *Paris 1900* in terms of its influence on Bazin's film theory. Bazin was so taken with the film that he is rumored to have leapt "over two rows of chairs with tears of pleasure in his eyes, at the conclusion of *Paris 1900*, to embrace its creator, Nicole Védrès."[25] "The faded images of a time past were structured by people he knew

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[21] Erik Barnouw, *Documentary: A History of the Nonfiction Film* (New York: Oxford U.P, 1983), 199.

[22] Arthur Elton, "The Film as Source Material for History," *Aslib Proceedings* 7, no. 4 (November 1955): 210.

[23] Elton, "The Film as Source Material for History," 212.

[24] At the 2012 Film Studies Association of Canada conference, Russell contributed the conference presentation "*Paris 1900*: The Archive in Ruins," to the panel "The Essay Film: Decolonizing the Archive, Repositioning Spectatorship", and the following year, she delivered another presentation, "The Special Effects of the Archive: *Paris 1900* and the Decay of Fiction," at "The Magic of Special Effects" conference held at the Cinémathèque québécoise in Montreal November 5-10, 2013. Thus, Russell's unpublished work on *Paris 1900* predates Amad's 2015 article. Russell has remarked, however, that she was inspired to take up analysis of *Paris 1900* by Amad's 2010 book *Counter-Archive*.

[25] Dudley Andrew, *André Bazin*, (New York: Oxford University Press, [1978] 2013), 139.

and respected into a highly contemporary meditation on time and place," explains Dudley Andrew in his 1978 tome on Bazin's intellectual life.[26]

Ungar includes *Paris 1900* in a list of sixteen post-war films, mainly works by Left Bank filmmakers, which he believes take up "Jean Vigo's 1930 call for a social cinema whose treatment of provocative subjects would move spectators in ways that only cinema could move them."[27] Vigo outlined his vision for a new type of cinema in a June 14, 1930 presentation, "Toward a Social Cinema," delivered before the second screening of his city symphony, *À propos de Nice*.[28] In formulating his notion of a "social cinema," Vigo drew on films that visually assaulted the spectator, like Luis Buñuel's *Un Chien andalou*, as well as on "depictions of daily life in and around Paris [that] redirected conventions of reportage toward social critique."[29] Ungar's is not a sustained attempt to recover *Paris 1900* for a history of the essay film, or "social cinema" as Vigo calls it. His main argument considers the potential to reveal "repressed geopolitical relations" through a close reading of Resnais' "*Toute la mémoire du monde*," but his inclusion of the up-till-then mostly forgotten *Paris 1900* shows the importance of the film to essay film scholarship, as well as its relation to other early theorizations of the essayistic in film, such as Vigo's "social cinema," which had not been considered previously in writing about the film.

In 2010, German-French film scholar, Christa Blümlinger wrote about *Paris 1900*, Bazin, Chris Markers' *Level Five* (1997), and essay film, but with less sustained analysis of Védrès' film than Bazin, Amad or Russell. Blümlinger's aim in this work is to theorize Marker's discursive use of found images in *Level Five*. In doing so, she opens with Chris Marker's acknowledgement of his debt to Védrès and *Paris 1900,* and Bazin's influence on his work:

> When Nicole Védrès's compilation film *Paris 1900* was first released, André Bazin issued this frankly programmatic statement: "One should not, however, believe that the authors' merits are diminished by the exclusive use of newsreel footage. On the contrary, their success can be traced to a subtle working of the medium, to the cleverness of their

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Steven Ungar, "Scenes in a Library: Alain Resnais and *Toute la mémoire du monde*," *SubStance* #128, Vol. 41, no. 2, (2012): 59.

[28] Jean Vigo, "Towards a Social Cinema," Stuart Liebman, trans., *Millennium Film Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Winter 1977-78): 21-24.

[29] Ungar, 59.

selection from an immense body of material; to the delicacy and the intelligence of the editing, to all the tools of taste and culture used to tame the phantoms" (Bazin 1958, 41f). It is no accident that decades later Chris Marker employs "found footage" from this very film in *Level Five* (1997), which can be called a kind of science-fiction documentary. In the program of his retrospective at the Cinémathèque française in 1998, Marker noted: "I owe everything to Nicole Védrès", and as a reply in a sense to Bazin, he went on: "Here it is not a question of the intelligence of the filmmaker, rather of the previously only somewhat acknowledged idea that the intelligence could be found in the source material, the raw material from which the commentary and the editing proceed, obtaining from them an object, namely Film.[30]

While Bazin attributes to the director of the compilation film, Védrès, value in her function as intermediary between the monstrous archive and the audience, Marker specifically acknowledges Védrès as an influence but reduces the significance of the director to highlight and redeem the source material itself. The footage from *Paris 1900* that Marker uses in *Level Five* is of the man who Bazin, Amad, and Russell call "the birdman" and who is called by the contemporaneous voiceover a "modern Icarus". In 1912, Franz Reichelt, an Austrian tailor and inventor, was recorded by the Pathé cameras standing at the first level of the Eiffel tower in a self-made flight suit: he shows off his suit to the camera; he climbs upon the rail, hesitates, and jumps to his death. We see him as he falls, then the six-inch indentation in the earth as it is measured, and finally his body is carried away through the crowd. (Figures 10-11)
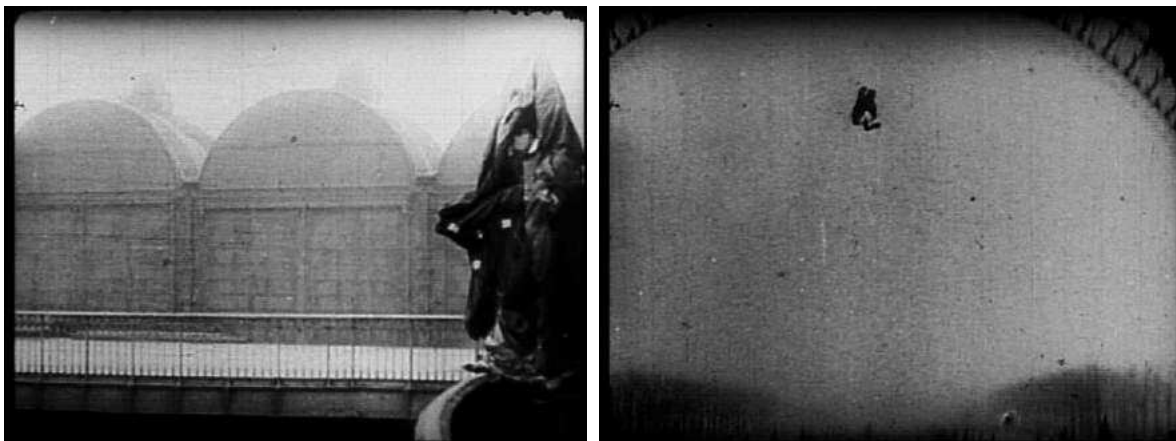
Figure 10 & 11 The birdman prepares to jump from the Eiffel Tower (left). His descent is swift and flightless (right).

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[30] Christa Blümlinger, "The Imaginary in the Documentary Image: Chris Marker's *Level Five*," *Image & Narrative,* Vol 11, No 1 (2010): 3-4.

After Bazin, Blümlinger analyzes how this footage, as it appears in *Level Five*, manipulated "[t]hrough enlargement, slow motion, concealment, repetition and stoppage," represents the camera as a witness that drives people to become subjects of representation even to the point of their ultimate destruction.[31] She concludes her discussion of *Paris 1900* and the birdman's jump with Bazin's observation that the eternal, soulless gaze of the camera pushes people to dangerous extremes rather than appear cowards in the historical record. The camera's "impersonal gaze on history" does not allow time to be regained in the literary Proustian fashion, but rather brings into view "found" bits of lost time only to lose them again, concludes Bazin.[32] The difference between Védrès' and Marker's use of the birdman footage, as well as Bazin's and Blümlinger's discussions of it, can be seen as a result of the awaking of the theory and production of found-footage and essayistic filmmaking, in which the nature of the archival material as image, sign and spectacle is pursued over its status as a historical document, or in conjunction with it, respectively.

Amad and Russell examine the birdman footage within the context of *Paris 1900*, coming to similar conclusions as Blümlinger about the camera's role in motivating people to become part of history as spectacle, but with added textual analysis on the allegorical function of the sequence. The birdman footage is the most uncanny of all the footage in Védrès' film because it captures the moment of death. But the death seems highly unnecessary. This birdman engages in a practice of tower jumping that has never been successful in producing flight over its several-thousand-years history, just at the moment when technology is overcoming the problem. The sequence immediately following it displays Louis Blériot after his 1909 flight across the English Channel, three years prior to the birdman's jump, emphasizing Reichelt's folly. Russell sees the juxtaposition of Reichelt's and Blériot's aviation stunts as evocative of the obsession with a notion of automatic progress that depends on the amnesia of alternative strategies to function: the birdman's "role in *Paris 1900* is precisely to underline the vulnerability of the past to teleological narratives of success in which an aviator such as Bleriot is a hero and poor old Reichelt is forgotten."[33] The archival resurrection of a failed attempt to achieve human progress shows that the archive is capable of undermining the notion of automatic progress and producing

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[31] Blümlinger, "The Imaginary in the Documentary Image," 11.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Russell, "*Paris 1900*: Archiveology and the Compilation Film," 97.

a more complex discourse on human endeavour. Amad observes a break in the tone at this point in the film, "the birdman sequence shifts the tone of the film from a light-hearted nostalgic skip through the Belle Epoque to a bleak forewarning of the abyss of the Great War into which Europe would soon plunge".[34] The birdman's seeming ignorance of the forms of relatively safe aviation of his time can be seen as an allegory for France's pre-war denial of dangerous political currents that served to shatter the hazy fog of innocence in the *Belle Époque*, as Amad and Russell both suggest. Russell explains, "In keeping with Benjamin's theory of allegory as a process of mortification and loss, the birdman's death proclaims the failure of *La Belle Époque* to save itself, and the world, from devastation."[35]

One of the worries that *Paris 1900* provokes in film theorists like Bazin and Elton, and subsequently for Amad and Russell, revolves around whether archival film footage accumulated to that point could be seen as documents with serious historical import, or if their compilation simply re-presented fragmented "tabloid-like" spectacles, "seemingly trivial remains of history," and "unusable mass[es] of incidental visual chit-chat, lacking the epic and ordered sense of serious historical documents."[36] Vedrès herself believed that 99 percent of the footage she discovered in her research for the film could not be thought to represent "important events."[37] But what was thought of as a failing at the time can now be redeemed for instigating a new and provocative view of the moving image's capacity to record history from below, from street-level, as it were. Russell argues that "*Paris 1900* expands the concept of the archive and 'official' history to include many other histories that were recorded on film and subsequently abandoned as inconsequential."[38] Even today, scholars and filmmakers continue to call into question the capacity of film to represent what documentary scholars call an "historical world" (as opposed to the invented worlds of fiction), and a world in which events of historical value can be clearly and distinctly preserved and perceived through the moving image apparatus.

Some of the more remarkable documentary footage displayed in *Paris 1900*, besides the birdman's jump, shows the 1910 flood of the Seine. (Figure 12) Woolley's voiceover mocks the

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[34] Amad, "Film as the 'Skin of History'," 85.

[35] Russell, "*Paris 1900*: Archiveology and the Compilation Film," 103.

[36] Amad, "Film as the 'Skin of History'," 85, 87. Amad paraphrases Elton from "The Film as Source Material for History" here.

[37] Ibid., 85.

[38] Russell, "*Paris 1900*: Archiveology and the Compilation Film," 91.

drama of the flood by comparing it to war: "Paris has never known such a flood! Worse than a tornado! Worse than a war! But wars are fortunately things of the past." The irony of the last line further insinuates that what made the *Belle Époque* seem like an idyllic moment in time could only have appeared so due to ignorance, lack of foresight, or, worst, naïveté. But hindsight only has value if it is put to use in the present, for it cannot help the past. What seeds of catastrophe can be seen in periods of peace? We must not assume that peacetime is a time for a return to innocence and idleness. *Paris 1900* is surely an indictment of the *Belle Époque*; it exposes the beauty of the period as deception, disingenuousness, and folly. But its critique is more seriously directed towards the present of its audience who are caught in the same historical web as those on screen.

Figure 12 The 1910 flood of the Seine.

It is fitting that the first backwards glance at urban modernity in cinema occurred in the same city that Benjamin located most of his own retrospective evaluation of urban modernity, Paris. *Paris 1900* succeeds in being both late to the baroque and early to the postmodern parties. An untimely object. And yet, the historical questions it provokes are in many ways timeless. Were the people of pre-war France ignorant of what was on the horizon? Or were they aware and powerless? Or were they in denial? Were the people swept up in a blind faith of the power of their modern state? Or were they swept up in a blind faith in a nationalism that thinks that evil cannot happen where "good" people live? Or was the catastrophe of the Great War on a level they could have never anticipated, and so they missed the signs of its imminent arrival? Can we see ourselves in them? We can ask this last question from the perspective of the post-war era from which the film emerges or from whatever time period we are in when we watch the film,

because it is a timeless question that leads us to ask about the deeper realities of historical consciousness. That is, what does it mean to be a responsible historically conscious "citizen" (for lack of a better word) if we are always mostly blind to and in many ways mostly powerless to defend against the ever-brewing catastrophes? But the key word here is "mostly," for we do make choices to see or not to see, to follow or not follow, and to communicate or not communicate.

Paris 1900 is a film recovered for film history by the theorization of essay film in the 2010s. Although found-footage filmmaking, and compilation film (areas of film scholarship in which *Paris 1900* could easily have found redemption) have been widely theorized in the last 40 years, *Paris 1900* was not reevaluated by film historiographers and theorists until the essay film was. Both Amad and Russell argue for the inclusion of *Paris 1900* within the canon of essay film.[39] The reason for this convergence, I argue, is that *Paris 1900* is not simply compilation or found-footage film, but rather a distinct type of essay film, a city-symphony-in-reverse, which brings together an embodied, situated spectatorship with the reflective nostalgia of an archival travelogue.

Paris 1900 evoked a strong reaction from its contemporary film community due to its clear commitment to the historical capacity of the moving image. And yet, confusion around just exactly how film captures and communicates historical value has relegated the film to a marginalized position within the canon and film scholarship. What follows in this dissertation is an attempt to understand how a resurgence of the city-symphony-in-reverse some 60 years later, preceded by film scholarship around compilation, found-footage, and essay film in the intervening years, can help to answer some of the questions around the value of the film fragment to historiography that has confounded film scholars from the mid-century till today. I argue that city-symphonies-in-reverse pursue a baroque understanding of time and space that encourages new visions of historical consciousness that could not be fully appreciated or grasped at the time of *Paris 1900*'s release. *Paris 1900*'s untimeliness as a city-symphony-in-reverse, the only one I have found in the twentieth century, explains, as well as redeems, the initial fascination with the film followed by an imprecise and inconsistent remembrance of it.

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[39] Amad, "Film as the 'Skin of History'," 88; and Russell, "*Paris 1900*: Archiveology and the Compilation Film," 99-103.

I.

Concepts and Contexts

Methodology and Approach to Case Studies

My research takes a distinctly interdisciplinary methodology. This methodology places a significant emphasis on the power of the object of analysis to substantiate, exceed or contest the theoretical underpinnings the cultural analyst employs. For this type of methodology to be judged successful, a focus on the object of analysis (here, particular films), in which the analyst looks for opportunities to let the object "speak back," must be combined with "conceptual analysis," which permits novel approaches to disciplinary objects through the use of concepts borrowed and traced from outside disciplines. Concepts are seen both as heuristic and historical in this view.

The first step to this methodology is identifying one's concepts. For this thesis, I have chosen several conceptual angles from which to view my objects of analysis in a manner that puts them into contact with relevant ideas which have tended to find more comfortable homes within other, or between, disciplines. For example, I will show that the concepts of "the baroque," "essay," "anamorphosis," "nostalgia," "the archive" and "cinema of attractions," which have a legacy of theory primarily situated in the disciplines of Art History, Literature, and Film Studies, help us to perceive the contingent, embodied, finite relationships between the spectator and the spectacle in film historiography, and at the same time, these concepts will connect such experiences to discourses that go back several hundred years, making links to larger trends in thought more apparent.

The next step is to investigate the lineage of concepts in order to comprehend the inflections different disciplines have made on the concepts in order to use them most effectively for the purposes of analyzing objects (films, in this case). As Mieke Bal writes in *Traveling Concepts in the Humanities* (2002), "concepts are neither fixed nor unambiguous. … They travel—between disciplines, between individual scholars, between historical periods, and

between geographically dispersed academic communities."[1] This travelling, she argues, "is an asset rather than a liability" because it allows for fresh interpretations of disciplinary objects, as well as a reevaluation of the usefulness of current concepts for a particular area of study.[2] Lastly, the concept is then put into contact with relevant objects to see the possible benefits of employing such a concept as well as to perceive the ways in which the specific objects might resist the universalizing potential of the particular theoretical construct set up for the concept, and how it might be reformulated to better meet our needs.

The genealogical method will also be an important strategy for creating a narrative within this research. I take as prior exemplars of this approach Friedrich Nietzsche and Michel Foucault, and therefore I will attempt to adopt what I see as their hermeneutical principles in my work. Wendy Brown offers a beneficial description of the *aims* of genealogy:

> [Genealogy] does violence to [the] ordinary ordering and situation [of the terms by which we live], and hence to their givenness. … to create some kind of distance between us and our knowledge, unsettling what we think we know, defamiliarizing the familiar, defamiliarizing us with ourselves. … Genealogy promises a worldview that is differently populated and oriented than the one in which we are steeped.[3]

The features that stand out in Brown's account of genealogy for me are the unsettling of knowledge and the defamiliarization of the commonplace, which emphasizes self-reflexivity, discovery, and provocation in the practice of geneaology. Foucault also emphasizes that concepts analyzable through genealogy, such as sexuality or discipline, cannot be traced to an original, authentic or stable interpretation. Such concepts are composed, rather, of a number of reinterpretations played out over time within the politics of truth. To this end, I will examine the problems of the archive today in terms of concepts that go beyond the history of the medium of film itself that connect to concurrent issues in critical thought and historiography.

Each film in this study proposes a way to revise notions of the archive, the city and spectatorship. My approach to my case studies will be to describe and contextualize these

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[1] Mieke Bal, and Sherry Marx-MacDonald, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 23-24.

[2] Ibid., 25.

[3] Wendy Brown, *Politics Out of History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 95-6.

interventions. The focus of each chapter will be to historicize each film within its film culture; to position its author's professional orientation towards the chosen archive and city; and to explore the baroque elements of each film.

A theme that travels through my analyses is the plentiful and various representational forms, with strong roots in other mediums, that characterize the strategies the films take. This dissertation sees attempts to re-classify such archive-based films slightly away from both documentary and experimental film discourses as symptomatic of a larger shift towards opening up new historiographical, philosophical and aesthetic avenues for the moving image archive through critical strategies not frequently employed within more familiar modes of address. The films examined here remain in tension with documentary and experimental discourses, however, even as they bring in radical new strategies of representation and address.

The apparent "auteur" of the city-symphony-in-reverse is here reconceived as a figure, a figure that models a precise relationship to the archive and archives of the filmmaker's particular urban environment. The figures of the essayist, the collector, and the charlatan model a moving image urban archival avant-garde pedagogy that, I argue, demonstrate important strategies to help foster historical consciousness after the turn of the twenty-first century. Avoiding the tunnel-vision of auteur theory, Thomas Elsaesser suggests a "historio-pragmatic, as opposed to essentialist" approach to nonfiction film to reveal a wider variety of players and interests that play a role in bringing a nonfiction film into being by posing three questions: 1. "Who commissioned the film?"; 2 "What was the occasion for which it was made"; and 3. "To what use was it put or to whom was it addressed?"[4] Despite the essayistic direct address of my case studies, I employ Elsaesser's questions for each case study to discover any underlying influences in the cinematic texts.

My analysis will also shed some light on what is at stake in the current crises around the value of the archive and archival material. First, photography has lost its status as a nearly infallible, or at least largely believable, index to the historical world. This does not mean, however, that the photographic does not continue to offer a partial index to the historical, or that it is not still operative in influencing beliefs. What this loss does mean, I argue, is that a

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[4] Thomas Elsaesser, "Archives and Archaeologies: The Place of Non-Fiction Film in Contemporary Media," in *Films that Work: Industrial Film and the Productivity of Media*, Vinzenz Hediger and Patrick Vonderau eds.)Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press. 2009), 23.

skepticism around forging relationships with the past through the photographic object has taken hold in documentary spectatorship, which has consequences for documentary realism and moving image historiography. Second, due to the dominance of digital technology, the global economic crises of the late 2000s, and the establishment of neo-liberal principles in governance and commerce nearly everywhere, an ideology which devalues the importance of heritage, the arts and the humanities, archives have been defunded worldwide. That material archives have not been maintained, and in many instances cannot be maintained or will not be maintained for much longer poses a real threat to the future of historiography. How artists, scholars, and various communities work with governments to create policies that preserve extant audiovisual material will dictate how the moving image may contribute to the memory of the twentieth century, the age of celluloid. And third, a loss of faith in the certainty, stability and unity that historiographical projects attempt to establish and convey can, and arguably has, provoked a descent into a radical relativism from which it can be difficult to establish a new or alternative historiographical paradigm.

In light of these current crises, this thesis looks at the lasting effects of some of the more totalizing aspects of an Enlightenment-based modernity as the central quandary that has been playing itself out within the history of the documentary tradition. While cinema emerges out of the quests of modernity, documentary in particular has been positioned, for much of its history in the mainstream as the champion of cinema's contribution to the aims of the Enlightenment.[5] Through the lens of the concepts and practices of essay, anamorphosis and reflective nostalgia, and through the particular films I will analyze in this study, I hope to be able to open up the question of how and why particular films have attempted to revisit baroque strategies of representation in order to move beyond politically reactionary and overly reductive aspects of modernity and postmodernity within the documentary tradition.

As I will argue in this dissertation, city-symphonies-in-reverse take an anamorphic perspective on the moving image city archive. These fragments of a city's past are curated by the city-symphony-in-reverse filmmaker to be inspected for the visual revelations of a ruins of the city which can only be witnessed through the moving image archive. Excerpts are chosen for

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[5] For instance, Bill Nichols calls the Enlightenment paradigms that influence the documentary tradition's "truth-telling" structures, "discourses of sobriety." See, Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 39.

their remarkable visibility. The moments chosen are baroque in the sense that they show, from the archival material available, the most revealing and dramatic views of a city in the midst of becoming.

The films in this study were selected for their ability to enable people to have experiences with the historical aspects of the image that are not possible by other means. I seek to take these marginalized "avant-garde" films out of the ghetto of film studies in order to give them a place in discussions around historiography, the archive, spectatorship and the city in the larger arena of the humanities. Much like the baroque facades of cathedrals and theatres that set the tone of provocation and potential bewilderment at the extravagance of what could be found within built structures, I see the films in this study as baroque entryways to the sublime world of urban moving image archives.

Historicism and Historical Consciousness

In the 1970s, 80s and 90s, philosophers of history, art historians, and literary theorists, such as Hayden White (1973), Hans Kellner (1989), Stephen Bann (1990), and Frank Ankersmit (1983, 1994),[6] destabilized traditional historiographical truth claims by questioning their basic premises. These theorists agreed that historians did not so much *discover* the truth about the past, but rather they *built meaning* around events, which then brought particular patterns from within the supposed continuum of history into view. They argued that "historicism"—or conventional historiography—depends on culturally constructed beliefs in history as a continuum, ruled by cause and effect, and in the narrative potential to represent this continuum as transparent. In order to usher in a "new" historicism, the first task that theorists such as White, Kellner, Bann, and Ankersmit would have to collectively accomplish was to identify and critique a cultural predisposition towards totalizing discourses of the past as well as the historian's role in

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[6] See, Haden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press. 1973); Hans Kellner, *Language and Historical Representation: Getting the Story Crooked* (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989); Stephen Bann, *The Inventions of History: Essays on the Representation of the Past* (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1990); Frank R. Ankersmit, *Narrative Logic: A Semantic Analysis of the Historian's Language* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1983); and Frank R. Ankersmit, *History and Tropology: The Rise and Fall of Metaphor* (Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1994).

perpetuating such discourses.[7] Literary scholar, Ernst Van Alphen provides further elucidation around this move to understand the relationship between history and narrative in the late twentieth century:

> The narrative text is a specific discourse which has cognitive consequences for the history told. It imposes specific form and meaning on history. … central notions like totality, unity or coherence are not the essence or nature of historical reality, but effects of their rhetorical or narrative discourse. In fact, it is not possible any longer to say that they speak *about* history; what they do instead is create history by means of discourse.[8]

Thus, the "new historians" found that discourse and narrative provide rational structure to history, not the other way around. Furthermore, what is continuous is not reality, claims Kellner in his 1989 book *Language and Historical Representation*, but rather the mythic forms through which our culture represents reality. Through their sequentiality, historical narratives are shot through with explanation, even when they simply attempt to describe events. In the end, Kellner deduces that "the intuition of historical continuity has less to do with either documentary fullness or personal consciousness than it has with the nature of narrative understanding."[9] Thus, for Kellner, narrative coherence might well be the biggest factor in the cultural acceptance of a historical account. According to these historiographers, then, narrative is the means by which continuity, totality, unity and coherence are imposed on history, not the other way around, as it had commonly been thought.

These reversals in the accepted theories of historiography, which ask us to look at history as a creation of discourse, are radical challenges to any medium concerned with historical thinking. In her 1988 book on postmodern representation, Linda Hutcheon coins the term "historiographical metafiction" to describe "the more paradoxical and historically complex" works of literature.[10] Historiographical metafictions "[focus] on the possibility and impossibility

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[7] Ernst van Alphen's chapter "The Performativity of Histories: Graham Swift's *Waterland* as a Theory of History" in *The Point of Theory: Practices of Cultural Analysis*, Mieke, Bal and Inge E. Boer, eds. (New York: Continuum, 1994), 202.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid. As quoted by van Alphen: Hans Kellner, *Language and Historical Representation: Getting the Story Crooked* (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 1.

[10] Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 40.

of historical reference," van Alphen clarifies after Hutcheon.[11] Such works are "the artistic counterpart[s] of the scholarly practice of contemporary historiography. In both domains the truth claims of the writing of history or, rather, in the case of literature, the claim of plausibility, is problematized."[12] The problem with historiographical metafiction, argues van Alphen, is that the discussion of history continues to revolve around "truth, exactitude, completeness" in its endless deconstruction of these notions, instead of producing something new.[13] The corpus of films in this dissertation can easily be seen to engage in this postmodern historiographical project, functioning as "an artistic counterpart" to contemporary historiography. I would like to propose, however, that the films gathered here around archival montage, specific cities, and several baroque critical strategies of representation are works that take up the deconstruction of such notions, but contrary to van Alphen's assessment of their literary cousins, these works do produce something new. The way they produce something new is by not making their deconstructions of "truth, exactitude, completeness" their central aims. Rather, the films in my corpus interrogate these supposed virtues of documentary film, in order to show how contrary values, partial truths, figuration, and fragmentation, can and do contribute to more nuanced and varied historical representations, which are needed to provoke the necessary questions to deepen historical consciousness.

Lingering loyalty to the philosophical tenets of old historicism still exist in information-based documentary film, and can especially be seen where the archive is employed. Old historicism's reliance on positivism, facticity, and uncomplicated notions of historical objectivity, degrades the power of the moving image, and more specifically the archival moving image, to present complex, even contradictory, views of the past. Old historicism is flawed in its ability to provide documentary spectators with the historical tools they need to find relevance and utility in the past themselves, especially in regard to the use of the archive.

As recently as 2004, a research group out of the University of British Columbia, The Centre of the Study of Historical Consciousness, claim to have released the *first*[14] book in North

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[11] Van Alphen, "The Performativity of Histories," 203.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] While it may be true that *Theorizing Historical Consciousness* is the first book on historical consciousness from the tradition of Continental political historical philosophy to be published in North America, the authors neglect to acknowledge the 1968 book *Historical Consciousness* by Hungarian-born American conservative historian, John

America to appropriate the concept of historical consciousness from Continental political historians, the anthology, *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*. Editor Peter Seixas, a Canadian history educator, begins to map out its interdisciplinary affinities: "[historical consciousness] implicates historiography, collective memory, and history education (or, as the field is known in French and German, 'history didactics')."[15] Other terms to have been used are "historical awareness" or "historical education" in Britain, and "historical literacy" in Anglo-America. Unlike "historical consciousness," however, "'[h]istorical literacy' is a behaviouristic term suggesting a mastery of the basic historical information," and "does not require a personal meaning-attribution to history."[16] In the Anglo and American traditions, the historical has often been seen as a pragmatic for developing cognitive skills (Britain), or citizenship guidance (American), whereas the notion of historical consciousness is theorized as "a vital human asset for an orientation to life and the world,"[17] an existential faculty. Historical consciousness is a process of learning how to recognize the personal in the collective past, and vice versa. The study of historical consciousness is the study, not of the past, but of "how people look at the past."[18] Therefore, in order to possess historical consciousness, we must also possess a reflexive awareness of how we look at the past, individually and collectively.

The recent adoption of the study of historical consciousness in Canada, argues Seixas, is directly connected to "the disorientation that results from awareness of rapid change", part of "the postmodern condition," an extended malaise of the subject theorized by David Harvey and Jean-François Lyotard in the 1980s.[19] In the last half-century, we have seen an unprecedented unraveling of these discourses from within the humanities in general, and the discipline of history in particular. Despite the drastic reduction of faith in the professional historian from the perspective of late-twentieth century philosophers of history, and the subsequent radical upset of

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Lukacs (not to be confused with Hungarian Marxist literary historian, György Lukács). The elision of Lukacs' work from Seixas' account of published writing on the topic in North America may stem from Lukacs' current identification as a reactionary, a position that seeks to restore society and politics to a previous state (usually before either WWI or the Civil War). His views on history then are inflected with different ideological values than those of The Centre of the Study of Historical Consciousness.

[15] Peter Seixas, ed. *Theorizing Historical Consciousness* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 4.

[16] Sirkka Ahonen, "Essay Review: Historical consciousness: a viable paradigm for history education?" *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 2005, Vol. 37, No. 6, 697.

[17] Ibid., 698.

[18] The Centre of the Study of Historical Consciousness. *The University of British Columbia.* http://www.cshc.ubc.ca/about/ (Last accessed, 14 January 2017).

[19] Seixas, *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*, 4.

historicism itself, Seixas and his colleagues are in agreement that, at the turn of the millennium, "the historian's tools and dispositions continue to have an important role".[20] But we must also look beyond the historian's tools, since "people's relation to the past is not only a matter of formal education but a broad social phenomenon."[21] This is to say that much of our relationships to the past are in fact informal, and socially and culturally inflected in ways that are outside of the historian's purview.

In the 2000s, the concept of "historical consciousness," in the sense theorized in the Continental philosophy tradition, begins to be integrated into Anglo-American thinking at the same time as localized archive-based film works in North America begin to eschew historicism for goals more appropriate to those of increasing historical consciousness. As this dissertation argues, rather than attempt to transmit historical narratives about their respective cities, what the films in this study do is open up the question of how we can look at a very localized past through the moving image archive. Vivian Sobchack and Jaimie Baron have both contended that documentary can more accurately be described as a mode of reception rather than a particular set of film practices or strategies of representation.[22] Following from this idea then, I propose that the historical dimension of a film should be measured in experiential terms. Instead of thinking about documentary films as cinematic texts that represent the historical world, perhaps we should think about them as cinematic texts that produce different kinds of experiences of looking at the historical world. In particular, archive-based documentary works provide various distinctive experiences of looking at the historical world, ranging from providing the spectator with a historical narrative, to offering tools and opportunities to increase historical consciousness. As I work through the case studies, I investigate the different kinds of archival experience each film privileges over historical narrative: *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, lived experience and representational experience; the *Lost Landscapes* films, evidentiary experience; and *My Winnipeg*, subjective, psychogeographical experience.

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[20] Ibid., 5.

[21] Sirkka Ahonen, "Essay Review: Historical consciousness: a viable paradigm for history education?" *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 6, (2005): 698.

[22] See both: Vivian Sobchack "Toward a Phenomenology of Non-Fictional Film Experience" in *Collecting Visible Evidence* (1999), Michael Renov and Jane Gaines, eds. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 241-254; and Jaimie Baron, *The Archive Effect: Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History* (London: Routledge, 2014).

What my corpus shows is that something new can be produced through the framing of archival experience in this manner: historical consciousness. These films engage with and go beyond the postmodern deconstruction of the paradigms of truth and continuity. By proposing solutions to satisfy our need for increased historical consciousness and by framing archival experience in terms of situated localized perspectives, redemptive projects, and fertile partial knowledges, city-symphonies-in-reverse present new ways of building visions of the future.

The Baroque

Recent film theorists have proposed the baroque and neo-baroque as a lens through which to understand media forms of the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century that merge cinema and digital technologies.[23] These initial connections between cinema and the baroque in the film studies literature have largely focused on entertainment and fiction filmmaking, however. I argue that archive-based filmmaking is experiencing a similar resurgence of baroque techniques, resulting from archival and historiographical crises.

If we look at the Baroque as a period and style, we find that the critical strategies of representation developed in this dissertation took root in Western culture within what is roughly considered the Baroque period. Anamorphosis, essay, and nostalgia connect the emergence of faith in positivistic strategies of rule and communication characteristic of the Renaissance (fourteenth to seventeenth centuries) to the excess and fragmentation that takes over in what is commonly known as the Baroque (1580-1670). I argue that the films in this study employ these critical strategies of representation to present a baroque intervention into the dominance of positivistic discourse.

One of the major threads in this dissertation is that the baroque helps to illuminate current crises in representation through the moving image archive. It does this work of illumination through means that run contrary to classical Enlightenment paradigms and values, the erosion and exhaustion of which have brought about the crises to begin with. Several important philosophers and cultural theorists of the last century and a half, such as Friedrich Nietzsche,

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[23] See Angela Ndalianis, *Neo-baroque Aesthetics and Contemporary Entertainment* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2004); and Timothy Murray, *Digital Baroque: New Media Art and Cinematic Folds* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

Walter Benjamin, Giles Deleuze, Christine Buci-Glucksmann, and Mieke Bal, have provided the rationale that dislodges the baroque from its periodization in order to see it as a conceptual technology, a mode of vision, and an operative function. They also theorize the particular strategies the baroque takes to combat various kinds of absolutism in thinking that unnecessarily, and often unproductively, keep us in repeating patterns of catastrophe.

Since the mid-nineteenth century, when historian Jacob Burckhardt published the first detailed study comparing the Baroque[24] to Renaissance art, finding the former lacking in the face of the latter, art historians, especially, have been slow to realize the uniquely valuable attributes of the baroque as well as its existence outside of its periodization. It can be easy to miss the presence of baroque forms in archive-based cinema with only a superficial understanding of it. The content of archive-based cinema's imagery does not contain obvious and familiar signifiers that identify the baroque as a periodized form, signifiers found primarily in baroque architecture, music and painting, such as ostentatious ornamental flourishes or dramatic scenes of murder. But, as baroque scholar Buci-Glucksmann observes after Benjamin, the baroque's primary obsessions are with, rather, the ruin, the library, and the labyrinth,[25] which are indeed abundant tropes in archive-based cinema, in general, and city-symphonies-in-reverse, in particular.

Recent scholarship in the humanities has identified the baroque as a "conceptual technology" capable of "[provoking] new forms of historical conceptualization and interpretation."[26] That is, while the content may differ between representations in the seventeenth and the twenty-first centuries, the baroque, taken as a conceptual technology, can influence representational forms in a manner that has important consequences for the way we see time and history through art in any period. I argue that the critical strategies of representation of essay, anamorphosis, and nostalgia are re-emerging in contemporary archival montage film, functioning as baroque strategies of representation to help us reevaluate the historiographical use of the moving image archive in a time of crisis around positivism's failure to bring about the rational utopian society it promised.

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[24] In order to distinguish between "the Baroque" as a concept and as a period, only the latter will be capitalized.

[25] Bryan S. Turner, "Introduction" to Christine Buci-Glucksmann's *Baroque Reason: The Aesthetics of Modernity* (London: Sage Publications, 1994), 8.

[26] Helen Hills, *Rethinking the Baroque* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), 3.

Due to its negative associations with decadence, excess, wildness, the grotesque, and the ruin, recent art historians have distanced themselves from using "the baroque" to identify the period following the Renaissance, a period that never identified itself as Baroque anyway. Calling it "the early modern" instead, art history scholars are now attempting to move the Baroque period away from some of the less savory characterizations associated with it. Philosophers and literary theorists, on the other hand, have taken up the baroque as a useful "conceptual technology" that resists periodization.[27] More scholars are now agreeing that the baroque "has itself been a historiographical monstrosity—a phenomenon defying conventional categories of periodization and description,"[28] opening up a new fascination with the notion today. I argue that it is precisely this "historiographical monstrosity", a sense that a mode of thought illicitly runs through time and cannot be easily confined to the spaces, people and periods it had been first attributed to, that provides us an opportunity to recognize it as a potentially radical conceptual technology for the re-envisioning of the past.

Following the lead of Nietzsche, Benjamin, Deleuze, Buci-Glucksmann, and Bal, my discussion of the baroque will be divorced from periodization after the initial contextualization of the critical strategies of representation (essay, anamorphosis and nostalgia), and instead focus on the conceptual, representational, and historiographical aspects of the baroque as a perspective that reasserts itself at certain historical junctures. I seek to employ an "off-modern" use of the baroque, inspired by the aforementioned philosophers and the baroque revival in literature that Spanish language writers and literary movements, such as Generation 27' in Spain and the Contemperáneos in Mexico, took on in the 1920s.[29] Many twentieth century writers adopted the methods of the baroque because "it offered a means of creating an alternative modernism."[30] What Svetlana Boym calls the "off-modern"—"a tradition of critical reflection on the modern condition that incorporates nostalgia"—accounts for this need to distinguish one's thinking from the all encompassing spirit of the period one finds oneself in:

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[27] Ibid.

[28] Timothy Hampton, "Introduction: Baroques," *Yale French Studies*, No. 80, Baroque Topographies: Literature/History/Philosophy (1991): 1.

[29] Lois P. Zamora, and Monika Kaup, *Baroque New Worlds: Representation, Transculturation, Counterconquest* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 4-5.

[30] Ibid.,14.

[Off-modernism] makes us explore sideshows and back alleys rather than the straight road of progress; it allows us to take a detour from the deterministic narrative of twentieth-century history. Off-modernism offered a critique of both the modern fascination with newness and no less modern reinvention of tradition. In the off-modern tradition, reflection and longing, estrangement and affection go together.[31]

The idea of the off-modern allows us to see marginalized patterns of thought that seek to fight dominant and dominating discourses throughout modern history. This dissertation sees city-symphonies-in-reverse as an expression of a line of thinking in the tradition of off-modernism and baroque revival. The filmmakers in this study follow a tradition of philosophers, writers, and poets concerned with the problems of modernity, such as Nietzsche, Benjamin, Jorge Luis Borges, Generation 27', and the Contemperáneos, who looked to "Baroque poetics to formulate a modernist aesthetic."[32]

A current discussion within the field of Early Modern Studies, which can be related quite easily to our own historical moment, is how people from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, roughly the era of the scientific revolution, dealt with what is called *copia* (from the Latin for abundance) in that field, or "information overload." Art historian Itay Sapir calls the years around 1600 a "significant epistemic watershed" in which European thinkers and artists experienced a crisis in the representation of knowledge.[33] Baroque critical strategies of representation emerged to challenge and check the Renaissance methods of organization and valuation implemented to meet this crisis, providing an alternative route to manage and attenuate its affects. Similarly, as the archive accumulates ever more material into the twenty-first century, our rational systems of management become congested, and excess must be dealt with in new ways. I argue that the baroque critical strategies of representation discussed in this dissertation supply us with vital tools with which to approach crises in the archive by helping us to reconceive its epistemic stakes and beat a path towards greater access and involvement with the archive on a personal level.

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[31] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xvi-xvii.

[32] Zamora, and Kaup, *Baroque New Worlds*, 6.

33 Here, Sapir draws on the works of Michel Foucault (*The Order of Things*), Giles Deleuze (*The Fold*), Walter Benjamin (*The Origin of German Tragic Drama*), Hans Blumenberg (*The Legitimacy of Modern Age*), and William Bouwsma (*The Waning of the Renaissance*). Itay Sapir, "Trauma: A Concept 'Traveling Light' to a Case Study of Early Modern Painting," in *Conceptual Odysseys: Passages to Cultural Analysis*, Griselda Pollock, ed. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 55.

Reassessments of the baroque have often focused on its usefulness as an intervention into some of the problems of historicism, temporality, rationality, and representation. Literary theorist Mieke Bal reconceives of the baroque "not as a style but as a vision or even as a philosophy" that presents alternatives to the "cultural threats" of repressed history or its political mobilization.[34] The baroque can be thought of as a conceptual technology that helps us to understand how representational strategies have been developed at different times to combat totalizing modes of thought. Totalizing modes of thought strive to remove the messiness, embodiedness, and situatedness of human experience, and baroque conceptual technologies work to reinstate them.

As the Baroque period came to an end in Europe and the New World, the obscure reason of the baroque was replaced by neoclassical and Enlightenment "lucidity".[35] For Nietzsche the baroque is a reoccurring phenomenon that appears cyclically in all periods. "The Baroque always arises with the decline of great art, when the demands of classical expression become too great," writes Nietzsche.[36] Thus, the baroque names strategies that are employed at any time when an appeal to ideals and totalities begins to lead us into bad faith or needlessly rigid thinking. In a similar vein, Buci-Gluckmann writes, "The baroque is anti-Platonic." [37] It follows that the baroque is a conceptual technology itself that challenges the false notion that, by appealing to Plato's forms, we can master our objects of inquiry and know them in their essence. Accordingly, through the baroque, we find a way of looking that acknowledges and appreciates what happens when the desire for totality and coherence are preventing knowledge, or simply are not the goal. In opposition to classical appeals to balance, completeness, order, proportion, rationality, consistency, objectivity, and certainty, the emphasis of the baroque is, therefore, placed upon fragmentation, multiplicity, heterogeneity, incompletion, anticipation, indeterminacy, excess, partiality, contingency, dynamism, subjectivity, and speculation.

The swing between "baroque reason" and instrumental rationality, which can be seen throughout modern history, is an oscillation that attempts to balance out the deficiencies of each mode. Nietzsche observes that the baroque arises when the demands of appeals to classical forms

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[34] Mieke Bal, "Baroque Matters," *Rethinking the Baroque* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), 185.

[35] Ibid., 4.

[36] Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the baroque style," in *Human, All Too Human* [1878], R. J. Hollingdale, trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 246, §144.

[37] Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *The Madness of Vision: On Baroque Aesthetics*, Dorothy Z. Baker, trans. (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2013), 5.

become too much, creating a chasm between abstract notions and concrete expressions of life. And, after Benjamin, Buci-Glucksmann identifies three distinct periods, "the seventeenth-century baroque, the nineteenth century of Baudelaire (and not Balzac), the literary avant-garde of the twentieth century," when baroque reason manifested its challenge to the "fine totalities of classicism", resisting Western history through allegorical, or "Saturnian", history.[38] Forms of baroque reason that help us to see oversights in the Enlightenment-based paradigms, and for that reason are relevant to the films examined in this dissertation, include allegory (reflective nostalgia), enfolded and oblique perspectives (anamorphosis), and a reflexive gaze and self-consciousness embedded in the text (essay).

Benjamin develops his understanding of the value of the baroque for the modern world in his 1925 work *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. For him, the baroque's underlying episteme was rooted in the allegorical. *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* challenged the prevailing notion among academics in the 1920s that the Classical period had birthed the most important epistemological structures for civilization and that the Baroque period, and early Romantic, did not provide value to the modern era, but were merely the periods of decline that followed the two rebirths of classical thought, the Renaissance and the Neoclassical. In this work, Benjamin employs a baroque perspective of history, rooted in the notions of decomposition and ruin, and focused on the "grammatical devices" of "montage, pastiche, irony, allegory, and parody."[39] The periodization of the concept of the baroque is only helpful insofar as it points us to a time in which the baroque episteme was particularly active and many persistent critical strategies of representation established themselves within particular art forms and mediums.

Baroque temporality is concerned with the dramas of temporal coexistence and ephemerality. It tends to display all times coexisting in one text (heterochrony), or the fleeting moment of resolve in an act of madness or bravery. Classicism presents subjects in the calm space before the action, while the baroque puts the spectator into the action at its decisive moment. While classicism focuses on being, essence, and the timelessness of ideal forms, the

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[38] Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *Baroque Reason: The Aesthetics of Modernity* (London: Sage Publications, 1994), 46.

[39] Turner, "Introduction" to Christine Buci-Glucksmann's *Baroque Reason,* 8.

baroque focuses on becoming, anticipation, and the ephemerality of the moment.[40] The *in medias res* quality of the archival film fragments in city-symphonies-in-reverse offer a baroque view of the past in which each moment of the city's becoming exists in conjunction with every other moment of the city's past, seen or unseen, proposing not an urban totality, but the city as an organism always in flux and never complete.

Bal suggests that baroque time offers an alternative to the dominance of chronology. Baroque temporality, she argues, can be thought of through the concept of "heterochrony", which is for her "a primary feature of baroque thought and art."[41] From the Greek meaning "other-time", heterochrony is the notion that multi-temporal experiences can coexist. For example, when Michel Foucault theorized the socio-cultural experience of different urban spaces as "heterotopias", he suggested the concept of "heterochrony" as the temporal difference attached to these spaces. Archives and cinemas are heterotopias that provide heterochronic experiences of time that differ from those of everyday life: archives deal in "indefinitely accumulated time", while cinemas are contradictory spaces that can be thought of as both spaces for spectacles, which foster a time of celebration, or transient time, and spaces for the eternal, which combines all times and spaces.[42] The cinema is a complicated heterotopia in terms of temporality because, while the time spent within it is measured and transient, the cinema provides access to the endless and immortal with the promise of a return to the security of our own everyday temporalities upon exiting. The concept of heterochrony emphasizes time as a subjective phenomenon, as opposed to the objective time of the calendar and the clock, and yet, includes both. "[H]eterochrony disrupts the traditional linear narratives onto which routine responses and images are grafted," according to Bal.[43] By mixing the corporeal time of moving through the city with the ephemeral time of the celebration and the accumulated time of the archive, city-symphonies-in-reverse make use of this baroque form of temporality, heterochrony,

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[40] Leo Cabranes-Grant, "The fold of difference: performing Baroque and Neobaroque Mexican identities," *Baroque New Worlds: Representation, Transculturation, Counterconquest*, Lois P. Zamora, and Monika Kaup, eds. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 468.

[41] Ibid., 187.

[42] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias" [1967], *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, Neil Leach, ed. (NYC: Routledge, 1997), 334-335.

[43] Mieke Bal, "Heterochrony in the Act: The Migratory Politics of Time," *Symmeikta: Collection of Papers Dedicated to the 40th Anniversary of the Institute for Art History*, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade. Edited by Ivan Stevonic. Belgrade: Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, 579-596, 2012. 593.

which, I argue, disrupts the traditional linear and narrative dependent experience of historicity that dominates nonfiction film.

Deleuze, too, saw the baroque not as a period, but rather, as an operative function. Consciousness itself is a baroque phenomenon, and the baroque's ultimate objective, according to Deleuze. Working from the seventeenth century mathematics-based philosophy of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz who originally theorized "the fold", Deleuze theorizes, in his materialist fashion, that consciousness results from an immense amount of folds in matter that eventually bring what was once outside, inside. Because, for Deleuze, "the criterion or operative concept of the Baroque is the Fold … the Baroque invents the infinite work or process [of the fold]."[44] The endeavor to continue the fold to infinity is the work of consciousness. Through its baroque operative function of adding fold upon fold, stretching towards infinity, and thus never reaching completion, consciousness is never-ending, always changing, and necessarily only a part of what it can and will be at any given moment.

If we go along with Deleuze to see consciousness as a product of folded matter, we might also consider the folds that bring about *historical* consciousness. Similar to Benjamin's allegorical literary folds, the archival montage film presents a series of unique and rather unlikely temporal folds along its many cuts between previously unconnected fragments of archival footage. Along with Deleuze's insistence that enfolding material creates greater depth and meaning as it goes on, Benjamin's concept of dialectical image, with its appeal to the folds in time created by a kairological view of history[45], are the proper analogues for the manner in which the montage of archival footage produces variations of historical consciousness that are not dependent on linear narrative strategies.

For Deleuze and Bal, the baroque perspective results in the detection of one's own reflection in the object and the recognition of the object's ability to alter the subject. Since every configuration of matter exists in time always modulating and never static, Deleuze follows philosopher Alfred North Whitehead in his contention that the subject, or "superject", is

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[44] Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (London: Continuum, 2006), 38, 39.

[45] From the Greek *kairos*, meaning the critical or opportune moment, the *kairological* view of history understands historical relationships as the product of felicitous timing, allegory, and fortune, even, and especially, between moments separated by long periods of time. The concept of the kairological contrasts with that of the chronological, which conceives of historical meaning in terms of linear cause and effect in the progression of time.

similarly redefined by her point of view of the object in various phases of its becoming. Defining an object as an event, the subject can witness the object's variation, or metamorphosis, from a fixed point of view, or its multifacetedness from an oblique one, anamorphosis.[46] The oblique point of view of anamorphosis is here one of two baroque approaches to the object that grants the possibility of perspectivism. Perspectivism, Deleuze tells us, "is not a variation of truth according to the subject, but the condition in which the truth of a variation appears to the subject. This is the very idea of Baroque perspective."[47] A baroque perspective then is multivalent, reflexive, and striking. It prioritizes a consciousness of how a subject makes contact with her object of perception, as well as how both are impacted by the confrontation. Bal similarly theorizes the "baroque point of view" in terms of the subject's sensitivity to the power of the object: "The primary characteristic of a baroque point of view is that the subject becomes vulnerable to the impact of the object."[48] A baroque entanglement of points of view that are folded into archive-based filmmaking produces a self-conscious spectatorship capable of seeing the archive as excessive in its variation, and partial in its expression, at the same time.

The Essay Film

While he is often considered a Renaissance scholar, more detailed studies of the sixteenth century French social critic and philosopher, Michel de Montaigne's (1533-1592) work have positioned his style of philosophical inquiry as an exemplar of the baroque in literature.[49] The essayistic itself is a baroque conceptual technology that challenges totalizing modes of thought by prioritizing embodied perspective, speculation, and subjective judgment. If we take the essayistic to be born with Montaigne, a claim that is arguable in itself, but helpful in pointing us towards the moment when the essayistic becomes a recognized self-conscious literary form in Christian continental European culture, we find that the essay presented a challenge to the philosophical movement towards certainty of the day, exemplified in the Cartesian question,

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[46] Ibid., 20-21.

[47] Ibid., 21.

[48] Bal, "Baroque Matters," 189.

[49] See, for example, M.W. Croll, "The Baroque Style in Prose," *Studies in English Philology: A Miscellany in Honor of Frederick Klaeber*, (Minneapolis, Univ. of Minnesota Press: 1929), 437-56; R. A. Sayce, "Baroque Elements in Montaigne," *French Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 1, (January, 1954); Imbrie Buffum, *Studies in the Baroque from Montaigne to Rotrou* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957); and S. Peytavin, "Montaigne, philosophe baroque ?" *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, No. 2, Philosophies et baroque, (avril-juin 1999).

"How do I know for certain that I exist?" Rather than try to rid the mind of doubt to find at least one certainty from which to proceed, the certainty of one's own existence, and build from there, Montaigne embraced the contingency of his own embodied being and doubted the notion of certainty itself. As the essayistic has worked its way into film practice, we have witnessed a kind of filmmaking that uses doubt in its most productive capacity, upholding the partial, speculative, and contingent perspectives of embodied subjectivity over positivistic linear modes.

In 2009, Laura Rascaroli published the first book-length study on the essay film, *The Personal Camera*. Since 2009, two other monographs and one anthology on the essay film have been published in English: Timothy Corrigan's *The Essay Film: From Montaigne, After Marker* (2011); David Montero's *Thinking Images: The Essay Film As a Dialogic Form in European Cinema* (2012); and Elizabeth Papazian and Caroline Eades's (Eds.) *The Essay Film: Dialogue, Politics, Utopia* (2016), respectively.[50] These works, and the majority of articles written on the essay film, have emerged rather late in relation to essay film production. The city symphonies of the 1920s can be seen as early efforts to bring a subjective and reflective use of the motion picture camera into being. But not until the 1950s do we see more concerted efforts to bring essayistic strategies into film form, due in some part to the initial theorizing of the translation of essay from writing to moving images by Hans Richter and Alexandre Astruc in the 1940s, and François Truffaut in 1954. Marker's *Lettre de Sibérie* (1958), Alain Resnais's *Nuit et brouillard* (1955), and Agnès Varda's *L'Opera Mouffe* (1958) (to name a few notable early examples from the "Left Bank", though *Paris 1900* of a decade earlier could also be included here, as well) initiated some of the first attempts to disrupt the polarizing codes of fiction and nonfiction filmmaking, and more importantly, to mark out a cinematic space for subjectivity and philosophical contemplation in film practice and viewing. In 2012, a literature and culture journal that often includes film studies pieces, *SubStance*, devoted an entire special issue to revisiting the contributions of the "Left Bank" filmmakers on the essay film, especially concerning their use of sound (three of the five articles are explicitly focused on sound).[51] These recent studies agree on the notion that the essay film translates its most definitive features from

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[50] In 2016, Thomas Waugh included a chapter on Joris Ivens essay film work, "The Poet Reborn? 1956-65," in his monograph, *The Conscience of Cinema* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016). Two more books on the essay film have been released in 2017, one monograph and one anthology, respectively: Laura Rascaroli, *How the Essay Film Thinks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); and Nora M. Alter, and Timothy Corrigan, eds, *Essays on the Essay Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

[51] *SubStance* #128, Vol. 41, no. 2, 2012. http://sub.uwpress.org/content/41/2.toc

the well trodden, though nowhere near exhausted, literary genre to cinema. And yet, cinema has proven to take up these features through the audiovisual in ways that essayistic literature could not have anticipated during most of its long history.

Rascaroli and Corrigan have made the most extensive surveys of the recent literature describing essay film, including those film scholars who mark out the territory of the essay in cinema most explicitly—Michael Renov, Philip Lopate, Paul Arthur, and Nora M. Alter. What these scholars have in common is that they tend to agree on the most basic features of the cinematic essay based on extensive evaluations of the literature available on the written essay, as well as careful analyses of films that they feel are exemplary (or not) of the essayistic, providing similarly well-rounded initial sketches of the territory to be mapped. The vast majority of detailed studies on the essay film (Alter, Arthur, Rascaroli, Renov) begin their circumscriptions of the form by tracing its origin to Montaigne, who named the form and provided its initial boundaries in his *Essais* (1580). Evoking Montaigne and establishing a lineage of the essayistic form that goes back more than 400 years can be seen as a way to tactically position subjective filmmaking within a well-established, strong and diverse tradition of thought and textuality. These film scholars concur that essay films, like written essays, are, at their most basic, marked by reflectiveness and subjectivity, and that they project these characteristics through open-ended, personal investigations of an idea or problem in the tradition of Montaigne. Rascaroli ultimately defines the essay film in this way: "[A]n essay [film] is the expression of a personal, critical reflection on a problem or a set of problems," which emerges from a "single authorial voice" that offers "this in-depth, personal and thought-provoking reflection,"[52] and, as Paul Arthur has written, this voice inscribes itself in the film as "a blatant, self-searching authorial presence."[53] Essay films create an enunciator, that is, a narrator that contains the authorial voice, which invites the spectator into a dialogue, according to Rascaroli: "Metalinguistic, autobiographical and reflective, they all posit a well-defined, extra-textual authorial figure as their point of origin and of constant reference; they strongly articulate a subjective, personal point of view; and they set up a particular communicative structure, largely based … on the address to the spectator, or

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[52] Laura Rascaroli, "The Essay Film: Problems, Definitions, Textual Commitments," *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, Volume 49, Number 2 (Fall 2008): 35.
[53] Paul Arthur, "Essay Questions: from Alain Resnais to Michael Moore," *Film Comment*, 39, 1 (2003): 59.

interpellation."[54] The single authorial voice here is construed as capable of creating an intersubjective textual experience by addressing the spectator as a singular *you*, whether explicitly or implicitly.

In her *Framework* article, "The Essay Film: Problems, Definitions, Textual Commitments," Rascaroli provides Phillip Lopate's conditions for essay film to distinguish it from a more vague "reflective self-conscious style" and to retain its important inheritances from its literary origins. She indicates several imperatives that Lopate outlines for the essay film. First, words, verbal or titled text must appear. Second, these words must come from a single voice. Third, the text must put forth a "reasoned" line of thinking on an issue. Fourth, the text must go beyond information to impart a perspective. And finally, the style of the text must be graceful and compelling.[55] While most scholars writing on essay film can agree on the last two of Lopate's imperatives, the role of words, verbal or textual, as well as that of reason are not commonly agreed upon characteristics of the essayistic turn in film practice, especially when its film historical roots are traced to silent films, city symphonies in particular. In terms of locating the essay film within the history of filmmaking, Rascaroli agrees with Paul Arthur's contention that the essayistic in cinema exists within the interstices of the traditions of documentary, avant-garde and art film.[56] Throughout her writing on the essayistic, Rascaroli emphasizes that the form should not be considered a genre, but rather an anti-genre, because of its heretical nature and its transgressive flexibility. Thus, instead of looking for generic coherence, Rascaroli contends that we can instead think about the essay film as a particular configuration of strategies, or "textual commitments": direct address from the filmmaker to individual spectators, not a collective audience, usually in the form of voiceover, but not always; the conversational tone invites questions, and resists simple resolutions in favor of a multiplicity of possibilities; the use of all the techniques of documentary and fiction to advance a deep meditation on the chosen topic; questions are not answered, pushing the spectator to think for himself; the enunciator situates himself in his own subjectivity and invites the spectator to join him in his personal investigations.[57]

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[54] Laura Rascaroli, *The Personal Camera: Subjective Cinema and the Essay Film* (London: Wallflower Press, 2009), 3.
[55] Rascaroli, "The Essay Film," 31-2.
[56] Arthur, "Essay Questions," 62; Rascaroli, "The Essay Film," 24, 39.
[57] Rascaroli, "The Essay Film," 37.

By 1940 the documentary was already in need of artistic intervention, since by then it had largely been co-opted to meet the needs of state power in the form of propaganda and under the guise of "objectivity,"[58] despite some notable examples from the left in the 1940s, such as *Native Land* (Leo Hurwitz, 1942). As Nora Alter has pointed out, at the dawn of WWII, and a year before his relocation to the United States, Hans Richter, a German surrealist, Dadaist, and avant-garde filmmaker, published "Der Filmessay: Eine neue Form des Dokumentarfilms," the first text to outline and advocate the possibility of translating literature's most probing form, the essay, into a cinema.[59] Alter, somewhat ironically, has positioned this early appeal to the essayistic tradition, aimed at bringing subjective, open, philosophical inquiry and reflexivity into the cinema, as "a type of *post*-documentary filmmaking",[60] signaling the insufficiency and demise of the objective, fact-based, totalizing Griersonian documentary with this first call for reform, in 1940. Alter concentrates on Richter's claim that one of the strengths of bringing the essayistic form into cinema lies in its ability to illuminate instances of "imperceptibility," or, in her later essay, "invisibility"—focusing on those ideological forces hidden deep within, below, or outside of the image,[61] which were exploited by propagandists and not adequately questioned by audiences at the time of Richter's writing. Rascaroli, too, sees Richter's call to take up the essayistic as particularly auspicious: "The transgressive quality that the essay film inherits from the literary essay, its derivation from but also betrayal of documentary, and its ability to be a meeting point between intellect and emotion are already identified in this first contribution [Richter's "Der Filmessay"]."[62]

Astruc's 1948 "The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: La Caméra-Stylo" likens the camera to a writing device in the hopes of shifting the use of the camera away from that which produces "a fairground attraction, an amusement" and towards a practice that permits an artist to express abstract thoughts "or translate his obsessions exactly as he does in a contemporary essay or

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[58] Bill Nichols, "Documentary Film and the Modernist Avant-Garde." *Critical Inquiry*, 27, 4 (2001): 583.

[59] Alter, Arthur, Corrigan, Nichols, and Rascaroli all make reference to this text.

[60] Nora M. Alter, "The Political Im/Perceptible in the Essay Film: Farocki's Images of the World and the Inscription of War," *New German Critique,* 68 (1996): 170. Emphasis added.

[61] Alter, "The Political Im/Perceptible in the Essay Film," 170; and Nora Alter, "Translating the Essay into Film and Installation," *Journal of Visual Culture*, 6, 1 (2007): 50.

[62] Rascaroli, *The Personal Camera*, 25.

novel."[63] Astruc claimed that philosophy's proper expression would come through cinema. Unlike other film practices of the time, this new mode, for Astruc, would privilege the written word, displacing emphasis from the referential power of the visual and dislodging itself from the need to produce dramatic narratives.[64] By likening cinema to language, and filmmaking to writing, Astruc created an analogy for cinema with a medium that had already proven its ability to facilitate intense subjective intellectual explorations, motivating filmmakers and film scholars alike to see a different potential in the function of cinema itself. Taking a more general perspective, the comparison between writing and film entails a consideration of the many changes and births of forms in literature, as well as their reflexive and critical movements, over time, in order to contemplate the much younger medium of film in a similar way—that is, as a properly historical object that does not need to be stuck in its traditional paradigms of storytelling and artistic practice, or to that of cultural, national or corporate utility and economy.

Significantly, such a revision in the understanding of the function of cinema that the essayistic in general proposes has influenced filmmakers in each of the three major modes of filmmaking—experimental, fiction and non-fiction. This infusion of subjectivity and open abstract questioning into cinema seems to have produced (at least) two effects for film theory. First, it brings the three main modes of filmmaking into relation with each other, often blurring their boundaries. And second, by combining elements from the major modes of cinema, filmmakers are capable of creating a marked contrast between those filmmaking practices that exist as humanistic projects, and those that exist as an extension of industry and state power, making their agendas clearer by contrast.

The French New Wave helped to establish the essay film from 1948-60 through a combination of film theory and experimental film works. While Astruc advocated the birth of an authorial cinema, which would include the essayistic, François Truffaut helped take account of that impulse and direct it toward a new French art film movement in his 1954 manifesto "Une certain tendance du cinéma français".[65] As Rascaroli observes, "both manifestos introduce a

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[63] Alexandre Astruc, "The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: La Caméra-Stylo" [1948], in *Film and Literature: An Introduction and Reader.* Timothy Corrigan, ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1999), 182. "The Birth of a New Avant-Garde" was originally published in *L'Écran français* in 1948 when Astruc was only 25 years old.
[64] Ibid.
[65] François Truffaut, "Une certaine tendance du cinéma français**,**" *Cahiers du cinéma*, janvier 1954.

concept of cinematic auteurism borrowed from literature."[66] Corrigan points to two early essays, Bazin's 1950 written essay, "The Myth of Stalin in the Soviet Cinema," and Alain Resnais's 1948 short film essay, *Van Gogh*, both focused on portraiture, which together set the stage for the New Wave's adoption of the essayistic. The former proposed "how the essayistic might free cinema from film's dominant narrative logic and situate itself in the more exploratory logic of the edit or cut," and the latter theorized "the grounds for cinematic expression," according to Corrigan.[67] While Bazin's criticism of Stalin's film portrait promoted a kind of essayism as a remedy for solidifying forms, Rascaroli notes that "the first article that compared a film to an essay is, probably, Jacques Rivette's 'Lettre sur Roberto Rosellini,' published in 1955 in *Cahiers du cinéma,*" in which the author positioned the neo-realist *Voyage to Italy* (1955) as the first film to display the potential of the essay in cinema.[68]

What Rascaroli calls "the most famous among the early articles that deliberately analyzed a film by comparing it to an essay" is, once more, a review by André Bazin.[69] Bazin is impressed by Marker's formal innovations, likening *Letter from Siberia* to Jean Vigo's *À propos de Nice* (1930).[70] He is especially interested in Marker's use of what he calls, "horizontal montage," a sideways movement "from *l'oreille à l'oeil* (ear to eye)," which for him contributed to the film's production of "a truly innovative form of filmed intelligence" by putting language first, referring the images to the voice and not to each other.[71] Bazin goes on to further situate the cinematic essay as a close relative of the written essay, asserting that it should be "understood in the same way it is in literature: an essay is both historical and political, while being written by a poet."[72] However, even as Bazin emphasizes the integral import of Marker's use of words, language and the essay as a guiding literary form, he does not limit himself to thinking in these terms. In fact, he "goes beyond literature and looks at the relationship between text and image, and between

[66] Rascaroli, *The Personal Camera*, 26.

[67] Timothy Corrigan, "'The Forgotten Image Between Two Shots': Photos, Photograms, and the Essayistic," in *Still Moving: Between Cinema and Photography*, Karen R, Beckman, and Jean Ma, eds. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 45.

[68] Rascaroli, *The Personal Camera*, 26.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Nora Alter, *Chris Marker*, Contemporary Film Directors Series (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 15.

[71] Ibid.

[72] André Bazin, "Chris Marker, Lettre de Sibérie," *France Observateur* (30 Octobre 1958): 180. (As translated and quoted by Alter, 2006: 17.)

shots," according to Rascaroli.[73] Ultimately, Bazin sets Marker's film apart from all other non-fiction cinema, asserting its unique status within and apart from documentary filmmaking at the time.[74] In these early stages of experimentation with the essayistic in cinema, it is significant that this initial investigation into the form from within the French New Wave is achieved through a dialogue between written and cinematic essays over a period of more than a decade before film theory begins to focus more on the many branches of authorial cinema, not truly returning to the essay in any sustained way until quite recently.

In 2003, Paul Arthur observed that the turn-of-the-century onslaught of essay films successfully challenged the value of such documentary staples as the realist ideal of "styleless style," confronting "the myth that 'actuality' should not only dictate but totally subsume any subjective discourse or overt aesthetic design".[75] Indeed, essay films have been rather effective on many occasions in "fractur[ing] epistemological unities of time and place associated with documentary practices from John Grierson and Thirties New Deal tracts through Sixties vérité," breathing new life into and provoking questions around documentary's function and potential.[76] The anti-generic status of the essay (Corrigan, Rascaroli) acts to identify and disrupt the orthodoxy of totalizing codes and conventions within any genre, or, more generally, any medium with which it is put into contact. Specifically, in relation to documentary, as Arthur contends, "essays hold up for scrutiny precisely those conventions that other documentary genres suppress and, in that sense, fuel meta-critical speculations on non-fiction cinema's blind spots."[77] Therefore, we can see that in performing a meta-critical function around realism in documentary, the essay film continues to act in the meta-critical manner intended even by the earliest of literary essayists, but it does so with regard to issues around mediation ("cinema's multi-channel stew," as Arthur has called it)[78] that could have never been foreseen at the essay's birth.

The role of voiceover in the essay film is a somewhat contentious one among scholars. I agree with Rascaroli et al. on most points, but I, like David Oscar Harvey in his *SubStance* article, "The Limits of Vococentrism: Chris Marker, Hans Richter and the Essay Film," take

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[73] Rascaroli, *The Personal Camera*, 27.
[74] Ibid., 29.
[75] Arthur, "Essay Questions," 58.
[76] Ibid., 59.
[77] Ibid., 60.
[78] Ibid., 59.

exception with the narrow restriction of the essay film only to films that convey a strong verbal enunciation. Astruc's "*Caméra-Stylo*," Harvey points out, seeks to express "a mode of abstract intelligence available within specifically cinematic characteristics of the film medium: namely, its image and non-vococentric soundtrack, or elements uneasily likened to literary modes of signification."[79] Thus, even in the first attempts to theorize a translation of the essayistic into cinematic form, we find an emphasis on what cinema can do that the written word cannot. Harvey looks to Bill Nichols's notion of documentary voice, which for Nichols does not depend on the vocal or verbal, but instead results from the combination of film codes at play, to begin to theorize instances of the essay film's "non-vococentric voice".[80] Though he does not draw attention to non-vococentric essay films, as Harvey does, Corrigan also makes room for such films within the essayistic tradition in his book.[81]

Beyond the question of how to determine whether a film lacking a voiceover is taking up the essayistic voice, it can also be difficult to determine how and when the essayistic is being employed in nonfiction cinema in terms of striking the right equilibrium between contemplation and opinion. Failure to maintain a balance between a "rhetorical focus [that] is at once directed outward to concrete facts and inward to a realm of mercurial reflection" leads to the major difficulty found of distinguishing between the essayistic and the documentary in cinema.[82] On the one hand, privileging the inward focus, that is, the movement toward intense self-reflection, may produce overly solipsistic results, while on the other hand, "failure to carve out enough space for contradiction and self-questioning can result in heated didacticism".[83]

Subjectivity in personal documentary, for Rascaroli, is "the product of the text's adoption of certain strategies," which "usually imply strong enunciators, who produce an audio visual discourse that asks to be experienced by the viewer as eminently personal."[84] This framing of subjectivity in documentary relies on both the performative movement of enunciation and the

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[79] David Oscar Harvey, "The Limits of Vococentrism: Chris Marker, Hans Richter and the Essay Film," *SubStance,* 128, Vol. 41, no. 2, (2012): 7.

[80] Ibid., 8.

[81] Ibid. Harvey quotes Corrigan from page 30 of *The Essay Film*: "When lacking a clearly visible subjective voice or personal organizing presence, this act of enunciation can also be signaled in various formal and technical ways, including editing and other representational manipulations of the image."

[82] Arthur, "Essay Questions," 60, 62.

[83] Ibid., 62.

[84] Rascaroli, *The Personal Camera*, 12.

personal reception of the address by individual viewers, not a mass audience. Spectators of essay films are interpellated to connect with the enunciator, which can lead to a more personal spectator experience: "every 'I' implies a 'you'".[85] What essayistic film reveals about the cinema's fundamental aspirations, Rascaroli concludes, is that they reside in the utopian desire of the filmmaker for individual expression and his/her wish to communicate directly with the spectator.[86] The use of the essayistic in cinema, then, betrays the desire for the cinema to become an instrument of full, open and direct communication.

The resistance to making the essay film into a genre helps to preserve its baroque roots that challenge existing structures over time. Rascaroli calls the essay "informal, skeptical, diverse, disjunctive, paradoxical, contradictory, heretical, open, free, and formless".[87] I argue that the essay, although not a generic category, functions as a baroque impulse to question complexity-reducing totalizing structures and reintroduce embodied experience into representational structures. Adorno writes that the essay "does not permit its domain to be prescribed. Instead of achieving something scientifically, or creating something artistically, the effort of the essay reflects a childlike freedom that catches fire, without scruple, on what others have already done."[88] Here, Adorno positions the essay as an open form of collection and commentary. The freedom that the essayistic exhibits is a use of commentary upon appropriated, borrowed, and stolen materials that can question, observe, interrogate, and suggest without creating a totalizing narrative that reduces the audio-visual material to its agenda. In not permitting its domain to be prescribed, the openness of the essay permits a kind of discourse in cinema that recognizes the strengths and limitations of the moving image archive as an important instrument in the cultivation of historical consciousness. While not all essay films engage with archival footage, the adoption of the essayistic as a strategy in archive-based filmmaking invigorates and redeems the role of the moving image archive in historiography in a way that most conventional documentaries do not aim to do.

Essayism uses erotetics (the philosophical art of asking questions) and dialectics as heuristics for the baroque project of redeeming silenced fragments of the material world. As

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[85] Ibid., 14.

[86] Ibid., 15.

[87] Rascaroli, "The Essay Film," 39.

[88] T. W. Adorno, "The Essay as Form [1958]," Bob Hullot-Kentor, and Frederic Will, trans. *New German Critique*, No. 32 (Spring - Summer, 1984): 152.

open forms of collection and commentary, essay films focus on erotetics and dialectics to advance their textual commitments to embodied resistance to totalizing structures.[89] Essayism depends on both embodied lived experience and the dialectical preservation of tensions between subject and object, public and private, question and answer. Corrigan argues that "the lack of a dominant narrative organization" is one of three key aspects of the essay film.[90] But essay films do have structures and themes, so how are they organized against narrative? Noël Carroll's theory of erotetic narration and Bordwell's hypothesis formation model of fiction film spectatorship both explain the spectator's ability to make sense of narrative film's essentially fragmentary constructions in terms of question and answer structures embedded within narrative films.[91] By contrast, essayistic erotetics focus on posing questions, verbally and visually, and then sustaining and exploring those questions, rather than attempting to resolve them within the text. The ultimate goal of this kind of erotetics is to keep the questioning going outside of the text. Unlike narrative film structures that seek to create a series of questions and resolutions, the key to the essay film's momentum and satisfaction of its goals is to fill out its questions and keep them open and in play even outside of the screening time. Essayism therefore exhibits both textual and extratextual commitments to its content.

Anamorphosis

I was inspired to look into the concept of anamorphosis after seeing an animated short film by the Brothers Quay and Roger Cardinal, *Anamorphosis* (1991, 14mins),[92] commissioned by "The Program for Art on Film" (a project backed by the Getty Foundation and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York). So many of the characterizations of anamorphosis that were made in the film matched the ways I had begun to think about critical uses of archival footage in

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[89] I take the concept of erotetics from philosophy as a project of questioning and interrogation. I am not working with Noël Carroll's theory of "erotetic narrative" in fiction film, here.

[90] Timothy Corrigan, *Film and Literature: An Introduction and Reader* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1999), 58.

[91] Noël Carroll, *Mystifying Movies, Fads and Fallacies in Contemporary Film Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); and David Bordwell, *Making Meaning, Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1989).

[92] Watch *Anamorphosis* (1991) here: http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xd8d9_anamorphosis_shortfilms Last accessed, 4 April 2017.

experimental documentary and essay film. I was thus compelled to investigate the origins, migrations, and intermedial translations of the concept of anamorphosis further.

In film studies, we know the word "anamorphic" due to the "anamorphic format" of cinematographic lenses and their anamorphic projector counterparts used in many film productions. These lenses vertically compress the image during filming such that it may be decompressed during projection in order to maximize the full frame of 35mm film when aspect ratios of up to 2.40:1 are desired. The *concept* of "anamorphosis", however, is not commonly used in our discipline since, when we think of anamorphic lens, we think of an unseen technical process rather than a spectatorial relationship to the image. Between the image's compression in production and decompression on the screen, there is no opportunity for spectators to reposition themselves *vis-à-vis* the image, to reconfigure its perception, and thus meaning. The anamorphosis of the anamorphic format is therefore limited to the production and projection processes without involving the spectator. Although the anamorphic format uses the technology of catatropic anamorphosis to achieve its aims within the film industry, I am more interested in the legacy of conceptual possibilities of the anamorphosis of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that stress embodied engaged spectatorship over and against disembodied passive spectatorship.

Anamorphosis as a practice was systematized in the sixteenth and seventeenth century in Western Europe, and might even go back to European cave painting. It was at first seen primarily as a practical application of perspective in order to achieve more convincing central perspective-oriented works. Its baroque applications (allegorical, embodied), however, were not realized until Holbein's *The Ambassadors* of 1533. Even after Holbein's work anamorphosis techniques were more often used in the service of *trompe l'oeil* or other spectacles of optical illusion (as with catatropic, or cylindrical mirror, anamorphosis). While anamorphosis is associated with the Renaissance period, the practice and philosophy behind it embraces the baroque perspective that emphasizes a reflexive unfolding of multiple, and multivalent, points of view; embodied spectatorship; and a recuperation of the margins through oblique viewing strategies. Anamorphosis "solicits the double view" and reveals what Deleuze called "the truth of the variation", [93] expressing the baroque perspective *par excellence*.[94]

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[93] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 20.

From the Greek, anamorphosis literally means to shape or form (morphe) again or against (ana-). As a critical concept in art history, anamorphosis has been theorized in terms of the interpretive possibilities derived from shifting spectatorial positions and the layering of different perceptual registers within a text. Anamorphosis, like essay, is a concept and representational strategy that was first developed in the Renaissance period. As soon as Renaissance artists developed linear perspective some of them, including masters like Leonardo Da Vinci, who is said to have originated the practice with some drawings in 1485, also began creating anamorphic images in order to deal with the problems of a mind/body split created by the establishment of a disembodied, idealized viewpoint. Artists *and* theorists of the time saw the lack of embodiment that linear perspective conveyed as an impetus to explore issues of embodied spaces pictorially: "Rather than abstracting and detaching the eye from the body and incorporating it into the mechanism of perspective, *anamorphic illusions juxtapose disembodied and embodied notions of vision*" within the same text.[95] Thus, the invention of a perspectival regime that excluded the notion of spectatorial engagement immediately created its antithesis and synthesis through the anamorphic image.

In order to bring the concept up to date, and to theorize its value for more recent representational technologies, including film, it is helpful to understand its beginnings in the visual arts. Two types of anamorphosis emerged in the Renaissance, oblique perspective anamorphosis in the fifteenth century, and cylindrical mirror, or catatropic, anamorphosis in the sixteenth century. In painting, the oblique perspective technique of anamorphosis relies on the central perspective system, sometimes aiming to subvert a conventional image through the recognition of another contrasting image that could only be perceived by changing one's position in relation to the painting and reading the different perceptual registers against each other. German-Swiss painter, Hans Holbein the Younger's 1533 painting*, Double Portrait of Jean de Dinteville and Georges de Selve*, better known as *The (French) Ambassadors,* which depicts the French Ambassadors of King Henri II at the court of the English King, Henry VIII, is the most recognized example of anamorphosis. (Figures 1-3) When looking at an anamorphic painting the viewer is shown a way out of the central perspective of the work, through a visual lure that

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[94] Hanneke Grootenboer, *The Rhetoric of Perspective: Realism and Illusionism in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Still-Life Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 131.
[95] Lyle Massey, *Picturing Space, Displacing Bodies: Anamorphosis in Early Modern Theories of Perspective*, University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007, 2. Emphasis added.

necessarily demonstrates the painter's own embodied repositioning to the margin, and invites the viewer to come along to a place where a different hermeneutic may be explored. In order to make visual sense of the anamorphic object, the skull in Holbein's painting for instance, spectators are forced to reposition themselves to the side of the painting.

Figure 1 In Holbein's *The Ambassadors*, most of the painting is easily read through a central perspective positioning of the spectator before the canvass. But what is that oblong object in the foreground?
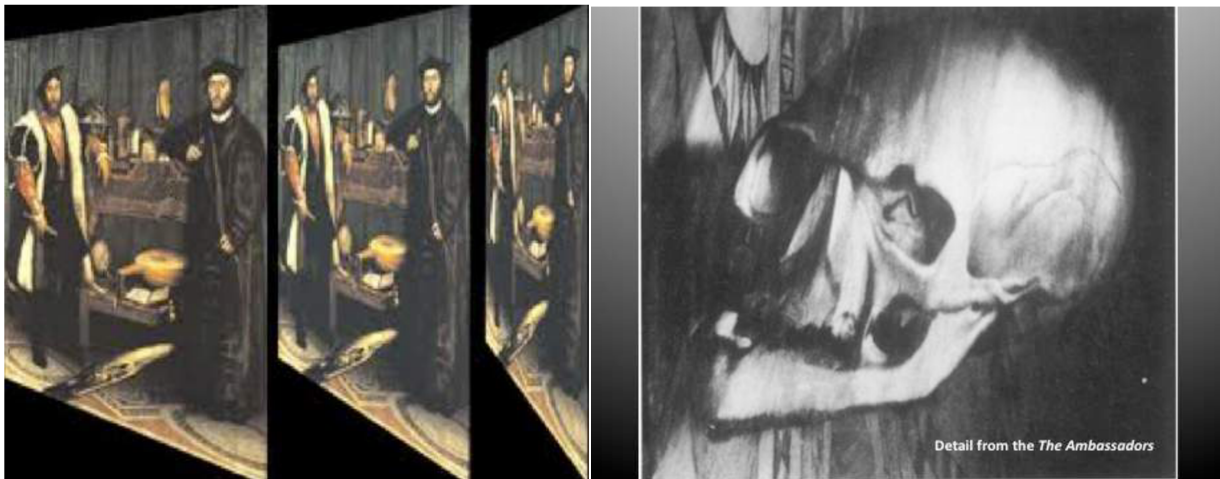
Figure 2 In order to perceive the object in the foreground as a particular object, the spectator must move to the side of the painting where the oblique angle reveals a skull.

Figure 3 A close-up of the anamorphically perceived skull shows the detail with which it is rendered for the embodied spectator.

Anamorphosis introduces the ideas that an embodied view of a work can yield greater meaning, and that spectators can choose to reposition themselves before the artwork. Where the artist and the spectator position themselves, in the evaluation of the work, and in relation to each other through the work, makes all the difference in its interpretation. What anamorphic art makes clear is that art can be made to speak to the situated embodied individual by instigating and rewarding a repositioning of the spectator. And when it does, it communicates different realities than does the disembodied view.

The placement of an anamorphic object within and against the central perspective object in *The Ambassadors* produces a crucial collage quality, as well. This juxtaposition creates a new meaning: often the second, or anamorphic, image contains the subjective commentary against the dominant ideology of the image that maintains the straightforward, central perspective position. So, the act of "shaping again and against" that anamorphosis performs can be thought of as a subjective repositioning of perspective. This repositioning calls attention to the embodiment of both the author and spectator at once. In Renaissance painting, these sidelong images served as commentary for the "straight" image in much the same way that the essay filmmaker's vocal commentary repositions the spectator of the "documentary" film such that she may reinterpret what she sees against the traditional conventions of nonfiction spectatorship. In the case of Holbein's *Ambassadors*, the anamorphic image, the skull, serves as a *memento mori* commentary aimed at the two powerful figures in the "straight" viewing of the painting, the French ambassador and the bishop. Anamorphosis is an important, yet underutilized, technique for creating interference in the narrative and codes of a representational form, whether it is a painting, drawing, or film. These moments of interference arise in response to a narrowing of the acceptable limits of narrative expression within a given time in order to indicate a level of dissent and an alternative path to meaning within the text.

Anamorphosis has been trivialized in the discipline of art history since its very origins.[96] Galileo perceived its potential ambiguity, obscurity, and allegorical functions to be frivolous and unnecessarily obstructionist.[97] As we have seen with the essayistic, anamorphosis, too, can be found in other mediums besides painting and drawing where it originated, even non-pictorial ones. And yet, theorists have only recently begun to go back and read film and literature for their

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[96] Grootenboer, *The Rhetoric of Perspective*, 132.
[97] Ibid.

anamorphic qualities. For instance, the first "serious appropriation of the concept [of anamorphosis] for the field of literary studies," argues David R. Castillo, was Ernest Gilman's *The Curious Perspective: Literary and Pictorial Wit in the Seventeenth Century* (1978), and books like *Don Quixote* have since been read for their anamorphic qualities.[98]

I am inspired by theorists, such as Jacques Lacan, Slavoj Žižek, Daniel L. Collins, and Ernest Gilman, to consider the possibilities of using the concept of anamorphosis as a metaphor in order to further migrate the concept across disciplines and mediums, and theorize shifts in spectatorship in film studies, specifically around the reuse of the moving image archive. For instance, Collins theorizes an "eccentric observer," a spectator "who acknowledges the limitations of a static, homolographic worldview and embraces instead a dynamic unfolding process".[99] He concludes that the value of the concept of anamorphosis lies in its ability to help open up an object of inquiry's heretofore unknown critical spaces by way of its use as a metaphor: "The importance of anamorphosis, then, is not as an alternative to the way we experience artworks—that is, like the latest video game or clothes for the emperor—but *as a metaphor for accepting information from unfamiliar places and unexpected sources*."[100] The "eccentric observer" learns through anamorphosis to view other representational forms for their anamorphic qualities. Anamorphosis can thus be seen as an artistic and spectatorial practice; as a metaphor for pursuing the margins; and as a hermeneutic strategy.

The discipline of film studies has been slow to bring the concept of anamorphosis into its discourse, though there are some notable instances of its use. Stephen Heath is one of the few, and perhaps the first, film scholar to use anamorphosis as a concept in film studies, if only briefly. In his 1976 *Screen* article, "Narrative Space," which became its own chapter in his 1981 *Questions of Cinema*, Heath writes,

> Anamorphosis is the recognition and exploitation of the possibilities of [distorting central perspective by pulling the gaze to one side]; playing between 'appearance' and 'reality', it situates the centre of the projection of the painting (or of a single element, as in Holbein's 'The Ambassadors' in the National Gallery) obliquely to the side, the sense of the

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[98] Castillo, David R. *(A)wry Views: Anamorphosis, Cervantes, and the Early Picaresque.* West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2001. 1.

[99] Daniel L. Collins, "Anamorphosis and the Eccentric Observer: History, Technique and Current Practice," *Leonardo*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (1992), 186.

[100] Ibid. Emphasis added.

painting–its representation–only falling into place (exactly) once the position has been found.[101]

Here, Heath correctly describes and situates anamorphosis in his discussion of the early modern perspective system and central projection, but does not use it as a critical concept in his film theory. In his 2003 study of Tarkovsky's *The Mirror* (1975), Tollof Nelson positions anamorphosis as his central critical concept to theorize history and memory from the point of view of Holbein's anamorphic skull and Deleuze's crystal-image.[102] In her 2007 monograph on director Abel Ferrara, French film scholar Nicole Brenez employs the notion of catatropic anamorphosis to characterize Ferrara's style. She writes that "composition by anamorphosis" is a "systematic form" within his oeuvre and particular films in which "a key image is translated and metamorphosed in the course of the film, just as an anamorphic image can only be viewed correctly under certain conditions, such as through a lens or in a mirror that 'unsqueezes' it."[103] Although she briefly mentions the concept of anamorphosis in *Atlas of Emotion* to invoke the idea of a mobile spectator,[104] Giuliana Bruno does not employ it as a critical concept in her work. She does however challenge the notion that the experience of the filmic space derives straight from Renaissance perspective, positioning the spectator always as the holder of the traditional transcendental, disembodied gaze, and as a consequence, eliding the many "displacements that are represented, conveyed, and negotiated in the moving image."[105] In order to account for these displacements, Bruno seeks to theorize the spectator/voyageur through the haptic experience of movement through space that cinema can provide. So as we can see, scant attention has been paid to the concept of anamorphosis in film scholarship, and the usage thus far has not motivated a migration of the concept into the discipline. I seek to remedy this oversight.

One of the reasons the concept of anamorphosis is relevant for studies of archive-based film works, I argue, is because it helps us understand a type of re-framing that brings together and contrasts embodied and disembodied perspective regimes, undermining the perceived

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[101] Stephen Heath, "Narrative Space," *Screen* Vol. 17, No. 3, Autumn 1976, 76.

[102] Tollof Nelson, "Sculpting the End of Time: The Anamorphosis of History and Memory in Andrei Tarkovsky's Mirror (1975)," *Cinémas : revue d'études cinématographiques / Cinémas: Journal of Film Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 2003.

[103] Nicole Brenez, *Abel Ferrara*, (Urbana: U. of Illinois P, 2007), 13.

[104] Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film* (London: Verso, 2002), 137.

[105] Ibid., 16.

realism of disembodied views of the historical world. By presenting a unique embodied subjectivity that has gone before the spectator to gaze upon the image, essay filmmakers demonstrate the potentialities and limitations of visual perception. I contend that the anamorphic metaphor is appropriate to the essayistic mode in cinema because of its emphasis on the *experience* of shifting perception, the way we look and listen, which leads to shifting hermeneutics. I take as my basic premise for using this concept that if a text implies embodied subjectivity critical of the central perspective established within the medium and of the archival footage at the time of production, then the text has the basic components for creating an anamorphic experience of spectatorship.[106]

When a strong enunciator projects their framing of the archival material from an embodied perspective in essay films, they model archival anamorphosis for the spectator. "Embodied perspective" here refers to the way in which the cinematic text indicates that a singular person, the filmmaker who employs direct address, is responsible for the framing of the material in the film. The essay filmmaker's lived experience and contingent views of the world is clearly referenced within the text. "Disembodied perspective," by contrast, refers to the way a cinematic text constructs the pretext of the material it conveys as omniscient, objective, or naturalized, which can be obtained through voice-of-God narration, or other narrative or editing techniques that erase traces of constructedness. Anamorphosis is the process that makes the film essayist's use of found or archival footage critical. It is the process that preserves both levels of inscription of and on the image, that is, the original context, or past, and the new context, or present, so that the archival film work can function as both document and art. The archival material still retains its relationship to the historical world as document, but a new dimension is added to it, which could be thought of as the trace of another embodied subjectivity upon the material—a palimpsest of an individual subject's reading of the archival material.

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[106] Though little has been written on the concept, I find evidence for my views on the intermediality of anamorphosis in several texts dealing with different representational forms, such as David R. Castillo's *(A)wry Views: Anamorphosis, Cervantes, and the Early Picaresque* (2001), Jurgis Baltrušaitis' *Anamorphic Art* ([1969] 1977), Lyle Massey's *Picturing Space, Displacing Bodies: Anamorphosis in Early Modern Theories of Perspective* (2007), Fred Leemann, Joost Elffers, and Michael Schuyt's *Hidden Images: Games of Perception, Anamorphic Art, Illusion: from the Renaissance to the Present* (1976), Daniel L. Collins' "Anamorphosis and the Eccentric Observer: History, Technique and Current Practice" (1992), Jacques Lacan's *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* ([1973] 1998), Gilles Deleuze's *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (1993), Hanneke Grootenboer's *The Rhetoric of Perspective: Realism and Illusionism in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Still-Life Painting* (2005), and Slavoj Žižek's *Looking Awry* (1991), as well as his DVD commentary on *Children of Men* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2006).

The concept of anamorphosis is helpful in understanding how, through a shared experience of shifting spectatorial positions, both the filmmaker and the spectator of the essay film, and certain experimental documentaries, may contribute to the disruption of the structure of visual information. It helps us to think through the effects of shifting spectatorships in archive-based film and video works because it shows us a legacy of works symptomatic of various tendencies to reduce the spectator to a disembodied receiver of the status quo. In much the same way that these sidelong images can serve as commentary for the "straightforward" image in painting, the essay filmmaker's vocal commentary repositions the spectators of the "documentary" film such that they may reinterpret what they see against some of the more passive, disembodied conventions of nonfiction spectatorship.

If the subjective reading in the essay film is successful in its anamorphosis, the spectator will experience a reflexive shock during which the recognition of the discourses that guided the production and maintenance of image creation are seen more clearly in their clash with the experience of subjective historiography and hermeneutics. Modeling an act of reading the image that relinquishes and makes conspicuous the illusion of mastery over interpretation shifts interpretation away from the interpellated ideal spectator towards an instance of a contingent, embodied, and finite subjective gaze, encouraging spectators to consider their own relationship to such images. By presenting a unique subjectivity which has gone before the spectator to gaze upon the image, taking an embodied position before it through various filmmaking strategies, essay filmmakers demonstrate the potentialities and limitations of visual perception in relation to epistemic projects.

Besides the use of direct address through sidelong embodied perspectives, the clearest anamorphic strategy displayed in all of my case studies, what I will call "backgrounds-into-foregrounds anamorphosis", is made most explicit in the voiceover of two films. In *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, Thom Andersen sums up this strategy as bringing our "involuntary attention" to the fore, and in *My Winnipeg*, Guy Maddin observes that over time, the backgrounds of photos begin to become more important than the people in them. The thrust of this type of anamorphosis is to present the archival material such that the spectator is implored to read the marginalia of the archival moving image for the latent, unintentional archive held within their frames. Unlike the reframing of the images through vocal suggestion, backgrounds-into-foregrounds anamorphosis

can be initiated through archival montage, and is thus present in all the films in this study, regardless of the presence or absence of voiceover.

Žižek also uses the concept of anamorphosis to analyze how a film might encourage a transposition of backgrounds-into-foregrounds in his short (6 minute) DVD commentary to *Children of Men* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2006). He proposes that the use of anamorphosis in the film "gives the best diagnosis of the ideological despair of late capitalism" through the tension between the hero's story, in the foreground, and the background which shows the evidence of a "lack of meaningful historical experience".[107] Backgrounds-into-foregrounds anamorphosis, Žižek suggests, is a technique for unlocking our ideological unconscious.

Backgrounds-into-foregrounds anamorphosis is a type of *détournement*. Developed first by the Belgian surrealist writer and artist Marcel Mariën, the Situationists adopted *détournement* in the 1950s as a technique of subversion that works by plagiarizing capitalist media productions in order to reverse the perspectives contained within them so as to expose and critique the meaning of the symbols themselves.[108] I argue that backgrounds-into-foregrounds anamorphosis functions in a specific way that has important consequences for historiographical spectatorship. The process of shifting positions from a central, disembodied perspective—here the intended spectatorship of the original filmic text—to an embodied, subjectively informed and idiosyncratic perspective not only diverts or hijacks the meaning to another meaning that challenges the ideology of the status quo, but also shifts the hermeneutic terms by which historicity is itself consumed.

Framing creates an event.[109] As the Dadaists observed, conspicuously framing a cultural object conveys an intentional motivation of the material, a point of view, and the power to reevaluate things or ideas in a way that contextualization does not. To contextualize is to present one's relationship to an object as neutral. By presenting an object as though its importance surfaces naturally within a continuous stream of occurrences, contextualization denies the act of setting the object apart from its environment or considering it in a particular way within it. The

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[107] Slavoj Žižek's DVD commentary for *Children of Men* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2006), Universal Pictures.

[108] Sadie Plant, *The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age* (London: Routledge, 2002), 86.

[109] See chapter on framing in: Bal, Mieke. *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

concept of framing, and the frame, helps us to understand the advantages of connecting the practices of anamorphosis with critical uses of the moving image archive.

Framing also allows for the concepts of foreground and background. In early anamorphic painting, the anamorphic object viewed straight-on appears blurred as if it were part of the background even when it appears in the front of the picture, as it does in Holbein's *Ambassadors*. For this reason, these objects are not considered fully representational when they are not seen from the focusing angle and their identification and meaning is not probed further without the suggestion from within or outside of the visual text. They exist as "stains," something Real (in the Lacanian sense) that interrupts the picture but does not propose a rational explanation for its presence. As Žižek argues in *Looking Awry*, such "stains" can, thus, either be extremely disconcerting, like the birds in Hitchcock's eponymous film, or they can blend in to the scene, as with camouflage.[110]

In the case of the filmic examples approached in this study, as well as in examples of anamorphic painting, there are two frames at play at all times. First, the frame of the source material, or the straightforward presentation of the painting, both of which have been so naturalized within their respective environments that they are not perceived to be framed, or motivated at all. Second, the reframed sidelong view, a view that spectators must participate in achieving, but when they do, the intentionality of both original framing and reframing become conspicuous and contentious. There is thus a recognition that the frame that motivates the standard view is itself a particular perspective on the content, which can, and perhaps should, be considered, critiqued, or discussed, as is the reframing.

This dissertation will take "anamorphosis" to mean a repositioning of the spectator's ability to make meaning away from the dominant view and towards a mode of critique that trains the spectator in ways of further opening up texts. I argue that the case studies analyzed here prompt the spectator towards an anamorphic viewing of film, and because anamorphic viewing strategies can be fruitfully adopted where no such internal prompt exists, I further argue that it is the aim of the city-symphony-in-reverse to provide an anamorphic experience to spectators that they can (and should) apply to other films.

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[110] Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1992), 96.

Nostalgia as a Critical Concept

Nostalgia has often been described as a malady, or disorder, that distorts one's relationship to history and geography. It is often thought that nostalgics suffer not only from a psychological distortion but also from a moral failing; they are seen to flee or escape into a sentimentalized past rather than facing the harsh truth of their existence. Although there were already words to describe the longing for one's native land in German and French, *heimweh* and *maladie du pays*, respectively, Swiss medical student, Johannes Hofer created the neologism "nostalgia" from the Greek stems *algia* (longing) and *nostos* (the return home), in his 1688 dissertation, the first to provide a comprehensive account of the condition. Christine Sprengler, in her book *Screening Nostalgia*, defines "nostalgic experience" as "the longing for an *irretrievable* ideal".[111] In longing for "an irretrievable ideal," one version of the past is extended to its most totalizing conclusion within that past moment, and allowed to stand in for and envelope completely the moment it is meant to represent. In this way, the past, in its mystery and multiplicity, becomes defined and fixed—an image of glory, not an image of complexity, actuality or historical engagement. Fixing a past glory in our minds may be a way of reassuring ourselves that a persistent and consistent ideal is possible, and that uniformity in a common memory or vision of the past is also possible. If the majority of a group we belong to can acknowledge the same markers of particular past eras, we feel comforted that we know, we understand the past—that it is manageable even in its irretrievability. Unfortunately, this move to be reassured by the uncomplicated homogeneity of collective recollection is in bad faith, for if we are to scratch the surface of any of these past moments to which (unreflective) nostalgia refers us, we will undoubtedly find an overwhelming diversity of experience, perspectives, contradictions, and unexplained details in the archive, that is, if the archive has not been thoroughly purged of such evidence. To disregard the heterogeneity of the past is not only to condemn to obscurity those whose visions were suppressed or unaccounted for in official narratives, but also to deprive ourselves of the opportunity to comprehend and evaluate the present in a way that reflects an understanding of the myriad paths toward "progress" and the ways in which these have been closed off, or opened up, before our own arrival on the scene of history.

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[111] Christine Sprengler, *Screening Nostalgia: Populuxe Props and Technicolor Aesthetics in Contemporary American Film* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), 2. Emphasis added.

A key characteristic of nostalgia is the effect of embodiment on the mind, and of the mind on the body. The displacement, the not-at-homeness, of the body is recognized in both the body and mind through nostalgia. The nostalgic's affliction of the mind, or soul, is rooted in the destabilization of their sense of embodiment—it is their body that is not where it should be or where they would ideally want it to be. Displacement from a sense of "home" then constitutes the particular, and peculiar, perspective from which the nostalgic's worldview issues.

Beyond the fact that each of my case studies takes a city as a subject and looks at it through the archive, what all of the films have in common is that they are born of a clear longing for the past of a city the filmmaker (in most cases) calls home. Nostalgia resulting from temporal displacement, rather than geographical displacement, could be seen here as, at its root, a longing to know one's home better, to occupy it more fully even as one presently inhabits it, and to connect to some crucial element of it when looking towards the future. To dismiss such films because they embrace their nostalgia would be to miss a chance to see how nostalgia might be taken seriously as an aspect of archival experience. The films in this study thematically revolve around two affects of estrangement—a longing for a historically displaced city in which the filmmaker has lived experience, and a desire to draw historical experience from the city archive.

Following the work of Svetlana Boym, who strove to make nostalgia into a critical concept in her book *The Future of Nostalgia*,[112] I distinguish between two kinds of nostalgia with opposing aims, reflective and unreflective nostalgia. City-symphonies-in-reverse take nostalgia seriously as an important, and even inevitable, component of interacting with the archive. For the purposes of this dissertation, "nostalgia" must not be thought of as the dirty word it is often taken to be in cultural criticism, but rather as a continuum of affective relationships with the past that fall into patterns within the polls of reflective and unreflective approaches to the past. Even Benjamin, contends Canadian film scholar Andrew Burke, "refuses to dismiss nostalgia outright or to concede it to the reactionary or retrogressive elements on either side of the political spectrum. As a result, Benjamin has come to exemplify the way in which nostalgia might be

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[112] In addition to Svetlana Boym's *The Future of Nostalgia*, there are several texts that attempt to make nostalgia into a critical concept, for instance Stewart Tannock's 1995 *Cultural Studies* article, "Nostalgia Critique," and Christine Sprengler's book *Screening Nostalgia* (2009). Excepting Boym, who believes that nostalgia is a relation to the past that exists on a spectrum of critique, some instances being more critical than others, these authors endeavor to reveal how nostalgic images *can be read critically* such that the audience is able to get more than was intended out of the representation.

understood as an integral part of the work of cultural memory and even a potential catalyst for positive political change."[113] The possibility that nostalgia may provide some of the tools to combat positivism's oppressive view of revolutionary transformation is, thus, left open in Benjamin's work.

Furthermore, nostalgia and historical consciousness will be seen as two intrinsic and connected elements of historical experience. I argue that the affective aspects of historical experience, which the concept of nostalgia recognizes, are as important to the notion of historical experience as intellectual probing is. Nostalgia and historical consciousness are interrelated to the extent that one can provoke the other. Whereas the affect that reflective nostalgia produces can stimulate historically conscious reflections, the reverse can also be true. My intervention here is to show that these concepts cannot be separated from each other in the city-symphony-in-reverse, and that to do so, artificially hierarchizes the intellectual over the affective in a process that requires both. This dissertation argues that localized reflections of the past constructed through the archive in the twenty-first century are beginning to explore these two aspects of historical experience in the absence of creating totalizing historical narratives. To create a totalizing historical narrative by archival means, I contend, would be to fall into unreflective nostalgia's tendency to homogenize and reduce human experience to its most sentimentally and politically expedient properties, seen in Ken Burns's documentaries, for instance, but some filmmakers, such as the ones in this study, are realizing, highlighting and interrogating this tendency within archive-based historical representation.

The affects associated with nostalgia, a longing for a relationship with the past, need not lead to the reactionary distortions most commonly associated with the concept and can, thus, be directed towards historical consciousness. Following Svetlana Boym and Benjamin, I see nostalgia on a continuum. At one end, we find the kind of temporal delusion that allows individuals and groups of people to be overtaken by a desire for a transhistorical past and an essentialized sense of geographical identity that they begin to think of time as retrievable. At the other end, we find a strong fascination and desire to connect with the past, and what it means to be at home, that is nevertheless rooted in present reality and accepts the past as irretrievable, yet

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[113] Andrew Burke, "Music, memory and modern life: Saint Etienne's London," *Screen* 51(2) (2010): 105.

integral to the present, and potentially predictive of the future. Boym defines the former as "restorative nostalgia" and the latter as "reflective nostalgia":

> Restorative nostalgia puts emphasis on *nostos* [the return home] and proposes to rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps. Reflective nostalgia dwells in *algia* [longing], in longing and loss, the imperfect process of remembrance. The first category of nostalgics do not think of themselves as nostalgic; they believe that their project is about truth. … Restorative nostalgia manifests itself in total reconstructions of monuments of the past, while reflective nostalgia lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and another time.[114]

Truth, for restorative nostalgics, lies in reaffirming and reenacting a national myth. Restorative nostalgia insists that its narrative is the one and only true understanding of the past. Reflective nostalgia mistrusts any representation of the past as absolute and seeks to understand the subjective and collective desires for historical connection. Restorative nostalgia creates a relationship to the past in which existing objects and texts are incorporated into a narrative of national identity that threads "essential" characteristics of the in-group through the past into the present. Reflective nostalgia examines restorative nostalgia and attempts to find more historically conscious, more open and varied, relationships with the past. I argue that reflective nostalgia, with its mixture of intellectual and emotional appeals, is a pre-requisite for an experience of historical consciousness through aesthetic means, such as archive-based filmmaking. Our longing to understand the past does not just come from intellectual questions about time and history, but more deeply from an existential urgency to see ourselves within history, to belong to the historical, and realize our historicity.

I agree with Boym's warning regarding the potential for powerful ideologies to create imaginary, impossible, ideal visions of home that the unreflective nostalgic will easily tend towards confusing with an actual home, "tempting us to relinquish critical thinking for emotional bonding."[115] The slippage of the bond between the displaced individual and her home to an abstracted ideologically motivated notion of home can provoke extremist actions, and has been used to great effect by fascist and totalitarian regimes. As Boym remarks, "Unreflected nostalgia

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[114] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 41.
[115] Ibid., xvi.

breeds monsters."[116] Thus, we can see the roots of cultural criticism's distrust for nostalgia here. Reactionary authoritarian forces can easily motivate nostalgic longing for their own nationalistic political agendas by providing master narratives that position vulnerable people as part of a righteous in-group that has somehow been victimized by minorities, or (an) out-group(s). And, because the archive is an inherent trigger for the nostalgic drive, especially the moving image archive which often has remnants of past nostalgias, dreams and desires, lingering in the frames, it should come as no surprise that some filmmakers who are disquieted by the potential mobilization of the archive for reactionary political agendas seek to cultivate its opposite, a reflective nostalgic response to the moving image archive that encourages the critical thinking necessary to resist reductive, fear-based, political ideologies.

Boym prescribes an effective remedy, if not a cure, to the dangerous affliction restorative nostalgia presents: recognize its "mechanisms of seduction and manipulation."[117] Restorative nostalgia has two chief narrative strategies for convincing its subjects that *nostos*, homecoming, is possible: the conspiracy theory and the restoration of origins.[118] Boym explains,

> The conspiratorial worldview is based on a single transhistorical plot, a Manichean battle of good and evil and the inevitable scapegoating of the mythical enemy. Ambivalence, the complexity of history and the specificity of modern circumstances is thus erased, and modern history is seen as a fulfillment of ancient prophesy. "Home," imagine extremist conspiracy theory adherents, is forever under siege, requiring defense against the plotting enemy.[119]

Many injustices of the twentieth century, "from pogroms to Nazi and Stalinist terror to McCarthy's Red scare, operated in response to conspiracy theories in the name of a restored homeland."[120] In the twenty-first century, the conspiratorial worldview adopted by the restorative nostalgic has already become the backbone of numerous political campaigns. For instance, fantasies of persecution and a desire to return to an idea of home that excludes a "mythical enemy" have been invaluable to both Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan, whose actions

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[116] Ibid.
[117] Ibid., xviii.
[118] Ibid., 43.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid.

against Kurds, Armenians, and intellectuals have galvanized the largely uneducated Muslim majority, and American president Donald Trump, who ran on a platform that demonized Muslims and Mexicans in the name of "[Making] America Great, Again" for the largely uneducated white Christian majority. Boym emphasizes that restorative nostalgia draws its strength not from the longing for the past so much as from "the anxiety about those who draw attention to historical incongruities between past and present and thus question the wholeness and continuity of the restored tradition. … restorative nostalgia has no use for the signs of historical time—patina, ruins, cracks, imperfections."[121] Thus, the natural enemies of the restorative nostalgic, and that which incites them to eradicate all that does not conform to their vision, is anyone or anything that could expose and invest with meaning the signs of historical time: the baroque, the archive, and the reflective nostalgic. A key strength of *Paris 1900*, we have already seen, is its ability to form a compelling critique of restorative nostalgia through the moving image archive and essayistic filmmaking. The city-symphony-in-reverse uses heterogeneous fragments of local moving image representations of historical time to combat (potentially) dangerous attempts to create national narratives that reinforce restorative nostalgia.

Nostalgia has much in common with the other critical concepts in this dissertation. All three, essay, anamorphosis and nostalgia, arise out of a denial of embodied presence within the dominant modes of representation. The displaced nostalgic body can be seen as an afflicted, compromised body, but it can also be seen as an anamorphized body. The subject that experiences nostalgia must look upon "home" from a new vantage point after being displaced. "Home" is thus seen from a repositioned angle by the nostalgic, a sidelong view from the margins. No longer on the inside geographically or temporally, the nostalgic has the opportunity to embrace the view and the new perspective it affords, or try to claw their way back into what had been left behind, or left them behind. If nostalgia is maligned because it involves physical, sensual, and emotional responses to the past, I suggest that we can redeem these characteristics to give it a place in historical consciousness by rethinking it as a critical strategy for reintegrating embodiment, affect, and personal investment into the archive. While nostalgia may be an anamorphic condition in its reflective and unreflective states, only reflective nostalgia presents a baroque reformulation of the concept. The ability to reflect on our own ways of seeing recalls the essayistic and Deleuze's folds of consciousness.

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[121] Ibid., 44-45.

The baroque makes a productive intervention in unreflective nostalgia. Helen Hills conceives of "the baroque as an illegitimate and invasive presence in the unperturbed past, which is imagined and necessitated by a history aimed at 'recuperation'".[122] Hence, a baroque nostalgia could be seen as a historiographical tool that upends restorative nostalgic narratives to open up the past for new relationships. It does not try to integrate its view into the past to appear as though it was always already there, consistent and eternal, as does restorative nostalgia. "Renaissance and early Baroque artists never disguised their work as the past. They left the scars of history … They conscientiously preserved different shades of marble to mark a clear boundary between their creative additions and the fragments of the ancient statues," writes Boym.[123] Baroque nostalgia is additive and conspicuous.

What I am calling "baroque nostalgia" is a reflective nostalgia that acknowledges the primacy of affect and reflexivity when creating bonds with the past. It describes a process that is intensely personal, and at the same time, a process that has important consequences for collective memory. Since restorative nostalgia relies on the whole in-group accepting a single narrative, baroque nostalgia requires of the observer a commitment to reflexivity, that is, an understanding that what we might discover of the past may not be what we intended to find, and we cannot force from it what we want. And indeed, we may find far less than we expected, even when we have far more material than we can process. The archive pushes back against us, and yet our longing, our affect, tells us that we were always already intended by it. We find some access to this irretrievable home by discovering ourselves in the archive's envelopment of humanity. We are both always inside and always outside of the archive at all times in our modern world.

Baroque nostalgia fights against the totalitarian logic of restorative nostalgia. It exposes the absolutist notions in the restorative nostalgic's reasoning and proposes alternatives that retain the crucial affect of longing for the past, but show that a single cohesive narrative will not lead to redemption. Baroque nostalgia, as I am defining it, is a reflective nostalgia that longs for a relationship with an irretrievable past with the knowledge that a unified vision of that past is not the same as truth, a restoration of that past is impossible, and an engagement with the past is necessary for any perspective on the future. It seeks small acts of redemption rather than totalizing ones. It critiques the efforts of restorative nostalgia by deconstructing the tendency

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[122] Hills, *Rethinking the Baroque*, 4.
[123] Ibid., 47.

towards totalizing disembodied perspectives and emphasizing the exciting richness of multiplicitous fragments in historical discovery (as we have already seen in *Paris 1900*). Baroque nostalgia focuses on the heterogeneity of the past, its necessarily fragmented presence in the present, and the reflective and reflexive capacity of the observer. I argue that city-symphonies-in-reverse adopt a baroque nostalgia on particular urban pasts in ways that help us to understand the role of historical consciousness in dismantling the power of the national narratives created by restorative nostalgics to macromanage local action.

The Archive

At its most basic and familiar, the word "archive" denotes a place where records are collected and maintained. Because records are fundamental in the creation of representations of the past, the integrity of historical representations may be compromised if archives do not maintain their records properly. But equally important to the integrity of historical representations is our conceptual understanding of what an archive is and what it does. In its widest interpretation "the archive" can point to the set of all things in existence, so it is important to establish some boundaries around what is meant by the archive in general, and the moving image archive in particular.

In their introduction to the anthology, *Using Moving Image Archives*, Nandana Bose and Lee Grieveson determine what kinds of pursuits might be possible in the archive: "The archive is also potentially not just a space where we investigate objects in order to flesh out our sense of history. The archive can also be an object of our investigation itself, which can therefore enable us to consider the various ways in which history is constructed, even designed."[124] Investigation of both the concept of the archive and particular archives themselves are rather recent pursuits in film studies. Not only can the films themselves be seen as archival materials that are worthy of preservation and study, but the images they contain can also be seen as documentary records of particular times and places whether they come from fiction or nonfiction sources. A focus on moving images themselves as oblique historical records is proving to be a fruitful area of study.

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[124] Nandana Bose, and Lee Grieveson, eds., *Using Moving Image Archives. Scope: An Online Journal of Film and Television Studies* ebook, (2010): 2. http://www.scope.nottingham.ac.uk/archives/indexcov.php

Archives are not neutral ground; often they are controlled by powerful interests who have a stake in what is remembered and how. Canadian archive scholars, Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook sum up some of the general concerns around the archive in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries succinctly: "archives are established by the powerful to protect or enhance their position in society. Through archives, the past is controlled. Certain stories are privileged and others marginalized. And archivists are an integral part of this story-telling."[125] The films in this study are quite deliberately not beholden to any powerful institutionalized archives, and equally thwart the very idea that exploiting the archive for story-telling purposes is necessarily its best use. In fact, they take on subversive traditions of art through thievery, trash picking, and fakery to make their claims regarding the archive. In the case of *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, Andersen primarily uses home videos and bootleg copies of films for which he famously did not have permission to use and distribute, holding up the release of the film for more than a decade.[126] Similarly, the "ephemeral" films quoted in Prelinger's *Lost Landscapes* series' issue from "the trash heap of history" from which a Benjaminian principle of critique of the dominant trends in historiography can be fashioned from the detritus, or reclaimed abject materials, of the moving image archive. In contrast to the other works in this study, most of *My Winnipeg*'s visual material was created to fake archival footage, presenting its own analysis of the value and limits of the archive in cinema.

The perception that cinema is declining in significance has spurred not only a fascination with the moving image archive, but a call to redeem its treasures and preserve its optical unconscious for future generations. Tom Gunning writes,

> Cinema was often described as the "art form of the twentieth century". That phrase, which once denoted the inherence of film in the modern age, now threatens to sink into an outmoded historicism. The century now has turned and its privileged medium appears

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[125] Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook. "Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory." *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 1.

[126] *Los Angeles Plays Itself* only got a DVD release as of October of 2014. Home distribution company Cinema Guild also released two previously unreleased feature films, including *Red Hollywood* (1996) in December of 2014, and *Eadweard Muybridge, Zoopraxographer* (1975) in 2015.

to have been cannibalized by a host of new media. *But we cannot let either the century or cinema disappear without wresting from them the promise they once held...*[127]

If we are to heed Gunning's warning, we will need to consider what is at stake for the moving image archive of the twentieth century as its essential medium, celluloid, becomes obsolete in the twenty-first century. The impending obsolescence of celluloid at the turn of the millennium concerns the production of new footage, as well as the presentation and preservation of existing and future moving image works. We have not already fulfilled the historiographical promise of film that Gunning refers to, however. Indeed, we are only just now entering into that period of discovery. The threat of a rich medium's disappearance, physically and culturally, has motivated scholars, archivists, and filmmakers to consider what might be left unexplored, or forgotten, if this unique archive is dispensed with because the medium upon which it was recorded is no longer viable. Increasingly, filmmakers today are asking what the stakes of leaving behind the most comprehensive visible evidence of a century are, and what *new* experiences can be unfolded from the celluloid still in existence. In these first decades of the twenty-first century, as it becomes clearer that the moving image archive will need our attention, we are noticing that archive-based films, somewhere between the documentary and experimental traditions, are the kinds of films that are beginning to show a concern for a project of recuperation and redemption of the moving image archive as a critical historiographical tool.

Film scholar, Janna Jones considers the historical relevance of the moving image archive to be considerably high as we enter into the twenty-first century:

> This moving image time machine [as Laura Mulvey had characterized archival footage] has and will continue to have an enormous impact on the way the twentieth century is remembered. But the stakes are high for this sort of history making: the films that are saved, preserved, and made accessible are the ones that will help us to remember particular social, political, and cinematic pasts. The ones that are not will vanish, their film elements quietly disintegrating, their stories disappearing into oblivion.[128]

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[127] Tom Gunning, "Joris Ivens, Filmmaker of the twentieth century, of The Netherlands and the world," in A. Stufkens (ed.), *Cinema without borders, the films of Joris Ivens* (EFJI, Nijmegen, 2002),18. Emphasis added.

[128] Janna Jones, *The Past Is a Moving Picture: Preserving the Twentieth Century on Film* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), 4.

While some of the moving image archive can be seen through digital means, increasing the potential for the public to gain more "archival experience", the vast majority of what remains of the analogue material remains inaccessible and is slowly slipping away through the degradation of its material substances.

Jones is concerned with the long-term preservation of complete films within the moving image archive, while I am concerned with the ultimate (re)use value of these preservation efforts starting with the present. The films I examine in this dissertation answer to some of these high stakes in the way they reuse and represent their archival material, affirming the necessity of the archive not only for the faraway future, but for the current spectator. In a time dominated by apocalyptic visions, predictions of immanent economic, environmental, and political global catastrophe, moving image archives are treasuries of potential knowledge we cannot afford to let perish or idle; they are troves we must put to their maximum use in the now.

As the vast majority of the moving image archive will ultimately be left behind by the transfer to digital technologies, a renewed interest from documentary filmmakers and scholars focuses attention on the capacity of the archive to show what cannot be told as well as to add multiplicity and heterogeneity to the larger narratives of the twentieth century by focusing on points of view that have been excluded but can be found in the archive. Archival montage films adeptly allude to a major paradox described by archivists of all kinds at the turn of the twenty-first century: archives provide too much and too little at the same time; they are, for those charged with their protection, as well as those who hope to use them, at once, unimaginably large, and frustratingly deficient. This paradox makes the question of what to preserve and what to re-present all the more difficult, and prescient, for archivists and artists, respectively.

Jones writes about her experience of a screening in Tampa, Florida curated, and sponsored by the Library of Congress and American Movie Classics (AMC) in which Edwin Porter's 1903 canonical film *The Great Train Robbery* was shown along with 30 seconds of Edison's 1898 footage of Spanish American War soldiers unloading cargo from a train in Tampa. She contrasts the efforts to preserve the two films, flagging the intensity of the measures taken to safeguard the former's history and materiality for the future, while the latter had been somewhat neglected by comparison. It is the latter film, Edison's naked footage, however, that captures her attention. Even as she found these images "difficult to discern," she remarks on their

ability to "[resurrect] the city and the soldiers in a way that photographs could not."[129] She goes on to say why, for her, this footage stood out from both period photographs of similar scenes, and its highly canonized companion:

> Edison's moving images of a Tampa that existed one hundred years ago were a compelling reminder of how a city's past can disappear from the landscape and from the memory. Perhaps it was just the glimpse of the mundane animated before my eyes, but the images also suggested that the past could be summoned by way of the archival moving image, if only in such moments of exhibition. In Edison's filmic minute, I experienced both the loss and a partial salvaging of time.[130]

Her emphasis on the disappearance of local urban history "from the landscape and from the memory" is echoed in the thematics of the films analyzed in this dissertation, and especially in Prelinger's *Lost Landscapes* presentations. She also highlights the presence of the past within the exhibition space, the ephemerality and rarity of it, as well as the "the loss and the partial salvaging of time" that, for her, signals the chief tension in archival experience, that which occurs between our mourning for a lost past and the often fragile redemption of it that the archive provides.

We, "twenty-first century beings", according to Jones, have at our disposal a unique historical tool, a moving image archive of the century that precedes us. The question of how we are to use such a tool and what it might bring to how we envision ourselves as historical subjects is precisely the common thread that unites my case studies. Jones continues to examine the significance of her experience with the Edison footage: "Witnessing the reanimation of the soldiers, the city, and the era to which the film belonged, I understood that *cinema and its preservation have drastically altered our relationship with the past*, for it is only we, twenty-first century beings, who experience both the pleasure and the anxiety of watching the century before us come into motion."[131] Each one of the cinematic objects in this dissertation theorizes this "pleasure and anxiety of watching the century before us come into motion" through a different body of archival source material. Archival and evidentiary experience alter our relationship to

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[129] Ibid., 3.

[130] Ibid., 4.

[131] Ibid. Emphasis added.

the past by giving us a chance to test our assumptions, as well as to test the narratives by which we construct the past, against concrete materials, any of which could suggest very divergent and diverse variations of historical understanding.

Paula Amad pursues Bose and Grieveson's logic of investigating a particular archive in her study of Albert Kahn's *Archives de la planète* (1908-1931), "a literal film archive devoted to recording the diversity of global daily life",[132] to understand the history of his particular project as well as to extrapolate more abstract understandings of the concept of the archive itself. Through Kahn's archive, Amad finds evidence of the need for a notion of a "counter-archive". Amad's book, *Counter-Archive* looks at historical debates around the limits of the archive to aid memory. Through an examination of debates around film's documentary capacity in its early days, which changed the idea of the archive, she creates the concept "counter-archive" in order to theorize the capacity of film to aid in memory in a manner contrary to positivism's desire for transparency, certainty, order, and clarity.[133] She clarifies the qualities of the counter-archive that fly in the face of positivism's mnemonic strategies:

> Film's counter-archival properties—its propensity for capturing excessive detail, inciting unmanageable curiosity, suspending habitual modes of memory and perception, and most importantly, automatically collecting that which was usually overlooked or suppressed in the official archive, such as the minor events of social life that Boleslas Matuszewski described as the 'anecdotal side of History'[134]

Exceptionally specific and exact recordings of a scene; obsessive visual excitation; revolutionary strategies for remembrance; and an optical unconscious that brings the everyday into the historical are a few of the areas of inquiry that can be approached only when the archive is seen from a perspective counter to the dominant positivistic view, according to Amad.

Outside of religious idealism, positivism has been the dominant philosophical view of the last two centuries. It is the philosophical movement that makes science and technology possible. All positivistic knowledge stems from the scientific method, which depends on the reduction of

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[132] Paula Amad, *Counter-Archive: Film, the Everyday, and Albert Kahn's Archives de la Planète* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 6.

[133] Ibid., 4.

[134] Amad, *Counter-Archive*, 165.

all things to measurable units; the establishment of facts; the reification of human social action and history; and the elision of the observer's ideological commitments and their effects on the object. As Frankfurt School critical theorists have pointed out, it can be a dangerous totalizing perspective from which to regard human life because, among other things, it claims political neutrality, when no philosophy can be truly neutral, and in doing so it acts in service of the status quo.[135] In contrast, critics of positivism focus, therefore, on the qualitative aspects of people and things; unknowability and partial knowledge; historicity; the irreducibility of human experience and human worth; and the reflexive labor of the observer. Positivism is also the philosophical foundation that underlies and perpetuates capitalism. Positivism relies on an intellectual conformity that asks people to objectify society and their own beliefs, which results in an inability to see that the present could have been otherwise, and consequently that we could influence the future. Positivism undercuts the possibility of revolutionary change by denying alternative visions.[136]

Positivism's affinity for reifying their objects of study has particularly devastating consequence for the pursuit of a history and memory of everyday life. As Theodor Adorno wrote, "all reification is a forgetting: objects become purely thing-like the moment they are retained for us without the continued presence of their other aspects: when something of them has been forgotten."[137] Narrative can work to reify the archive in the sense that if it tries to substitute for the archival record, it will necessarily leave out details. Which details the narrative leaves out will depend on explicit agendas linked to powerful institutions, corporations, or states, as well as implicit bias on the part of archivists, historians and filmmakers. Therefore, narrative cannot substitute for archival or evidentiary experience without "forgetting" details that may render the narrative false, flawed, or biased in intended or unintended ways.

Amad's theory of the counter-archive is extremely useful because it sheds light on the importance of the archive for uses other than the creation of master narratives that perpetuate a positivistic view of humanity at best, and a hegemonic control of access to history and memory

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[135] Fred Rush, "Conceptual Foundations of Early Critical Theory," in *The Cambridge Companion to Critical Theory*, Fred Rush, ed. (Cambridge [etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 22.

[136] Raymond Geuss, "Dialectics and the revolutionary impulse," in *The Cambridge Companion to Critical Theory*, Fred Rush, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 121.

[137] Adorno in a letter to Benjamin, February 29, 1940, in Theodor W Adorno and Walter Benjamin, *The Complete Correspondence, 1928 – 1940*, Henri Lonitz, ed. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 2001), 343.

at worst. In her conclusion, Amad acknowledges that Khan's counter-archive is "a baroque version of the archive,"[138] but she does not make the connection between baroqueness and the need for a counter-archive capable of challenging positivism's totalizing claims to the archive anywhere else in her book. I take her position on the counter-archive as a starting point for my discussion on the use of the moving image as an archive in my case studies. My research here extends and further develops Amad's counter-archival theory through the lens of baroque conceptual technologies.

Due to its awkwardness in the organizational systems of filing cabinets and card catalogues of the late-nineteenth century, film was not immediately understood by all who worked with it as an archival medium the way photography was.[139] Although there were early examples of advocates for approaching film as an archival, and hence historical medium, a case for its importance to historiography needed to be made, and in some ways, still needs to be made. In 1898, Polish cameraman, Boleslas Matuszewski was perhaps the first to write about the archival potential of the moving image in his two pamphlets, "A New Source of History," and "Animated Photography," two of the earliest, if not the earliest, works of film theory. In "A New Source of History," Matuszewski promotes the establishment of a film archive, "a depository of historical cinematography," that would focus not only on preservation, but access, as well; where a film that exhibited "historical character" would exist in three separate locations with varying focus on access and preservation, "a section of the Museum, a shelf in the Library, [and] a cabinet in the Archives."[140] Even at that time, Matuszewski expressed exasperation with the excessiveness of the photographic archive relative to its "noteworthy historical interest", an issue that would also trouble "animated photography", or film, as well.[141] He saw in the potential for a moving image archive a unique capacity to facilitate historical knowledge. But for Matuszewski, historical knowledge primarily came through "historical events", and much less through recordings of everyday life. Interestingly, among the great historical events he suggests will be the focus of future history classrooms, in which students will enjoy and learn from the views afforded by the moving image archive, he also includes "even the changing, mobile

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[138] Amad, *Counter-archive*, 301.

[139] Ibid., 20.

[140] Boleslas Matuszewski, "A New Source of History," [25 March 1898] Laura U. Marks, and Diane Koszarski, trans., *Film History*, Vol. 7, No. 3, Film Preservation and Film Scholarship (Autumn, 1995): 323.

[141] Ibid., 322.

physiognomy of the city!"[142] as a potential source of a moving-image-based historical education. Elsewhere in his manifesto, he alludes to his own experience of filming the 1897 visit of French President Félix Faure to St. Petersburg Russia as the official cameraman of the Tsar Nicholas II. He writes that he was able to capture "among other curious views, important scenes and intimate events of the visit".[143] The latter, he explains in a footnote, "is *a whole anecdotal side of History* that until now has escaped the imagination of narrators,"[144] recognizing, at once, the unique capacity of film to record and present "curious views" and "intimate events" for historical reflection, as well as the everyday as a category of historical knowledge that had yet to be interrogated by historians. He acknowledges, too, that recordings of the "anecdotal side of history" were difficult to narrate under his contemporary historiographical paradigm. Amad uses Matuszewski's footnote to develop a notion of "anecdotal history" for the counter-archive:

> if on the surface Matuszewski's manifesto trumpeted the idea that the traditional "historical fact" had found its most accurate reproduction in film, at its margins it also recognized the new medium's challenge to the traditional definition of the historical event by invoking this different type of unreliable, anonymous, unofficial, and uneventful history to which the film camera seemed fatally drawn.[145]

Amad's research shows that film is more suited to representing the historicity of everyday life, challenging the prima facie notion that the historical event is the basis of all historical consciousness. The late-nineteenth century paradigm of historicism that dismissed as "unreliable, anonymous, unofficial, and uneventful history" the "anecdotal history" that made up most of what film captured, would continue to dominate understandings of film's contribution to historiography throughout the majority of the twentieth century.

By the 1930s, theories of the moving image archive were still rather rare, and the creative reuse of the moving image archive was virtually nonexistent. However, in an unpublished 1936 book on film theory, French filmmaker and theorist, Germaine Dulac included a chapter, "Cinema at the Service of History: The Role of Newsreels," in which she theorizes the value of

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[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid., 324.
[144] Ibid. Emphasis added.
[145] Amad, *Counter-archive*, 4.

Newsreel footage to future historians. She writes, "An event recorded today, the importance of which has not immediately been grasped, may appear at a later date in the fullness of its significance, and in all its immediacy of movement, for later generations who will know how to judge it."[146] Here, Dulac identifies a blind spot in the thinking around the moving image archive as an entity governed by chronological notions of time, what constitutes an "event", and how to determine its significance. Meaning, importance and significance, cannot be forced in regards to our relationships with the past. She goes on to consider some of the potential difficulties and benefits of using newsreels as historiographical material, highlighting the transformation in spectatorship that must occur when the historical event can be comprehended as a part of a larger picture from a future vantage point. She distinguishes between those cinematic records that have import in the present and those that take some time to recognize, which she calls "slow-burn events." Within her argument, I see a nascent theory of archival cinema, echoing Vertov's "kino eye" in some ways, and Benjamin's "dialectical image" in others. Dulac had begun to map out some of the tensions between, on the one hand, the excessive dry mechanical capture of images, and on the other, the need to continually engage in a historiographical relationship with all such images in a way that brings experience within the historical world to bear on their interpretation.

The exciting potential that Dulac perceived in the newsreel, and other sources of moving image archival material, has certainly been seized upon in the intervening years, although with varying degrees of critical historiographical engagement required from the spectator. Stella Bruzzi posits two types of deployment of moving image archival material: illustrative, which does not "[ask] the spectator to question the archival documents but simply to absorb them as a component of a larger narrative," or critical, which constructs "a more politicized historical argument or debate."[147] According to Bruzzi, what she calls the "generic archive," the illustrative use of any past footage suitable to advance the narrative regardless of its sufficient historical relation to it, is commonly used in the documentary tradition.[148] This state of affairs provokes the question, if the archive is used illustratively by and large in documentary filmmaking, what is the value of the moving image as a record of the past within historiography, and how are

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[146] Germaine Dulac, "Cinema at the Service of History: The Role of Newsreels," (c. 1936) http://tlweb.latrobe.edu.au/humanities/screeningthepast/classics/cl0301/gdcl12a.htm (Last accessed, November 3, 2015.)
[147] Stella Bruzzi, *New Documentary: A Critical Introduction, Second Edition* (London: Routledge, 2006), 21.
[148] Ibid., 33.

documentary film spectators given access to it? How and why does the status of the moving image archive as record become a priority over pre-established historical narratives? I contend, along with Bruzzi, that prioritizing the explicit use of archival footage to write history has an important effect on documentary spectatorship—that of providing evidentiary experience, differing significantly from historical narrative experience. Bruzzi and most other theorists of archival and found footage seem to think that such a probing of the moving image record can radically reformulate the spectator's position.

Spectatorship

In John Berger's 1972 book, *Ways of Seeing*, he identifies the "principal protagonist" of the classical nude painting as the male spectator.[149] In the 1970s and 1980s, poststructuralist film theorists, such as Christian Metz, Stephen Heath, Jean-Louis Baudry, Laura Mulvey, Kaja Silverman, and Mary Ann Doane, pursued the notion that Berger put forth, that "ways of seeing" were structured into visual representations and that they addressed viewers in different ways. A common thread in this wave of theory on film spectatorship was the idea that even pleasant seemingly neutral images contain "an invisible ideology" that endows the gaze with a "mastery and equilibrium" within and over the images.[150] Following Berger's lead, the major players of 1970s film theory undertook the task of theorizing the dominant spectatorial placements of cinema, each pursuing a characterization of the viewing subject from a different social/material perspective. Baudry saw film spectators as analogous to Platonic prisoners when he examined them from the perspective of the apparatus; Metz saw film spectators as vacant vessels waiting to be filled with meaning when he saw them from the perspective of the sign; Mulvey saw film spectators as perverts when she observed them from the perspective of feminism.[151]

In her 1993 book, *Cinema and Spectatorship*, Judith Mayne positions her account of spectatorship beyond the simple binary that assumes that any given film creates either a crude or critical spectator, a passive or an active one. In the 1970s, "classical," mainstream cinema was theorized to position its spectators as passive receptacles for its pleasures. Spectatorship itself

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[149] John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 2008 [1972]), 54.

[150] Linda Williams, *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film* (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 1.

[151] Ibid., 2-3.

was thought to be under the power of the film, not the people watching it, and as such, their differences, whether they be cultural, temporal, or experiential, were not important to the construction of spectatorship. Since the 1970s, however, many scholars have pointed to this procrustean misunderstanding as a disabling factor in the important study of film spectatorship. Attempts to simply reverse the terms of film spectatorship theory were a crucial first response to the crisis film spectatorship theory. Showing that "classical" films could be read in critical ways by particular kinds of viewing subjects provided a degree of control over the text. Meaning-making and viewing experience was understood to be in the spectator's hands. Soon, however, these simple reversals were overcome by a greater understanding that the dualisms of critical vs. uncritical and insight vs. pleasure were barriers to the pursuit of theorizing film spectatorship.[152] Since images can be read "against the grain," and there is no way for image creators to control the gaze of every spectator, even when they have carefully constructed it to create particular phenomenological pathways, we must conclude that a tension between the properties of the image and the individual gaze is always at play in any image.

The tension between the gaze and the image is of particular consequence in archive-based filmmaking. Appropriation-film scholar, Jaimie Baron reformulates "'the archival document' as an *experience of reception* rather than an indication of official sanction or storage location," referring "to this experience as 'the archive effect.'"[153] Baron positions spectatorship as essential to the notion of the archival document, arguing that the degree to which filmmakers can generate belief in the material as having "come from another time and served another function" determines the reception of the material as "archival" or "found".[154] In addition to her contribution of the notion of "the archive effect" to our understanding of how the moving image archive can be used to create an experience of "temporal disparity, … a 'then' and a 'now' produced within a single text,"[155] Baron theorizes the value of "the archival *affect*" in this experience. The confrontation "of time's inscription on human bodies and places" produces "not only an epistemological effect but also an emotional one based in the revelation of temporal disparity … [forcing] us to recognize that the past is irretrievable even as its traces are

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[152] Judith Mayne, *Cinema and Spectatorship* (London: Routledge, 1993), 4.

[153] Jaimie Baron, *The Archive Effect: Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History* (London: Routledge, 2014), 7. Original emphasis.

[154] Ibid*.,* 11.

[155] Ibid*.,* 18.

visible."[156] She, too, builds on Boym's theory of nostalgia, drawing on the distinction between restorative and reflective nostalgia to account for the kinds of "archival affect" that "may encourage either a nostalgic desire to recreate the past in the image of the 'perfect snapshot' or a nostalgic but self-conscious awareness of the past and past."[157]

As has been discussed, the tendency to use archival material to illustrate the filmmaker's (ostensibly unbiased) narrative is pervasive. Consequently, some filmmakers have made it their mission to create opportunities for the spectator to experience archival material in a more critical and unrestricted capacity. I have determined that archive-based filmmakers attempt to bring spectators into a hermeneutical relationship with archival material in three principal ways. First, by providing a conspicuously subjective interpretation of the images through voiceover (the majority of essay films employ this strategy, prime examples include, *Letter to Siberia* [Marker, 1957] and *Images of the World and the Inscription of War* [Farocki, 1989]), the spectator may be pushed to see the archival material as capable of inspiring idiosyncratic interpretations, destabilizing its authority to represent an uncomplicated disinterested past. Second, by offering archival material for prolonged inspection uninterrupted by newly created footage or voiceover, the viewer's scrutiny of the "curated" images is made central to meaning-making process (*Atomic Café* [Loader, Rafferty and Rafferty, 1982], *Let the Fire Burn* [Osder, 2013], *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceaușescu* [Andrei Ujica, 2010], to name just a few). And third, through anamorphic repositioning of the backgrounds-into-foregrounds of the archival images (city-symphonies-in-reverse, for instance), the spectator can experience perspectival shifts capable of changing the focus or meaning of the image, exposing the variety of viewing positions available to spectators. Each of these strategies of representation is a reflexive move that calls attention to the spectator's capacity for interpreting archival material in the documentary.

The recycled film fragments used in city-symphonies-in-reverse not only retain some of the original perspective that directed the spectator's gaze according to the original function of the footage, but also a new perspective added by the filmmaker. As they are anamorphically reframed, the gaze is directed to the margins of the frame in search of what remained peripheral, both in perspective and in importance, in the original framing and context of the footage. For instance, several of the iterations of *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco* recycle a 1906 "phantom

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[156] Ibid., 21.
[157] Ibid., 130.

ride," *A Trip Down Market Street,* a seven-minute film traveling down San Francisco's main boulevard created by mounting a camera to a streetcar and "pushing" it about ten blocks towards the central perspective point in the middle of the frame, the Ferry Building, a clock tower by the San Francisco Bay. What mesmerized viewers of this early experiment in movement and local cinema was the virtual mobility, and the disembodied symmetrically composed perspective that was achieved by consistently keeping all converging lines in the center of the frame. We are confined to the onward progression towards the centre of the frame. As though spectators were horses with blinders, the central-perspective formalism permits no object or figure to draw the attention of the camera away from the pull of the vanishing point, nor from the inevitability of reaching it. Ernie Gehr's *Eureka* (1974), a found-footage reuse of *A Trip Down Market Street,* famously slowed the entire phantom ride down by reproducing each frame six times, giving the spectator time to contemplate the margins of the frame and their entrapment within the disembodied gaze of the camera. I argue that just as anamorphic art, and other forms of baroque perspective, reveal the imperceptible mechanisms of the linear perspective by re-staging its methods,[158] so too does the city-symphony-in-reverse's use of anamorphosis reveal strains of dominant ideology enfolded into the urban archives they re-present.

The backgrounds-into-foregrounds anamorphic repositioning, which is employed in all the films in this study, and often in essay films that make use of the archive, reframes diverse archival material as visible evidence, regardless of its source. In terms of spectatorship, this type of anamorphosis is a hermeneutic strategy that can be indicated within the text or employed independently by the spectators themselves. The address requests that the spectator open up to the possibility of the moving image *as an archive itself*, and to see an untapped source of archival evidence in the footage. Backgrounds-into-foregrounds anamorphosis in archive-based filmmaking relies on the notion that all footage constitutes visible evidence of some kind (though some footage is richer than other footage), necessitating an active visuality and looking, and imploring viewers to investigate it as such.

Tom Gunning's notion of the development of an urban "detective spectator" is helpful in understanding the particular kinds of spectatorship involved in city-symphonies-in-reverse. After Dana Brand's study of Edgar Allen Poe's "The Man of the Crowd" (1845) in which he correlates

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[158] Justina Spencer, "Baroque Perspectives: Looking into Samuel Van Hoogstraten's Perspective Box," MA thesis, McGill, 2008.

"the three modes of urban spectatorship which appear in [Poe's story] (detached observation; desperate search for sensation; and shadowy pursuit) and three urban types as described by Walter Benjamin: the *flâneur*, the *badaud* (or gawker) and the detective,"[159] Gunning connects the trajectory of the three modes of urban spectatorship, and their accompanying figures, to the development of film spectatorship. He disputes the notion that the *flâneur* should continue to be thought of as *the* model of spectatorship for urban modernity, urging his reader to consider Brand's trajectory of urban spectator figures as successive, and overlapping, in both urban and cinema spectatorship.[160] After Benjamin, Gunning argues that the changes to urban spectatorship, instigated by commodity culture with the establishment of arcades and department stores, created the necessary "world of visual stimulus … designed to convert passersby into gawkers, and gawkers into purchasers," which in turn produced the conditions for film spectatorship when cinema arrived on the scene.[161]

Just as the *flâneur* becomes a detective within the cityscape, so too does the spectator of baroque urban montage films move from *flâneur* to detective spectatorship. Each city-symphony-in-reverse in its own way, brings the spectator from *flâneur*, to *badaud*, to detective spectator in its own way, but the will to do so is clear and consistent among these films. That is, spectators are not allowed to remain detached observers of the archival images of the cityscape. Rather, they are brought into the spectacle to become immersed within in, and amazed by it, losing their mastery over the scene as they merge with it, eventually driven to pursue various white rabbits down their rabbit holes.[162] The cool detachment of the fixed gaze of the *flâneur* is replaced by an affected mobile spectatorship. In "The Man of the Crowd," the *flâneur* is transformed by a lure in the cityscape before him that hooks him into hot pursuit. The lure is a man that defies type. The ambiguity of the man's purpose within the scene, as well as his newness as an urban type, instigates the detective's searching gaze. In Poe's story, the curiosity of the *flâneur* narrator is piqued by "visual uncertainty," which puts us, according to Gunning, "in the realm of the detective whose gaze is aroused by the resistances it meets."[163] This notion

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[159] Tom Gunning, "From the Kaleidoscope to the X-Ray: Urban Spectatorship, Poe, Benjamin, and Traffic in Souls (1913)," *Wide Angle* 4 (Oct. 1997): 26.
[160] Ibid.
[161] Ibid., 32.
[162] Ibid., 27-8.
[163] Ibid., 40.

that "visual uncertainty" and that which resists the mastery of our gaze should provide visual arousal is precisely the baroque perspective that demands an embodied subject to go in pursuit of the unknown, and possibly unknowable.

The "detective spectator" is motivated less by narrative progression than the "classically constructed spectator", according to Gunning.[164] "One must scan the surface of the image for various centers of interest" within a series of spectacles, "using what Noël Burch has called a topographical reading," which is akin to the early cinematic viewing strategies of what Gunning has termed "the cinema of attractions". Gunning elaborates:

> New centers of interest bob into the frame unexpectedly, while others depart beyond reclamation. The receptive spectator approaches these images with a global curiosity about its "many interesting phases," a curiosity that is being endlessly incited and never completely satiated. The street is filled with endless attractions. However, the classically constructed spectator, confronted by films such as this, more than likely becomes bored. Staying with such an image demands too much energy and its pay offs seem too small.[165]

This searching gaze is spurred on by a visual fascination with the cinematic screen and/or the city scene. The detective spectator's insatiable orientation towards the image contrasts it with the "classically constructed spectator" who relies on narrative symbolism to create a relaxed and coherent viewing experience.

In her introduction to the 2006 anthology *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, Dutch film scholar, Wanda Strauven begins to theorize a "reloaded form of cinema of attractions" for the twenty-first century through which she draws a thread from early film pleasures to those of today. The foundations for defining and "reloading" the cinema of attractions were initially laid out in two 1986 articles on early cinema, both written by Tom Gunning, and one co-authored by André Gaudreault,[166] but many interlocutors have since contributed to the concept, suggesting that it is in no way an idea that can be limited to the needs and desires of the early film

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[164] Ibid., 36.

[165] Ibid.

[166] See Tom Gunning's "The Cinema of Attraction[s]: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," in the (no longer published) film quarterly *Wide Angle* (but reprinted in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*); and André Gaudreault and Tom Gunning's, " Le cinéma des premiers temps: un défi à l'histoire du cinéma?," in the Tokyo-based journal, *Gendai Shiso*.

spectator.[167] In Routledge's 2005 *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, Gunning provides a concise definition that Strauven finds suitable for theorizing film from any time period: "cinema of attractions" concerns those films "dedicated to presenting discontinuous visual attractions, moments of spectacle rather than narrative."[168] The concept of attractions captures not only the types of spectacle that could be counted on to intrude upon, disrupt, replace, and at times critique, the narrative development, but also "the potential energy of cinema's address to the spectator."[169]

Gunning highlights direct address, visual shocks, and the lack of both character development and a coherent narrative universe as the salient features of a cinema of attractions as he summarizes his theorization of the concept:

> the cinema of attractions directly solicits spectator attention, inciting visual curiosity, and supplying pleasure through an exciting spectacle – a unique event, whether fictional or documentary, that is of interest in itself. [...] It is the direct address of the audience, in which an attraction is offered to the spectator by a cinema showman, that defines this approach to filmmaking. Theatrical display dominates over narrative absorption, emphasizing the direct stimulation of shock or surprise at the expense of unfolding a story or creating a diegetic universe. The cinema of attractions expends little energy creating characters with psychological motivations or individual personality. Making use of both fictional and non-fictional attractions, its energy moves outward [to] an acknowledged spectator rather than inward towards the character-based situations essential to classical narrative.[170]

The cinema of attractions, thus, is an active visual mode on both the parts of the filmmaker and spectator. "It is all about the cinema's ability to *show* something, to '*make images seen*,' to directly address the spectator," writes Strauven.[171] In addition to the centrality of making images seen, the outward focus towards the spectator, as opposed to the inward focus of narrative cohesion and character development, places essay film and other experimental documentaries

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[167] Wanda Strauven, "Introduction to an Attractive Concept," *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, Wanda Strauven, ed. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 11-12.

[168] As quoted by Strauven in "Introduction to an Attractive Concept," *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, 11.

[169] Tom Gunning, "Attractions: How They Came into the World," in *Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, 32.

[170] Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction[s]," in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, 384.

[171] Strauven, "Introduction to an Attractive Concept," in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, 15, original emphasis.

within the cinema of attractions, providing us with contemporary examples with which to theorize how a cinema of attractions spectatorship can influence and transform perception today.

The tension between visibility and narrative in the cinema of attractions reveals an alternative route for cinema's revolutionary potential. In his original 1986 article on the cinema of attractions, Gunning begins by referencing a 1922 essay by Fernand Léger where he searches for the radical potential of cinema and identifies it in the quality of making visible; "this harnessing of visibility, this act of showing and exhibition," is where Gunning finds the "unique power" of early cinema to rouse the avant-garde in a different way than had been done in the narrative dependent mediums of literature or theatre.[172] Gaudreault sees the schism between "the momentary and linear progression" as a crucial factor in how the cinema of attractions intervenes in "the cinema as a system" as we have come to know it. By not permitting narration to interrupt and overtake the momentary, the cinema of attractions unveils the vulnerability of the moment to narration and establishes linear progression as an "antithesis of attraction."[173] As film industries were initiated a little more than a decade after cinema's "birth", narrative coherence became the primary aim of cinema made for the masses, and the cinema of attractions was rejected by commercial industries and driven underground. The historical cinema of attractions, that is to say early cinema (before 1908), represents a "mode of film practice" Gaudreault calls "a system of monstrative attractions," which is followed by "a system of narrative integration" (1908-1914) as cinema becomes more institutionalized. He argues that in the system of monstrative attractions, the momentary was allowed expression and created a different kind of spectatorship before the institutionalization of cinema came in "to create linear progression out of the momentary," and subordinate its wildness to the rules of narrative: "During this period [of narrative integration], cinematic discourse was put in the service of the story being told. The various components of cinematic expression were thus mobilized around, and subjected to, strict narrative ends".[174] Since "a system of narrative integration" was initiated, monstrative attractions have often made an appearance in mainstream cinema, but rarely to the point of overtaking the narrative aims. Still some film theorists, such as Scott Bukatman, see the potential of such visual shocks to introduce an element of doubt into the aims of narrative coherence: "Spectacle, by actively

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[172] Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction[s]," in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, 381.

[173] André Gaudreault, "From 'Primitive Cinema' to 'Kine-Attractography,'" in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, Wanda Strauven, ed. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 96-7.

[174] Ibid., 97-8.

disrupting narrative coherence, threatens the stability of the narrative system," he writes.[175] While institutionalized cinema allows the spectacle to threaten its sense of mastery over the cinematic text to some extent in order to keep things interesting, an unadulterated cinema of attractions spectatorship is generally not allowed to be pursued within its purview, and as a result is more often taken up within the avant-garde. From here, we can see that the radical potential of the cinema of attractions in the present rests in exposing the effects of narration's dominance over the momentary, and investigating the difference in spectatorship that the momentary initiates on its own when narrative is subordinated or absent.

Just as "[t]he history of early cinema, like the history of cinema generally, has been written and theorized under the hegemony of narrative films,"[176] so too has the history of documentary and historically oriented films been written and theorized under the hegemony of old historicism's unquestioned narrative primacy. Documentaries based on the spectatorship of visibility, or "attractions," are harder to sell to audiences because they require more work to make sense of them and to see their value, and are often more ambiguous in their meaning than documentary audiences are willing to tolerate. As Gaudreault writes, "Attractions are… in contradiction with the dominant principle of institutional cinema (and the cinema of institutionalization): narration."[177] Documentaries with strong narrative threads appeal to the funders of "institutional cinema" because they require little of audiences in terms of an active spectatorship, and the messages can be controlled by leaving little room for alternative interpretations.

The idea of showing versus telling is quite important for documentary spectatorship. There are two necessary components to films that are part of the documentary tradition—the "document," or visible evidence, the trace or the referent; and the narrative or story. The story, whether communicated directly or pursued through editing, stems from non-fiction lines of inquiry, history, argumentation, and the written word that symbolically describes the thing but has no indexical trace of it. The worry that the narration could overwhelm the visible evidence and submerge the document within an all too tidy net is not unfounded. So, the question is, when

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[175] Scott Bukatman, "Spectacle, Attractions and Visual Pleasure," in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, Wanda Strauven, ed. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 75.

[176] Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction[s], in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, 381.

[177] Gaudreault, "From 'Primitive Cinema' to 'Kine-Attractography,'" in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, 96.

it comes to archival material, how is the spectator given an opportunity to have different kinds of relationships with the documents that are not overwhelmed by the narrative? I argue that the cinema-of-attractions mode of spectatorship is necessary in the documentary film landscape to show the potential of the document to disrupt narrative trajectories such that the authority of the image cannot be used to uphold just any narrative desired by institutionally funded or distributed cinema. Furthermore, city-symphonies-in-reverse present just such an opportunity to investigate the effects of cinema-of-attractions spectatorship on historical representations.

One quality the city-symphonies-in-reverse share with their city-focused predecessors from the 1920s is their commitment to developing a contemporary cinema of attractions spectatorship. City-symphonies-in-reverse transform archival footage into a cinema of attractions by creating a spectatorship that directly addresses the viewer, inciting them to join in viewing the footage as an exciting visual curiosity to be probed and enjoyed for its uniqueness. The attractions found in city-symphonies-in-reverse do not capture the spectator's visual attention because they are new, never-before-seen views, or because they show off the most recent special effects, as is the case with many of the films evaluated through the concept of "cinema of attractions," but rather they capture our attention because they display a disappearing past in great detail—detail that has barely begun to influence our historical consciousnesses and historical imaginations. Views we were not aware existed, because they have been submerged within the immense and often impenetrable archive, we glimpse quite fleetingly moments before they slip away, like the crest of a wave. The more we probe them for the evidence we seek, the more fragile and brittle their ability to hold up our grand notions of archive and history become. Rather, the revelatory experience of minutiae becomes the attraction. They teach us how fragile the historical trace actually is. We become witnesses to the fleeting details of the trace that are suggestive of a zeitgeist, a mood, an episteme but do not reveal their secrets willingly.

Most city-symphonies-in-reverse rely heavily on vocal commentary to position their archival material, but all require spectators to use their observation skills to make subtle distinctions about the visual material. However, since city symphonies are baroque uses of the archive, as I argue, visibility is positioned as key to spectatorship and, paradoxically, imperfect and largely inaccessible. Bal establishes the primacy of entangled points of view for "a baroque way of reasoning—a baroque epistemology" capable of challenging the false sense of mastery over an object afforded to a subject by the classical (Cartesian) point of view. With its many

folds and its ability to "deprive perception of its object", drapery becomes an emblem for the power of baroque epistemology to interfere in the dominant scholarly discourses of "both linear history and objectivity", according to Bal.[178] City-symphonies-in-reverse are at once excessive displays of visuality and at the same time fragments of time enfolded through montage to suggest the inaccessible visual information trapped between each "fold" or cut. The obsessive folding of fragments through non-linear montage makes the absence of visuality a conspicuous constitutive element of city-symphonies-in-reverse. This kind of enfolding of fragments through montage disrupts spectators' attempts to access city history as linear and objective. At the same time, the presence of detailed and enticing images of the past point to the power of the fragment to provide partial knowledges that would go unnoticed if presented in a linear and objective historical narrative.

As with Berger's classical nude, in city-symphonies-in-reverse, there are two principal protagonists, but neither are subjects of representation. Both are spectators, but one is also the filmmaker. The filmmaker and spectator look together at the city archive. The filmmaker suggests different ways of seeing through a direct address. Through the curated images, an active visibility is solicited but not guaranteed. The "invisible ideology" that puts the gaze in a position of "mastery and equilibrium" is relinquished in favor of learning "the truth of the variation," in favor of perspectivism.

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[178] Bal, "Baroque Matters," 184, 190.

II.

The Essayist's Archive:

Los Angeles Plays Itself

> The best place to view the Los Angeles of the next millennium is from the ruins of its alternative future.
> –Mike Davis, *City of Quartz*[1]

Mike Davis' introductory words to his own study of the history and representation of Los Angeles at the turn of the millennium, also serve as an appropriate starting point for an examination of Thom Andersen's similarly themed 2003 essay film, *Los Angeles Plays Itself*.[2] The two essayists, Davis and Andersen, are in good company with their retrospective approaches to the future; Walter Benjamin, too, was decidedly committed to the methodology of interpreting the previous century's cast off objects of urban modernity to understand the present and future possibilities of his world, a mission that was particularly evident in his *Arcades Project*. Moreover, Davis, Andersen, and Benjamin share ambivalence around the utopian potential of various urban spaces and the city itself. "For Benjamin, the great cities … were both beautiful and bestial, sources of exhilaration and hope on the one hand and of revulsion and despair on the other. The city for Benjamin was magnetic: it attracted and repelled him in the same moment," writes Graeme Gilloch.[3] The three essayists, Davis, Andersen, and Benjamin, channel their ambivalences into a dialectical approach to understanding the complexity of the previous century of their respective cities—their utopias and dystopias, their sunshine and their *noir*.[4]

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[1] This line begins Davis' essayistic 1990 book on Los Angeles history. See, Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (London: Verso, 1990), 3.

[2] In 2003 *Variety* magazine called *Los Angeles Plays Itself* "an audiovisual *compadre*" to *City of Quartz*, and in 2014 Mike Davis contributed an essay to *Los Angeles Plays Itself*'s DVD booklet. See, Robert Koehler, "Review: 'Los Angeles Plays Itself'," *Variety*, September 3, 2003, http://variety.com/2003/film/reviews/los-angeles-plays-itself-1200539371/. (Last accessed 29 May 2017).

[3] Graeme Gilloch, and Walter Benjamin, *Myth and Metropolis: Walter Benjamin and the City* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, in association with Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 1.

[4] The first chapter of *City of Quartz* is titled "Sunshine or *Noir*?"

The focus on Los Angeles in Davis' and Andersen's works brings clarity to Benjamin's quest to understand "the modern metropolis as the phantasmagoric site of mythic domination"[5] by contemplating the most pertinent exemplary of such a site within the last century: Los Angeles, a city that could not be properly evaluated as the postmodern organism it would become over the twentieth century until it was well positioned in the rear view mirror. Andersen both loves and hates Hollywood as the primary agent of the city's representation. He loves and hates Hollywood for the mythologies it creates that permit collective memory and at the same time corrupt or submerge potentially revelatory pasts. He loves that Hollywood has inadvertently created an archive of cityscape views, but hates that it views the city and its representation as a commodity. Through a subjective, critical reevaluation of the representational capacity of arguably the most commodified and mythological art object—popular cinema—within and concerning the city that most forcefully projected it into the world, Andersen's *Los Angeles Plays Itself* provides spectators with the opportunity to find redemption in a moving image archive of films most familiar to them—Los Angeles-based filmmaking—with some surprises along the way.

This chapter addresses how the essayistic mode provides a particular experience of twentieth century modernity through the moving image archive as it represents urban life. Andersen's brand of film essayism draws upon and reinterprets multiple aesthetic strategies. In this chapter, I will position *Los Angeles Plays Itself* within the context of its influences and inspirations, the tradition of the city symphony, and Andersen's oeuvre and essayistic style. *Los Angeles Plays Itself* is possibly the first feature-length film since *Paris 1900* (1947) to revive a playful, avant-garde, city-as-subject film tradition by entering into a dialogue with the moving image archive and reversing aspects of the city symphony without betraying its fundamental avant-garde spirit.[6] Andersen's suggestion to see *Los Angeles Plays Itself* as a "city-symphony-in-reverse," part of the city symphony tradition, yet divergent from this tradition due to its reversals—a dialectic of the two—inspires me to consider it an Ur-text for the other films in this

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[5] Ibid.

[6] To my knowledge *Los Angeles Plays Itself* is the first feature-length city-symphony-in-reverse since *Paris 1900*. I have searched online databases and references within Anglophone film scholarship for feature-length films appearing before *Los Angeles Plays Itself* that meet these criteria, to no avail. However, this is not to say that a film in a language or national cinema not accessible to me at this moment does not exist. Or that an obscure Anglophone example is not languishing in a rare and unsearchable collection, or worse, disappeared and unaccounted for in film history.

study, which I argue should be seen as functioning within the same tradition. The reversals of the city symphony tradition are interventions into the urban archival imaginary that speak to the current state of contemporary film spectatorship, theory, and historiography.

In its 169-minute running time, *Los Angeles Plays Itself* excerpts some 200 films, from silent to contemporary, and contains an intermission break at the 92-minute mark in the remastered version (moved down from the 104-minute mark of the earlier version to create more equal halves). Unusually, each excerpt is accompanied by an onscreen citation: the title and date of the film from which it has been taken. *Los Angeles Plays Itself* is divided into three parts—"City as Background," "City as Character," and "City as Subject"—gradually repositioning the city of Los Angeles from the background of the film frame and film history (setting or set), to an object of contemplation (character), and finally into a detailed, complex organism of its own (a subject), one which film can help us to understand.

Los Angeles Plays Itself arrives at a watershed moment in the history of Hollywood location shooting in Los Angeles. Beginning at the turn of the twenty-first century and worsening into the present, two factors would conspire to radically reduce, if not nearly eliminate, the use of the city of Los Angeles as a convenient, and often default, background for Hollywood filmmaking: first, the flexibility of Post-Fordism that sends film crews to work in the location with the lowest possible production costs; and second, the ever-increasing potential of Computer Generated Images (CGI) to stand-in for any location. In 2013 and 2014, there was a spate of film industry publications that printed articles on the demise of location shooting for larger budget films in Los Angeles in particular, and in California in general. A *Variety* article blamed the fall in location shooting on California's vastly smaller tax credits compared to other states, such as New York, and on film funds set up in foreign countries, such as Australia, which have been attracting motion picture production business outside of Hollywood.[7] The article goes on to identify several big budget films set in Los Angeles or San Francisco but filmed entirely or primarily in other states or countries, such as *Godzilla* (1998, Vancouver and Hawaii); *Battle: Los Angeles* (2008, Louisiana); *Rock of Ages* (2012, Florida); *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* (2014, Canada); and *San Andreas* (2015, Queensland, Australia). In fact, "only one of 41 big-

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[7] Dave McNary, "Hollywood Continues to Flee California at Alarming Rate," *Variety*, March 5, 2014. http://variety.com/2014/film/news/even-films-set-in-california-are-shooting-elsewhere-to-save-money-1201125523/ (Last accessed, October 10, 2016).

budget feature films shot in 2012 and 2013 was shot entirely in California," according to the article. *Los Angeles Plays Itself* can be seen as a eulogy for the Los Angeles location shooting that was once prevalent.

Los Angeles Plays Itself is made entirely from an archive of VHS tapes, the most available form of home entertainment at the turn of the millennium. Hal Foster described such an archival body of work, as "the archives of mass culture"—works not collected in any one place or controlled by an institution, but functioning as a kind of familiar archive; according to Foster, the recognizability of this "archive" makes it highly détournable.[8] The film fragments that appear in *Los Angeles Plays Itself* are both "found footage" and archival material in the sense that Andersen "finds" an archive that could easily be found by the average American at their local video store (with the notable exceptions of the 1961 *The Exiles*, and those "high tourist" films, like Warhol's *Tarzan and Jane Revisited … Sort Of* [1964], which would be harder to find), and his approach to their re-presentation in the film is consistent with both the found-footage and archival compilation traditions. In keeping with the low-fi, found nature of the project, Andersen edited a rough cut of the film on VHS in his home before giving it to his editor, Seung-Hyun Yoo.[9] None of the rights was cleared before it was screened at festivals, however, creating a barrier to distribution despite the widespread critical appreciation of the film and public interest. Andersen decided not to pursue permission from the studios for several reasons. First, studios make no distinction between licensing costs for high or low budget films, and he could not afford their fees on his virtually non-existent budget; and second, at the time, most documentaries that drew directly from studio archives and obtained permission from the studios were, in Andersen's words, "pious, uncritical works made by rich kids."[10] Since he intended to approach "the archives of mass culture" with the utmost irreverence (but not without personal affection), he decided not to seek the permission of the studios.

For over a decade after its release, it was often repeated at special screenings at *cinémathèques*, universities, and festivals that *Los Angeles Plays Itself* would never receive a home video release due to the difficulty of clearing the rights for the hundreds of films it

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[8] Hal Foster, "The Archival Impulse," *October*, Vol. 110 (Autumn, 2004): 4.
[9] In a Q & A after a retrospective screening of *Los Angeles Plays Itself* for RIDM on November 14, 2015, Andersen explained that he began the project in 1999, a time just prior to the wide availability of digital home editing equipment, but would have preferred a less crude method of editing than from VHS.
[10] Ibid.

excerpts, and Andersen's unwillingness to do so. In 2014 when Cinema Guild, a New York-based distributor of independent films, announced it would be releasing a remastered and reedited version of the film in the fall of that year, a *Los Angeles Times* article revealed that in fact the film's use of its copyrighted material was entirely covered under Fair Use. In the United States, Fair Use protects filmmakers from lawsuits when they use film excerpts to illustrate a point in a clear and appropriate manner. Around the time of its premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2003, Los Angeles entertainment attorney, Michael Donaldson evaluated every borrowed excerpt to determine whether it met the Fair Use standards; he found that they all did. Andersen, then, knew that the film was protected under Fair Use but was reticent to release the film on home video at that time, despite the demand, for two reasons. First, because he took the excerpts from VHS copies, many of them were of lesser quality than he felt appropriate to represent the films he was quoting. And second, though the film met Fair Use standards, he still couldn't afford the (~$3,500) insurance premium against lawsuits necessary to release the film on home video.[11] After acquiring the rights to four of Andersen's films, and making sure they were all covered by Fair Use, Cinema Guild surprised the film community when it revealed that it would be giving *Los Angeles Plays Itself* a digital home video release on September 30, 2014. As of 2015, *Los Angeles Plays Itself* entered its second decade of existence improbably as a film easily accessible for home viewing now that it is available on DVD, and (sometimes) through Netflix (USA) and other online streaming platforms.

Thom Andersen was born in Chicago in 1943 but his family moved when he was three years old to Los Angeles, where he grew up. Andersen has made only nine films in his 50-year career as a filmmaker/scholar. Of those nine, more than half are explicitly concerned with some aspect of the city of Los Angeles or Hollywood. Of his five feature-length films, four are nearly entirely composed of archival footage or photography. In the mid-60s he attended University of Southern California's film school where he made his first experimental films: *Melting* (1965), a short that examines a melting ice cream cone; *Olivia's Place* (1966), a wordless time capsule of an old Los Angeles diner; and --- ------- (1966–67), or "The Rock N' Roll Movie," a Structural found-footage film of rock performances. Andersen's 1974 essayistic photo lecture, *Eadweard*

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[11] Glenn Whipp, "'L.A. Plays Itself' [sic] is finally coming to home video. Here's how," in the *Los Angeles Times*. July 26, 2014.
 http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/movies/la-et-mn-on-film-copyright-protection-movies-20140727-story.html
(Last accessed, June 12, 2017).

Muybridge: Zoopraxographer (co-directed with Fay Andersen and Morgan Fischer, 60 mins), a decade in the making, reanimates Muybridge's proto-cinematic motion studies, while exploring his biography and the technological and cultural restrictions under which he lived. *Red Hollywood* (Thom Andersen and Noël Burch, 120 mins, 1996), a compilation essay film, which excerpts more than 53 films by the victims of the Hollywood blacklist, is a meditation on ideology, representation, and politically motivated censorship. *Get Out of the Car* (34 mins, 16mm, 2010), a Structural film, which Andersen sees as an "old school" city symphony itself and a companion piece to *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, frames old signage in Los Angeles—murals, neon, billboards, graffiti, advertisements, and unmarked landmarks—as fading ephemeral detritus of popular culture. *Reconversão* [Reconversion] (65 mins, digital, 2012) shows seventeen examples of buildings designed by Portuguese architect, Eduardo Souto Moura; instead of vocal commentary, Moura's writings are read over the images. His most recent film, *The Thoughts That We Once Had* (2015), a voice-over-less personal political history of cinema, inspired by the cinema books of Gilles Deleuze, was created partially as a retort to Jean-Luc Godard's thesis in *Histoire(s) du Cinéma* (1998) that the cinema proved itself inadequate as a witness to the twentieth century. He has taught film theory and history at Cal Arts in Valencia, California, since 1987, and is a long-time resident of the Silver Lake neighborhood in Los Angeles.

Andersen himself lives in a late-30s modernist bungalow in the Silver Lake neighborhood of Los Angeles.[12] Austrian architect and one-time director of Frank Lloyd Wright's American operations, Rudolph Schindler (1887-1953) designed the second floor addition of Andersen's home for *Arts & Architecture Magazine* critic Peter Yates as a studio for live performances by modern composers in 1938, where it hosted Los Angeles' bohemian scene for "Evenings on the roof" concerts by the likes of Arnold Schoenberg and John Cage. Andersen has claimed that he made *Los Angeles Plays Itself* as a substitute for a film he wanted to make about Schindler, Richard Neutra (both famed Austrian modernist architects that transformed the look of Los

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[12] John Bailey, a cinematographer who attended USC with Thom Andersen, collaborated with Andersen on his first film, *Melting*, in 1965. In a web-post on the ASC (American Society of Cinematographers) website, he provides inside knowledge of Andersen's influences and process. See Bailey, John. "Thom Andersen: Los Angeles Plays Itself Part 1." "Blog: John's Bailiwick" on *The American Society of Cinematographer*'s website. August 1, 2011. Web. http://www.theasc.com/site/blog/johns-bailiwick/thom-andersen-los-angeles-plays-itself-part-one/

Angeles), and other modernist architects and architecture in Los Angeles.[13] A great lover of modernist architecture, not just for its minimalist elegance, but also, and most importantly, for its utopian aspirations, Andersen focuses heavily on modernist Los Angeles buildings in Hollywood movies as ideological signifiers operating within Hollywood narratives in the first part of *Los Angeles Plays Itself*. Here, he is especially concerned with the way that Hollywood subverts the utopian intent of modernist architects, in effect redesigning and re-envisioning Los Angeles' history away from its progressive past through narrative and spatial relationships.

Figure 1 The Peter Yates and Frances Mullen Studio remodel, Andersen's Silver Lake residence, designed by Rudolph Schindler and added to the building in 1938.

Play is a vital quality of *Los Angeles Plays Itself* in more ways than one. Unpacking the various senses of the verb that influence the hermeneutical entryway into the film through its title is worth a moment before pursuing more theoretical aims. The most straightforward use of the verb "to play" in the title, taken literally, means to play a role; just as an actor performs a character, Los Angeles plays various foreign and domestic locations, as well as assorted versions of itself, which Andersen takes pains to identify in *Los Angeles Plays Itself*. Another meaning of "to play" especially relevant to film and video culture is the notion of screening or reviewing the moving image material by pushing "play" on the VCR, DVD or VLC player. A Los Angelino watching clips of location shot film, "playing" one after the other as Andersen does, can be seen as a part of the city self-reflectively looking at itself through its own representation, by screening itself to itself. "To play *with something*," as with a game or an idea, is another valence of the

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[13] From a talk Andersen delivered at the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal on November 15, 2015 entitled "Cinema, Architecture, Urbanism," and given as part of an Andersen retrospective for the RIDM film festival.

verb, projecting creativity, light-heartedness, the investigation of limits and margins, and a child-like curiosity over other agendas. Andersen plays with the visible evidence of Los Angeles' historical existence on film, inviting the spectator to play with it, as well. Particularly relevant to *Los Angeles Plays Itself*'s namesake, Fred Halsted's 1972 gay porn film, *L.A. Plays Itself*, is the valence "to play *with oneself*," alluding to the masturbatory qualities of Los Angeles' self-representation, and to the essayistic form, as self-reflective and self-reflexive, more generally: *Los Angeles Plays [With] Itself*. Finally, the sense that the motion picture industry's representations of Los Angeles are themselves a con, a trick or a manipulation are present if we think of the title in terms of the idiomatic expression "to play someone," which, appropriately, is common in the vernacular of film noir, a mode that is represented well in *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, as in the phrase, "She *played him* like a fiddle." In the Los Angeles film industry, self-representation tends to be either a con or a ruse, and even a form of self-deception. Thus, the verb "to play" in the title of the film establishes multiple valences for an initial approach to meaning and tone in *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, suggesting variously the mimetic devices of performance and representation; screening and showing; creativity and limit testing; masturbatory exercises; and fraud, deceit and trickery.

City-Symphonies-in-Reverse

Andersen explicitly references the city symphony tradition by calling *Los Angeles Plays Itself* a "city-symphony-in-reverse" within the first few minutes of the film, but he does not make any direct reference to particular city symphonies either in the film or in interviews.[14] Rather, the notion of the city symphony serves as an inspiration for a sculptor-like approach to his video collection: "The Motion Picture industry, without intending to, created a city symphony, and the work of [*Los Angeles Plays Itself*] is to make that film apparent," contends Andersen.[15] Everything that did not contribute to the motion picture industry's unintentional ongoing construction of a city symphony, Andersen "simply" had to cut away to reveal the poetic representation of Los Angeles that had been hidden within every location shoot since the birth of

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[14] He does, however, make an indirect, yet clear reference to *Man With a Movie Camera* in the first part of the film when discussing "the best Los Angeles car chase movie"—Toby Halicki's 1974 *Gone in 60 Seconds*—which he claims "realized Dziga Vertov's dream: an anti-humanist cinema of bodies and machines in motion."

[15] Andersen in the Q & A after the RIDM screening of *Los Angeles Plays Itself* on November 14, 2015.

the industry. An inverted anamorphic view of motion picture history was the first repositioning of spectatorship that needed to occur before *Los Angeles Plays Itself* could be made—its creator had to be able to see a large swath of Los Angeles film history from an embodied sidelong perspective.

Andersen invites a comparison between his city essay film and the city symphonies of the 1920s in *Los Angeles Plays Itself* when he calls his work a "city-symphony-in-reverse" early in the voice-over narration. What does Andersen mean to do by creating this very particular category, "city-symphony-in-reverse"? First, he aims to contextualize his work within an earlier tradition. Second, he aims to suggest a multivalent and anamorphic hermeneutical project for his work "composed of fragments from other films read against the grain to bring background into the foreground."[16] In this section I will unpack Andersen's apt categorization/contextualization of his film, as well as theorize further reversals implied by the structure and logic of *Los Angeles Plays Itself*.

The first, and most crucial, reversal of the city symphony tradition that is evident in the city-symphony-in-reverse is the reversal of time. The city symphonies of the 1920s focused exclusively on the possibility of urban modernity in the present, in the moment as it was happening in everyday life. Many of the city symphonies of the 1920s portrayed diurnal narratives. For instance, *Man with a Movie Camera*, *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City*, *Rien que les heures*, and *Manhatta* are all structured around the rhythms of the day, linking cyclical time with historical time. *Los Angeles Plays Itself* and the other films in this study, by contrast, resurrect nearly the whole previous century, rooting themselves firmly in the past tense. Yet the fragments of the past are never ordered chronologically, or in terms of cause and effect. The city-symphony-in-reverse demonstrates an emerging belief that the resurrection of the past will help us to envision the future by investing in the notion of kairological experimentation.

The second reversal concerns the inversion of the unison of the symphonic into the cacophony of multiple styles, tones, and authors working separately and towards different ends. The harmony of vision that extends from a single film crew creating all the images and sounds is not present in the city-symphony-in-reverse. Multiple genres coexist to form a kaleidoscopic

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[16] Thom Andersen, "Get out of the Car—a Commentary," in *Urban Cinematics: Understanding Urban Phenomena Through the Moving Image*, François Penz and Andong Lu, eds. (Bristol: Intellect, 2011), 55.

image of the city as many different people have imagined or experienced it. In *Los Angeles Plays Itself* every fictional genre is represented from comedy to film noir to action to science fiction to porn. In Rick Prelinger's *Lost Landscapes* films we find a wide variety of "ephemeral films," including home movies, B-roll, industrial films, amateur films, and process plates. The filmmakers work to harmonize their appropriated materials under various structural forms, conveying strong enunciative positions, but the moving image material of the cities themselves are multi-vocal in their representational strategies. Because the representational topography is so varied, the unifying principles are to be found in the reflexive elements of the productions, such as Andersen's vocal commentary, Prelinger's interactivity, and Maddin's subjective structure. We can see the second reversal as a result of the postmodern undoing of modernist notions of unity, totality and certainty, as well as its challenges to social homogeneity and conformity that came over the course of the near century that separates the original city symphony tradition from its 2000s reboot.

Early on in *Los Angeles Plays Itself,* Andersen proposes an irony at the center of the city's cinematic history as a subject of representation: that Los Angeles, (supposedly) the most filmed city of the twentieth century, and certainly the city most associated with and reliant upon the film industry, is resistant to cinematic representation precisely because of its own unique character. Andersen calls it an "elusive" city that pulls away from its center, lacking cohesion, experienced primarily from the inside of a car. *Los Angeles Plays Itself* is a "city-symphony-in-reverse" in the sense that it will not try to present the city as an integrated whole. Instead, it fragments the already fictive Hollywood views of the city into a picture of the city that is inconsistent in space and time. Moving away from totalizing comprehension, the industry that made Los Angeles famous is also shown to have unwittingly and erratically documented the city's last century. Protean above all, the city itself cannot harmonize into a unity, but in its inverted form we can see the heterogeneity that once defined it and defies our comprehension of it. This reversal, the symphonic into the cacophonic, reflects the heterogeneity of the city itself, as well as that of the archival material that has accumulated to represent it.

The third reversal is also a result of postmodern interventions into modernist notions of progress: the reversal of the reveries and celebrations of twentieth century modernity into its redemptions and critiques. An underlying belief of Vertov's city symphony, *Man with a Movie Camera*, was that modernity would quickly and efficiently bring human progress, fusing man

and machine into a mass of extraordinary beings that could create an accelerated social and economic paradise. In the 1930s this belief began to crumble with the global Great Depression, and as of the 1940s the notion that reason and order could conquer the irrationality and chaos of mythological thinking had already been thoroughly thrown into question.[17] Instead of living in such a paradise, the descendants of twentieth century modernity find themselves laboriously sifting through its detritus to discover what can be renewed and redeployed; what needs to be memorialized if only to remind us to stay away; and what we can permit ourselves to release and forget. Progress is conceived of in modern utopian terms in the city symphony; it is automatic and chronological. A reversal of this aspect of the city symphony would take into account postmodern critiques of progress.

In the fourth, and last, reversal, modes of address and reception are made to become more flexible: the inversion of fiction into non-fiction; fantasy that reveals reality; narrative into spectacle. This anamorphic reversal requires both an essayistic intent to reposition spectatorship, and a spectator open to reading against the grain. It is comprised of two sub-reversals: a reversal of backgrounds-into-foregrounds; and a reversal of Vertov's prime directive, "to catch life unawares" into "to catch *cinema* unawares."

The reversal of backgrounds-into-foregrounds entails an expansive view of spectatorship, from the subversive anamorphic techniques of the Renaissance, to the early film theory of Hugo Münsterberg, to the recent film theory of early cinema—the cinema of attractions. Andersen establishes the reversal of backgrounds-into-foregrounds as a guiding hermeneutic for the film within the first few minutes:

> Of course, I know movies aren't about places, they're about stories. If we notice the location, we are not really watching the movie. (Figure 2) It's what's up front that counts. (Figure 3) Movies bury their traces, choosing for us what to watch, then moving on to something else. They do the work of our *voluntary attention*, and so we must suppress that faculty as we watch. Our *involuntary attention* must come to the fore. *But what if* we watch with our *voluntary attention*, instead of letting the movies direct us? (emphasis added)

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[17] See, for instance, Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

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"But what if" puts us into the realm of speculation, play and experimentation that will guide the reception of the next several hours of the film. The "voluntary" and "involuntary" attention to which Andersen refers here is a reference to Münsterberg's early film theory. In his 1916 book of film theory, *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study*, Harvard professor of applied psychology, Hugo Münsterberg argued that film draws its power from its analogy to the mind. The key convergences between film and mind for Münsterberg were "Attention," "Memory," and "Imagination," each of which he explicates in their own chapters.[18] The first concept, attention, he had already theorized in his 1913 study *Psychology and Industrial Efficiency*, where he distinguished between active and passive forms, which he called "voluntary attention" and "involuntary attention," respectively.[19]

Figure 2 Screen grab of *The New Centurions* (1972) from *Los Angeles Plays Itself*. This multilayered picturesque cityscape fills the screen as the vocal commentary remarks, " Of course, I know movies aren't about places, they're about stories. If we notice the location, we are not really watching the movie."

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[18] Hugo Münsterberg, *The Film: a Psychological Study: The Silent Photoplay in 1916* (New York: Dover Publications, 1970).

[19] Hugo Münsterberg, *Psychology and Industrial Efficiency* (Auckland, N.Z.: Floating Press, 2009).

Figure 3 Screen grab of *Brother* (2000) from *Los Angeles Plays Itself*. Vocal commentary continues after a cut from the last image to say, "It's what's up front that counts."

When we go before the art object we must let it guide us to some extent, thought Münsterberg. When we give our attention over to the film's direction it becomes involuntary, not self-directed, yet present and capable of following the pre-inscribed narrative paths. Film is especially good at directing the spectator to use their involuntary attention by restricting what can be perceived in the scene to a single object, thus removing other distractions, as is the case with the close-up.[20]

In the migration of the concept of attention from industrial psychology to film theory, Münsterberg implicitly identified the work of the film spectator with other kinds of industrialized labor. Twenty years later, in his "Artwork" essay, Benjamin posits forms of attention analogous to Münsterberg's through his concepts of "distraction" and "concentration" (further clarifying their relationship to labor in his book on Charles Baudelaire): "Distraction and concentration form an antithesis … A person who concentrates before a work of art is absorbed by it … By contrast the distracted masses absorb the work of art into themselves."[21] Involuntary attention, like distraction, is a habituated mechanical form of engagement with one's environment. It is

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[20] Edward Branigan, and Warren Buckland, *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Film Theory* (London & New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014), 40-43.

[21] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of its Reproducibility [Second Version, 1936]," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 3, 1935-38*, Howard Eiland, and Michael W. Jennings, trans. (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap, 2006), 119.

trained through work and leisure situations in which the human agent must immerse herself in the whole scene at once and respond to small shocks as they announce themselves. This type of immersion within the scene prevents the critical distance needed to contemplate specific elements of our own choosing. When we choose to use our voluntary attention, we can scan the scene for elements of interest of our own choosing, thus finding hermeneutic potentials alternative to those intended by the filmmakers.

If involuntary attention is the faculty that permits the narrative to unfold in cinema, then to advocate that the spectator use their voluntary attention is to deprioritize the value of the narrative. Andersen positions the subversive powers of location over narrative early in the film. "Of course, I know movies aren't about places, they're about stories," Andersen's vocal commentary declares ironically. *Los Angeles Plays Itself* enters and exits its excerpted film material not at significant narrative points in the films, but at moments when the scenery is particularly evident and can be identified as actual Los Angeles locations or evocative of periods in its history. Whereas the city was positioned as background and the narrative as foreground in the original films, in *Los Angeles Plays Itself* these are reversed. Aspects of the original narrative are still at play, but they are now subordinate to the location.

Passive viewing of Hollywood films turns into active viewing in *Los Angeles Plays Itself*. The whole frame demands attention. Reliance on "involuntary attention" is discouraged through the suggestion that everything in the frame is crucial to the experience, and the subsequent modeling of "voluntary attention" throughout the film. In early cinema, fiction and nonfiction spectatorship modes were more fluid with the spectacle taking precedence over the narrative aims.[22] Here, in the city-symphony-in-reverse, we are asked to revert back to the viewing mode of a "cinema of attractions" that deemphasizes the narrative component in favor of an investigative mode of viewing and attention to marginalia within the frame. Inspection of the whole frame requires a big screen and a willingness to stand back and contemplate the visible evidence. Thus, the best way to view a city-symphony-in-reverse is in a theatrical setting. Such an address reestablishes a spectatorship more akin to "the humanistic, Renaissance ideal of art appreciation—marked by individual immersion and contemplation of the work" and "[requiring]

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[22] See, Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction[s]: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," and Charles Musser, "Rethinking Early Cinema: Cinema of Attractions and Narrativity," in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), 381-88, 389-416, respectively.

distance and therefore framing,"[23] than current film practices. Like anamorphosis in paintings such as Holbein's *The Ambassadors* (1533), backgrounds-into-foregrounds anamorphosis in cinema is not a permanent and stable move. Once the shift has been made, the spectator has then the option to toggle between the two, creating a choice between perceptive registers to create meaning.

The reversal of one of Vertov's prime directives, "to catch life unawares" into "to catch *cinema* unawares" is a similarly anamorphic collaboration between filmmaker and spectator. One of the works of film theory that influenced Ruttmann as he made *Berlin*, as well as Dziga Vertov's own *Man with a Movie Camera*, was Vertov's "WE: Variant of a Manifesto". Written in 1919, "WE" theorized a revolutionary use of the moving image camera as a visual prosthetic and tool for ideological transformation, but it also advised on the methods of nonfiction representation. Vertov's emphasis on catching "life unawares," or "life as it is lived," motivated his generation to create visual representations of their environments without the use of a script or staging. In "WE", he implored filmmakers to cleanse their work of influence from "music, literature, and theater," to find their own rhythms through the film apparatus and the movement of things in their environments, and to free themselves from the temptations of romantic, psychological or tawdry popular narrative styles.[24] The visible evidence in city symphonies showed that the filmmakers had taken seriously the call to move away from fiction in many of its codified forms and to find *kino pravda*, "film truth" in their immediate environments, the "truth" of the everyday life that only the camera can provide. One of the methods that Vertov, Ruttmann and Vigo employed in their city symphonies was hiding cameras in suitcases to be able to survey the cityscape without the knowledge of the social actors, privileging the notions of spontaneity and authenticity in cinema.[25] This was not the only strategy they used, however. What was considered "film truth" and nonfiction in the 1920s differs significantly from the cinéma vérité or direct cinema notions of "truth". City symphonies are filled with mise-en-scène, enactment, and motivated montage. Despite the appearance of Vertov's fervent dictates, he did often set up shots

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[23] Thomas Elsaesser, and Malte Hagener, *Film Theory: An Introduction Through the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 16.

[24] Dziga Vertov, *Kino-eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, Annette Michelson, Ed. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 7.

[25] Keith Beattie, "From city symphony to global city film: documentary display and the corporeal," in *Screening the past: an international, refereed, electronic journal of screen history*, no. 20 (2006): web, np.

with his subjects. In *Man with a Movie Camera*, he followed his brother, Mikhail Kaufman, who played the cameraman in question and did the cinematography, around the city, and filmed various subjects at close range in tight quarters. Thus, while he positioned the new film form to respect an unprovoked relationship between the camera and the social actor, what he valued most in these experiments was the discovery of film's capacity to reveal the underlying structures of reality. And we can see in his own practice that "catching life unawares" could involve multiple filmmaking strategies, some of which were collaborative.

In contrast, the visible evidence of the city's underlying structures of reality in *Los Angeles Plays Itself* are precisely the types of staged narrative films that evolved from those that Vertov endeavored to pull his generation of filmmakers away from in order to invent the documentary form. After referencing Münsterberg and suggesting a perceptual repositioning of backgrounds-into-foregrounds, Andersen implores spectators to reverse their reception of the works: "If we can appreciate documentaries for their dramatic qualities, perhaps we can appreciate fiction films for their documentary revelations." The material that forms the basis of *Los Angeles Plays Itself* is hermeneutically reversed to expose its latent documentary potential, though this move is held in brackets throughout the film because the instability of the fictional film excerpt's ability to accurately represent its time and place is always present. But the limited spatial and temporal accuracy of the fictional film fragment does not justify a wholesale rejection of the documentary capacity of fiction film. Thus, we are implored to find the indexical within the image with the understanding that it will provide only partial knowledge. If Dziga Vertov's aim in *Man With a Movie Camera* was to present life as it was lived, "life caught unawares" in early (Western) Soviet urban centers, Andersen's aim in *Los Angeles Plays Itself* was to present life as it was dreamed in a (largely) post-war Los Angeles and to catch *cinema* unawares. Andersen détourns Hollywood's own archive against itself to reveal a counter-archive of its home base. In both cases, modernity is a fascination and the object the filmmaker must stalk from a distance. Vertov's city symphony needed to prove a much different point about the status of documentary evidence, and the differences between fiction and nonfiction than Andersen's "city-symphony-in-reverse" did 75 years later. Vertov's insistence that narrative filmmaking is inadequate to present life as it is lived is, at once, a central hypothesis in *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, and dialectically, a disputable one. After all, the dream life of a culture is representative of that culture only when it is decoded. The symptomatic reading of the archival image is now a

common enough practice, at least in academia, but *Los Angeles Plays Itself* provides a master class on this approach.

Refractive Essay Film and Video Essay

Los Angeles Plays Itself can be seen as an essential link between the essay film and the more overtly pedagogical video essay for its clear adoption of the subjective and reflective open-ended questioning that is characteristic of the essay film tradition, as well as for its early commitment to the preoccupations of the video essay: the easy circulation of video (though not digital video, here), pedagogy and cinephilia. Timothy Corrigan categorizes essayistic films about films as "refractive essay films," arguing that "[r]ather than mimic aesthetic terms and questions, they refract and deflect them. … refractive cinema reenacts art as open-ended criticism."[26] The essayistic and the reflexive are brought together in the refractive essay film such that one of the main goals of the work is to scrutinize its own aesthetics and hermeneutics. The dialectic between public and private experience that characterizes the essayistic in any medium is in the refractive essay film key to its power to critique film aesthetics: "[refractive] essay films depend on the force and pressure of a presumed public experience or … a *public circulation* of experience that troubles and comments on the aesthetic experience and the subjectivity that articulates it," claims Corrigan.[27]

Providing insight into archive-based essayistic practices in the new millennium, *Los Angeles Plays Itself* comes about at a time when essay film as a practice had not yet been widely theorized, and digital moving image archive material was not yet readily available to be easily reused by filmmakers. *Los Angeles Plays Itself* arrives just about five years before the moment when theory, practice and technological possibility will converge to make the video essay a viable public pedagogical form, announced in 2008 by Eric Faden in his "A Manifesto for Critical Media."[28] As well, scholar-produced video essays depend upon the technological access,

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[26] Timothy Corrigan, *The Essay Film: From Montaigne, After Marker* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 183.

[27] Ibid., 182-3. Original emphasis.

[28] Although Faden had been delivering short critical videos instead of conference papers since 1998, the "video essay" did not catch on until a decade later. See, Eric Faden, "A Manifesto for Critical Media," in *Mediascape*, (Spring 2008). Web. http://www.tft.ucla.edu/mediascape/Spring08_ManifestoForCriticalMedia.html (Last accessed, January 8, 2016).

through digital editing and Internet distribution, and the interest in the digital humanities that was not fully realized until the late 2000s.

The formal differences and aims of Corrigan's "refractive essay film" and Faden's video essay, which he calls "media stylo" after Alexandre Astruc's early theorization of the essay film in "The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: Le Caméra Stylo," are minimal. However, in terms of "the practitioners and the exhibition setting" there are important differences between the two. While Corrigan describes the refractive essay film as one of several avenues of (largely long-form, theatrically presented) essayistic cinema, Faden places a special emphasis on the (digitally produced and consumed, often short-form) video essay by positioning it as the future of media scholarship. More specifically, Faden distinguishes "media stylo" as the work of "scholars who became filmmakers," from "refractive essay film," which is created by "filmmakers who [engage] scholarly or intellectual topics."[29] In making this distinction, Faden asks that we consider the work of "Noël Burch, Thom Anderson [sic], Trinh T. Min-ha [sic], [and] Peter Wollen" within a pedagogical framework.[30] Corrigan, on the other hand, groups these scholars/filmmakers in with the filmmaker/intellectuals, such as Chris Marker, Raoul Ruiz, and Alain Resnais, based on their formal similarities.[31] What makes *Los Angeles Plays Itself* unique within the history of the essayistic in filmmaking is its ability to transcend the academic, and perhaps even the cinephilic, audience for whom Andersen's critiques were originally intended (it began as a lecture at Cal Arts) in order to bring a larger audience into a relationship with its critical evaluation of film, historiography and urban life, as well as to help establish an artistic pedagogical use of the video archive for scholars. This achievement is accomplished in part through the hermeneutical cues Andersen provides the spectator, actively modeling them within the cinematic text, which provide opportunities for the spectator to join him in an intersubjective critical journey that straddles pedagogy and avant-garde film spectatorship.

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[29] Faden, "A Manifesto for Critical Media," 2008.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Corrigan, *The Essay Film*, 182-83.

Site, Cite, Sight: Refractive Travel Essay Films and "Cinematic Pilgrimages"

Corrigan groups together "films that interrogate films" within the refractive essayistic mode, while those that are concerned with the geographical situation of the author/subject he places within the "travel" essay tradition. Here, he mentions *Los Angeles Plays Itself* by name as an exemplar of the travel essay despite the filmmaker's lack of travel for the film. I have found few films prior to the city-symphonies-in-reverse of the 2000s that occupy the intersection between the refractive essay film and the "travel" essay film in my research of primarily North American and European cinemas. Even fewer still take on the refractive view of cinema and the "travel" essay as a vigorous "staycation" by exploring the representation of the author's own urban environment. *Paris 1900* seems to be unique in the twentieth century in this regard. We might also consider within this essay film intersection, *In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni* (1978), Guy Debord's autoethnographic meditation on France as a consumer capitalist society and the (mostly) cinematic spectacles that reinforce this alienated historical mode. *In girum* moves between Paris and Venice, and uses film excerpts in a less site-specific manner than city-symphonies-in-reverse do, however. Another example of a refractive travel essay film can be found in the five-minute Canada Vignettes series film, *Ma Chère Albertine* (Suzanne Olivier, NFB, 1979), which uses close-ups of vintage postcards of Montreal (1905-10) to invent an epistolary narrative of a trip to the city at the beginning of the twentieth century.[32] Also from Montreal, NFB collage found-footage artist, Arthur Lipsett made a series of archive-based shorts that often feature city life as well as meditate on the image sphere, such as *Very Nice, Very Nice* (1961, 7 mins) *21-87* (1964, 9 mins), and *A Trip Down Memory Lane* (1965, 12 mins). While Lipsett's films are certainly expressions of urban modernity and refractive in their strategy, the city itself, and even less the geospatial specificities of place, are not conspicuous foci of the films.

Within the essay film tradition, an apt precursor to the very specific way *Los Angeles Plays Itself* interrogates the intersection of the Hollywood archive and the lived experience of its location shooting is the *Vertigo* (1958) sequence in Chris Marker's *Sans Soleil* (1983). In the *Vertigo* sequence, Marker's fictionalized stand-in persona, cameraman Sandor Krasna, writes a letter to the equally fictional female narrator describing his "pilgrimage to all the film's

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[32] Watch *Ma Chère Albertine* here: https://www.nfb.ca/film/canada_vignettes_ma_chere_albertine_en

locations" in and around San Francisco. He goes to the flower shop, "Podesta Baldocchi, where James Stewart spies on Kim Novak—he the hunter, she the prey." (Figure 4) He drives up and down the same hills Scotty did in pursuit of Madeline. (Figure 5) He visits the cemetery at Mission Dolores "where Madeline came to pray at the grave of a woman long since dead, whom she should not have known." Like *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, the *Vertigo* sequence in *Sans Soleil* explores and blurs the embodied relationship between spectatorship and location shooting: if films can inhabit our spaces, we can also inhabit theirs, and in doing so soak up a bit of their enchanted psychic residue.

Figure 4 Kim Novak in the Podesta Baldocchi flower shop in *Vertigo* from *Sans Soleil*.

Figure 5 Shot of "Krasna" driving up and down the same San Francisco hills as "Scotty" did in *Vertigo* from *Sans Soleil*. (See Alcatraz in the distance.)

In his 2008 *Screen* article, "'It's all there, it's no dream': Vertigo and the Redemptive Pleasures of the Cinephilic Pilgrimage," film scholar Douglas A. Cunningham theorizes what he calls "cinephilic pilgrimages" to profilmic sites, using both *Vertigo*, and *Sans Soleil*'s treatment of *Vertigo*, as models.[33] For his theory of the cinephilic pilgrimage, Cunningham draws heavily

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[33] Douglas A. Cunningham, "'It's all there, it's no dream': Vertigo and the Redemptive Pleasures of the Cinephilic Pilgrimage," *Screen* 49:2 (Summer 2008).

on Siegfried Kracauer's "psychophysical correspondences," which Kracauer asserts comprise "all these more or less fluid interrelations between the physical world and the psychological dimension in the broadest sense of the word—a dimension which borders on that physical universe and is still intimately connected with it."[34] The cinephilic pilgrimage would not be possible without a sense that an intimate connection exists between our physical universe and that of the imaginary universe of the particular film in question.

Cinephilia has often been theorized as aligned with memory, necrophilia, and an undead love: our love for the dead keeps them alive in memory through film (Paul Willemen), and the past and present is bound into "a love that will never die" through film (Thomas Elsaesser).[35] Like nostalgia, the concept of cinephilia has had a maligned history within the Humanities. As Thomas Elsaesser explains, "cinephilia has been in and out of favor several times, including a spell as a thoroughly pejorative and even dismissive sobriquet in the politicized 1970s."[36] Fortunately, there is not just one kind of cinephilia but different forms that have taken hold in different periods.[37] Today the concept of cinephilia has been recovered by a new generation who praise the democratizing effects of home movies, digital video, and the Internet.[38]

Andersen shares his cinephilia with his audience without assuming that they share his passions or filmic experience. Resembling the city symphony filmmakers that came before him, Andersen's "spiritual" quest to find psychophysical correspondences takes place in the spaces where he has lived experience in his everyday life—his hometown of Los Angeles. Andersen establishes the terms of his cinephilic pilgrimage early on in *Los Angeles Plays Itself* by presenting several instances of his own filmed locations. First, he displays the present day infusion of the film industry into city space. Then, he cuts together his own on-site footage with its cinematic spectacle counterparts from Los Angeles film history in much the same way Marker did with *Vertigo* and San Francisco in *Sans Soleil*. Five minutes into the film, Andersen presents

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[34] Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 69.

[35] Marijke Valck and Malte Hagener, "Down with Cinephilia? Long Live Cinephilia?" in Marijke Valck and Malte Hagener, eds. *Cinephilia: Movies, Love and Memory* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 14-15.

[36] Thomas Elsaesser, "Cinephilia or the Uses of Disenchantment," in *Cinephilia: Movies, Love and Memory*, Marijke Valck and Malte Hagener, Eds. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 27.

[37] Annette Michelson, "Gnosis and Iconoclasm. A Case Study of Cinephilia," *October* 83 (Winter 1998): 3.

[38] Theo Panayides, "Essay 2" in the "Permanent Ghost: Cinephilia in the Age of Internet and Video" series, *Senses of Cinema*, March 2000, Issue 4: http://sensesofcinema.com/2000/cinephilia-special-feature/cine2/

us with a montage of cryptic signs on diverse street corners—"Diablo," (Figure 6) "Face Value,"
"Elysian," "Pår Mars," "Women," "Boys," "Crimes,"—directing crews to location shoots.

Figure 6 Andersen's own footage of signs directing crews to location shoots.

He ends this montage of signs with shots of a truck, cameras and lights set up to shoot on a Los
Angeles street, placing him physically within and around the profilmic spaces of films to come.
Here, in voiceover, Andersen presents a claim that will guide our placement of the film industry
in Los Angeles, Los Angeles in film history, and Andersen between the two: "Los Angeles is
where the relation between reality and representation gets muddled." The slippage between
reality and representation that characterizes Los Angeles for Andersen is then established
through Marker-style cuts between films and their locations as filmed by Andersen. In the most
extended of these early demonstrations of psychophysical correspondences, he takes a cinephilic
pilgrimage to the Music Box Steps, "a narrow public stairway between Vendome Street and
Descanso Drive in Silver Lake" (Andersen's own neighborhood) where Laurel and Hardy filmed
a classic short in 1932. We are shown three shots of the location in the present day: one from the
front in which the stairs are flanked closely by the fronts of houses; one looking down the stairs
towards the street (Figure 7); and one of the street sign, confirming its name, the Music Box
Steps. An extended excerpt from *The Music Box* (1932) immediately follows in which Laurel
and Hardy unsuccessfully attempt to move a piano up the steps. (Figure 8) Andersen lets the
excerpt play out without vocal commentary, signaling to the spectator that the material is not just
a pertinent example to support his thesis but also a film worthy of enjoyment even in the present.
Throughout *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, Andersen provides many opportunities to indulge in such

cinephilic pleasures by withdrawing the vocal commentary long enough for spectators to immerse themselves in the spectacle.

Figures 7 and 8 The "Music Box Steps" as Andersen filmed them, and the steps as they appeared in Laurel and Hardy's *The Music Box*.

"The true cinephilic pilgrimage is always necessarily a 'wandering', a hopeful meshing of spectatorial, personal, geographic and cultural memory with filmic indexicality and affect," argues Cunningham after Kracauer.[39] By positioning himself as a cameraman inhabiting the sites of a few films in the beginning of *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, Andersen can then dispense with creating his own footage for the remainder of the film since it can be assumed that he has gained experience of further local sites through embodied interaction with them as a resident of the city. Therefore, many of Andersen's references to psychophysical correspondences are implied after he first situates himself in the cinephilic spaces, allowing him to draw on the effects, and affects, of positioning himself within the archival material through physical analogy to pursue deeper critiques of Hollywood's (mis)representation of Los Angeles history and everyday life.

In both *Sans Soleil* and *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, the bodies of the filmmakers are positioned uncannily within filmic spaces, and yet simultaneously outside of them. Cunningham insists that the cinephilic pilgrimage differs significantly from "the casual ogling of curious film buffs" due to the intensity of the phenomenological experience that borders on a spiritual contact between the self and the filmic world. He writes, "the cinephilic pilgrimage is born of love (for the diegetic world of the film), loss (the apparent absence of that diegetic world within the realm of the real) and a longing to occupy/influence a space-time somewhere between the index and its

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[39] Cunningham, "'It's all there, it's no dream'," 123-124.

referent."[40] The filmmaker brings himself to the site not to film himself in the city, but to film it from his perspective, a perspective that synchronizes itself with the location but is out of step with the universe the location inhabited in the cited film. The filmmaker tries to make them synchronize, and in this attempt, we can see that the real lived space and the cinematic space exist in anamorphic relation to each other.

Early in the vocal commentary of *Los Angeles Plays Itself* Andersen characterizes Hitchcock's oeuvre as "touristy travelogues." He attributes Hitchcock's cultivation of the mastery of suspense to his desire to "enliven" the travelogues, strategically positioning the narrative element of suspense as secondary to the visual pleasures of the scenery. But Andersen is no tourist and his pilgrimage, like that of the *Vertigo* protagonists, takes him deep into time rather than space. Andersen, as he expresses in his vocal commentary, "find[s] another way to animate this city-symphony-in-reverse" by creating a sidelong, or anamorphic, view of the city's "spectacular" life over time. According to Cunningham, the ultimate goal of essayistic animations of cinephilic pilgrimages is to "control the space of possibility and meaning," but to do so "the cinephilic pilgrim must exercise his/her own creative agency; only then can the cinephile redeem both the real and the image."[41] Through their cinephilic pilgrimages, Marker and Andersen have created localized and subjectively situated refractive "travelogues" that perform their own redemptive projects. Always threatening to slip by unnoticed and unredeemed, their films seek to enchant the everyday with a glimpse of a potential life recast from within a cinematic parallel universe.

Essayistic Archival Redemptions from Muybridge to *The Exiles*

Andersen has developed a strategy of essayistic archival redemption through his major film works over the years. Although *Los Angeles Plays Itself* demonstrates a decidedly more traditionally essayistic orientation towards its subject matter through its personalization of the vocal commentary, it shares with *Eadweard Muybridge: Zoopraxographer*[42] a formalistic

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[40] Ibid., 124.

[41] Ibid., 127.

[42] I first saw a print of *Eadweard Muybridge: Zoopraxographer* at an exhibition on Muybridge presented at San Francisco's Museum of Modern Art in 2011. I enquired at the time as to whether or not the film could be obtained for pedagogical uses (I thought it would be a great resource for a future film history or experimental documentary

meditation focused on re-setting the spectatorship around film historiographical material, thus reopening the question of the archive's relevance to current, and future, historical experience. Andersen and his collaborators[43] thus enter into a quest to redeem the proto-cinematic and to bring it into dialogue with its intermedial legacy, the moving image. The untapped potential of the film historical archives is front and center in both films.

Much of the first half of *Eadweard Muybridge: Zoopraxographer* resembles a photo lecture. Muybridge's still photographs comprise the visible evidence while the voiceover (performed dead-pan by actor Dean Stockwell) explains their significance. Andersen employs a technique of combining camera movement and still photography to create tableau-like compositions of Muybridge's nature and city photography in order to get closer to the subject matter highlighted in the voice-over narration (this technique would later come to be known as "the Ken Burns effect"). The first section of the film accounts for Muybridge's biography and provides a profusion of examples of his nineteenth century land/cityscapes, working both in and around his home base of San Francisco, as well as travelogue photography of Central America, particularly coffee plantations in Panama.

The middle part of the film examines Muybridge's contribution to technologies of vision by explaining his cinematic invention, the Zoopraxiscope, and experiments in motion photography at former California Governor and Central Pacific Railroad magnate, Leland Stanford's Palo Alto Stock Farm. At this point in the film, Andersen begins to use techniques such as dissolves and montage to suture together the sequential images produced in Muybridge's photographic experiments, animating the figures from the late 1870s as they had never been seen before. While the Zoopraxiscope was able to animate and project some of his experiments for an audience, such as the 24 frames of Stanford's horse, Sallie Gardner, at full gallop (photographed in 1878, and projected in 1880), the vast majority of Muybridge's work was not adapted for his invention, and thus was not experienced as moving images within his lifetime. As the film goes on, the contrast between stillness and motion becomes ever more apparent through the slow investigation of the ways film can reanimate static prototypes of realistic movement. The

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class). To my disappointment, the museum staff told me it had been borrowed from USC and was not available otherwise. Happily, in 2013 I found that someone had been kind enough to post the entire film on youtube, but the link has since been taken down. Cinema Guild has recently announced a release for the film on DVD, however, it will not be priced for home viewing.

[43] From now on "Andersen" will stand in for all responsible for this film.

technical potential for animating bodies is pursued throughout the rest of the film as the vocal commentary delves into precise shutter speeds and the required length of time the screen needs to be black between photos such that the movement will appear natural. As these calculations are demonstrated through a variety of nude subjects engaged in such activities as picking up a broom, sweeping, lying down, or drinking tea, the voiceover continues to offer specifications on duration. The flow of images is slowed down and sped up to distinguish between the effects of image presentation at the calculated values and the awkward movement resulting from miscalculation. When the "sweet spot" of realistic animation is hit upon, the sequential still photographs suddenly become cinema. For the spectator, the thrill of recognition emerges and fades in accordance with the momentary attainment of realistic movement, and its noticeable failure, throughout. The play between the two teases the spectator, requiring their attention to the transformation of photography into moving pictures and its attendant revelatory properties. The film took ten years to make due to the arduous process of animating these images precisely so they would provide such an experience. Thus it can be surmised that the spectator-effect derived from this effort was of utmost importance to the filmmakers.

In the latter third of the film, the filmmakers continue to show the seriousness of their redemptive project by providing the names of the models whom Muybridge had simply identified by number in his own presentation of the photographs. In Muybridge's prospectus and notebooks many details about the model's lives are identified, including the biographical descriptors Muybridge thought were particularly important. For example, one of the subjects is identified in the vocal commentary as Ben Daily, "a mulatto and pugilist". (Figure 9) Breaking the anonymity of the models brings a historicity to them that Muybridge clearly intended to bracket in the interests of science. Andersen demonstrates that our interest in looking at this material has gone beyond the original intentions of its creator.

Figure 9 Ben Daily, "a mulatto and pugilist," as photographed by Muybridge for his motion studies of human movement, from *Eadweard Muybridge: Zoopraxographer*.

While several stills of nude women appear one after the other, surrounded mostly by black, with text alongside the image, the vocal commentary informs us that Muybridge consistently noted the height, weight, and marital status of his female models. Lacking other biographical details unrelated to the female body as a viewable, measurable object, the one detail provided—marital status—sticks out conspicuously as a potential illustration of the reductiveness of the patriarchy of the era. (Figure 10) Even when a woman is stripped down to nothing, to be examined as a body in space, her relationship to a man was still important to the photographer as a matter of record.

Figure 10 Mamie Dayson, an unmarried woman, 22 years old, as photographed by Muybridge for his motion studies of human movement, from *Eadweard Muybridge: Zoopraxographer*.

Instead of leaving this sparse information to frustrate the spectator with only very partial historical understanding of the stripped figures, Andersen provides important contextualizations,

linking, not for the first time, Muybridge's scientific study of the body to the influence of both culture and the other plastic arts that required live models (e.g. painting and sculpture). For instance, we learn in this sequence that Muybridge's only other note about his female models, a more general methodological note, was that they were chosen "from all classes of society." Since, as the vocal commentary informs us, prostitutes were often the only women who would consider working as models for artists at the time, it would likely be assumed by spectators of painting or photographs that "any woman willing to pose naked was a degraded woman." There is an implication, thus, that in making the general statement regarding economic and social background, in place of identifying each model's class, Muybridge wanted all the models taking part in the study to be considered "respectable." Each model could well be modeling for the "higher" aim of contributing to the aid of scientific study if it is known that some of them were not already engaged in the business of selling their bodies for money, which was thought to be the most debased occupation one could have at the time. The narrator goes on to note some indications of female agency within the photos themselves: "Muybridge's female models violated the conventions of their society, not only by appearing naked in his photographs, but also by wearing their hair close-cropped, and by languorously smoking cigarettes. But Muybridge's objective gaze discovered not licentiousness and dissipation, but naturalness and grace." (Figures 11 & 12) These observations conspire to refute the idea of an "outmoded" Muybridge by delivering him into the feminist discourse of the 1970s when the film was made; moreover, feminist discourse itself is informed by the recognition of the many micro-rebellions of long ago that made it possible.

Figures 11 & 12 Women smoking, photographed by Muybridge for his motion studies of human movement, from *Eadweard Muybridge: Zoopraxographer*.

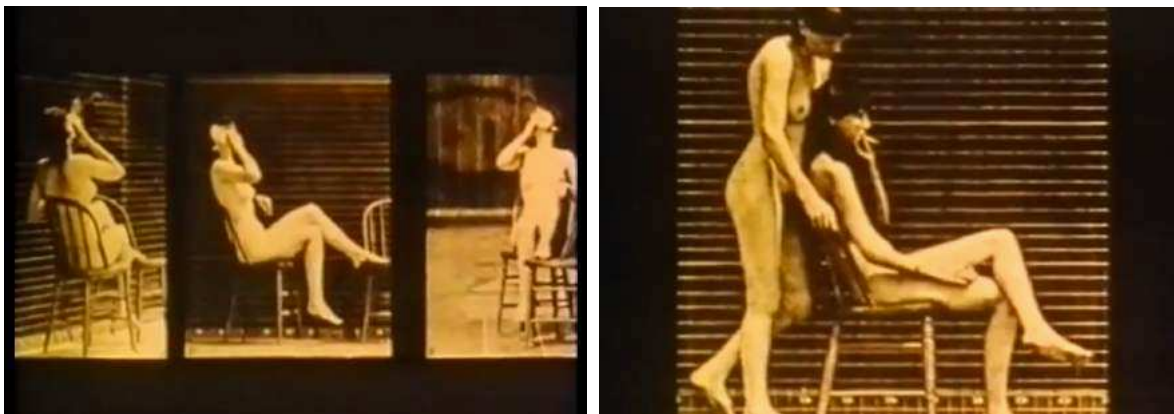In 1932, J. Stuart Blackton also attempted to reanimate some of Muybridge's sequential images for his documentary, *The Film Parade*, about cinematic history going back to Egyptian hieroglyphics and Leonardo Da Vinci's invention of the camera obscura. *Eadweard Muybridge: Zoopraxographer*, however, is the first film to present a sustained analysis of Muybridge's biography, his context, and his work, as well as animate his photographs. Moreover, it pursues a formalism that creates the spectator-effect needed for the dialectical image to emerge in contrast to the more banal acceptance of the historical narrative. The experience of the spectator thus goes from that of the photo lecture, inspecting the vast array of still images as they are catalogued and contextualized within the artist's historical era, biography and technological possibility, to essayistic documentary that re-presents Muybridge's work as an experience of its subjects' humanity, in movement and in historicity. Muybridge himself anticipated some of these effects but was never able to achieve them in his lifetime. The redemptive moment of this work occurs when the spectator is made to become aware of herself as the privileged recipient of the artist's long unrealized vision, and through the path to careful inspection laid out by the filmmakers, to approach the humanity of his subjects as it could not have been anticipated by them. In a flash, the past that has laid in wait for a future to see it, animated and realistic as the trace of living bodies, as it hoped one day to be seen, can suddenly be recognized, which is a provocative and powerful experience.

In *Eadweard Muybridge: Zoopraxographer* both form and content are motivated to provide a redemptive historiography. Though not subjective in the sense *Los Angeles Plays Itself* is, it is clearly essayistic in its orientation toward the spectator and its archival source material. Reflexivity is achieved here, however, not simply through the choice of film-related content (though that is a major element), but rather through a subtle shift from the still photographic material in Muybridge's oeuvre to the increasingly animated latent potential of the moving image contained within his later "movement" experiments, which distinguishes the two mediums.

Andersen's mid-nineties collaborative effort, *Red Hollywood* preserves the essay film tradition of maintaining a focus on a topic that extends beyond cinephilia and film scholarship to issues of immediate importance—injustice, martyrdom, ideology, race, class, gender, labor, censorship. In 1985 Andersen published an essay of the same title, but the film itself was based on a book Andersen and Burch wrote expanding the essay, *Les communistes de Hollywood:*

autre chose que des martyrs (1994), but published only in France. The whole project wears its redemptive aspirations on its sleeve. As Jonathan Rosenbaum noted, in the wake of the "martyrdom" of blacklisted writers, Andersen and Burch realized that, while the narrative of the industry's unjust conduct had been recognized and accepted, the films themselves, made by blacklisted writers and directors, remained at the margins of film history, and had been largely unseen since their release.[44] *Red Hollywood* redeems the blacklisted writers, thus, not just through a reiteration of the injustice of their suppression, but crucially, by bringing their work to life again on the screen and identifying their unique contributions to film history. Through Andersen and Burch's insistence that the spectator experience the films themselves, as opposed to watching talking heads expound upon them, *Red Hollywood* and *Los Angeles Plays Itself* can be seen as part of a larger movement at the turn of the twenty-first century towards making "historical information, often lost or displaced, *physically present*,"[45] through archival art.

The redemption of the "untimely" film object is as strong in *Los Angeles Plays Itself* as it is in *Eadweard Muybridge: Zoopraxographer* and *Red Hollywood.* Catherine Russell argues that Andersen's use of archival essayistic filmmaking practices creates an opening for a non-linear history in which Kent Mackenzie's 1961 *The Exiles* can be seen for its significant contribution to Los Angeles (film) history after its close-to-50-year disappearance.[46] As Russell observes, Andersen presents *The Exiles* "as the movie that offers an antidote to Hollywood's lies".[47] Based on interviews with Native American Los Angelinos, *The Exiles* presents a gritty high-contrast black-and-white neo-realist look at the everyday lives of three Native Americans living in the Bunker Hill neighborhood of Los Angeles. At the time of the film's conception, around 1956, the Bureau of Indian Affairs was attempting to relocate Native Americans to big cities,[48] dispossessing them of their culture in the process. Mackenzie presents a day-in-the-life of his protagonists, performed by Native Americans essentially playing themselves, as a lonely search

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[44] Jonathan Rosenbaum, "*Red Hollywood*" in the *Chicago Reader*, August 8, 1996. https://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/red-hollywood---directed-and-written-by-thom-andersen-and-noel-burch-narrated-by-billy-woodberry/Content?oid=891237. (Last accessed, May 29, 2017).

[45] Foster, "An Archival Impulse," 4. Emphasis added.

[46] Catherine Russell, "The Restoration of *The Exiles*: The Untimeliness of Archival Cinema," *Screening the Past.* 2012. Web. http://www.screeningthepast.com/2012/08/the-restoration-of-the-exiles-the-untimeliness-of-archival-cinema/

[47] Ibid.

[48] Dennis Lim, "Displaced and Adrift in Los Angeles," in *The New York Times*, July 6, 2008. http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/06/movies/06lim.html (Last accessed, June 22, 2017).

for excitement and belonging in the big city. In *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, Andersen asks his spectators to take an anamorphic look at Bunker Hill through clips from *The Exiles*, exposing "uncanny parallels between latent colonialism and urban renewal in postwar America," according to Russell.[49] The erasure of the Bunker Hill neighborhood, in which the "Indians" took temporary refuge in the 1950s, can be seen as a metaphor for continued sweeping attempts to remove native and other non-white people from even temporary residence in the central areas of urban life. Andersen's voiceover explains, "Rents were low, so it put the wrong kind of people too close to downtown. Bunker Hill became a target for slum clearance or urban renewal." After enjoying a premiere at the Venice Film Festival in 1961, *The Exiles* was pushed out of view and lost to the archive, that is, until its historical value was redeemed through Andersen's analysis of the film in *Los Angeles Plays Itself*. That a metatext without a proper release itself, such as *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, which quotes a film without a proper release, such as *The Exiles*, could instigate a restoration, theatrical and DVD release, and the creation of significant paratext is a notable feat, and a testament to the perceived value of Andersen's film historiographical reading of *The Exiles*, as well as the reputation of *Los Angeles Plays Itself* within the larger film community.

Los Angeles Plays Itself ends with a redemptive pursuit of neorealist filmic records of Los Angeles' minority communities. Andersen positions Charles Burnett's *Killer of Sheep* (1978), Billy Woodberry's *Bless Their Little Hearts* (1984), and Haile Gerima's *Bush Mama* (1979) together against the untimeliness of Mackenzie's *The Exiles*. Unlike Mackenzie's lonely unseen offering, Bernett, Woodberry and Gerima's films can be grouped together as a timely "neorealist movement in Los Angeles led by young black filmmakers from the south," according to Andersen at the end of *Los Angeles Plays Itself*. As Andersen asserts at the end of *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, "Neorealism describes another reality, and it creates a new kind of protagonist". At the same time as he exalts Los Angeles' diminutive neorealist movement two decades earlier, he identifies a current gap in Los Angeles filmmaking where the marginalized, those who really know the city, "those who walk or take the bus," can show us the city in a new way, a way industry movies cannot.[50]

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[49] Ibid.

[50] It is true that the lack of neorealist Los Angeles filmmaking has persisted in the decade since *Los Angeles Plays Itself* came out, but the 2015 indie sleeper hit *Tangerine*, filmed on an IPhone, shows potential for a reawakening of

Inspirations and Influences: Pop Art and Kitsch

In a 2011 *Cinema Scope* article on Christian Marclay's *The Clock* (2010), in which Andersen provides 30 notes on his experience of the 24 hour video installation featuring found footage of clocks from television and films (or snippets of dialogue indicating the hour of the original film's diegesis) synched to the actual lived time of the audience, he starts off by asking, "*The Clock* is certainly dumb…But is it dumb enough?"[51] Those not familiar with Andersen's Pop Art and Dada influences may perceive this introduction as inauspicious, but they would be wrong. Andersen begins with the same question, "Is it dumb enough?" in another *Cinema Scope* article on Phil Spector and two documentaries, Vikram Jayanti's 2008 biography, *The Agony and the Ecstasy of Phil Spector,* and Adam Curtis' 2009 film on the history of the 1960s, *It Felt Like a Kiss*. However, in this article the question appears as a quote. Spector asks Sonny Bono, "Is it dumb enough?" as they listen to a demo of The Crystals' "Da Doo Ron Ron" in 1963. Andersen clarifies the cultural weight of the question: "In other words, is this record something you can understand in a flash but listen to forever? Is it both art and kitsch? It's a profound question, one that has resonated through the subsequent history of art and popular culture."[52] Andersen's fascination with the intersection of art and kitsch resonates throughout his oeuvre, but it is especially potent in *Los Angeles Plays Itself* in a way that, seen in Benjaminian terms, contributes to its redemptive aspirations.

Benjamin addresses the revolutionary potential of art for the masses in his "Arcades Project" essay "Konvolut K: Dream City and Dream House, Dreams of the Future…Jung." He writes:

> At no point in time, no matter how utopian, will anyone win the masses over to a higher art; they can be won over only to one nearer to them. And the difficulty consists precisely in finding a form for art such that, with the best conscience in the world, one could hold

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a neorealist Los Angeles film tradition that shows working class people and families dealing with the omnipresent threat of unemployment and discrimination.

[51] Thom Andersen, "Random Notes on a Projection of *The Clock* by Christian Marclay at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 4:32 pm, July 28, 2011-5:02 pm, July 29, 2011," *Cinema Scope*, no. 48, (Fall 2011). http://cinema-scope.com/features/random-notes-on-a-projection/ (Last accessed, November 13, 2013).

[52] Thom Andersen, "Unchained Melodies: *The Agony and Ecstasy of Phil Spector* and *It Felt Like a Kiss,"* *Cinema Scope*, no. 44, (Fall 2010).

that it *is* a higher art. This will never happen with most of what is propagated by the avant-garde of the bourgeoisie.[53]

For Benjamin, for art to have a revolutionary effect on the masses it must be recognizable to them, that is, it must be drawn from consumable items, or kitsch, and it must be "warming" in a way that does not produce hatred, but allows the art to be embraced for consumption. Benjamin anticipated the politics of Pop Art here. "Kitsch," Benjamin observed, "is nothing more than art with a 100 percent, absolute and instantaneous availability for consumption."[54] Kitsch, according to Benjamin, functions paradoxically. It is at once art for the masses, and, due to the ephemerality of its relevance to the masses, it is also opposed to the idea of art as works that endure timelessly. He writes, "But for developing, living forms, what matters is that they have within them something stirring, useful, ultimately heartening—that they take 'kitsch' dialectically up into themselves, and hence bring themselves near to the masses while yet surmounting the kitsch."[55] The "living forms" with which Benjamin is concerned, synthesize the qualities of art and kitsch in the same way Andersen observed: they are "something you can understand in a flash but [listen to, read, watch] forever". The most fertile cultural practice that combines art and kitsch into "living forms", for Benjamin (and presumably for Andersen, too), is film:

> Today, perhaps, film alone is equal to this task—or, at any rate, more ready for it than any other art form. And whoever has recognized this will be inclined to disallow the pretentions of abstract film, as important as its experiments may be. He will call for a closed season on—a natural preserve for—the sort of kitsch whose providential site is the cinema. Only film can detonate the explosive stuff which the nineteenth century has accumulated in that strange and perhaps formerly unknown material which is kitsch.[56]

The explosive stuff which the *twentieth* century has accumulated as filmic kitsch is precisely what Andersen seeks to "detonate" in *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, and in doing so to enact a relationship to the past similar to Benjamin's approach "to present the past history of the

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[53] Walter Benjamin, "Arcades Project," 395 [Konvolut K 3a, 1].
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid. 395-96.

collective as Proust had presented his personal one: not 'life as it was,' nor even life remembered, but life as it has been 'forgotten'"[57] in order that we might awaken from the twentieth century into a more hopeful twenty-first century. Miriam Hansen draws on Benjamin's critical recovery of kitsch in her theory of cinema as vernacular modernism. Hollywood, according to Hansen, took it upon itself always to embody the most current trends in a modern world intent on constant revision of its own image. Here, we find a move to recuperate brief moments of the articulation of the modern before they get replaced by another updated version as it continues to reinvent itself.

In 2006, Andersen wrote about his first experience with Warhol's Structuralist films, which he contextualizes within the art history of the period.[58] In his personal account of seeing Warhol's six-hour *Sleep* in 1964 at "the birthplace of Midnight Movies," the Cinema Theater in Los Angeles, he provides the following insight:

> 'Minimal' wasn't and isn't the right term for it, but I think you could call it 'reductionist'. Or you could call it 'Pop Art.' The impulse behind the movement was to paint *something so obvious no one had noticed it*, something that therefore demanded acknowledgment. […] Pop Art wasn't so much about turning low culture into high culture as it was about *turning the mundane into the representable*, and sleeping is even more mundane than a can of soup.[59]

Andersen has embraced in his own work the Warholian idea that art is made by looking at what has been overlooked, or by representing that which it is assumed needs no representation, reframing it for contemplation, whether it be representing the quotidian of sleep or of kitsch. Formal relationships between *Los Angeles Plays Itself* and Pop Art abound. Pop Art often relied on found objects, as *Los Angeles Plays Itself* does, speaking to a populist sensibility in an attempt to bring the concerns of everyday life and lived experience into rarified museum spaces, and exclusive film festivals. Hollywood kitsch too often substitutes for a deep understanding of American, or more specifically here, Los Angelino history and identity. By analyzing the traces of our collective unconscious found in "the archives of mass culture," Andersen sets out to

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[57] Susan Buck-Morss, "The City as Dreamworld and Catastrophe," *October*, Vol. 73. (Summer, 1995): 6.
[58] Thom Andersen, "The '60s Without Compromise: Watching Warhol's Films," *Rouge*, (2006). http://www.rouge.com.au/8/warhol.html (Last accessed, November 3, 2013). Emphasis added.
[59] Ibid.

expose what a more elitist art, concerned with Platonic constants of grace, beauty and purity, cannot: a messy ever shifting dreamworld of commodity culture. Benjamin sees hope for historical awakening in our ability to recognize the political valences of material that we have already dispensed with and deemed irrelevant when it fell out of fashion. In collecting the local filmic kitsch, Andersen, in Benjaminian fashion, constructs "an alarm clock" in which "the kitsch of the last century" is roused "to 'assembly',"[60] creating an opening for the masses to awaken from the dreamworld of mass culture. As Susan Buck-Morss explains, "it was exactly the outmoded state of these wish-symbols that attracted [Benjamin] to them. Having lost their dream-power over the collective, they had acquired a historical power to 'awaken' it," to recognize the dreams held within kitsch *as* dreams, hopes and desires, and with this recognition, for the historian to take as his task dream interpretation.[61] Andersen takes as his task the decoding of the twentieth century's dreams around cities and film as the central sites of modernity in *Los Angeles Plays Itself*.

Inspirations and Influences: Situatedness and Verisimilitude

Andersen has borrowed more than film clips in the making of *Los Angeles Plays Itself. Los Angeles Plays Itself* is part of a late twentieth century move to cultivate historical consciousness within and around Los Angeles through the analysis of architecture, culture and film. Unlike the concentric circles of growth that characterize the European urban model, Los Angeles is an amalgamation of towns and villages spread out over an area larger than any other American metropolis, which has posed its own challenges for those attempting to theorize its significance to urban theory. Reyner Banham's 1971 *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* kicks off a progressive move within urban theory to embrace "the everyday, Pop, and kitsch" of Los Angeles, as well as "Futurist celebrations of transit culture, speed, new technologies and designed obsolescence."[62] Mike Davis describes the shifts between successive generations "to establish authentic epistemologies for Los Angeles," in the century before his own *City of*

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[60] Walter Benjamin, "The Arcades of Paris," in *The Arcades Project*, 883.

[61] Buck-Morss, "The City as Dreamworld and Catastrophe," 6.

[62] Joe Day, "Foreword to the 2009 Edition: After Ecologies," in Reyner Banham's *Los Angeles; the Architecture of Four Ecologies* (New York: Harper & Row, [1971] 2009), xxiii.

Quartz,[63] focusing primarily on how the various period urban mythologies position working class people and the potential for social change. He sees Los Angeles' mythological landscape as moving dialectically, and bi-polarly, from "sunshine" to "noir."[64]

In a recent trilogy of books, John Bengston provides period documentary evidence of film locations from the films of three prolific silent screen stars alongside current views of those same locations. Each of the books in his series examines the film locations of a different silent film comedy star: *Silent Echoes* (1999), Buster Keaton; *Silent Traces* (2006), Charlie Chaplin; and *Silent Visions* (2011), Harold Lloyd. Only the first of the series, *Silent Echoes: Discovering Early Hollywood through the Films of Buster Keaton*, had been published by the time Andersen started work on *Los Angeles Plays Itself*.[65] Film historian, filmmaker, and future collaborator with Bengston, Kevin Brownlow, begins his "Foreword" to *Silent Echoes* with the following words: "Los Angeles is the most photographed town in the world. A fascinating film could be made showing its architectural progress simply by using exteriors from the thousands of films shot in its streets."[66] Andersen seems to be responding to Brownlow's call by beginning *Los Angeles Plays Itself* that same year, reaffirming the city's claim-to-fame as "most photographed," and crafting just such a film that shows Los Angeles' architectural progress through its cinematic traces.[67] While Bengston's first photo book of location shots may have provided some of the inspiration for some of *Los Angeles Plays Itself*'s form, its content owes a great debt to two other books published in the 1990s—the aforementioned *City of Quartz*, and a book by Andersen's Cal Arts colleague, Norman M. Klein, the 1997 *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory*—in which we find many of the same urban mythologies, local memories and municipal histories.

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[63] See chapter one, "Sunshine or Noir?" of Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (New York: Verso, 1990), quote on p.23, chapter pp.15-96.

[64] Davis continued his biting urban critique over the next decade after the release of *City of Quartz* in several books such as *Magical Urbanism: Latinos Reinvent the US City* (1993), *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster* (1998) and *Dead Cities* (2002).

[65] In a Q & A after a retrospective screening of *Los Angeles Plays Itself* at the RIDM on November 14, 2015 in the Salle Claude-Jutra of the Cinémathèque Québécquoise, Andersen told the audience that he had begun work on the film in 1999.

[66] John Bengtson, *Silent Echoes: Discovering Early Hollywood Through the Films of Buster Keaton* (Santa Monica, Calif: Santa Monica Press, 1999), 6.

[67] While I do not know if Andersen was directly influenced by Bengston and Brownlow's work, the similarities show an incredible synchronicity of vision and expression located in the same place and time.

It is likely that Brownlow and Andersen were both influenced by Norman M. Klein's 1997 book, *The History of Forgetting*, given that they both repeat his assertion that Los Angeles is the most photographed city/town in the world. In a section called, "The Most Photographed and Least Remembered City in the World," Klein explores the contribution of the movies and television to local collective memory. Klein sees *Chinatown* as the "Ur-text for L.A. political history," but concedes, like Andersen, that it "obscures more than it clarifies."[68] He then laments the lack of documentary alternatives to the over-fictionalization of local historical narratives that Hollywood perpetuates, finding hope in an obscure independent feature about a group of Native-Americans that spend a "Joycean night" joyriding through downtown Los Angeles, *The Exiles*, which, significantly to Klein (and later to Andersen) documents the "Bunker Hill [neighborhood] months before it was torn down."[69] Klein calls *The Exiles* "the best documentary fictional film I know," "a post-colonial noir," and ultimately, "a noir documentary," in an effort to classify its contribution to making visible forgotten people and places through "high-contrast lighting" and a pervasive atmosphere of dread.[70] (Figure 13) Similarly, in *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, Andersen calls *The Exiles* "The best Bunker Hill movie", arguing that it proves "[b]etter than any other movie … that there once was a city here, before they tore it down and built a simulacrum," (Figure 14) a claim that appears to be supported through the anamorphically viewed documentary evidence provided by, mostly noir, features shot before it was torn down, such as *The Unfaithful* (1947), *Shockproof* (1949), *The Glenn Miller Story* (1954), and *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955), (Figures 15 & 16) to science fiction features shot afterwards, such as *The Omega Man* (1971), *Night of the Comet* (1984), and *Virtuosity* (1995). (Figures 17 & 18) Between Brownlow's and Klein's call for filmmaking action, in 1999 and 1997 respectively, *Los Angeles Plays Itself* comes not a day too early to fulfill the needs of local (film) historians.

Los Angeles Plays Itself begins with the basic premise that the movie industry misrepresents its hometown. Despite the asserted "fact" that there are more photographic records of Los Angeles than any other city (which he qualifies with an "it is said"), Andersen feels betrayed by how the city has been portrayed and endeavors to set the record straight.

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[68] Norman M. Klein, *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory* (London and New York: Verso, 1997), 247.

[69] Ibid., 248.

[70] Ibid.

Figures 13 & 14 *The Exiles* **shows a neorealist noir Bunker Hill from a Native American viewpoint.**

Figures 15 & 16 *Kiss Me Deadly* **and** *The Glenn Miller Story* **show the same view of Bunker Hill before the neighborhood was destroyed and rebuilt. (See the Angel's Flight funicular railway in the background.)**

Figures 17 & 18 *The Omega Man* **and** *Night of the Comet* **show Bunker Hill after its transformation into an uninhabitable modern downtown area.**

Both Klein's discussion of film as urban memory (and forgetting), and *Los Angeles Plays Itself* emphasize the apparent contradiction between photographic abundance of a location, and a pervasive lack of historical and geographical understanding.

In "The City as Backdrop" chapter of *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, Anderson details the way films have used the city and its nearby natural environments to depict vastly different locations in the world, including Switzerland (Figure 19), China (Figure 20), and Chicago.

Figures 19 & 20 Locations in proximity to Los Angeles, such as Lake Arrowhead and Calabasas in the San Fernando Valley, played such far-flung places as Switzerland and China in *Three Smart Girls* (1936) and *Dragon Seed* (1944), respectively.

He also identifies significant Los Angeles buildings and locations that have played various characters in the movies. In the classical Hollywood period, people only visited Los Angeles, Andersen explains, no one lived there. "It was a resort, not a city," he exclaims. His voiceover continues:

> When its streets and buildings appeared in movies, they were just anonymous backdrops. Nobody called Los Angeles the capital of the Pacific Rim, or worried about how it stacked up with the great cities of the world. The varied terrain and eclectic architecture allowed Los Angeles and its environs to play almost any place. […] Again and again it has played the city with no name. Its landmarks are obscure enough that they could play many roles.

Andersen's narration is equal parts ironic and sincere here. He recognizes the typical spectator's lack of investment in, or knowledge of, the real material existence of the city that provides these backdrops. However, as the film goes on, and a heavy emphasis is placed on *particular* "obscure" landmarks that have become unstuck in time and place through their use as backdrops in a variety of genres and eras, he brings a nuanced view to the role these buildings have played in establishing Los Angeles as a setting.

Figure 21 A dystopian future in the sky as seen through the glass roof of the Bradbury Building in *Blade Runner.*

Andersen sees Los Angeles buildings as actors. He provides readings of film excerpts showing the Bradbury Building (*China Girl*, 1943; *D.O.A.*, 1950; *Indestructible Man*, 1956; *Marlowe*, 1969; *Blade Runner*, 1982; *Wolf*, 1994; *Murder in the First*, 1995) (Figures 21, 22, & 23) and Frank Lloyd Wright's Ennis House (*Female*, 1933; *House on Haunted Hill*, 1959; *Blade Runner*; *The Karate Kid III*, 1989; *Black Rain*, 1989; *Passion to Kill*, 1994) (Figures 24, 25, & 26) that conjure an oblique perspective of the action on screen from the point of view of the building's "career" in the movies. Built as a residential dwelling for Charles and Mabel Ennis in the Los Feliz neighborhood in 1924, Wright's Ennis House had fallen into poor condition by the late1960s. In 1968, Gus Brown bought the hillside Mayan revival mansion for $119,000 after it had been on the market for two years, opening up the house for tours and private parties in the 1980s to pay for its upkeep.[71]

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[71] Steve Oney, "The House on Haunted Hill," *Los Angeles Magazine*, Nov 1, 2006.
http://www.lamag.com/longform/house-on-haunted-hill1/ (Last accessed, June 12, 2017).

Figure 22 & 23 The Bradbury Building's interior from a similar angle in *Wolf* and *D.O.A.*

Figure 24 The Ennis House provided art deco architectural façades for the movies since the 1933. But, as Andersen's voiceover claims, by 1958, William Castle had to rediscover the building's cinematic potential when he used its exterior for *House on Haunted Hill*. The mysterious and imposing impression given by the Ennis house was evidently found capable of supporting *House on Haunted Hill*'s premise that Vincent Price's character could wager $10,000 that none of his guests could manage to stay there for a mere 12 hours.

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Figure 25 & 26 In *Blade Runner*, the Ennis House plays the futuristic apartment of a detective; in *The Replacement Killers* (1998), the lair of a crime boss.

Throughout the montage of each building's film career, the diversity of roles played by modernist architecture, in every genre from melodrama to science fiction, and crime to music videos, is staggering. In the sequence on Los Angeles' Union Station, (Figures 27 & 28) he attempts to decipher the location signifiers of *Union Station* (1950), which makes abundant, and even titular, use of the Los Angeles landmark without identifying its geographical location.

Figure 27 Union Station as seen in *Nick of Time* (1995).

Figure 28 In *Blade Runner*, Union Station is the police headquarters.

The building is positioned in a vague elsewhere, but inconsistently and incoherently: "The station is only a commuter ride from West Hampton, which would place it in New York City, yet one of the villains takes an elevated train, suggesting Chicago. The police chase [the villain] into the stockyards. This must be Chicago. But what about those palm trees?" (Figure 29)

Figure 29 Stockyards and palm trees in *Union Station*. Where are we?

Anderson points out the features that make the ostensible setting for the film improbable, inappropriate, or misrepresentative, providing the details of the real location that betray the fiction. While many locations have been cast, and miscast, as places and spaces for fantasies of urban life, plenty of landmarks make their appearances as themselves. Andersen's voiceover lists thirteen: "City Hall, Grauman's Chinese Theater, Griffith Planetarium, the four-level freeway interchange, the concrete channel of the Los Angeles River, the Eastern Columbia Building at 8th and Broadway, the Bonaventure Hotel at 5th and Figueroa, the Beverly Hills Hotel at Sunset and Rodeo, the Paradise Motel at Sunset and Beaudry, Clayton Plumbers at Westwood and La Grange, Circus Liquor at Burbank and Vineland, Pink's Hotdogs at Le Brea and Melrose, the Memorial Coliseum in Exposition Park."

As we watch the film excerpts presenting Los Angeles and its environs as various locations around the world, Andersen implores the viewer to consider the reality of the profilmic location. This oblique interpretation is important to understanding the tension between record and representation because it draws out the questions, how do images of the world that one has seen in one's life, fictive or not, make up one's understanding of what the world looks like? If Los Angeles can "play" these various locations and we cannot tell the difference, it is likely that we rely too heavily on media, and not enough on our own embodied experience to provide us with our sense of the world? This subversion of our interpretation of setting also functions to make us recognize how what we see is more often a result of hermeneutical suggestion than our own ability to read the details of the image as an accurate representation or not. We must ask ourselves, what would we have to see in these images such that we might begin to ask questions that disrupt our suspension of disbelief? And most importantly, how might our own experiences of the world contribute to that perception? Anderson displays himself as an expert in identifying the buildings, streets and environs of his own hometown in the movies, and so he models a subjective gaze that can read hidden meanings within the image in a way that provokes the spectator to make a comparison between his or her own hermeneutical powers and that of the filmmaker.

Anderson praises films that represent space and place with verisimilitude. For instance, when he looks at *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955), he remarks on how the film presents a specific address and then shows the characters driving on the street where that address was actually located: "The real streets appear in *Kiss Me Deadly* […] what we see is what was really there." The fidelity to

the cityscape is important to him. Why should a fiction film be expected to aspire to this reflection of reality? Clearly this spatial continuity within the real city that serves as the film's setting is of little importance to viewers of the original fiction film who are not familiar with Los Angeles. These viewers would not even notice lapses in spatial continuity. Yet, an inhabitant of that city would notice such discontinuities immediately, and as a result, their suspension of disbelief would be shattered. By reorienting the typical consumer of Hollywood films towards that of a local spectatorship, Andersen introduces an ethos around representation that is not often extended to the Hollywood film. He exposes a type of exploitation from within American culture that sacrifices the importance of being grounded in place and space to the needs and interests of industry, that is, to turn out a product quickly and cheaply that will return on its investment.

Andersen has often responded to inquiries around his original motivation to make *Los Angeles Plays Itself* by stating that he was inspired to make it after seeing *L.A. Confidential* (1997) and becoming frustrated with the misrepresentation of Los Angeles' history he continued to see in studio films that were otherwise compelling works.[72] Noirs like *L.A. Confidential*, *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* (1988) ("which offers itself as a cartoon version of *Chinatown*," according to Andersen's voiceover), and *Chinatown* (1974) itself are popular period pieces that depict cases of municipal police, transportation and water corruption, respectively, without much care for the facts. Worse yet, as Andersen identifies in *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, they present ideological frames for their fake histories that infect civic spirit and engagement. And worse, even Andersen admits that they are enjoyable well-directed films that will continue to find audiences in the future.

For Andersen, even more repugnant than misrepresenting the municipal crises of 1950s Los Angeles (Andersen claims police corruption and the public housing shortages were actually much worse than *L.A. Confidential* depicts them), is the ideological spin *L.A. Confidential* creates. *L.A. Confidential*'s greatest sin, according to Andersen's analysis in *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, is that it "preaches" "the dominant myth of our time": cynicism. Andersen sees *L.A. Confidential* as a argument for the perpetuation of the myth of cynicism, which has characterized the turn of the twenty-first century to the detriment of more socially progressive ways of thinking: "Cynicism tells us we are ignorant and powerless, and *L.A. Confidential* proves it."

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[72] See, for instance, Benjamin Strong, "Urban Renewal," in *The Village Voice*, 20 July 2004. http://www.villagevoice.com/2004-07-20/film/urban-renewal/

Andersen's strategy for exposing historical misrepresentation in *Los Angeles Plays Itself* is not just to correct facts, which he does sparingly, but to identify the mechanisms of the spin that influence the way we approach history more generally. The first time we encounter *L.A. Confidential* in *Los Angeles Plays Itself* is in the context of Hollywood's treatment of modernist residential architecture, "One of the glories of Los Angeles" according to Andersen. We are shown gangster bosses, "psycho kidnappers," (Figure 30) and racist depictions of "the yellow peril" in modernist dwellings, such as Frank Sinatra's Palm Springs residence and the Ennis house, leading up to the prime example of *L.A. Confidential*, which Andersen christens "the most celebrated episode in Hollywood's war against modern architecture" for the way it casts Richard Neutra's Lovell house, "the first great manifestation of the International Style in southern California … designed as a kind of manifesto for natural living," which became "a center for radical left-wing political meetings in the thirties," as a den of depravity. (Figures 31 & 32) Andersen's objection to Hollywood's continued casting of modern architecture as spaces for immoral behavior revolves around the very real fear that the history of art and design geared towards utopian desires for social change will also be erased from collective memory.

Figure 30 In *The Night Holds Terror* (1955), John Cassavetes' character leads a "band of psycho kidnappers" who "[hole] up in a prototypical mid-century modern house in the Hollywood hills," according to Andersen's voiceover.

Figure 31 & 32 Screen grab from *L.A. Confidential* showing the outside and the inside of Neutra's Lovell house, embroiled in mysterious narratives of "depravity".

In his analysis of a subplot in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*, Andersen critiques the reductive nostalgic revisionism of late the 1940s Los Angeles transportation wars. The dismantling of the public transportation system has long been bemoaned as a terrible mistake by traffic-plagued Los Angelinos, who are famous for their dependence on cars. *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* creates a narrative of the past that, while very apparently fictionalized, plays with a key moment in Los Angeles history: it provides a hero and a villain in the city's transition to car culture, as well as, an alternative outcome to the transportation wars—one the ends with the city's trolley system intact. But as Andersen argues in *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, the real city politics were more complicated, and much of the blame for the transition rested with the government's inability to gain control of the transportation systems, and invest in new infrastructure to keep people from leaving the city for the suburbs, not to mention rider discomfort in over-crowded trolleys:

> Actually trolleys had been on the way out since the twenties when proposals for public ownership were defeated. […] The real postwar struggle over mass transit reached a climax in 1949 when a proposal for a new light rail network was narrowly defeated in the City Council. An alternative to cars and buses was defeated not by General Motors and its allies, but by the promoters of decentralized suburban development.

Andersen's objection to the way *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* represents Los Angeles is not that it is an urban historical fiction that has fudged some of the details for the sake of drama, but that it does so in a way that forecloses on our understanding of our own civic responsibilities and potentials because it reduces historical catastrophe to a consequence of agonism between

individuals. The figure and actions of the villain, Judge Doom (Christopher Lloyd), the owner of Cloverleaf Industries, stand in for the mythological conspiracy of General Motors to manufacture public dependence on automobiles by buying up the public trolley systems and dismantling them so that people would have no alternative but to buy cars as cities expanded into suburbs following the war.[73] As Andersen's voiceover observes, "[Eddie] Valiant kills Judge Doom after a protracted duel, … but once again, the people are excluded".[74] If, as it is frequently depicted in Hollywood movies, a single man can destroy the good in our communities, and only one other single man can defeat him, what role does the common person have in history? In the movies, the hero can cut off the head of the king and his entire kingdom falls, but in lived experience, as Foucault observed in his theories of power, everyone has a stake and role in the power structure whether they are cognizant of it or not. By challenging the notion that history is fought and won on the individual level, Andersen suggests that the ideology of hero/villain, good/evil may not be a useful path for understanding our futures through renditions of the past. *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* provides us with the fantasy of a happy ending, which seductively sublimates the audience's present frustrations with car culture by giving them what they think is the answer to their problems, a trolley system, but it does little to help us forge a path towards similar ends.

Los Angeles Plays Itself's third section, "The City as Subject," begins with a protracted discussion of *Chinatown*'s contribution to the representational history of Los Angeles on the screen. Andersen's voiceover claims that "It was the outsider Polanski who made Los Angeles a subject for movies […] The city could finally become a subject in the early seventies because it had finally become self-conscious. […] It had big-city problems: big-city racism and big-city race riots." After 50-odd years of doubling for "anytown" USA, or an ill-defined dream factory version of "LA," *Chinatown* seems at first glance to engage seriously with Los Angeles as a well-defined city with its own complicated history. Andersen's biggest issue with the film's mythology of the water project it depicts is not just the names, dates and locations (though these

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[73] In a 1997 article in *Transportation Quarterly*, a journal published by the non-partisan Eno Transportation Foundation of Lansdowne, Virginia, Cliff Slater debunked this popular conspiracy theory, arguing that the replacement of streetcars with buses was an inevitable practical and economically motivated transition that was not a result of a GM conspiracy, despite their unlawful monopoly of transportation supplies. See, Cliff Slater, "General Motors and the Demise of Streetcars," *Transportation Quarterly*, Vol. 51. No. 3 (Summer 1997), 45-66.

[74] These last four words are likely a reference to Deleuze's critique of the use of cinema for reactionary political purposes in which he famously identifies the tell-tale sign of their handicraft, "*the people are missing.*" See, Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: the Time Image*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989. 216.

are certainly already red flags for him), but that *Chinatown* gets its power relations and ethics wrong, and sets a precedent for the hopeless mystification of the city's real, and not as inaccessible as people might think, histories.

> The Mulholland-like figure, Hollis Mulwray, isn't the chief architect of the project, but rather its strongest opponent, who must be discredited and murdered. Mulwray is against the Alto Vallejo Dam because it's unsafe, not because it's stealing water from somebody else. […] But there are echoes of Mulholland's aqueduct project in *Chinatown*. […] These echoes have led many viewers to regard *Chinatown* not only as docudrama, but as truth, the real secret history of how Los Angeles got its water, and it has become a ruling metaphor for non-fictional critiques of Los Angeles development. […] *Chinatown* set a pattern. Films about Los Angeles would be period films, set in the past or in the future. They would replace a public history with a secret history. Jake Gittes tries to expose a con job, but he fails. […] *Chinatown* teaches that good intentions are futile. It's better not to act, even better not to know. Somehow this dark vision hasn't offended anybody.

Andersen spends little time telling his reader about the "real" history of Mullholland's water project, this historical narrative is publicly accessible for anyone who would care to investigate it and "The public history is the real history," he insists. His greater objective, rather, is to highlight the dangers inherent in using entertainment that portrays itself as historically and geographically situated as a guide for historical consciousness, which is a pertinent critique even for those who do not call Los Angeles home. *Chinatown*'s ideology seeps into our collective unconsciousnesses, by Andersen's analysis, and creates a hermetically sealed space where the answer to all civic quandaries is quietism, and an expectation that the underworld has already won. Once we go down the rabbit hole and accept the notion that an impenetrable secret history underlies all attempts to understand the past, and by extension the present, we have ceded any power we might once have had to argue for civic inclusion and to influence local events. Through his treatment of period pieces based on real municipal scandals, Andersen shows that misrepresentation of the past in Hollywood movies is not simply a matter of narrative inaccuracies that can be cleared up through nonfictional narrative corrections, but rather, clearing the way to understand the dangers of misrepresentation to the present and future requires the more troubling task of deconstructing reductive, reactionary, and fatalistic ideologies, as well as problematizing passive spectatorship. Furthermore, Andersen's essayistic position in the film

makes such an analysis of representational forms and critique of ideology possible since their authority relies on the speaker's subjective stake in both the location and the medium.

Utopias/Dystopias: Modernity as Dreamworld

At the threshold of the twenty-first century, the out-of-date ruins of the recent past appear as residues of a dreamworld. … The disintegration of cultural forms is endemic to modernity. Its temporality is that of fashion, the relentless production of the new—and therefore, just as relentlessly, the production of the outmoded.

—Susan Buck-Morss[75]

The turn-of-the-century period, in which Andersen made *Los Angeles Plays Itself* and which we still inhabit today, is an epoch in which historical consciousness has been in many ways overpowered by disillusionment, on the one hand, and outright cynicism on the other. In public discourse, we walk a tightrope between the disappointment of dashed utopian visions of modernity, which has dissuaded many potential dreamers away from actively producing hopeful templates for visionary futures, and the postmodern malaise of cynicism, which carries the danger of a permanent foreclosure on the modernist dreams of creating social and economic equality through art and architecture. "Cinema is on the one hand a great tool for breaking up the phantasmagoria; on the other, it is the greatest manifestation of the dreamworld of commodity capitalism" argues Russell in her analysis of another video collage of urban modernity, Christian Marclay's 24-hour museum film, *The Clock* (2010).[76] Cinema, like Los Angeles, embodies the dualisms and contradictions of capitalism.

Benjamin's concept of phantasmagoria is helpful for thinking about how the Hollywood moving image archive can act as "the expressive form"[77] of commodity culture such that it can then be analyzed to reveal its secret irrational holds on our collective memories. Margaret Cohen argues that "Benjamin's phantasmagoria emblematizes one of the *Passagen-Werk*'s central methodological projects: to free Marxist analysis from its overwhelming valorization of rational

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[75] Buck-Morss, "The City as Dreamworld and Catastrophe," 4.

[76] Catherine Russell, "Archival Cinephilia in the Clock," *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, Vol. 54, No. 2 (Fall 2013): 251.

[77] Margaret Cohen, "Walter Benjamin's Phantasmagoria," *New German Critique*, No. 48 (Autumn, 1989): 89.

forms of representation,"[78] and thus make room for anti-positivist strategies of analysis within a historical materialist framework. Phantasmagoria literally refers to a parade of ghosts projected on a wall by a magic lantern—a spectacle of nineteenth century European technology and culture, though it was invented in the late 1790s by a Belgian doctor, Étienne-Gaspard Robertson.[79] Robertson's original use of the phantasmagoria focuses our attention on the irrational reappearance of figures from our past, which is now a function of archiveology. Benjamin's appropriation of the phantasmagoria as a critical concept brings Marx together with Freud in "the conflation of display culture with commodity fetishism".[80]

The previously discussed *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* ending, in which the supposedly utopian spaces of Los Angeles' trolley system and Toontown are preserved without the participation of the people, illustrates postmodern's version of utopia, the candy-colored children's toys "reproduce the dream-image, but reject the dream."[81] Providing only momentary relief through an exultant illusion, such "utopian" happy endings, with their over-the-top proclamations of harmony, joy, and triumph over evil, act as fetishes to protect the spectator from the disillusionment that may result from actual hope that anything will change, and further, that she can be the one to change it. *Los Angeles Plays Itself* actively engages in the space between utopian vision and the denial of that vision, that is, outright cynicism, throughout. It acknowledges the failures of modernity to maintain and actualize the utopian visions proposed, while not falling into the despair of being unable to imagine the possibility of any kind of utopia. Rather, it attempts to resurrect and redeem remnants of utopian thought found in the on-location shots of nearly a century of Los Angeles filmmaking. As Mike Davis observed in *City of Quartz*, Los Angeles distinctively, significantly, and oddly "has come to play the double role of utopia *and* dystopia for advanced capitalism. … Los Angeles—far more than New York, Paris or Tokyo—polarizes debate: it is the terrain and subject of fierce ideological struggle."[82] The phantasmagorias of utopian and dystopian in the Hollywood archive are often two sides of the same coin, portraying a city that can scarcely envision a world without capitalism.

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[78] Ibid., 87.

[79] Ibid., 90-1.

[80] Russell, "The Restoration of *The Exiles,"* web, np.

[81] Buck-Morss, "The City as Dreamworld and Catastrophe," 4.

[82] Davis, *City of Quartz,*18-20.

Continuing with his project to show the difficulty of cinematically depicting Los Angeles in a progressively imaginative manner, Andersen includes films shot in Los Angeles by non-Hollywood filmmakers, dividing them into high and low "tourists." He presumably calls them "tourists" because they do not operate as part of the local (Hollywood) film industry, not because they are from afar. In fact, the "high-tourist" filmmakers are mostly local avant-garde filmmakers who portray the ugliness, contradiction, and kitsch of the city with care, while the "low-tourist" filmmakers are foreigners whose contempt for the very idea of Los Angeles does not permit them to present the city in its complexity. Andersen's voiceover explains: "Just as there are highbrows and lowbrows, there are high tourists and low tourists. Just as there are highbrow directors and lowbrow directors, there are high tourist directors and low tourist directors. Low tourist directors generally disdain Los Angeles. They prefer San Francisco and the coastline of Northern California—more picturesque." Andersen considers this preference for the visually attractive, "picturesque," superficial and insulting to the extant Los Angeles whose multifaceted idiosyncratic richness never seems to get the popular enthusiasm it deserves.

The "low-tourist" directors, such as Alfred Hitchcock, Woody Allen, Tony Richardson, and John Boorman, tend to treat Los Angeles with contempt by ignoring it, denigrating it, or casting it as an already dystopian city, according to Andersen. Andersen seems only mildly offended when he remarks upon Hitchcock's choice not to shoot the one film he partially set in Los Angeles, *Saboteur* (1942), on location. (Figure 33) He also offers as evidence of Hitchcock's slight against Los Angeles, a quick shot of *Psycho*'s (1960) Marion Crane (Janet Leigh) choosing to bypass Los Angeles altogether on her way to the fictional Fairvale, California. (Figure 34) As much as he might have enjoyed seeing Los Angeles get the Hitchcock treatment, placing the city in distinguished company with other modern international cities, Andersen saves his criticism for Allen, who "plainly expressed his disdain for Los Angeles in his most popular movie [Annie Hall]" by relying on facile stereotypes and poking fun at the city's supposed lack of culture. He provides an excerpt from *Annie Hall* (1977) in which Alvy and Annie visit Los Angeles: Annie says, "You know, I can't believe that this is really Beverly Hills." Alvy responds, "The architecture is really consistent isn't it, French next to Spanish, next to Tudor, next to Japanese." Annie marvels, "God, it's so clean out here." Alvy responds, "It's because they don't throw their garbage away, they make it into television shows." Here, Allen identifies

Los Angeles as a postmodern dreamworld of eclecticism, which Buck-Morss argues "den[ies] responsibility for present history."

Figure 33 In *Saboteur,* Hitchcock portrays a Los Angeles airplane factory as one of the locations for the film. However, no exteriors of Los Angeles were shot on location, despite the fact that the film relied heavily on location shooting in New York City and in the Alabama Hills of East Central California near the Nevada border.

Figure 34 In *Psycho*, Marion Crane elects not to go to Los Angeles.

In a certain sense, Andersen agrees with Allen that the postmodern refusal of historicity is in bad faith, but he does not agree with Allen's willingness to cast the entire city in this light with only a

cursory glance from his lofty and myopic Manhattanite perch. It's more than bad manners; it's subterfuge in a cold war between American film industry capitals that reduces Los Angeles to its most base displays of popular culture. But Andersen thinks his city has more to offer than Allen is willing to admit. He praises Richardson, another "low tourist" director for at least "acknowledg[ing] his ambivalence. The local architecture is kitsch, but it is transcendent kitsch." Boorman, however, plays to Los Angeles' enemies by "mak[ing] the city look both bland and insidious".

The "high-tourist" filmmakers that Andersen identifies are a mix of experimental, "trash," and Continental European directors: Roger Corman, a B-moviemaker; Maya Deren, queen of the 1940s American avant-garde; Andy Warhol, who alternated between Structuralism and Camp film forms when he was not painting; Fred Halsted, experimental, gay porn director; and the Europeans, Jacques Deray, Michelangelo Antonioni, and Jacques Demy. More than any of the Hollywood films, which present their dreamworlds of modernity as too removed from the city's materiality and the lived experience of its inhabitants to be believable or hope inducing, Andersen locates Los Angeles' utopian promise of modernity in the films of the "high-tourists," who he says "discovered a pastoral arcadia near the heart of Los Angeles." Each of these directors finds a way to portray little-known parts of Los Angeles as potential sites for the resurrection of prehistoric utopias, which provide surprising counterpoints to the defeated superficiality of "low-tourist" works, as well as Hollywood revisionist histories, offering clear moments of hope for Los Angeles' representational future.

Like Benjamin in his figure of the collector, Andersen "struggles to recognize and reconfigure the utopian impulse within the modern phantasmagoria, and to rescue it from its deadening service to commodity capitalism."[83] In the sequence examining "high tourist" directors in *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, Andersen stresses the importance of film forms that create alternative spectatorships to that of Hollywood filmmaking in the representation of the city. Following an extended clip from Corman's *The Trip* (1967), which includes a psychedelic montage of Peter Fonda's character running around Los Angeles to a frenetic jazz soundtrack, Maya Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943) provides a serene example of the radical potential of everyday utopian vision that at one time inhabited the film culture of (even) the Los Angeles avant-garde.

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[83] Russell, "The Restoration of *The Exiles*", web, np.

"Deren and her collaborator Alexander Hammid could find a private Eden just by gazing out the window of their Spanish Colonial Revival duplex above the Sunset Strip," suggests the vocal commentary. In the excerpt from *Meshes* that Andersen provides to illustrate this insight, Deren watches from the window as her dream double chases a figure up her driveway. Here, Deren models a reframing of the psychic space of the city in order to be able to imagine herself within it in alternative modes, enacting what Benjamin called "profane illumination": "the transformation of ordinary experience into the marvelous through perception."[84] The ability to envision one's everyday life differently is the great contribution of the Surrealists to revolutionary utopian thinking for Benjamin. At the end of Benjamin's Surrealism essay (1929), he calls for a technologically produced "image-space" or "image sphere" (*Bildraum*) where the proletarian masses can participate in a space that is both aesthetic and political, and which can be achieved through the "profane illumination" of the material world.[85] The Surrealists recognized reality as a dream precisely so that they could learn to dream of new realities. What the Surrealists discovered was that the ability to "find a private Eden just by gazing out the window" is not a consequence of living in a utopia already, but of cultivating utopian vision wherever one lives.

Andy Warhol's *Tarzan and Jane Regained … Sort Of* (1964) was one of the artist's first forays into filmmaking. The excerpt shown in *Los Angeles Plays Itself* starts with a black and white shot of Warhol, camera in hand, whipping one of his loin-cloth clad actors with a palm frond, moving into a richly color saturated handheld camera shot of Simon ("Sam") Rodia's *Nuestra Pueblo* (Our Town), more commonly known at the Watts Towers. The voiceover comments: "For Warhol, Hollywood formulas represented an innocence that could be regained only 'sort of,' but Sam Rodia's towers in Watts were a bit of paradise not yet lost. In the early sixties, the Watts Towers were the First World's most accessible, most user-friendly civic monument." By evoking Warhol's vision of the Watts Towers, Andersen points to an alternative mythology for the city of Los Angeles that Hollywood has never attempted to subject to one of their formulas. Rodia, an illiterate, Italian immigrant standing just 4'10" in height, spent over 30 years (from 1921-51) building "these seventeen spires comprised of steel supports, mortar, 7 Up

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[84] Jean Petrolle, "Profane Illumination, Genre, and the Integrative Study," *Issues in Integrative Studies*, No. 25, pp. 111-130 (2007): 115.

[85] Walter Benjamin, "Surrealism" in *One-Way Street, and Other Writings*, Trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: NLB, 1979), 239.

bottles, Vicks Vapor Rub jars, sea shells and more Jadeite and Fiestaware than the Rose Bowl Flea Market can ever hope to see," remarkably without the use of "nails, bolts, welding or scaffolding".[86] To act on a dream, to dare to envision space, this space around you, the space within the city you inhabit, is not a part of our cultural lexicon anymore. That the Watts Towers now appear to us as unusual and rare is a testament at once to the possibility of the radical freedom of vision that brought them into existence, and conversely to our own ability to lose sight of our power to inhabit space differently. The "paradise not yet lost" to which Andersen refers is not an unreflective nostalgic ache for simpler times, but a direct reference to Rodia's utterly uncynical example of the transformation of an everyday urban space into a dreamscape. We need reminders of such possibilities that are neither examples of capital-driven utopian modernity nor postmodern pastiche.

The highly scripted and edited experimental gay porn film, *L.A. Plays Itself* (Halsted, 1972) portrays the gritty underbelly of the Los Angeles gay S&M scene of the late 1960s and early 1970s while it "considers the larger politics of homosexuality and of the nascent gay liberation movement against the rapidly changing cityscapes of 1950s and 1960s America."[87] It began shooting the year of one of the biggest watershed moments in gay rights history, 1969, the year of the Stonewall Riots in New York City, and finished two years later, in 1971. "Fred Halsted's gay porn masterpiece recapitulates the loss of Eden, moving from the idyllic rural canyons to the already mean streets of Hollywood. As the landscape becomes more urban, the sex gets rougher," observes Andersen's vocal commentary. More than providing Andersen's film with inspiration for its title, Halsted's *L.A. Plays Itself* is one of the few films excerpted that had by the time of Andersen's film almost disappeared from the moving image archive already despite its counter-archival value. "The film is widely acknowledged as one of the most important historical documents of L.A. after race rioting and urban flight had gutted its core, leaving an urban wasteland for new occupiers," writes Cindy Patton in her short monograph on the 1970s gay porn classics, *L.A. Plays Itself* and *Boys in the Sand* (1971).[88] It is rumored that

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[86] Cori Clark Nelson, "The Enduring Legacy of the Watts Towers," on the *Los Angeles, I'm Yours* website, January 11, 2012. Last accessed, January 9, 2016.
http://www.laimyours.com/7370/the-enduring-legacy-of-watts-towers/

[87] Cindy Patton, *L.A. Plays Itself/Boys in the Sand*, in the Queer Film Classics series (Vancouver : Arsenal Pulp Press, 2015), 78.

[88] Ibid., 14.

New York's MoMA may have the only existing *full* version of the film (if they do have the only uncut print, it is not in circulation, but there are bootleg DVDs, an incomplete out-of-print VHS release, and cut copies floating around the Internet), which points to the vulnerability of films that openly display cultural and visual taboos.[89] The lack of preservation efforts for controversial and counterarchival material means that as time goes by views of the city that uphold the status quo are more likely to provide the evidentiary basis for archive-based filmmaking, making the need for a critical ethos around the archive all the more prescient.

The antipode of utopian thought is not dystopian thought, but cynicism. Utopias and dystopias are transformative tools of the imagination, while cynicism is the denial of transformative action and the eradication of the imagination. Appropriately then, Andersen finds the quintessential dystopian vision of Los Angeles in *Blade Runner* (1982) far more palatable than the world that *L.A. Confidential* projects. The enigmatic ending of *Blade Runner* allows for interpretation, and the city may be dark, but at least there's parking and no more traffic jams. The voiceover elaborates:

> *Blade Runner* has been called the "official nightmare" of Los Angeles, yet this dystopian vision is, in many ways, a city planner's dream come true. Finally, a vibrant street life. A downtown crowded with night-time strollers. Neon beyond our wildest dreams. Only a Unabomber could find this totally repellent. […] Yet *Blade Runner* continues to fascinate. Perhaps it expresses *a nostalgia for a dystopian vision of the future that has become outdated*. This vision offered some consolation because it was *at least sublime*. (emphasis added)

Andersen reads *Blade Runner* as sublime kitsch. That its version of dystopia can be read only twenty years later as nearly utopian shows us how far we have strayed from a progressive path in the intervening years. *Blade Runner* encourages its audience to envision a truly urban Los Angeles, untethered from its suburban aspirations, with high population density and visible working classes, yet actually functional. As Andersen notes, in *Blade Runner*, some of the city's most pressing problems have been fixed as result of truly dystopian political and environmental

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[89] Bernard Yenelouis, "*LA Plays Itself* by Fred Halsted," Review, *One Way Street* blog, August 27, 2008, http://bernardyenelouis.blogspot.ca/2008/08/la-plays-itself-by-fred-halsted.html (Last accessed, June 6, 2017).

circumstances. Cynicism today may not even permit the believable depiction of a dystopia in which such efforts have been made.

What we believe now, at the beginning of the new millennium, is that modernity's promise of a utopia, through technology and a free market economy, will never come. Even the dystopias of the past are more desirable, more "sublime" than what is likely in store for us. The voiceover continues by projecting a more realistic, and far more depressing, vision of the future than that of *Blade Runner*'s, as it is understood more than halfway between the film's release date and the year it's set in, 2019: "Now the future looks brighter, hotter, and blander. . . . Computers will get faster, and we will get slower. There will be plenty of progress, but few of us will be any better off or happier for it. Robots won't be sexy and dangerous. They'll be dull and efficient, and they'll take our jobs." As disheartening as this acknowledgement of our likely future may appear, it projects a hopefulness of the kind Buck-Morss finds in Benjamin's work. Indeed, the present conditions are catastrophic. Andersen's credibility is only enhanced by conceding this fact, which serves to bolster the redemptive reading of *Blade Runner*—that we can find inspiration in the idea that such a grand dystopia was possible to imagine not all that long ago.

Conclusion

The urban archive in the hands of the essayist is dialectical and redemptive. By preparing the spectator for a perceptual shift in viewing strategy, Andersen forges a pathway towards fostering a historical consciousness through spectatorship that acknowledges aesthetic consciousness as its precursor. The essayistic allows for, and indeed searches for, contradictions in perspective and ambivalent views. The archive in its multiplicity, heterogeneity and open-endedness is somewhat safer in the hands of the essayist who acknowledges that a single narrative of hagiography or of censure can neither capture his object nor his own response to it faithfully. The act of looking for small moments of redemption in that which thwarts our understanding is the gift the essayist gives to the archive, and to those seeking knowledge from it. That is, the essayist allows the archive to express it contradictions, and in so doing, challenges us to integrate those contradictions into our own historical consciousnesses.

By positioning *Los Angeles Plays Itself* as an Ur-text for the "city-symphonies-in-reverse" that follow it, we can see similarities in how these case studies dialectically approach the city symphony tradition. In the following chapters, the other case studies concern films made by particular figures—the collector and the charlatan—who are all also essayists to some extent. While each has their own relationship to the archive, the essayistic quality of redemptive care for archival materials is very much present in all the city-symphonies-in-reverse considered here.

III.

The Collector's Archive:

Lost Landscapes

> The past is not passé; it's prologue. What seems completely antiquated may, in fact, be predictive. So maybe the idea of "Lost Landscapes" is a misnomer. We're not just getting together to watch old footage. We're a focus group on what the future of San Francisco could be. If we squint hard, we might see the kernel of the future in the minute details of the past.
>
> —Rick Prelinger[1]

Rick Prelinger's *Lost Landscapes* programs appear on the surface quite uncomplicated, minimalist, decidedly understated. One may even get the impression that there is something "pure" or restrained in his display of the locally produced footage he has in his possession. Due to its seeming straightforwardness, Prelinger's film work has even largely escaped the notice of experimental and documentary film cultures and histories, and yet it speaks strongly to both. The conceit is simple: Prelinger assembles clips of city scenes belonging to a particular city—San Francisco, Detroit, Oakland or Los Angeles—from his vast collection of "ephemeral" films and invites a local audience to come watch the assemblage with him. What could be more clear-cut, and less baroque, than an archivist presenting extracts from his archive? Is this not the kind of display of unadulterated visible evidence that students crave and demand when they first begin to comprehend the inherent constructedness and bias in the documentary film form? Contrary to expectations, however, this most stripped-down presentation of archival footage succeeds in prioritizing not an objective disembodied gaze, but an embodied and subjective one. The experience of watching a *Lost Landscapes* program does not make us more objective, detached, disinterested viewers of history and the archive, but more individually and collectively situated, invested in, and claimed by the historical experience and its relevance to our present and future.

Prelinger's archival collection and film practice are curatorial endeavors that revolve around American ephemera and discussions of Americana. After a brief career as a typesetter, he

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[1] From the live introduction to *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco, 3*, screened at the Castro Theatre on December 19, 2008. http://longnow.org/seminars/02008/dec/19/lost-landscapes-of-san-francisco/

began collecting "ephemeral films" in 1982 as he watched his roommates complete *The Atomic Café* (Kevin Rafferty, Jamie Loader and Pierce Rafferty, 1982), a film famous for its use of archival moving image ephemera without the aid of a voiceover. Following *The Atomic Café*'s critical acclaim, writer/director Pierce Rafferty hired Prelinger as Research Director on his next film, *Heavy Petting* (1989), which combined interviews with stars about their early sexual experiences with educational films about sex and sexuality from the 1950s. "My particular field of interest," Prelinger recalls of this moment in his early career as a collector and filmmaker, "was the films produced to construct well-behaved, patriotic, consuming and compliant subjects after World War II, and I compiled a list of hundreds of possible sources where these films might be."[2] He began doing image-based lectures and public screenings of his collection in 1987 primarily in the US, which he acknowledges has influenced his understanding of the relevance of ephemeral films to his "vernacular public history practice".[3]

Prelinger specializes in collecting moving image ephemera. Home movies comprise an important and rare type of film in his collection. Since 2006 he has collected around 13,000 home movies all on celluloid,[4] and he is continually searching for and acquiring more. Home movies differ from many of the other films in his collection because they exist only as unique objects, very rarely as copies. Other moving image ephemera, which make up the bulk of his collection, includes educational, corporate, and industrial films; B-roll and process plates[5] from feature productions; orphan films; newsreels; film trailers; experimental films; amateur films; and government-sponsored films. In 2002, the Library of Congress acquired his collection of over 200,000 reels,[6] officially acknowledging the national and historical import of the materials Prelinger has fought to redeem. His appropriation-friendly private research library of print materials in San Francisco, the Prelinger Library, revolves primarily around various areas of Americana, for example, shelves are divided by region, types of geographical theory, and place-specific ephemera. Prelinger has released several self-curated digital collections of educational,

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[2] Sophie Cook, Beatriz Bartolomé Herrera and Papagena Robbins, "Interview with Rick Prelinger," in "Out of the Dark Stacks and into the Light: Re-viewing the Moving Image Archive for the 21st Century," *Synoptique*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Summer 2015): 167. Web.

[3] Ibid., 168-9.

[4] Ibid., 173.

[5] Process plates are the moving exterior shots that were rear projected behind actors on a sound stage to lower the costs of location shooting. I will discuss their relevance to Prelinger's work later in this chapter.

[6] Ibid., 169.

promotional, and industrial films from his collection.[7] Since 2000, he has joined with the Internet Archive, where he is a board member, to make thousands of films from his collection available online to be viewed, downloaded and reused for free. He estimates there have been more than 100 million downloads and views of "our films"—that is, the Prelinger archives collection of digitized films—as well as countless derivative works, since they were put online.[8] Most of his private collections are now in the public domain and thus have become a significant part of the moving image archive. Since 2013 Prelinger has held an associate professor position at the University of California, Santa Cruz. As of 2017, he continues to acquire, maintain, use, theorize, and share his materials, as well as tour the world for various speaking engagements focused on the future of the moving image archive.

Manifesto: Orphans and Ephemera in the Moving Image Archive

Over the last couple of decades, Prelinger has been instrumental in reframing the notion of what an archive can do, who and what an archivist is, and the importance of both in our current media sphere and historical period. Attempting to preserve ephemeral materials may at first appear to be a futile, even nonsensical pursuit, but the notion of ephemerality, as well as the materials that evince it, have transformed how we theorize cultural memory, the role of archives, and film history in the twenty-first century. Ephemeral films are films that were made for a unique purpose, and that have outlived the material and historical conditions of that original purpose. By definition, ephemeral films will never again be able to fulfill the unique purpose that brought them into being once that purpose has been fulfilled. They embody planned obsolescence, and as such are expected to be discarded after use. For instance, a training film produced by an automobile manufacturer in the mid-1950s will have lost its use-value within a few years as technology changes; a process-plate made along the Sunset Strip to be back-projected in a driving scene of a Hollywood film will be obsolete once that scene has been shot; a home movie

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[7] For example, the following two collections were released on CD-ROM in the 1990s:
- Prelinger, Rick. *Ephemeral Films 1931-1960*: *To New Horizons* and *You Can't Get there from Here.* CD-ROM. New York: Voyager, 1994.
- Prelinger, Rick. *Our Secret Century: Archival Films from the Dark Side of the American Dream:* Volume 1: *The Rainbow is Yours* with Volume 2: *Capitalist Realism;* Volume 3: *The Behavior Offensive* with Volume 4: *Menace and Jeopardy;* and Volume 5: *Teenage Transgression* with Volume 6: *The Uncharted Landscape.* CD-ROM. New York: Voyager, 1996.

[8] Cook, Herrera and Robbins, "Interview with Rick Prelinger," 170.

of the 1915 Pan-Pacific Expo will lose its personal significance once those in attendance and their family members have passed away. But filmmakers, collectors, and media theorists are increasingly noticing that such ephemeral films carry historical secrets that work created to endure may not.

The recent widespread recognition that the moving image is itself a document of its own creation no matter its original purpose has spurred a wide-range of archival repurposings. Rationales for preserving ephemeral films have included arguments for seeing them as valuable to our cultural heritage, as well as the current ethos that seeks to eliminate the concept of trash, redefining what had been considered trash in the past such that its hidden worth may be redeemed. The notions of repurposing, recycling, and even upcycling have been increasingly applied to ephemeral films in their remixed afterlives.[9] Furthermore, the notion that "the photographic image, moving or not, can itself be interpreted as an archive of the everyday, since the indexical trace of objects makes the image one of pastness, intimately connected to historiography,"[10] has become an important perspective on which such revaluation also depends in the millennial period.

The designation of "orphan film" conveys a filmic work's legal status of ownership and authorship, as well as some of the conditions of its existence within film circulation. Legally, a film falls into an orphan status if its author abandons it or neglects it to the point that it can no longer be discovered who initially was responsible for its birth. There is a broader view of what can be thought of as an orphan film, as well, which uses the idea of "orphans" as a metaphor to point to a variety of non-commercial moving image creations that have been left unprotected, undistributed (due to a lack of profitability), or discontinued:

> More generally, the term refers to all manner of films outside of the commercial mainstream: public domain materials, home movies, outtakes, unreleased films, industrial and educational movies, independent documentaries, ethnographic films, newsreels, censored material, underground works, experimental pieces, silent-era productions, stock footage, found footage, medical films, kinescopes, small- and unusual-gauge films,

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[9] See William Wees' book, *Recycled Cinema*, and Rick Prelinger's *Sight and Sound* "web exclusive" article, "We Have Always Recycled," August 5, 2015: http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/features/rick-prelinger-we-have-always-recycled

[10] Nandana Bose, and Lee Grieveson, eds., *Using Moving Image Archives*, in *Scope: An Online Journal of Film and Television Studies* ebook, 2010, 1.

amateur productions, surveillance footage, test reels, government films, advertisements, sponsored films, student works, and sundry other ephemeral pieces of celluloid (or paper or glass or tape or . . .).[11]

Materials thought of generally as "orphans" and those thought of as "ephemeral" overlap considerably for good reason. Once ephemeral films have satisfied their function, they are often abandoned and consequently fall into orphan status.

The theorization and discussion around the concept of orphan Films was a largely North American one when scholars, artists, archivists, collectors, and curators began to play with the idea in the 1990s, but has since been embraced by their colleagues internationally. Why is the "orphan film" a North American invention? "We're the world capital of ephemera, and much of it has no active parent," declares Prelinger.[12] Due to the way copyright law operated in the US, over the course of the twentieth century, ephemeral film often fell out of copyright fairly quickly. Until 1992, copyright lasted 28 years in the US, and it did not renew automatically as it does now. Thus, prior to 1992 many ephemeral films fell out of copyright due to nonrenewal, leading to most ephemeral films losing their copyright protection rather quickly.[13] Film scholar Dan Streible organized the first orphan Film Symposium, "Saving Orphan Films in the Digital Age" in 1999, and the community of those concerned with these works has grown noticeably with every following symposium.[14] Over the course of the last 20 years, Prelinger has been an active and integral figure in the preservation, distribution, reuse, and theorization of orphan films.

Resurrection, birth, rebirth and redemption are key concepts in Prelinger's reframing of the archive, "The archive can be a place where new works can be born, not a place where works go to die," he asserts.[15] Within our media repositories, germinating little seeds of thought lie in wait of our recognition and cultivation. Retaining strong roots in Walter Benjamin's redemptive theory of history, such a reconfiguration of the life cycle of the archive reflects a move to

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[11] From the Orphan Film Symposium website: http://www.sc.edu/filmsymposium/orphanfilm.html

[12] Rick Prelinger, "On the Virtues of Preexisting Material," *BlackOysterCatcher* (blog), 30 May 2007. http://blackoystercatcher.blogspot.ca/2007/05/on-virtues-of-preexisting-material.html

[13] Master class with Rick Prelinger preceding a closed screening of *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco: 8* at Concordia University in Montreal on February 13, 2014.

[14] Gerda Cammaer, and Zoë Druick, *Cinephemera: Archives, Ephemeral Cinema, and New Screen Histories in Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 12.

[15] Master class with Rick Prelinger, February 13, 2014.

reenvision its role in our pursuit of historical consciousness. Benjamin believed that materials from the past contained "prophetic" moments "that anticipate the future or await 'redemption' in the future."[16] In 2007, Prelinger published a manifesto on his blog that aimed at shifting archival discourse away from its increasingly neoliberalized, traditionally top-down trajectory, to rethink and invigorate the role of archives and archivists by providing a critique of received ideas about creativity and the archive. (Figure 1)

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On the Virtues of Preexisting Material: A Manifesto

 1 Why add to the population of orphaned works?
 2 Don't presume that new work improves on old
 3 Honor our ancestors by recycling their wisdom
 4 The ideology of originality is arrogant and wasteful
 5 Dregs are the sweetest drink
 6 And leftovers were spared for a reason
 7 Actors don't get a fair shake the first time around,
   let's give them another
 8 The pleasure of recognition warms us on cold nights
   and cools us in hot summers
 9 We approach the future by typically roundabout means
10 We hope the future is listening, and the past hopes
   we are too
11 What's gone is irretrievable, but might also predict
   the future
12 Access to what's already happened is cheaper than
   access to what's happening now
13 Archives are justified by use
14 Make a quilt not an advertisement
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Figure 1 2009 version of Rick Prelinger's Manifesto "On the Virtues of Preexisting Material"[17] (same as the 2007 version).

In her 2013 piece on Prelinger's Manifesto, "Benjamin, Prelinger and the Moving Image Archive," Catherine Russell connects the two media theorists' perspectives on the future of media, providing theoretical definition and precedence to Prelinger's cryptic, poetic "Utopian" Manifesto. Russell makes the case that Prelinger's Manifesto should be understood essentially as a Benjaminian call to arms, considering each of his fourteen edicts in turn as seen through parallels within Benjamin's oeuvre. Russell mobilizes several Benjaminian figures of modernity that find their counterparts in Prelinger's Manifesto. First, Russell identifies in Prelinger

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[16] Peter Szondi, "Walter Benjamin's City Portraits" in *On Walter Benjamin: Critical Essays and Recollections*, Gary Smith, Ed. (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1988), 18.

[17] Rick Prelinger, "The Archive We Don't Know," lecture/master class delivered at the Festival du Nouveau Cinema (FNC), Montréal, October 2009.

elements of Benjamin's ragpicker, who "collected the city's discarded materials in order to trade, recycle and reuse them," as the figure that emerges in archival film practice to rescue media trash, "the wasteful byproduct of a media-saturated society." In their ragpicker forms, both Prelinger and Benjamin endeavor to transform "The Refuse of History" into history's wellspring.[18] In his second edict ("Don't presume new work improves on old"), Russell finds evidence of Benjamin's collector, "who not only lets old works speak, but enables them to speak a new kind of language," distinctively by "detach[ing] the object from its use value and plac[ing] it within a new order."[19] Just as Benjamin saw in Baudelaire's work a "critique of the cult of the new in modernity," so too does Russell in Prelinger's work.[20] In choosing only old works whose use value is necessarily fixed in time to particular institutions, families, cities, or cultures, Prelinger keeps the notion of film as a utilitarian object active alongside its multivalent poetic and historiographical reuses, effectively refuting the notion that new moving image material has more to offer than the old. Finally, Russell reminds us that the predominant stage for the majority of found-footage filmmaking is the city, "the home of Benjamin's ragpickers, gamblers, *flâneurs* and collectors," placing these figures into Prelinger's "neighborhood" of "DIY low-budget" archive-based city filmmakers, among which she includes *Paris 1900* (Nicole Védrès, Paris, 1947), *La mémoire des anges* (Luc Bourdon, Montreal, 2008), *Los Angeles Plays Itself* (Thom Andersen, Los Angeles, 2003), *Of Time and the City* (Terence Davies, Liverpool, 2008), and *My Winnipeg* (Guy Maddin, Winnipeg, 2007).[21] Ultimately Russell sees Prelinger as a utopian figure in what Benjamin had marked out as "the ongoing catastrophe of modernity." Prelinger's Manifesto makes a prescient case for the moving image archive to be understood as "one of our most valuable resources for a language that can speak to the impasse of historicism. … and constitute the foundation of a new language of historical knowledge," according to Russell.

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[18] Catherine Russell, "Benjamin, Prelinger, and the Moving Image Archive," in *L'avenir de la mémoire : patrimoine, restauration et réemploi cinématographiques*, André Habib and Michel Marie, eds. (Paris ; Éditions du Septentrion, 2013), 103-4.

[19] Ibid., 104.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., 111, original emphasis.

Rick Prelinger, Collector

The collector dreams his way not only into a distant or bygone world but also into a better one…in which things are freed from the drudgery of being useful.
—Walter Benjamin[22]

Prelinger is unique in the archival film community in the way he takes on various roles in relation to his collection. Each of his roles—media theorist, activist, archivist, filmmaker, and collector—are interrelated, but the role of collector may be the least appreciated and understood. As a self-proclaimed collector of "useful media"[23] that no longer has utilitarian value, Prelinger represents the kind of baroque collector Benjamin identified in two 1930s essays as well as one "Konvolut" in *The Arcades Project*: "Unpacking My Library" (1931), "Eduard Fuchs, Collector and Historian" (1937),[24] and "Konvolut H: The Collector." Benjamin theorized the collector as a historical materialist capable of intervening into some of modernity's most significant impasses. Benjamin's work on collecting examines the aspects of material culture that can be productive for developing historical consciousness.

Benjamin's Montaignian-style essay, "Unpacking My Library: A Talk about Collecting," focuses on the act of collecting and the relationship between the collector and his materials, rather than the collection itself. Order here is illusory, always temporary and unstable, and yet, disorder does not triumph since a personal principle of organization is consistent within the collection as long as there exists a subject, a collector, to unify the materials. "The life of a collector manifests a dialectical tension between the poles of order and disorder," writes Benjamin.[25] Within these poles Benjamin finds room for a redemptive reciprocality between

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[22] Walter Benjamin, "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century," in *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, Thomas Y. Levin, and E. F. N. Jephcott, eds. (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 104.

[23] Rick Prelinger, "Ephemeral to Canonical: The First 33 and the Next 100 Years of Collecting Useful Media," Beeld en Geluid, November 6, 2015. For reference to "useful media," see also: Charles R. Acland, and Haidee Wasson, *Useful Cinema* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

[24] Max Horkheimer commissioned "Eduard Fuchs, Collector and Historian" in 1933 or 1934 for the Institute for Social Research (the "Frankfurt School"), which had moved from Germany to Geneva in 1933 and then to New York in 1934 in response to the rise of Nazism. Horkheimer had attended and testified at a trial in which Fuchs was prosecuted for his erotic art studies. Benjamin immediately follows this essay with "The Story-teller" and his Artwork essay.

[25] Walter Benjamin, "Unpacking My Library," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings. Vol 2 Part 2*, Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith, eds. (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap, 2005), 487.

collector and object. He writes that "one of the finest memories of a collector is the moment when he rescued a book to which he might never have given a thought, much less a wishful look, because he found it lonely and abandoned in the marketplace and bought it to give it freedom."[26] Prelinger adopted this ethos toward his collection from the very start by obtaining orphaned, outmoded, and soon-to-be-trashed materials, rejected by the marketplace, only to reinvest them with a new freedom to act as interference in the dominating cultural and historical narratives of our time. Furthermore, the collection returns the favor of redemption to the collector by the end of Benjamin's essay. He writes that "for a collector… ownership is the most intimate relationship that one can have to things. Not that they come alive in him; it is he who lives in them." The collector gives life to his collection through his own experience of the objects within a critical social paradigm. In so configuring their value, his experience lives on in them as they take on new cultural relevance.

Compared to the pithy, more personal, "Unpacking My Library," the "Eduard Fuchs" essay appears seriously devoted to an examination of collecting as a historically conscious endeavor, focused around contemporary Marxist notions of history and materialism. According to history scholar Michael P. Steinberg, the "Eduard Fuchs" essay demonstrates Benjamin's historical practice in a way that directs us back to "the cultural practices of the German baroque and romanticism," representing "some of the connections between the baroque and the modern which formed Benjamin's historical and critical motivations and work."[27] In this essay, Benjamin offers a precise definition of his theory of historical materialism against historicism:

> Historicism presents the eternal image of the past, whereas historical materialism presents a given experience with the past—an experience that is unique. … To put to work an experience with history—a history that is originary for every present—is the task of historical materialism. The latter is directed toward a consciousness of the present which explodes the continuum of history.[28]

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[26] Ibid., 490.

[27] Michael P. Steinberg, "The Collector as Allegorist: Goods, Gods, and the Objects of History," in *Walter Benjamin and the Demands of History*, Michael P. Steinberg, ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 89.

[28] Walter Benjamin, "Eduard Fuchs, Collector and Historian," in *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, Thomas Y. Levin, and E F. N. Jephcott, eds. (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 118-19.

In Benjamin's historical materialism, the individual's interpretive relationship to historical objects allows them to break free from historicists' chronological narratives in order to gain a new life in the experience of the present.[29]

In "Konvolut H: The Collector," Benjamin further describes the collector's unique powers of perception and assembly that serve to bring disparate objects into meaningful relation with each other without structuring them into a unified totality.

> The great collector is struck by the confusion, by the scatter, in which the things of the world are found. It is the same spectacle that so preoccupied the men of the Baroque; in particular the world image of the allegorist cannot be explained apart from the passionate, distraught concern with this spectacle.[30]

"This spectacle" is of course a constellation created through the [great] collector's ability to construct new relationships between objects. Like all births and rebirths the baroque constellation she conjures is on the edge of the chaotic—incomplete, finite and fraught with contradictions. The new life the baroque collector gives to her objects is not one that exists in seclusion from their old lives as commodities, but one that is granted only in the recognition of the object's past existence as a commodity fetish. In order to "[detach] the object from its functional relations," "[elevate] the commodity to the status of allegory,"[31] and commence the object's new life of signification, the fetish must be exposed and used as a link to the fetishized relations in other objects' pasts.

Like Eduard Fuchs and Aby M. Warburg before him, Prelinger's baroque collection takes up marginal aesthetic forms, resulting in a theory "which sooner or later meant the ruin of a whole series of clichés in traditional art history."[32] "The baroque poet hoped to astonish and astound… The baroque poet attempts to discover the secret relationship among things," wrote

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[29] Ibid., 144.

[30] Walter Benjamin, "Konvolut H: The Collector," in *The Arcades Project*, Rolf Tiedemann, ed. (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 1999), 211.

[31] Ibid., 207.

[32] Benjamin, "Eduard Fuchs, Collector and Historian," 125.

Octavio Paz, identifying similarities between the avant-garde and the baroque.[33] The baroque collector eschews the classical values of balance, proportion, harmony, composure, moderation, stability, and beauty by bringing an array of objects into relation with each other to give a picture of life in flux, the drama of the archive, excess, fragmentation, embodied relationships, and realism without the demand of idealism. Benjamin argues that baroque iconography is subtractive rather than additive in terms of meaning making: "The function of baroque iconography is not so much to unveil material objects as to strip them naked."[34] Baroque collections, like baroque poetry, uncover mysterious submerged realities in the fabric of history; they are not beholden to notions of good taste or mastery, freeing them up to pursue taboos and difficult truths.

"[The collector] is motivated by dangerous though domesticated passions," writes Benjamin.[35] Ackbar Abbas calls the social space of the collector "paradoxical," "one that is dangerous and domesticated at the same time. It is, as we shall see, the social space of modernity."[36] Indeed, the domestic space of home movies, and equally, the domestication of space carried out by the sponsored films that make up the base of Prelinger's collection, can be seen as the social spaces of modernity whose mythologies are in danger of exposure in the hands of the baroque collector. Prelinger stresses this paradox between domestication and danger within the social spaces of his collection, as well. Regarding his collection of home movies, he observes how they are capable of confirming and defying expectations:

> [Home movies] are infinitely repetitive, but infinitely variable as well. They're rich in evidentiary data, constituting detailed documentation of the contours, events and design of everyday life, but they are all too often poorly made and photographed. They are full of often agonizingly explicit detail, but frequently enigmatic. Premeditation and chance often collide. But above all they are unpredictable, surprising, full of warmth (and distance) and, I think, far tastier and more actionable than their feature counterparts.[37]

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[33] Octavio Paz, *Sor Juana; or, The Traps of Faith*, Margaret Sayers Peden, trans. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 53.

[34] Walter Benjamin, *Origin of German Tragic Drama*, (London: Verso, 2003), 185.

[35] Benjamin, "Eduard Fuchs, Collector and Historian," 132.

[36] Ackbar Abbas, "Walter Benjamin's Collector: The Fate of Modern Experience," *New Literary History*, Vol. 20, No. 1, Critical Reconsiderations (Autumn, 1988): 217.

[37] Cook, Herrera and Robbins, "Interview with Rick Prelinger," 173.

As a baroque collector, Prelinger seeks to preserve tensions between what we think we know all too well—the American family, our own city spaces, the rhythms and flows of everydayness— and the details of his home movie collection that tend to alternately confirm and deny such convenient storytelling, at times refusing to confirm or deny anything at all.

For Benjamin, the historical materialist's collections are always multivalent, fragmented, and allegorical in nature. Russell explains Benjamin's concept of allegory as it relates to found-footage filmmaking in this way: "The image, recontextualized through montage, loses its commodity status and once it is stripped of its use value, it takes on new meaning within the collection of images of which it is a part."[38] If the baroque is an anti-historicist critical strategy that provides an antidote to decay and decadence, as Helen Hills and others argue,[39] then the baroque collector is one that, among other things, assembles distinct objects in a manner that provides them with a new meaning through their new configuration, thereby rescuing them from their descent into obsolescence and producing a sort of alchemy in which their historical value is reassessed. Consequently, I argue that the figure of the Benjaminian baroque collector manifests in Prelinger through his collection of twentieth century moving image detritus and through his subsequent media theory and film practice that both redeem and complicate this material.

The Crises of Dematerializing Archives

Moving image archivists at the turn of the twenty-first century have had to reassess their theories, methodologies and practices significantly as a result of the transition from analogue to digital formats. "Every decision we make, after a few decades turns out to be wrong. It's impossible. There will not be enough computing power to find the right appraisals," Prelinger decries.[40] In the 1980s, Prelinger confesses, it was easy to build a huge collection of moving image material as people got rid of their outdated media (celluloid). In fact, he accrued material for his collection in the early 1980s precisely as a result of the change in media technologies that led people and institutions to purge their moving image holdings in favor of new formats, first

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[38] Russell, "Benjamin, Prelinger, and the Moving Image Archive," 106.

[39] Helen Hills, *Rethinking the Baroque*, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011, 3.

[40] Master class with Rick Prelinger, February 13, 2014.

video tape, then digital video. Ironically, what made the "outdated" technology, celluloid, seem cumbersome in terms of storage and maintenance might have been what kept those materials from dispersing and getting lost. The possibility of building such collections will get more difficult in the next media transitions, Prelinger warns: memory sticks will more easily be lost, trashed, corrupted, and/or we will no longer be able to use our devices to play them.[41] In response to this problem Prelinger advocates that archivists make risk assessments when migrating technology:

> In the past, I've suggested that we take a leaf from the environmental movement and require 'digitization impact statements' and 'preservation impact statements' when we undertake grand projects, in order to better understand their broad cultural and historical impact. In any case, I don't think that decisions to migrate and destroy material should be made in private. While a single decision may seem trivial or obvious, the sum of many decisions will change history.[42]

What this kind of plea shows is that the conversation around the material and technological parameters of our current and future archival needs is not being addressed by the powerful institutions that we entrust to care for our heritage, and that there is a need for public attention to the matter. And yet, how can the public understand these issues enough to have an opinion on them if they are not provided opportunities for archival experience, and especially archival experience directed at opening up some of our current archival crises?

Rick Prelinger and film scholar Patricia Zimmerman provided the keynote addresses at a 2007 conference at the University of Sunderland in the UK, "Future Histories of the Moving Image," which saw media theorists call upon the archival community to democratize holdings and begin to think beyond institutions as sites of stability and decision-making.[43] In his keynote, "It's Only A Moving Image: Archives, Access and the Social Contract," Prelinger argues that

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[41] Master class with Rick Prelinger, February 13, 2014.

[42] From Rick Prelinger's keynote address, entitled "We are the New Archivists: Artisans, Activists, Cinephiles, Citizens," at the *Reimagining the Archive* conference at UCLA on November 13, 2010.

[43] Zimmerman's keynote focused on the relevance of the acronym "DIWO" (Do-It-With-Others) to the archival community, which Aimée Mitchell describes as "a call to arms of sorts – to take documentation out of a commercial top-down flow of information, and make it more of a collaborative effort between people, with a view to disseminating information rather than accumulating it within institutions." See, Aimée Mitchell, "Review: Conference. Future Histories of the Moving Image, 16--18 November 2007, University of Sunderland, UK," *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies,* Vol. 14 (2008): 491.

access is an implicit foundation of the social contract between archives and the public. In addition to positioning the lack of accessibility to archives as one of the major challenges that archives are facing in the twenty-first century, he identifies two more crises: rapidly growing collections, and contradictions in preservation.[44] The crisis of over-abundance occurs when archives grow to capacity and no one wants to take on the expense of maintaining large collections at a time when public arts and heritage institutions are being defunded in nearly every corner of the globe. The demands of the archive are at odds with those of the market. Even huge archives are overflowing with celluloid they cannot afford to keep, and they are unable to take on more. "There are still important collections that are hurting for homes," notes Prelinger in a later keynote address. "Film is becoming a liability" for archives due to the physical demands of its preservation, Prelinger laments, "even as the images it contains become more sought after by more people. Fair market value has lost sync with cultural and historical value."[45] Second, the contradiction of the media archive – "to preserve, and yet not to touch"[46] must be addressed. The contradiction is that if preservation can be said to be of value for humanity at all, then endless, gated preservation cannot be said to benefit any era of humanity. As he proclaims in his Manifesto, "Archives are justified by use." Documents must be accessed in the present for their value to be pursued. Otherwise, we must ask, for whom and for when is archival material being preserved? Benjamin writes that "Historical materialism sees the work of the past as still uncompleted. It perceives no epoch in which that work could, even in part, drop conveniently, thing-like into mankind's lap."[47] Like Benjamin, Prelinger sees the work of history and its materials as an enduring imperative that cannot be thought completed by a particular era or from a particular historical perspective. The historical materialist recognizes the need for anyone to participate in the project of historically situated meaning making, but for such participation to occur, mass access to historical materials is primary. The crisis of inaccessibility stems from a pervasive capitalist paradigm under which "products of the intellect" are immediately and persistently commodified: "Orphaned works—which are works that are still owned by

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[44] Rick Prelinger, "It's Only A Moving Image: Archives, Access and the Social Contract," *Future Histories of the Moving Image* conference, Sunderland University, U.K., November 2007. *Keynote*.

[45] From Rick Prelinger's keynote address, entitled "We are the New Archivists: Artisans, Activists, Cinephiles, Citizens," at the *Reimagining the Archive* conference at UCLA on November 13, 2010.

[46] Mitchell, "Review: Conference. Future Histories of the Moving Image, 16--18 November 2007, University of Sunderland, UK," 489.

[47] Benjamin, "Eduard Fuchs, Collector and Historian," 124.

somebody, but a somebody that can't be found—testify to the absurdities that arise when products of the intellect are automatically born as property, which is the way our copyright law now reads," claims Prelinger.[48] And so, in order to address our inaccessibility issues, we must first redefine the role of the archive in terms of the public, and at the same time, move textual production away from the capitalist paradigm both legally and culturally.

For as many problems as he brings up, Prelinger has practical and creative solutions to address them. He advocates that archivists adopt a more public role[49] and that they become producers (filmmakers) themselves by integrating production into the mission of archivists.[50] Steven Ricci, writing in a 2008 issue of *The American Archivist*, argues that archivists have already begun to take on this role: "In addition to their previous role as custodians of legacy materials, archivists have now also begun to operate more openly as historical agents to fill in historical gaps by producing new works."[51] Presently, archivists have difficulty making public use of the archives they work with because they typically do not own them themselves. Prelinger admits that he is able to do what he wants with the films in his collection because he owns his own archive, but people who work in institutional archives are not generally free to use them or expose them to the public.[52] And even those who have their own collections are restricted by copyright in most cases, making a collection comprised of orphan films even more apposite for reuse. Reflecting on his anxieties around making the leap from archivist to archivist/filmmaker, when making his first film, *Panorama Ephemera*, Prelinger had this to say:

> Most archivists consider doing this at one time or another, but archival work and production are two very different kinds of activities. It's hard to turn off a sense of "archivalness," to let go one's concern for archival practice, and dismiss the feeling that archivists and art makers are somehow wired differently. Plus, the constraints of time and

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[48] Rick Prelinger, "On the Virtues of Preexisting Material," *BlackOysterCatcher* (blog), 30 May 2007. http://blackoystercatcher.blogspot.ca/2007/05/on-virtues-of-preexisting-material.html (Last accessed, June 6, 2017).
[49] Rick Prelinger, "Archives and Access in the Twenty-first Century," *Cinema Journal*, 46, Number 3, (Spring 2007), 114-118.
[50] Rick Prelinger, "Taking History Back from the 'Storyteller's," *BlackOysterCatcher* (blog), 22 June 2009, http://blackoystercatcher.blogspot.co.uk/2009/06/taking-history-back-from-storytellers.html (Last accessed, June 6, 2017).
[51] Steven Ricci, "Saving, Rebuilding, or Making: Archival (Re) Constructions in Moving Image Archives," *The American Archivist*, Vol. 71, No. 2 (Fall - Winter, 2008), 433.
[52] Master class with Rick Prelinger, February 13, 2014.

money often render film production an exercise in achieving the impossible, and archivists tend to live well within the domain of possible.[53]

The transition from concern with preservation to an active role as a producer is a radical, avant-garde act, meant to shake up both the archivist establishment and the public's understanding of heritage organizations and professionals, but it will not be an easy transition for many already underfunded archivists.

In response to the commodification of the intellect issue, Prelinger advocates that we move away from the market forces when evaluating what to preserve:

> For archivists, fair market value may be the enemy of the historical record. We would do well to try to reformulate what kind of value matters for us and for the records we try to preserve, and what kind of sense of value we wish to inculcate in our public. Otherwise, the new will continue to discredit the old, and the archival mission will present to the public as an increasingly quixotic pursuit.[54]

The future of archives rests on public support, but their value is often framed in market terms that refuse to recognize the worth of existing cultural objects above that of the latest cultural production whose use-value as a commodity is still in play. In order to begin to articulate the value of the archive, and by extension archives, to the public, Prelinger advocates starting a conversation around the connection between culture and property that "maximizes our freedom to speak, to learn and to inquire."[55] In his explanation of his first point in his Manifesto ("Why add to the population of orphaned works?"), he writes, "We can do this by limiting restrictions on reuse to the absolute minimum, by using permissive licenses, like the Creative Commons licenses".[56] Another way to limit restrictions on reuse is to put all ephemeral films online to be used freely. This user-centered approach can only be possible when works are not held from view because they are thought of more as commodities than as heritage.

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[53] Rick Prelinger, "Author's Statement: Panorama Ephemera," *Vectors Journal*, May 1, 2006. http://vectorsjournal.org/projects/index.php?project=58&thread=AuthorsStatement (Last accessed, June 13, 2017).

[54] From Rick Prelinger's keynote address, entitled "We are the New Archivists: Artisans, Activists, Cinephiles, Citizens," at the *Reimagining the Archive* conference at UCLA on November 13, 2010.

[55] Prelinger, "On the Virtues of Preexisting Material," 2007.

[56] Ibid.

Prelinger's transformative attitude towards his collection here displays a strong parallel with Benjamin's figure of the collector, who battles against omnipresent commodification. In taking possession of orphaned works vulnerable to re-commodification by market forces, "he makes his concern the transfiguration of things."[57] Prelinger undertakes "the Sisyphean task of divesting things of their commodity character,"[58] to transform their value away from use-value and into aesthetic historical objects. He is able to rescue his objects from the destructive forces of the market only by turning them into Art.[59]

Furthermore, Prelinger advocates that the public become collectors themselves and make a practice of "curated collecting." Because much of our cultural archives are part of large projects that are not under popular control, like Youtube and Facebook, we must face the fact that not everything will be saved. Asserting that we must now accept the inevitability of archival loss, Prelinger further advocates that we *embrace* loss as a formative model by investing in the reconstitution of vulnerable histories.[60] Because "the bulk of the current historical record is too great to save," loss is inevitable,[61] and this inevitability creates an opportunity for the public to contribute to the appraisal of archival materials by cultivating their own collections. If we can no longer trust institutions to preserve our heritage, the principles of heritage preservation become the public's responsibility.

In 2014, Prelinger noted a couple of areas of improvement for his Manifesto, flowing from several topics that had come to prominence in archival studies in the interim. First, the issue of privacy. Edward Snowden's 2013 revelations showed us that we were all part of an ever-growing archive, one that could be used against us at any time, whether or not we desire, or agree, to be in it. "Do we have the right to be forgotten, to be excluded from the archive?" has become a question of some urgency. "People recognized the liability of memory," as a result of this new knowledge, argues Prelinger.[62] And second, in the wake of mass digitization projects, held to be the answer to our crisis of overabundance in the archive, the physical object itself has

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[57] Walter Benjamin, "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century," in *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, Thomas Y. Levin, and E F. N. Jephcott, eds. (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 104.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Abbas, "Walter Benjamin's Collector: The Fate of Modern Experience," 220.

[60] Master class with Rick Prelinger, February 13, 2014.

[61] Cook, Herrera and Robbins, "Interview with Rick Prelinger," 186.

[62] Master class with Rick Prelinger, February 13, 2014.

become a problem. Does an archival object have the right to exist in its original, material sense? Prelinger wonders. Must all archival objects be converted to their digital "equivalents"? Prelinger points out that it has been decided that newspapers do not have a right to exist physically, only on microfilm, and libraries themselves are dumping books considered outdated.[63] However, the work of digitization and digital preservation is laborious, and too few people are being employed to meet the digitization demands of current archival holdings. So where does that leave us in the wake of decisions against the object's right to exist in its original form? Moreover, the ever-present issues of archival appraisal continue to plague us. What gets left out if we decide that digitization of some, or most of, an archive is the answer? Does it get destroyed if it is not digitized? If employment of properly trained archivists is decreasing in light of underfunding, as it did in Canada under Prime Minister Harper,[64] who will make the important appraisal decisions? In his many speaking engagements, Prelinger suggests that it is time for the public to play a more active role in discussions around dematerializing archives and the diminished funding of heritage institutions if we want to ensure that these crises are addressed in time.

Prelinger's Film Culture Context in the San Francisco Bay Area

Prelinger served as board president for the San Francisco Cinematheque from 2002-2007. The local film culture surrounding this artist-run foundation forms one of the crucial film culture contexts through which Prelinger's film presentations can be viewed. With the intention of supporting local filmmaking initiatives, and creating a close-knit local film community, in 1961

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[63] Ibid.

[64] In 2012, Stephen Harper's government cut over 6.6 million dollars from the National Film Board budget by eliminating 61 full and part-time jobs, and closing two viewing facilities, the CinéRobothèque in Montreal and the Mediatheque in Toronto. See, CBC News, "NFB to Cut 61 Jobs Across Canada," 4 April 2012. http://www.cbc.ca/news/arts/nfb-to-cut-61-jobs-across-canada-1.1180985 (Last accessed, 3 June 2016) Also in 2012, Harper's government axed one-fifth of Library and Archives Canada positions nation-wide along with other significant cuts to services. For an extensive list of these cuts, see, Myron Groover, "The Wrecking of Canada's Library and Archives: Thirteen ways the Harper government's planned cuts will swamp the mission of our heritage keepers," 7 Jun 2012, *The Tyee* http://thetyee.ca/Opinion/2012/06/07/LibraryCuts/ (Last accessed, 2 June 2016) In 2014, the Harper government closed seven out of eleven Department of Fisheries and Oceans libraries, discarding thousands of scientific and environmental research collections. For more on these cuts, see, Andrea Zeffiro, "A Monopology of Knowledge: the Dissolution of the libraries of Fisheries and Oceans Canada," in *The Harper Record 2008–2015: Food, Water, Air, Environment*, a report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2015. https://www.policyalternatives.ca/Harper_Record_2008-2015/25-HarperRecord-Zeffiro.pdf (Last accessed, 3 June 2016)

underground filmmakers Bill Baillie and Chick Strand, among others, began what would become in 1966 the filmmaker's cooperative and independent film distribution company, Canyon Cinema Cooperative. Initially they screened their own films, as well as ones from the East Coast avant-garde scene and the NFB, onto sheets in their backyards in and near Berkeley. Later, screenings took place wherever they could find a space within the Bay Area, which was often precarious due to harassment from local fire marshals.[65] These nomadic screenings eventually led to the formal organization of the Canyon Cinematheque to accommodate the growing film community. Early on, one of the members, Ernest "Chick" Callenbach, who was an editor at *Film Quarterly* at the time, convinced them to start a publication, *Canyon Cinema News*, and later the *Cinemanews*, to provide information to the alternative film community.[66] By 1978 the production/distribution faction of Canyon Cinema split off from the exhibition/publication faction of the organization, which then changed its name to the San Francisco Cinematheque,[67] becoming entirely independent by the 1980s.[68] As Scott MacDonald argues in his 2008 book *Canyon Cinema*, the artist-run organization is exceptional for its continued ability to provide "a lasting model for those who are committed to alternatives to commercial culture," functioning even these days as "the most dependable distributor of alternative cinema in the United States," which has improbably reached this status "without betraying the fundamental principles on which it was founded."[69] Today, Canyon Cinema is "one of the primary influences on what has recently become known as the 'microcinema' movement," according to MacDonald.[70]

Prelinger's film work is influenced by Canyon Cinema in a few important ways. First, the environments Prelinger fosters at his screenings are most reminiscent of intimate, "micro-cinema" spaces, even as they occupy larger venues and draw audiences that may never have participated in this kind of alternative film culture. "Baillie's instinct seems always to have been collaborative and communal," writes MacDonald,[71] establishing a local ethos around collectivity and the public that Prelinger's work continues. Second, Canyon Cinema's independent film

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[65] Scott MacDonald, *Canyon Cinema: The Life and Times of an Independent Film Distributor* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 6-7.
[66] Ibid., 10.
[67] Ibid., 17.
[68] Ibid., 22.
[69] Ibid., 2.
[70] Ibid., 8.
[71] Ibid., 10.

version of "vertical integration," in which it became "a three-part service to the community of independent filmmakers and cineastes,"[72] maintaining production, exhibition, and distribution operations in their early days, is a highly desirable model for sustaining a truly sovereign local film culture. Similarly, Prelinger is unique in the archive film world for building and maintaining his own film archive, creating new ways to provide access to it, and utilizing its contents for his own creative work that he then self-distributes and/or accompanies in community events. And third, the Canyon Cinema's cultivation of early found-footage experimental filmmakers provides a context for a local history of such practices that are direct influences for Prelinger. Canyon Cinema co-founder Chick Strand often used found footage in her collage works, like *Cartoon le Mousse* and *Loose Ends* (both from 1979), and *By the Lake* (1986). But perhaps more significantly, the filmmaker who is credited with kicking off the found-footage movement starting in the late 1950s, Bruce Conner, was also an active member of Canyon Cinema and the San Francisco avant-garde.

Three more iconoclastic Bay Area filmmakers round out my account of Prelinger's local influences and contemporaries: found-footage artists, Craig Baldwin and Jay Rosenblatt; and creator of live documentary events, Sam Green. Oakland native, "underground," found-footage filmmaker, Craig Baldwin is perhaps the most fantastical of all found-footage filmmakers, consistently manipulating his footage into highly fictive narratives, demanding that the spectator relinquish any notions that the material has any intrinsic meaning outside of what we give it.[73] Baldwin and Prelinger have a working relationship as a result of Baldwin's frequent use of the Prelinger archives. Moreover, even though Baldwin has his own distribution company, Other Cinema, Canyon Cinema is also a distributor of Baldwin's work, which Tim Maloney claims is "a clear indication of the place his films occupy in the family tree of American experimental filmmaking."[74] Jay Rosenblatt, an essayistic found-footage filmmaker who has been working and teaching in the Bay Area since the late 1980s, makes mostly short films that aim to demythologize conventional wisdom through collage. Films like "*The Smell of Burning Ants* (1994), and *Period Piece* (1996), investigate embodiment on an immediate, personal level,"

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[72] Ibid., 11.

[73] For an in-depth analysis of Baldwin's work and found-footage film, see: Michael Zryd, "Found Footage Film as Discursive Metahistory: Craig Baldwin's *Tribulation 99*," *The Moving Image*, Volume 3, Number 2 (Fall 2003): 40-61.

[74] Tim Maloney, "Great Directors: Craig Baldwin," *Senses of Cinema*, Issue 40 (July 2006). http://sensesofcinema.com/2006/great-directors/baldwin/ (Last accessed, June 16, 2015).

argues Brian K. Bergen-Aurand.[75] And finally, most recognized for his 2004 Academy-Award-nominated documentary *The Weather Underground*, Sam Green has made three "live" documentaries in the 2010s: *Utopia in Four Movements* (2010), *The Love Song of R. Buckminster Fuller* (2012), and *The Measure of All Things* (2014). His programs consist of Green narrating on top of a live musical score performance (Yo La Tengo did the music for *The Love Song of R. Buckminster Fuller*) and the projections of his film work. He insists that the events remain ephemeral: no recordings are commissioned or allowed. He claims the Japanese Benshi tradition of narrating silent film, early travelogue narrations and TED talks as his influences, all of which could easily be seen as predecessors for Prelinger's work, as well. Operating primarily out of San Francisco, we can see that Prelinger's local film culture context supports many of the unusual features of his film practice, such as a collaborative and communal ethos; independent vertical integration; found-footage filmmaking; the demythologization of Americana through the archive; and live, artist-present screenings.

Prelinger's Film Practice

Prelinger has had a fascination with the materiality of film from a young age. In elementary school he wrote a short play on the virtues of acetate film stock; and later in college, he would obtain 16mm scrap footage from the local office of Audio Brandon Films in his first efforts to make his own found-footage films.[76] As was previously mentioned, *The Atomic Café* directly inspired Prelinger to begin collecting "sponsored films" in the early 1980s, but scarcity of public experience with this type of distinctive collection in turn motivated him to bring such materials to the public, first through television (he was an executive producer of comedy and music video clips made from archival footage for Comedy Central from 1989-91); then through curated DVD collections (see for example, *Ephemeral Films 1931-1960* [CD-ROM, 1993]); then through digitization and online public databases (see the Internet Archive); and more recently, through his own experimental compilation film work.

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[75] Brian K Bergen-Aurand, "Great Directors: Jay Rosenblatt," in *Senses of Cinema,* December, Issue 53, 2009. http://sensesofcinema.com/2009/great-directors/jay-rosenblatt/ (Last accessed, June 16, 2015).
[76] Cook, Herrera and Robbins, "Interview with Rick Prelinger," 166.

Panorama Ephemera (2004)

The piece stands as evidence that there is nothing about a film or any work of art that cannot be turned inside out or upside down and redeployed for purposes that diverge from those of the original work.

– Rick Prelinger[77]

The compilation essay film, *Panorama Ephemera* explores America's mythological landscape up to the late 1970s; it is constructed from Prelinger's archive of American ephemera with no added voiceover, much like *The Atomic Café*, and *A MOVIE* (Bruce Conner, 1958). As Stella Bruzzi has argued, compilation films like *The Atomic Café*, and those of Emile de Antonio, achieve their critique through the "dialectic collision between the inherent perspective of the original archive and its radical re-use".[78] While *The Atomic Café* critiques the US government's use of film as propaganda to promote the proliferation of atomic weapons and energy in the 1950s, and *A MOVIE* disrupts the notion that there can or will be any stable narrative catharsis for the American experience, *Panorama Ephemera* takes a wide-angle look at post-war American narratives.

Excerpts of ephemeral films average four minutes apiece in *Panorama Ephemera*, which allows the spectator more time to think about what they see and hear than the vast majority of recycled film works do. Critique of the images is not achieved through dialectical editing here, as it is in *The Atomic Café*, but through an ideological "backgrounds into foregrounds" anamorphosis which provides enough opportunity to begin to form a critical attitude towards the various views on American identity. These film clips give us just enough to glean a sense of how some people and organizations saw themselves at different times in mid-twentieth century American history, how they looked upon the past, and what they desired for the future. While their ideological aims often remained in the background upon their first use, Prelinger's "radical re-use" positions the ideological frameworks that brought the moving images into being into the foreground, demanding their close inspection.

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[77] Author's statement for *Panorama Ephemera* and its online installation can be seen here: http://vectorsjournal.org/projects/index.php?project=58&thread=AuthorsStatement (Last accessed: June 10, 2015).
[78] Stella Bruzzi, *New Documentary: A Critical Introduction*, Routledge, New York, 2000, 22.

Panorama Ephemera differs from Prelinger's more recent work in its status as a filmic text that can be freely accessed, circulated, screened and remixed without the presence or explicit permission of its creator. These interactions with the text are possible, first, because Prelinger has released it as a set, finished work, which can be accessed either as a DVD or online. *Panorama Ephemera* was not conceived of, or presented, as a live interactive event, as his more recent works have been. Its interactivity was planned as a function of its reproducibility, not its live relationality. In addition to being easily accessible, either streaming or by download, on archive.org,[79] it is registered with Creative Commons, a non-profit that provides a system for non-commercial licensing of creative work that can be shared globally according to six categories that reflect the level of sharing authors wish for their work.[80] Creative Commons was founded in 2001, and provided its first licenses in December of 2002. So, in 2004, when *Panorama Ephemera* was released, this system of sharing texts digitally was still quite new, but quickly became very popular: by the end of the year approximately 4.7 million works had been licensed under their system (up from 1 million the year before).[81] This system of licensing was created to cover the vast number of newly produced works that authors felt should be owned both by the public and the author, somewhere between "Public Domain" and "All Rights Reserved." *Panorama Ephemera* is designated as "Attribution-NonCommercial," which means that the public is free to "Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format," and "Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material," but those who do must provide attribution, "You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use," and you "may not use the material for commercial purposes."[82] These designations remove the problem of the commodification of the intellect and allow the work and its derivatives to circulate freely.

The ephemeral footage in *Panorama Ephemera* differs from that of the *Lost Landscapes* series in a few important ways. First, they are largely location unspecific; outside of a few identifications contained within the original material (a fire in Berkeley; election day in Riverton,

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[79] *Panorama Ephemera* (2004), full movie: https://archive.org/details/panorama_ephemera2004

[80] Creative Commons website: http://creativecommons.org/

[81] Creative Commons website, "History": http://creativecommons.org/about/history

[82] Creative Commons website, "Attribution-NonCommercial 2.0 Generic" license: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.0/

California; New Salem State Park, Nevada-Utah Stateline), for the vast majority of the material, we know only that it emerges from the immense American mid-century imagination of what the country is and has been. Second, sponsored films make up far more of the material than home movies because they contain their own soundtrack. Sponsored films, that is, educational, commercial, and industrial films, almost always carry a voiceover due to their original use-value as instructional, and/or propagandistic, forms of communication. The excerpts of sponsored films appearing in *Panorama Ephemera* are chosen as much for their audio evidence as for their visible evidence. Third, there is slightly more editing in *Panorama Ephemera* in the sense that a few materials are cut to be revisited at different points in the film, creating ellipses that are not found in the *Lost Landscapes* series.

The essay film finds its antipodal film form in the sponsored film, for, although they are philosophically and ideologically opposed, the essay film and the sponsored film often share a heavy reliance on voiceover as well as the freedom to put to use any film strategy, mode, genre or style in the service of their goals: fiction, nonfiction, animation, and even experimental. [83] Beyond style, sponsored films also have a great variety of functions and audiences: "In the United States there are many different subsectors of industrial films: there are training films for workers, there are management-training films, there are sales-training films, and … institutional advertising," Prelinger observes.[84] In *Panorama Ephemera* and the *Lost Landscapes* programs, Prelinger plays with the range of styles and techniques found in the history of the sponsored film, showing not only that sponsored films are a diverse and complex film form as worthy of attention as any other, but also that they contain records of institutional agendas worth decoding, recalling and recording.

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[83] On the avant-garde end of the sponsored film spectrum was the 1950s collective On Film Inc. Prelinger has called On Film Inc. a "hotbed of creativity" for their unusual commitment to "the values of avant-garde art," often employing experimental filmmakers such as Stan Brakhage and Stan Vanderbeek, for collectively produced works. For instance, the 1958 film *Conversation Crossroads* produced by On Film Inc. makes use of highly choreographed dance routines, bright colors, lavish costuming, abstract images, surrealist motifs (a man rides a snail), and conspicuously simulated sets to explain the complexities of how switching systems work in telephone networks. One of the seven "designers" (On Film Inc. had a non-hierarchical creative attribution policy in which all of those who worked on their films were given the title of "designer") was Richard Bagley who had done the cinematography for the visually stunning docu-fiction film *On the Bowery* (Lionel Rogosin, 1956) a couple years earlier. Watch *Conversation Crossroads* here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EvvvLzw1XsQ

[84] Patrick Vonderau, "Vernacular Archiving: An Interview with Rick Prelinger," in *Films That Work: Industrial Film and the Productivity of Media*, Vinzenz Hediger, and Patrick Vonderau, eds. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 60.

Panorama Ephemera is Prelinger's first sustained effort to construct an anamorphic deconstruction of the ideological underpinnings of sponsored films. By exploiting the sponsored film's deceased use-value, which had previously served to disguise ideological patterns that went beyond the immediate and superficial levels of persuasion in the films, Prelinger places the focus on common institutional agendas. He continues this strategy, relying less on sponsored films and more on home movies, in his *Lost Landscapes* films.

No More Road Trips? (2013)

A point of view shot from the window of a car is the essential American viewpoint.
– Rick Prelinger[85]

The mobility of Americans and Americana, and the narratives they implicitly contain and resist, are the subjects of Prelinger's most recent interactive archival work. In his 2013 film presentation, *No More Road Trips?*, Prelinger takes a critical perspective on the mythical European journey from the East to the West coasts of the US. The live program for which Prelinger is always present, and in which he always requests that the audience "be the soundtrack," as he does in his *Lost Landscapes* events, is a topographically constructed collage work made entirely of home movies shot by hundreds of amateur camera-men and women on road trips within the US from the 1920s-1970s. (Figure 2) We begin on the Atlantic coast and proceed in a geographically consistent manner until we end up at "the Promised Land," a California beach.[86]

Through coast-to-coast home movie images of America and Americana, *No More Road Trips?* presents a collectively produced travelogue of domestic road trips. In the process, it acts to expose the death of the pioneer narrative that propped up notions of American mobility and identity at the expense of more complex multiethnic histories and identities.

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[85] Master class with Rick Prelinger, February 13, 2014.

[86] Information comes from an interview with Prelinger conducted for a blog post on *No More Road Trips?* in 2013 which can be found here: http://blog.creative-capital.org/2013/09/rick-prelinger-no-more-road-trips/ (Last accessed June 12, 2015)

Figure 2 *No More Roadtrips?* **(2013) emphasizes the central place of car culture in mid-century Americana by taking a trip through America as it could only be seen by car.**

The narratives that buttress the notion of the great American road trip appear antiquated, if still somewhat attractive for their ability to create idyllic and clearly American identified experiences. By contrast, in the present day, the great American migratory narratives of our time are those focused on global immigration to the US, and the precarious and unavoidable movement of labor between cities.

Today's migratory realities paint grimmer and more varied pictures of what American identity can and does consist of than those enacted in the predominantly white, American home movie travelogues. Prelinger had hoped that his *No More Road Trips?* audiences would audibly reflect on the different experiences of historical migratory conditions throughout America when watching the film: "while some people traveled as tourists, others migrated under economic or racial duress, and the landscape that African Americans navigated was not the same territory that white people experienced," he points out. But these discussions, he admits, were more likely to

happen post-screening, if at all.[87]

Lost Landscapes

The primary question at the root of each *Lost Landscapes* program, and the one which guides the entire project for Prelinger, is a progressive, collective, and imaginative one, "What kind of city do we want to live in?"[88] This utopian question is posed implicitly through a wide variety of micro-hermeneutical positionings of the past in service of the future. From the initial contact with the promotional material, to the choice of venues, to the introductory remarks, to the choice of evidentiary materials, and to the commentary and provocation to dialogue, Prelinger provides many opportunities for reflection on the future of the city during the screenings.

As of the summer of 2017, Prelinger had made and screened nineteen unique urban archival films, representing four different cities: *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco*, eleven annual iterations, 2006-2016; *Lost Landscapes of Detroit*, three annual iterations, 2010-2012; (the follow up to the *Lost Landscapes of Detroit* programs) *Yesterday and Tomorrow in Detroit*,[89] two annual iterations, 2014-2015; *Lost Landscapes of Oakland,* one iteration, 2014; and *Lost Landscapes of Los Angeles*, two iterations, 2015-2017. *Lost Landscapes of New York* is scheduled to premier on November 12, 2017 at New York University's Skirball Center. These films are first and foremost live interactive presentations of archival material, but some of the screening events are also documented and uploaded online. They enter the public sphere through a live confrontation with an audience, but also through the Internet as part of the digital archive. They are not otherwise distributed.

In a certain sense, it is difficult to call the *Lost Landscapes* series' "films," much less montage films. There are no definitive versions. The principle of montage is limited to

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[87] Cook, Herrera and Robbins, "Interview with Rick Prelinger," 177.

[88] Master class with Rick Prelinger, February 13, 2014.

[89] Originally created specifically for the March 2014 Freep Film Festival in Detroit, *Yesterday and Tomorrow in Detroit* is essentially *Lost Landscapes of Detroit, #4*. Prelinger changed the name because the city's condition is precarious after its financial collapse (and subsequent physical degeneration), and he felt audiences needed a clearer suggestion that the purpose of reviewing the archive was to see the potential of a new future in the ruins of the past, not to mourn its loss: "I want to get us out of the trap of talking about what's lost," he says. "Watching these vivid images in a group and talking about them as they unspool is a powerful stimulus for discussion about Detroit's future." http://freepfilmfestival.com/schedule-of-films/yesterday-and-tomorrow-in-detroit-archival-film-images-of-detroit-curated-by-rick-prelinger It played again in July of 2014 at Michael Moore's Traverse City Film Festival in Northern Michigan, and at Other Cinema's ATA Gallery in San Francisco, in October of 2014.

determining lengths of archival footage and ordering them with little to no cutting within the original footage (that is, extracts from the same footage do not come back later in the same film). There is also no attempt to commercially distribute the *Lost Landscapes* programs. They are conceived of and delivered to audiences exclusively as live, interactive, hosted events. Typically, Prelinger screens each iteration between one and four times within the year of its release before he retires that version and makes a new one.[90]

Documentation of some of the programs can be found online on the Prelinger Archives site, hosted by archive.org, and The Long Now site, which sometimes puts their documentation of *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco* versions 3-10 behind a pay wall.[91] Documentation of the programs on both sites consists of unedited video recordings of particular screenings, which vary in terms of how the participants are filmed. Often the audience can be heard, but not always distinctly enough to be intelligible. Prelinger is always provided a microphone, and at times there are other participants that are given amplification, as well. The Prelinger archive website also contains several examples of digitized *Lost Landscapes of Detroit* programs (one each of 1, 2, and 3) and one digitization of *Yesterday and Tomorrow in Detroit* (2014), which run without added sound (and because it is not a video recording of an event, there is no contextualization of the images provided by either Prelinger or spectators), and one documentation of a whole screening of a revised version of *Lost Landscapes of Detroit, 1* for a San Francisco audience at the Internet Archive. This last one contains the whole program, from the prologue—a baroque organ recital of Bach's Cantata in D minor—to Prelinger's introduction, through to the end of the archival screening.

During the live events, archival footage of the respective cities is projected as Prelinger identifies the source of the footage and what he thinks it may depict, the date, where it came from, and/or any other pertinent information. The audience is encouraged at several times during each event to shout out identifications of people, places and events: first in the press release description of the events; then, in Prelinger's introduction; and through an intertitle at the beginning of the screening, "Please make the soundtrack." Moreover, he requests that the

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[90] My analyses of the *Lost Landscape* films stem from my experience of four live screenings of *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco*, and the online documentations of *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco* and *Lost Landscapes of Detroit*.
[91] http://longnow.org/

audience interact with each other in many of his introductions, "I'm going to ask you to yell out your questions, to dispute what your neighbors are saying."[92]

The various iterations are characterized by a complete lack of hierarchy. No one version of a *Lost Landscapes* program can be seen as the authoritative one—the eighth is as informative and intriguing as the first, and there is no sense that you miss any overarching story or structure by not seeing them in order. Order is unimportant; the numbering of the versions only serves to indicate that the content will differ from previous iterations (though not always completely). This is to say that there is no sense of seriality, chronology, or developing narrative among the different versions. With each subsequent iteration, what builds is the realization that there is just too much to show—an overabundance. Each iteration contains only a small fraction of Prelinger's collection, so there is a sense that the depth of his collection is too big, and that his curation was necessary. However, Prelinger's persistence in making new versions of his *Lost Landscapes* films, as well as his willingness to digitize parts of his collection for free download, makes his collection more accessible than others.

The *Lost Landscapes* programs started out as a screening of San Francisco historical footage at the CounterPulse in San Francisco[93] in 2006. Due to its extreme popularity, Prelinger brought it back the following year, after which The Long Now Foundation[94] offered to sponsor the programs. Over the first few years, the programs slowly moved away from "archival footage screenings," to become "theatrical events." From the beginning, however, they were always highly structured programs, and followed a different kind of logic than that of the editing of a film aimed for distribution, such as *Panorama Ephemera*.[95]

The Castro Theatre, located in the center of San Francisco in its historic gay district, has hosted the majority of the *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco* events since its third version, sponsored by

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[92] *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco, 9*, screened at the Internet Archive in San Francisco, December 19, 2014. (For example.)

[93] CounterPulse is a politically progressive performance space in the South of Market district (not too far from Prelinger's print library) that serves "as an incubator for the creation of socially relevant, community-based art and culture." http://counterpulse.org/about-us/counterpulse-mission-and-history/ Accessed May 15, 2015.

[94] The Long Now Foundation is an organization devoted to long-term thinking, on the scale of 10,000 years. It was founded in part by Stewart Brand, who was also one of the founders of the Whole Earth Catalogue, and associated with Ken Kessey's Merry Pranksters in the mid-1960s. "The point is to explore whatever may be helpful for thinking, understanding, and acting responsibly over long periods of time," writes Brand. Their two biggest projects are a 10,000-year clock, and a 10,000-year library. http://longnow.org/about/

[95] Master class with Rick Prelinger, February 13, 2014.

The Long Now. The Castro Theatre serves primarily as a repertory film theater, but also hosts many live theatrical events and film festivals, such as the Berlin & Beyond Film Festival, Noir City, the San Francisco International Film Festival, Frameline: San Francisco International LGBTQ Film Festival, and the San Francisco Silent Film Festival. It retains many of its original features, such as the organ, which rises dramatically from the stage with its human player.[96] The Castro Theatre has been designated as an official historical landmark since 1977.

The Castro Theatre is a significant venue for the *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco* programs for two reasons, which I argue contribute to the spectator's experience of the program: its neo-baroque architectural qualities, and its historic role as a movie palace. (Figure 3)

Figure 3 The Castro Theatre is the preferred venue for the *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco* screenings.

Built in 1922, the theatre sports an impressive façade, which designer and architect Timothy L. Pflueger (1894-1946) chose for its resemblance to the Mexican cathedral design of the nearby

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[96] David Hegarty, the Castro Theatre's principal organist since 1983, performs on the Mighty Wurlizter before each of the *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco* programs, adding to the playfulness of the spectacle.
http://www.sfgate.com/movies/article/Castro-organist-aims-to-raise-1-million-4382915.php

basilica constructed adjacent to Mission Dolores, which was completed in 1918. It is one of the last remaining movie palaces in the US that is still in regular operation, and as such it provides the city with a space for spectacular cinematic and theatrical events throughout the year. The elaborate sculptural architectural design used on the Castro Theatre's façade was a revival of a Spanish baroque style called "Churrigueresque."[97] The combination of stylistic elements in the Castro Theatre's façade (including seventeenth century Spanish baroque; eighteenth century hybrid-baroque, originating in colonial Mexico; architectural elements created for an early twentieth century Expo, the 1915 Panama-California Exposition; and as a tribute to the nearby basilica built to honor the oldest building in the city, the Mission Dolores) is a convoluted one, speaking to the lush exuberance of the style, as well as to the transcultural influences and the appropriations within the region itself. "New World baroque" is the term used to describe this winding passage in form through time, place, and cultural/political reconfiguration. The interior of the theatre maintains the baroque eclecticism and extravagance of the exterior by combining Spanish, Oriental and Italian influences. In the context of the *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco* screenings at the Castro Theatre, the "Churrigueresque" contrasts with the assumed aesthetic minimalism, sobriety, and purity that a night of archival film viewing mistakenly implies. The baroque features of the Castro Theatre's architecture have more in common with the abundance and extravagance of the *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco* than the audience might first believe. Furthermore, the Castro Theatre was built to house silent film audiences. Movie palace spectatorship of the 1920s, with its rambunctious audiences, provides an appropriate corollary for Prelinger's present day screenings in the same space.

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[97] Named after José Beníto de Churriguera (1665–1725), the "Churrigueresque" was developed in late 17th century Spain and remained popular there until around 1750, when architectural trends towards the neo-classical's "balance and sobriety" supplanted the "twisted movement and excessive ornamentation" of the baroque. The period in which "Churrigueresque" was popular in Spain coincided with an active period of cathedral building in the Spanish colonies. This baroque style was especially common in Mexico and the Philippines. In their planning for the Panama-California Exposition to take place in 1915, lead architects, Bertram Goodhue and Carlton Winslow Sr., decided to adopt an architectural style with a "vernacular regional precedent," Spanish Colonial architecture, as the primary influence for the buildings to be displayed in San Diego's Balboa Park. After spending some time in Mexico studying the colonial architecture, Goodhue and Winslow invited architects, Irving Gill and Frank Lloyd Wright, to join the design team, and together they created one of the most influential architectural displays in history. Through the Panama-California Exposition the Mexican translation of the "Churrigueresque" style was repopularized, bringing a mestizo architecture, and a baroque sensibility of space into the vision of a modern America. As a result of the influence of Panama-California Exposition on architects of the period, Spanish Colonial Revival became the dominate architecture style of not only California, but also much of the South-West and South in the late 1910s and 1920s, although the "Churrigueresque" was articulated much more sparingly than the more minimalist stucco-based forms.

The *Lost Landscapes* programs are usually shown in the city that is their subject. Oddly, though I have attended *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco* live screenings four times, three of those screenings have taken place outside of San Francisco: two at the Sebastopol Documentary Film Festival (SDFF), in Sonoma Country, an hour and a half by car north of San Francisco, in 2013 and 2014, and one at Concordia University in Montreal in 2014. The SDFF audience was particularly well suited to the interactivity Prelinger requests during the screenings because a majority of the participants were over 50 years old, had grown up in or near San Francisco, and could therefore identify some of the buildings, streets, events, and customs, some of which Prelinger did not know himself. Audience members at these screenings commented on watching the building of the Golden Gate Bridge (1933-37), swimming at the Sutro Baths (1896-1964) and taking the Sky Tram (1955-65) that connected the nearby Cliff House to Point Lobos just past the Sutro Baths, and attending the Golden Gate International Exposition on Treasure Island (1939-40). After the screenings, several spectators in their eighties and nineties approached Prelinger full of gratitude for providing them the opportunity to revisit views of the city they had left behind in their childhoods. The screening at Concordia took place on February 13, 2014 in a small room with about 25 people, mostly master's students, in attendance. I was the only person present who had grown up in San Francisco, and besides Prelinger, the only one who had spent any significant amount of time in the city. Prelinger and I created the majority of the soundtrack for that screening. The most recent screening I attended, on December 19, 2014, was a benefit for the Internet Archive in San Francisco.[98] The Internet Archive is an independent, free, online library of donated media (books, films, photographs, ephemera, audio, webpages),[99] hosting 2-3 million users per day, and providing a platform for the Prelinger archives.[100] Unlike the Castro Theatre, the Internet Archive screening space is exceedingly minimal and sober. It occupies the

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[98] https://archive.org/index.php

[99] In addition to containing the largest digital database of media taken from print, celluloid, magnetic tape, wax cylinder, and vinyl, to name a few of the mediums they digitize, the Internet Archive has archived a snapshot of the World Wide Web six times a year since 1997, which they make accessible to the public in their Wayback Machine digital time capsule, providing archived versions of more than 85 million webpages. http://www.computerworld.com/article/2485752/data-center/fire-at-internet-archive-reaffirms-need-for-an-internet-archive.html

[100] About a year before the benefit screening, in November of 2013, the Internet Archive had suffered a fire in which they had lost some physical archival materials, half of which had already been digitized, and the scanner that Prelinger uses to digitize his films, sustaining about $600,000 in fire damage. The Internet Archive inhabits a former Christian Science church in the Richmond district, a wide Northwestern neighborhood of San Francisco, known for its large Chinese and Russian populations, long grid-like streets, and fog.

former site of a Christian Science church. At the Internet Archive screening, the audience was somewhat younger than the SDFF attendees, but also very prepared to contribute and clearly excited to see their city on the screen. There were even some audience members who appeared in the home movie footage that their families had donated to Prelinger's collection, and who were thus able to share what they knew about it.

After several years of presenting his *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco* programs in the city in which he resides, Prelinger decided to create a new *Lost Landscapes* program focused on Detroit. Since the early 1980s he had obtained the majority of sponsored film material for his collection primarily from defunct Detroit film studios, which made up the bulk of the American production of sponsored films in the postwar period. Prelinger explains his interest in creating a *Lost Landscapes of Detroit* program despite not being from, nor residing, there:

> I started travelling to Detroit in the 80s because Detroit was the world capital of industrial and advertising film production. It is often said that more film was exposed in Detroit than in New York and Hollywood combined, in the heyday. And so, I went to, you know, acquire the kinds of industrial films that are online at archive.org. And over the years, I collected home movies of Detroit, 'cause the history of Detroit and all of the various, and especially the struggles, the contestation, the ups and downs, the booms and busts, is a fascinating story and I was very interested in how it might be documented by ordinary people.[101]

First shown at the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (MOCAD) on February 10, 2010, *Lost Landscapes of Detroit* has been an extremely popular event every time he has brought it to Michigan.

Adding to the diversity of cities to get the *Lost Landscapes* treatment, on February 22, 2014, *Lost Landscapes of Oakland* premiered at the Oakland Museum of California (OMCA) in downtown Oakland, California, as part of an exhibition Prelinger curated for the museum, *Bay Motion: Capturing San Francisco Bay on Film*, itself a part of a larger exhibition on "how people and nature together have shaped the San Francisco Bay Area over the last 6,000 years,"

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[101] My transcription of part of Prelinger's introduction to a screening of *Lost Landscapes of Detroit 1* at the Internet Archive in San Francisco on April 19, 2011, documented in its entirety and available here: http://archive.org/details/lostlandscapesdetroit2011

Above and Below: Stories From Our Changing Bay.[102] From November 9, 2013 to June 29, 2014, installations culled from Prelinger's collection of ephemeral film from around the bay could be seen at OMCA. (Figures 4 & 5) 500 people bought tickets for the *Lost Landscapes of Oakland* live event at the OMCA, but the museum was only able to offer seating to 250 patrons, so Brewster Kahle, founder of the Internet Archive, planned another screening in San Francisco at the Internet Archive on April 8, 2014. OMCA was apparently unprepared for the event's popularity. On May 31, 2015, *Lost Landscapes of Oakland* screened free of charge in Oakland City Hall at a one-day Book Festival, sponsored by local libraries, museums, publishers, and non-profits.

Figure 4 *Lost Landscapes of Oakland* presented as an installation at the Oakland Museum of California.

Figure 5 Frame grab from *Lost Landscapes of Oakland.*

The most recent expansion of the *Lost Landscapes* urban history events came in November of 2015 when Prelinger premiered his *Lost Landscapes of Los Angeles* at the REDCAT theater, an extension of CalArts, in downtown Los Angeles. The demand for tickets was so high that a second screening had to be added before the first. For this *Lost Landscapes* iteration, Prelinger primarily used two types of ephemeral film made between the 1920s and the 1960s: home movies; and outtakes from feature films, specifically process plates and establishing shots, which tend to focus on cityscapes rather than people.[103]

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[102] http://museumca.org/exhibit/above-and-below-stories-our-changing-bay

[103] Avishay Artsy, "Exploring lost landscapes with Rick Prelinger," Interview, *KCRW Design and Architecture Blog*, November 10, 2015. http://blogs.kcrw.com/dna/exploring-lost-landscapes-with-rick-prelinger

Figure 6 Process plate frame grab of the old Bunker Hill Neighborhood, now downtown Los Angeles, the site of the city's many skyscrapers. Here in 1947, it has none. (*Lost Landscapes of Los Angeles*)

Figure 7 Process plate frame grab of oil derricks from the 1949 Max Ophuls film *The Reckless Moment*. (*Lost Landscapes of Los Angeles*)

For instance, Prelinger shows a highly detailed process plate of Bunker Hill, a neighborhood that has completely disappeared after being redeveloped in the 1960s. (Figure 6) He shows another process plate from the Max Ophuls film *The Reckless Moment* (1949), depicting oil derricks in the city. (Figure 7) Focused on disappeared urban communities, *Lost Landscapes of Los Angeles* also contains footage of Chavez Ravine, a primarily Mexican-American neighborhood that was cleared of its residents throughout the 1950s so that it could be paved over to build Dodger

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Stadium in the early 1960s. His first cut of *Lost Landscapes of Los Angeles* was over seven hours,[104] but he eventually edited it down to 80 minutes for the screening.[105]

Live Interactive Evidentiary Experience

I remain convinced that "Lost Landscapes" city film events should be more about building communities than watching admittedly cool clips.

—Rick Prelinger via Twitter, February 18, 2016

If I could specify the ideal audience for this, it would be sports spectators, with keen eyes for detail, interacting with the players and with one another, unafraid of making noise.

—Rick Prelinger[106]

The *Lost Landscapes* series approaches audience participation differently from contemporary avant-garde found-footage participatory strategies, reviving instead early film, theatrical, political, and even sport modes of interactivity.[107] Like the film "explainers" or "lecturers" of cinema's early years, Prelinger personally delivers the commentary for his mostly silent footage of cityscapes. Prelinger's commentary goes from sparse, to absent, to animated, and back again, over the course of the filmic presentation; thus, it does not consistently frame the visual material. The inconsistency in Prelinger's commentary creates a space where the audience can participate in the identification of images without feeling as if Prelinger knows everything or is willing to convey everything he does know. At times Prelinger verbally conveys where and when he thinks

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[104] Carolina A. Miranda, "Q&A: 'Lost Landscapes of Los Angeles': Rick Prelinger's new film of old home movies and studio outtakes," *The Los Angeles Times*, November 15, 2015, http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/miranda/la-et-cam-rick-prelinger-lost-landscapes-of-los-angeles-20151113-column.html (Last accessed, June 6, 2017).

[105] Due to the recentness of the *Lost Landscapes of Oakland* and *Lost Landscapes of Los Angeles* films, there are no documentations of the events available online as of yet. Since I have not been able to see them live either, I will keep further analysis of the *Lost Landscapes* series rooted in the films I have seen, either live or online, *Lost Landscapes San Francisco* and *Lost Landscapes Detroit*.

[106] Rick Prelinger, "The New Evidentiary Cinema," UC Santa Cruz, Film & Digital Media Colloquium, February 2013. Online at http://www.slideshare.net/footage/the-new-evidentiary-cinema (Last accessed, June 13, 2017).

[107] For instance, Ken Jacobs's famed live projection performances with his "Nervous System" apparatus focus more on the materiality of the archival footage than audience participation. Although some connection could be made between the interactive presentations of the two filmmakers, for the purposes of this chapter, I will leave Ken Jacobs's work aside to focus more on more direct influences on Prelinger's presentations. For more on Jacob's projection performances see: Steve F. Anderson, *Technologies of History: Visual Media and the Eccentricity of the Past* (Hanover, N.H: Dartmouth College Press, 2011), 79-83.

the onscreen footage was made. For example, many of the *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco* film programs open with a beautiful color shot of two ferries passing each other at twilight in the San Francisco Bay. In its eighth iteration, Prelinger comments, "Ferries crossing in the Bay. We forget that for a long time SF was entered by water, and here we're recreating that entry."[108] In its ninth iteration, he identifies the date of this footage, but leaves out the other comments, "This is two ferries passing in the Bay around 1938-39."[109] In its tenth iteration, the footage plays without any commentary.

Other times he notes how he acquired the footage, points out something he noticed in it, or makes a joke about what he sees. For example, in the middle of *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco, 10*,[110] we see footage of two middle-age men in suits and hats getting out of a 1930s model black car on a San Francisco street. They walk towards the camera. Smiling, they vigorously shake each other's hands. Prelinger is unusually verbose in his commentary over this sequence of several shots: "The man on the left is Mr. Yesson. He ran an advertising art and sign painting company. And it was a union shop. And his granddaughter has given us some wonderful films. Since it was a union shop, he did work for a lot of the unions, and [he was] a jolly fellow." The two men on screen goof around, playfully pushing one another. Mr. Yesson smiles broadly at the camera as he approaches it. After an in-camera edit, we see a truck pulling a billboard around a city corner. Prelinger continues: "There's his truck. He was on Stevenson Street. Here's some of his work. This is for all you, uh—I expect to see these motifs in next year's graphic design!" The audience laughs. He continues after a cut to another shot of the truck: "They specialized in these moving billboards." Cut to close-ups of men's faces, "Some of his crew." Several street shots follow, then he asserts provocatively, "You'll recognize that building at Van Ness and Mission." The audience can be heard murmuring in acknowledgment of the geography. "Anybody recognizes any of these streets…?" he asks. Several indistinct voices answer. We see many billboards and signs for Mayoral candidate, Angelo Rossi (the incumbent), pulled by Mr. Yesson's trucks. ("ROSSI. He has reduced taxes," says one sign.) Commenting on another billboard with a man standing in front, Prelinger says, "This was the labor candidate." What

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[108] *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco, 8*, screened at the Sebastopol Documentary Film Festival, March 29, 2014.

[109] *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco, 9*, screened at the Internet Archive in San Francisco, December 19, 2014.

[110] My description of Mr. Yesson's footage, here, comes from a documented screening of *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco, 10*, screened at the Internet Archive in San Francisco on December 9, 2015, and can be viewed here: http://longnow.org/seminars/02015/dec/09/lost-landscapes-san-francisco-10/

follows is footage of the Municipal Railway (MUNI) marching band, over which Prelinger asks, "Does this still exist?! It should!" Loud laughter. In the case of this sequence of home movie footage, Prelinger shows his interest in its back-story. In terms of content, he is especially focused on Mr. Yesson's support of union labor in his business. In terms of practical transmission of materials, how he acquired this home movie from Mr. Yesson's granddaughter is shared with the audience, showing the person-to-person transmission of materials, and debt to those who provide family materials for public viewing. The details of the signage, which shows the typographical fashions of the day, also provides a focus for the audience to think about the coming and going of trends and fashions. At the end, however, Prelinger leaves it up to the audience to date the footage themselves.

Provocatively, he occasionally warns that he could give false information so as to stimulate controversy among the spectators when they have fallen too silent. The audience must be present and active to keep the presenter honest. Eschewing the expectation of narrative framing and elaborate historical contextualization, Prelinger instead supplies a structure for the archival experience through hermeneutic directives sprinkled throughout the program. He very deliberately refrains from providing authoritative historicist domination over the image in order to allow the audience to have a more personal and collective, yet guided, relationship with the archival footage.

Interactivity within artistic spaces has become a source of fascination in the art world at the turn of the twenty-first century. French artist and critic Nicolas Bourriaud theorizes interactivity in art as "relational aesthetics" in his book of the same name, first published in France in 1997 (and translated into English in 2002). He defines "relational aesthetics" as, "A set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space."[111] Relational aesthetics, or relational art, as it is often called, creates social events and hinges the meaning of the art on the social experiences that result.[112] Bourriaud sought to characterize the shifts in artistic practice in the 1990s, to offer new criteria for their reception, and to position

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[111] Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2002), 113.

[112] The way that Bourriaud defines these artistic practices that began to take over the art world in the 1990s has much in common with the manner in which Timothy Corrigan theorizes the essay film as primarily concerned with the intersection of public and private space. (see Chapter 2: The Essayist's Archive)

interactive art as no less political than its generational predecessors.[113] The goals of Prelinger's *Lost Landscapes* programs are consistent with other relational art projects of the turn of the twenty-first century in terms of their focus on the transformation of aesthetic experiences into social ones.

The interactive mode Prelinger has developed for his live screenings relies on a return to old forms, an art of returns. He has suggested the Elizabethan theatre as the model for spectatorship for every one of his *Lost Landscape* programs, either in his introduction to the program or his press material, or both, since he became conscious of the parallels in interactive strategies. "I make digital films that play before audiences who talk while they're playing. I thought this was a radical move," reflects Prelinger, "until I realized what I was doing actually recalled old travel lectures from the late nineteenth century, and the Elizabethan theater with the rowdies in front from much earlier."[114] In addition to his staple suggestion that his audience emulate the spectatorial practices of the "Elizabethan" theatre, he has modeled his vision of interactivity after "question time in the house of commons," and "boxing matches."[115] The comparison of the theater of politics, and that of sport, to the arena of archival city projections suggests an incorporation of public realms such as civics, community building, and collective amusement into the historical consciousness strategy of his project.

Prelinger prefers to evoke modes of interactivity stemming from sport, political, and theatre predecessors in his introductions even though the *Lost Landscapes* series fits rather neatly into the "travel lecture film" tradition. Early travel lecture revues focused on the live personality not the material, according to Rick Altman.[116] The travel lecturer's "first-hand knowledge and expertise" satisfied the audience's demand for "authenticity".[117] Unlike the majority of travel lecturers, Prelinger was not present on location at the time the visual material was taken. He cannot therefore narrate the images from a first-person eyewitness perspective. He too must

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[113] Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October* 110 (Fall 2004): 53.

[114] Rick Prelinger, "The Noisy Archives." Keynote, Archives and Records Association of the United Kingdom conference, Newcastle, U.K., August 2014.

[115] Master class with Rick Prelinger, February 13, 2014.

[116] Rick Altman, "From lecturer's prop to industrial product: the early history of travel films," in *Virtual Voyages: Cinema and Travel*, Jeffrey Ruoff, ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 61.

[117] Liz Czach, "A Thrill Every Minute!": Travel-Adventure Film Lectures in the Post-War Era," in *Cinephemera: Archives, Ephemeral Cinema, and New Screen Histories in Canada*, Gerda Cammaer, and Zoë Druick, eds. (Montreal & Kingston : McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 74

speculate on much of what appears upon the screen. What he can do is provide information about the type of footage he is showing, how he acquired it, and what he thinks it shows. Like the early travel lectures, however, Prelinger's personality, expertise with the material, and status as a unique public figure are as important to the *Lost Landscapes* screenings as the films themselves.

Prelinger's role as MC during the *Lost Landscapes* programs encourages forms of participation, as well as states of diligence and play, analogous to pre-cinematic, and even pre-photographic, forms of spectacle interaction. "In-person presentation mirrors the live travelogue's emphasis on pre-industrial forms", writes Jeffrey Ruoff.[118] In his public introductions before the film programs begin, Prelinger explains his rather obscure reference to the Elizabethan theatre concisely in terms of the level of interactivity he expects: "You will provide the soundtrack. I'm going to ask you to yell out your questions, and to dispute what your neighbors are saying."[119] Why explicitly reference a practice of spectatorship from a different medium that was in practice some 500 years ago to encourage interactivity, when one might just as easily recall the first two decades of cinema spectators who practiced similar forms of interaction? Referencing the Elizabethan theatre might at first appear obscure and shocking, but there is good reason to ask for this particular type of engagement, which demands the embrace of a baroque embodied relationship to the work. Like the essay, the Elizabethan theatre came into being in the sixteenth century, and challenged a top-down construction of meaning by locating meaning in the spectator's bodily presence before the artwork and within the community to which the artwork speaks. Rather than refer the audience back to the early days of cinema, which may appear more retrogressive than radical, the reference to the Elizabethan theatre model allows the audience to escape the confines of twentieth-century spectatorship in order to think of the archival image as futuristic vision, and to think of their neighbors as collaborators. This provocation to aspire to Elizabethan spectatorship initiates a reflective nostalgic mode, a nostalgia "for the unrealized dreams of the past and the visions of the future that became obsolete […] not solely searching for newness and technological progress but for unrealized possibilities, unpredictable turns and crossroads."[120] Suggesting that the audience recall and emulate such a tradition within the context of an archival film program presents a cinematic experience that can

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[118] Jeffrey Ruoff, "Show and tell: the 16mm travel lecture film," in *Virtual Voyages: Cinema and Travel*, Jeffrey Ruoff, ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 232.

[119] *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco: 9*, screened at the Internet Archive, San Francisco. December 19, 2014.

[120] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, xvi.

be considered avant-garde for its innovative approach to archival experience and for its critical stance towards bourgeois institutions and spectatorship.

The Elizabethan theatre, a mode that dominated English theater in the Early Modern period from 1558-1642, has a reputation for providing a venue for the "illiterate rabble" to freely express themselves within the performance space.[121] Prelinger mystifies the call back to the Elizabethan theatre to some extent by relying on the conflation of some of the more exceptional characteristics of the mode as representative of the whole. English literature scholar, Michael Hattaway argues that scholars have tended towards this conflation through survivorship bias: "it was the disorderly performances that were recorded and not the peaceable ones," he writes.[122] Hattaway demonstrates that although the presence of "cutpurses" and disrupters is in evidence in the largely puritanical and sparse literature from the period, most Elizabethan theatre audiences were indeed attentive and prosperous, "not an unruly ignorant mob," as they have commonly been portrayed.[123] That said, some of the regular features of the Elizabethan theatre, as well as the potential for audience participation exhibited in some of the more exceptional occurrences, were quite different from today's spectatorial customs, providing opportunities for an interactive mode that could well serve twenty-first century needs for connectivity within a spectacular setting should they be revived. Hattaway argues that Elizabethan theatre was "more like a funfair than… a modern theatre," with abundant prospects for snack consumption (such as oranges, beer and nuts); pamphlet sellers calling out in the auditorium; hardly any reserved seating; and an established tradition of "gallants" smoking on the stage. "The players had to draw attention to themselves and could not count on reverent silence," observes Hattaway. Because performances took place in the daytime, spectators could see each other rather well and interact in the open, and often did so with the conviction that their interactions were as important to their theatre experience as those of the actors on stage. On at least one occasion, writes Hattaway, an audience "discontented with the day's offerings, demanded an impromptu performance" of a different play.[124] Exceptional as it was for an audience to make such demands, what it shows is that it was possible for the audience to exercise control over the proceedings and dictate their

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[121] Micahel Hattaway, *Elizabethan Popular Theatre: Plays in Performance* (London; Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), 44.
[122] Ibid., 45.
[123] Ibid., 45-6.
[124] Ibid., 46.

own desires by consensus in the Elizabethan theatre. The idea that Elizabethan theatre audiences were largely composed of constituents of the lower classes is another myth Hattaway works to dispel. He argues that, while it was possible for some members of the lower classes to attend some performances, it would have been unlikely that many could go given the cost of both transportation and attendance. In addition, afternoon performance schedules would have competed with the lower class's working hours, and prohibitions upon productions on the Sabbath when many workers had free time made finding a performance that fit their schedules difficult.[125] Thus, while the democratic ideal of the Elizabethan theatre, perpetuated by later historians, may not have existed as such in practice, there is evidence that the interactivity level within the performance space was considerably higher than in today's theatres, and that these were spaces in which members of the community could feel empowered to voice their opinions around the social and political issues of the day. The audience's physical occupation of the theatre, then, becomes an opportunity for creating a conversation space for the community, which is quite consistent with the mode of spectatorship Prelinger is looking to foster through his *Lost Landscapes* programs.

Through the suggestion of an Elizabethan spectatorship, Prelinger hopes to stimulate a performative understanding of the archival material in relationship to the audience and to disrupt dominant narratives in the process. As the audience watches each successive piece of footage, versions of the city performatively come into being and fade away. Prelinger stimulates a recognition of the performative quality of the footage through his commentary, as well. For instance, in *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco, 9,* over a piece of home movie footage of a cemetery on Laurel Hill that is no longer there, he says, "Think of this as an alternative universe."[126] The idea here is that the footage brings into being a scene from a possible version of San Francisco, which may or may not connect to other possible versions, indicating the instability with which the visible evidence can suggest a reliable and consistent historical narrative. And yet, each piece of footage does suggest an adjacent, or provisional, narrative to some degree, but only through the collective work of the audience to make sense of its signs and claim ownership over its implications.

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[125] Ibid., 47-8.

[126] *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco: 9*, screened at the Internet Archive, San Francisco. December 19, 2014.

Most of the "Elizabethan" soundtrack coming from the audience takes the form of laughter, the sporadic boo, gasps, and applause, along with the occasional identification and corrective. The nonverbal utterances issuing from the audience may at first appear less than sufficient to ascribe meaning to the footage. However, they are in fact competent indicators of a collective recognition of the "alternative universes" the city once inhabited. For example, a sponsored film showing images of the Bay Bridge while a voiceover makes laudatory statements about the city ends with a comparison of San Francisco to Babylon. The whole audience claps, displaying their enthusiasm for the notion of a Babylonian San Francisco.[127] In another instance, the appearance of the long since demolished Seal Stadium causes the audience to erupt in applause almost instantly.[128] The San Francisco Seals were the city's minor league baseball team from 1931-1957, when the Giants moved to San Francisco from New York City, giving San Francisco a major league team to follow. The stadium was torn down in 1959. As if to reward them for their recognition, Prelinger responds to the audience with a joke. Directing their attention to the scene as an unfolding present rather than a long lost world, he says, "Hold on…! They're losing!" Laughter erupts in the auditorium as the spectators draw their attention to the scoreboard. Humor breaks the distance created by unreflective nostalgic longing, and refocuses the audience towards a new understanding of the footage as the representation of another moment within its present tense, with its own future an unknown. The potential of viewing this past moment outside of its supposed narrative trajectory of cause and effect leading inevitably to the now makes room for a reflective nostalgic mode of spectatorship.

Another, more timely, instance of consensus in audience response comes during a shot of the many theater marquees and neon signs that lined Market Street somewhere between the time the city was rebuilt after the earthquake and fire of 1906 and before it was redeveloped in the 1960s. Interrupting the audience's enjoyment of the spectacle of brightly lit theatre signage at night, Prelinger observes a particular street corner, commenting, "That's now the Twitter building."[129] The audience, again shaken from their unreflective nostalgic stupor, begins to boo stridently. Their reaction is indicative of a bitter war over control of city spaces between long-time residents, business and government in general, and a history of unilateral municipal

[127] *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco, 8*, screened at the Sebastopol Documentary Film Festival, March 29, 2014.
[128] *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco, 9*, screened at the Internet Archive, San Francisco. December 19, 2014.
[129] Ibid.

decisions that sealed the fate of the Mid-Market area, as well as a recent influx of wealthy businesses. In particular, the Mid-Market district, where the Twitter building is now located, was a densely packed and vibrant theater district from 1906-1963, when its crown jewel, the Fox Theatre (est. 1929) was demolished and replaced by high-rise apartments. By 1967, the Market Street Beautification Act required marquees and neon signs to be removed, dimming the neighborhood's ability to draw spectators. In addition, from 1964-1974, BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) construction made that stretch of Market Street unnavigable, which forced many of the neighborhood's businesses to shut down.[130] The Mid-Market district was seen as a lost cause for decades after the last theatres closed. By 1985 even the famed *San Francisco Chronicle* daily columnist, Herb Caen was calling the mid-Market district "le grand pissoir" due to the concentration of the city's homeless on those blocks.[131] Ever since the decline of the mid-Market district in the 1960s, urban developers and politicians have had great difficulty revitalizing the area. The presence of the tech industry in the city became a hot button issue in the 2010s when the city suddenly became radically unaffordable after many tech companies moved to San Francisco from Silicon Valley to set up their headquarters, primarily in the Mid-Market district. Now that the district has become a zone for the tech industry and high-end dining, the city's elite have claimed victory and ownership over the district, marketing its transformations as signs of progress for business and tourism. For Prelinger's "Elizabethan theatre" of local spectators, however, tech companies such as Twitter are seen as contributing to the displacement of the poor, and now even the middle class, which, for them, is a sign of San Francisco's ruin.

Spectators confer their own personal and collective meanings on the versions of the city shown in the archival footage of the *Lost Landscapes* programs. Significantly, through their vocal *and* their auditory corporeal participation, they establish the relevance of the archival views within the current urban social sphere through embodied participation. Reflective nostalgia, visual pleasure, community engagement, and commitment to local development are the goals of these screenings. Prelinger does not attempt to focus the group towards the

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[130] Toby Marx, "Mid-Market," *Up From the Deep* (blog), https://upfromthedeep.com/mid-market/ (Last accessed, June 13, 2017).

[131] Ben Trefny and R. J. Sloan, "The haves and have-nots of San Francisco's mid-Market district," KALW Local Public Radio, 91.7FM in San Francisco, Jan 17, 2013. http://kalw.org/post/haves-and-have-nots-san-franciscos-mid-market-district#stream/0 (Last accessed, June 6, 2017).

development of positivistic theses on the future of the city, but rather fosters a space that connects subjective enjoyment and evidentiary experience with collective stakes.

Home Movies

The ordinary can become extraordinary not by eclipsing the everyday, or imagining we can arbitrarily leap beyond it to some "higher" level of cognition, knowledge or action, but by fully appropriating and activating the possibilities that lie hidden, and typically repressed, within it.

—Michael E. Gardiner[132]

Prelinger's collection of ephemeral films can be divided into three main categories: amateur films, feature film outtakes, and sponsored films. Outtakes, such as process plates and establishing shots, make up a significant portion of *Lost Landscapes of Los Angeles* and can also be found in *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco*. And while more sponsored films were made in Detroit than anywhere else in the US, *Lost Landscapes* iterations from each of the cities provide notable examples of sponsored films that use the city as a backdrop. Of the different kinds of amateur film, home movies are by far the most prevalent, and are the key component of the archival fabric of the *Lost Landscapes* films.

Since the 1970s, the "new history" movement has placed a greater emphasis on the historical importance of the "everyday," and home movies have become a crucial source of historical information. "The scholarly, archival, and artistic interest in home movies," writes Karen L. Ishizuka in *Mining the Home Movie*, has helped recognize "an important body of repressed knowledge to be reactivated and reworked within new historiographic and artistic paradigms" taking place within a "larger scholarly context of searching for a form of history that was diverse, multicultural, radicalized, feminist, and regional."[133] Paula Amad argues that film is more suited than other mediums to represent everyday life as history, presenting us with an "unreliable, anonymous, unofficial, and uneventful history,"[134] which challenges the notion that historical events are defined as grand actions taken by important figures. The "evidentiary

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[132] Michael E. Gardiner, "Everyday Knowledge," *Theory Culture Society* 23 (2006): 207.

[133] Karen L. Ishizuka, ed. *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 10.

[134] Paula Amad, *Counter-Archive: Film, the Everyday, and Albert Kahn's Archives De La Planète*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010. 4.

value," as Prelinger terms it, of the home movie lies in this everydayness that, as unassuming as it seems to be, conspires to unravel the top-down, positivist notions of history handed down from old historicism. Through multiple archival experiences, we begin to recognize the difficulty with which each successive image fits into our culturally received historical paradigms and their concurrent narratives. As Prelinger argues, "Home movies are wonderful to invoke as evidence because it is easy to see how subjectivity, ambiguity, error and lack of cinematic competence all introduce noise into the production of meaning."[135] Home movies thus provide a picture of everydayness that does not so much create a whole narrative of life at a particular time or place, as microhistories do, but rather intervenes into the totalizing narratives that have been inserted into our historical consciousnesses through modern mythological means to pave over the past by representing it as complete and known.

In an introduction to a screening of *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco, 8*, Prelinger suggested a hermeneutic for viewing the home movie footage in the screening: "Home movies are ordinary people's expression. They aren't corporate expressions. Think about the very special nature of home movies."[136] What is the "very special nature of home movies" that Prelinger asks his audience to consider? As he points out, the evidentiary experience gained from the documentation of everyday life by ordinary people differs greatly from institutional representations of everyday life. First, the amateur textual production of a home movie-maker gives the audience a sense that anyone can contribute to the production of meaning around the present and the past without the burden of having to be definitive, exact, objective, skilled, or capable of representing others. Prelinger observes the benefits of the amateur production:

> At a minimum, showing old home movies and amateur film to contemporary audiences creates a sense of entitlement regarding their own histories. They realize that their own family images might have value when shown to others, and draw a link between personal records previously deemed of little interest to others and a broader, shared set of histories.[137]

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[135] Cook, Herrera and Robbins, "Interview with Rick Prelinger," 179.

[136] *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco, 8*, screened at the Sebastopol Documentary Film Festival, March 29, 2014.

[137] Cook, Herrera and Robbins, "Interview with Rick Prelinger," 180.

Second, home movies bear witness to the existence of groups of people left out of the historical record, or representational sphere, by the dominant culture. In 1932 Kodak released its first double 8mm home movie cameras, "Cine Kodak Eight," and within a few years they became accessible even to working class families in the US. Suddenly working families, people of color, and rural people begin to create documentation of their own versions of Americana.[138] Although the self-representations of the marginalized did not significantly enter the academic or public spheres until home movies began to draw the interest of filmmakers, scholars, and community organizers in the 1970s, once their reevaluation took place, the historical record was greatly diversified. Third, home movies by their very nature provide a record of both the mundane and the exceptional. They confirm that, in many ways, we are all the same, and in the next breath, that our differences can be quite profound. Prelinger's extensive experience with home movie viewing has led him to conclude that

> Home movies are incredibly random and incredibly specific. Home movies are very codified. Typically home movies have positive motivations around them. People often shoot people or places that they loved. There are birthday parties and New Year's celebrations … But while the sameness is fascinating, you look for the differences. There's always an exception that makes you understand the rule. You never know what you're going to get when you look at a reel of them.[139]

Home movies have the capacity for nearly endless boredom and exquisite revelation. They are therefore materials in great need of visionary collectors and curators. As a collector and curator, Prelinger provides evidentiary experiences that are not only manageable and enjoyable for the public, but also provocatively engage with the epistemological limits of home movie footage.

Traveling Camera Anamorphosis: The Phantom Ride Meets the Feature Film Outtake

The *Lost Landscapes* films' use of traveling camera footage, primarily from process plates, aerial shots, home movies taken from streetcars and automobiles, phantom rides and government

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[138] Miranda, "Q&A: 'Lost Landscapes of Los Angeles': Rick Prelinger's new film of old home movies and studio outtakes," *The Los Angeles Times*, November 15, 2015.

[139] *The Los Angeles Times*, "Q&A: 'Lost Landscapes of Los Angeles': Rick Prelinger's new film of old home movies and studio outtakes."

sponsored films, provides variety and continuity to the topographical exploration of the city, as well as the visual delight and the immersive spectatorship of a cinema of attractions. In all of the versions of *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco*, Prelinger shows phantom rides down Market Street, sometimes including the now famous *A Trip Down Market Street Before the Fire* (1906), but more often focusing on rarely seen footage of the same trip decades later. In *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco, 3*,[140] phantom rides down Market Street, culled from different eras of home movie footage, surround an extended excerpt from *A Trip Down Market Street*. Prelinger first shows several minutes of a color home movie depicting a cable car at its turn-around point from "around 1938…when a lot of people started shooting color film". Then we see another color home movie phantom ride that takes us up and down various hills aboard a cable car, ending at the Ferry Building (where Market Street meets the Bay): "Shot about sixty-two-ish I think, and it's just San Francisco seen from a cable car but it's kind of beautiful—it's *Vertigo*-like in a way," he remarks before a spectator identifies a 1964 automobile make, which is met with Prelinger's appreciation for the corrective. Then the last four minutes of *A Trip Down Market Street*, also ending at the Ferry Building, garners cheers from the audience. (Figure 8)

Figure 8 Phantom ride frame grab from *A Trip Down Market Street Before the Fire* (1906).

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[140] *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco, 3*, screened at the Castro Theatre on December 19, 2008. http://longnow.org/seminars/02008/dec/19/lost-landscapes-of-san-francisco/

This crowd pleaser is followed by a few static black and white shots of Market Street from the 1940s, in which cars are parked in the middle of the street; a member of the audience identifies this footage as depicting a streetcar strike. And finally, we continue on towards the Ferry Building in a color mid-1950s home movie "phantom ride". The Ferry Building is the constant reference, and vanishing, point of the last four clips.

In *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco, 8*, we see a similar focus on the Ferry Building and nearby Market Street area in the beginning of the screening, but the footage is completely different from that of *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco, 3. A Trip Down Market Street* is no longer the star—it has been left behind entirely in favor of a process plate. The focus of this Market Street montage commences with black and white static camera shots—newly discovered footage from the 1920s—of the street filled with streetcars, people navigating the clogged terrain, and similar footage of the same from 1937: "we're just getting the safety material out of the way, showing just how dangerous it used to be to try to catch a car on Market Street," remarks Prelinger; "Some of these shots are from a film made in 1937 encouraging people to vote for the construction of a Market Street subway," Prelinger informs the audience; "That's how long it takes to build things in San Francisco!" he jokes, and the audience roars in agreement.[141] After a few more medium static shots of people jumping on and off packed streetcars and filing through the narrow gaps between them, which makes the audience gasp at the tight corridors passengers used to have to walk to board and disembark the streetcars, and then a few static color shots of streetcars turning around at the Ferry Building, there is a cut to a very clear black and white moving image looking down Market toward the Ferry Building in a central perspective. (Figure 9) "This is about 1934; this is an outtake from an independent feature film, a process plate meant for rear projection out the back of a fake taxi cab, probably. So during a conversation this is what you would see," says Prelinger.[142] At a different screening of *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco, 8*, the audiences "oohs" at the sight, and one of its members yells out, "Is that 35mm?" to Prelinger's delight. "It is!" he responds excitedly.[143] The clip goes on for nearly two minutes as the invisible car that carries the camera moves further away from

[141] *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco, 8*, screened at the Castro Theatre on December 17, 2013.
[142] Ibid.
[143] *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco, 8*, screened at the Sebastopol Documentary Film Festival, March 29, 2014.

the Ferry Building. Spectators call out the names of the different buildings they see along the way.

Figure 9 Process plate frame grab depicting Market Street from a 1934 "independent feature".

Later in the *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco, 8* program we find another feature film outtake; this one is identified as coming from *The Lineup* (1958), a noir film version of a popular mid-1950s police procedural television show, featuring many San Francisco location shots. This "phantom ride" outtake is shot from the front of a car as it drives from the city street to the end of a raised unfinished freeway in the center of the city. Prelinger identifies the footage as an outtake from *The Lineup* and warns, "Hang on!"[144] or "Fasten your seatbelts!"[145] when the shot begins, calling attention to the embodied sensations of the viewing experience. The car's movements are quick with many turns like an amusement park ride. The experience of watching the footage with an audience parallels the early "travel ride films," or "movie rides," provided by the likes of *Hale's Tours and Scenes of the World* (minus the surrounding simulated vehicle apparatus), and more recently, IMAX (minus the big screen). As they watch the outtake from *The Lineup*, the audience responds to the twisting motion of the vehicle with woos and hoots at each bend and as it builds up speed along the last long stretch of road. As the car nears the freeway's end, the audience collectively screams. (Figure 10) Uncomfortably close to the edge,

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[144] Ibid.

[145] *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco, 8*, screened at the Castro Theatre on December 17, 2013.

the car makes a last minute 90-degree turn to avoid plummeting to the street below, coming to an abrupt halt with a perfect view of the Bay Bridge. (Figure 11) The audience erupts into applause and relieved laughter. "Across the century, ride films articulate a seemingly contradictory process for the spectator: they attempt to dematerialize the subject's body through its visual extension into the cinematic field while they emphasize the spectator's body itself as the center of an environment of action and excitement," argues Lauren Rabinovitz.[146]

Figures 10 & 11 Outtake from *The Lineup* (1958) showing an unfinished San Francisco freeway and the Bay Bridge.

In other words, the sense of physical immersion fostered through the ride film at once relies upon, and collapses, the binary between disembodied and embodied spectatorship. The spectacle of dynamic movement through the city, coupled with the rare view of the city from an incomplete empty freeway, a freeway that every San Franciscan knows so well, places the emphasis on the delight of a localized collective evidentiary experience that comes through an obscure, and thus unexpected, archival source.

Outtakes from feature films comprise a unique set of archival location-specific material in the *Lost Landscapes* films. Unlike other city-symphonies-in-reverse that excerpt the finished feature film materials themselves, such as *Los Angeles Plays Itself,* the *Lost Landscapes* films give new life to several types of feature film outtakes that provide considerable location-specific visible evidence not contained, or barely perceptible, in the finished film itself. A search among the outtakes of Hollywood feature films may turn up any number of location shots, static or

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[146] Lauren Rabinovitz, "From Hale's Tours to Star Tours: Virtual Voyages, Travel Ride Films, and the Delirium of the Hyper-Real," in *Virtual Voyages: Cinema and Travel*, Jeffrey Ruoff, ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 45.

moving, to be used as establishing shots, process plates, or inserts. "I love these feature film outtakes because there's no requirement that anything happens," remarks Prelinger over a color shot of the exterior of the Flood Building in San Francisco in the late 1950s or early 1960s.[147] Middle-aged men awkwardly stop when they notice the camera and then hurry to get out of the shot, which makes the audience laugh. Indeed, the only original requirement of the on-location outtake is that the camera capture a short amount of usable footage of the location. In order to produce the necessary options for the needed location footage, however, second units often had to shoot at several locations, allowing shots to go on for up to twenty minutes in some cases. Length of footage was important to be certain the shot would not end before the scene into which it was to be inserted did, thus ruining the illusion of the composite diegesis through a cut in the background. Of the various types of on-location outtakes found in studio archives—establishing shots, transparency shots, insert footage, and process plates—the richest in length, detail and coverage of urban locations is unquestionably process plates. And yet, barely anything has been written about them, either for their use as special effects, as visible evidence, or as a form of moving image spectacle.

Enabling studios to streamline production by keeping actors on sound stages while camera crews went on location, rear projection was a ubiquitous composite special effect in Hollywood productions from 1930s to the 1970s.[148] Rear projection allowed prefilmed material to be projected in the background on "plates" while actors occupied the foreground. The most common use of rear projection was the "process plate" or "process shot," a continuous shot taken from a moving vehicle that made actors appear to be traveling through space. When rear projection involves projected footage taken from a static camera, it is called a "transparency shot".[149] Rear projection was almost never as seamless as film technicians, directors, and studios hoped it would be, special effects film historian Julie Turnock contends. It was "usually characterized by a recognizable difference between the foreground action and the rear projection footage,"[150] a discrepancy that often distracted spectators, taking them out of their suspended

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[147] *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco, 8*, screened at the Castro Theatre on December 17, 2013. http://longnow.org/seminars/02013/dec/17/lost-landscapes-san-francisco-8/

[148] Julie Turnock, "The Screen on the Set: the Problem of Classical-Studio Rear Projection," *Cinema Journal*, Volume 51, Number 2 (Winter 2012): 157.

[149] Ibid., 158.

[150] Ibid., 159.

disbelief. Because the background was "always a second generation, or 'dupe,' and therefore a lesser-quality image," than the "first-generation" foreground, the dissimilarity between the two was difficult to make inconspicuous.[151] As a result, film technicians spent considerable effort raising the quality of the process plate footage and its projection to compensate for the incongruity of image quality. Among the strategies for improving the quality of the background image was the use of "higher-format film stock such as VistaVision or 70mm".[152] Due to the feature film industry's widespread use of higher definition film in the creation of process plates, those that remain in existence are the highest image-quality footage of location shooting available, making them excellent source materials to be considered for reuse either as visible evidence or as sublime spectacle, or both. Prelinger is the only filmmaker that I have found in my research to employ process plates for the purposes of evidentiary experience *and* visual pleasure in a feature-length work.

The reuse of the process plate in the *Lost Landscape* films literally brings backgrounds to the foreground. What was made to represent only a background is now the main attraction. Its detail is increased dramatically as a first generation image. Instead of seeing a difference in the re-recorded quality of the process plate from the screen, where the foreground is clean and the background shows varying degrees of degradation, the process plate itself, filmed in 35mm or even 70mm, shows the detail of the location shots unobstructed. The foreground is removed and what was once merely background, unintended to be watched with voluntary attention, partially obscured by the actors and vehicle interiors in the foreground, and degraded by filming it from a screen projection, becomes a scene for inspection and visual pleasure.

Process plates present unintentional topographical documents of cities and their surroundings, unlike the other sources of location-specific traveling shots. Their original use value was to signify a typicality of location and a movement through space consistent with automobile or train locomotion. To stand in as a figural representation of a city or landscape, buildings, roads, streets and trees needed to suggest location through typologies of urban or rural space, and provide a realistic backdrop for the real focus of the scene, the actors. But in the afterlife Prelinger gives process plates, they become unique, concrete records capable of revealing "lost landscapes" in greater photographic detail and coverage than potentially any other

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[151] Ibid.

[152] Ibid.

source.

In one of only two scholarly articles[153] devoted to the history and theory of the use of process plates in rear projection, Julie Turnock argues that "composite work in general, but rear projection in particular, can show us the seams of a classical Hollywood system," and bring up questions about its "assumed totalizing effect". Undoing classical attempts at seamlessness by separating the process plate from its use value, that is, of attempting to create (and often failing to do so) a seamless composite, demonstrates the hidden potential in its components: a baroque fragmentation that allows for new meaning beyond the classical value of seamless realism in the service of narrative. And yet, the projection of the process plate as a "first generation" image, one that lacks the degradation caused by refilming the projected image or actors obstructing the view, creates its own inverted form of seamless central perspective for the spectator, albeit reversing the classical direction of topographical mastery insinuated by the phantom ride in the majority of cases.

In its new role as foreground, the process plate footage demands a reorientation of spectatorship. What had previously only represented movement and a vague sense of location, for example a country road or urban setting, now becomes both visible evidence of a particular location, revealed in detail through a rather comprehensive traveling camera, and an enjoyable spectacle of movement through space. At first glance, the spectacle of the process plate on its own seems to parallel that of the early film genre, the phantom ride. When anamorphically repositioned into the foreground, process plates provide a spectatorial experience comparable to the phantom ride in terms of classical central perspective and movement through space. Examination of a frame grab from either source yields nearly identical images in terms of the convergence of lines, be they from the street or the railroad, towards a vanishing point. Because this perspective is so similar, the key to determining from a frame grab whether one was looking at an image from a process plate or from a phantom ride comes from dating the image through its content and formal qualities, and from the orientation of the other vehicles in the picture—the backs of cars indicate the forward positioning of the phantom ride, while the fronts of cars indicate the backward view of the process plate. The "uncanny effect of ghostly movement" that

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[153] Laura Mulvey's 2007 *Film Quarterly* piece on process plates, "A Clumsy Sublime," is a fascinating initial foray into the topic, but only occupies one page of text. By contrast, Turnock's 2012 *Cinema Journal* piece is the only sustained writing on process plates that I have found in my research.

Tom Gunning remarked gave the phantom ride its name[154] also finds its cognate in the unveiled process plate.

The differences between the phantom ride and the process plate, however, are as profound as they are subtle. First, the original use-value of location in the phantom ride and the process plate could not be more different: phantom rides aimed to penetrate the spectator into exotic locations, capitalizing on the excitement around train travel at the turn of the twentieth century, while process plates were made to show only typologies of everyday environments as well as the regular motion of a car or train traveling through space, which had become banal by the mid-twentieth century. From the first phantom ride, *The Haverstraw Tunnel* (USA, 1897), the genre was consumed with the spectacle of location and locomotion. The process plate, on the other hand, was made to be as inconspicuous as possible. In stripping the process plate of its previous function and presenting it to an audience on its own, it takes on many of the cinema of attractions characteristics of the phantom ride. Even in its transformation into visual spectacle, the process plate retains some of its modesty, affecting spectatorship, however.

Second, the anamorphically repositioned process plate crucially differs from the phantom ride in its spatial and temporal positioning of the spectator through movement. Whereas the phantom ride puts us in the driver's seat spatially if not practically, the process plate orients us to the rear view. We can see where we have been, but not where we are going. Gunning and Noël Burch have both written about the effects of the phantom ride's central perspective forward movement on spectatorship.[155] The retreating spectatorship contrasts deeply with the advancing one of the phantom ride. The mood of watching the landscape pass by from the back of a vehicle is more contemplative and nostalgic than the plunge forward from the front, which "delivers a fantasy of total visual dominance," according to Gunning.[156] Unable to see ahead and fantasize that we have mastery over our position within the environment, instead we fixate on signposts that suddenly appear within the panorama, dazzle our vision with their brilliant detail, and get smaller and less distinct as we quickly move away from them. We feel a bit helpless; we have trouble accounting for all that comes into our view; we must let go of control as our direction

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[154] Tom Gunning, "Landscape and the Fantasy of Moving Pictures: Early Cinema's Phantom Rides" in *Cinema and Landscape*, Graeme Harper and Jonathan Rayner, eds. (Chicago: Intellect Books, 2010), 55.

[155] In addition to Gunning's "Landscape and the Fantasy of Moving Pictures," see Noël Burch, *Life to Those Shadows*, Ben Brewster, trans. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

[156] Gunning, "Landscape and the Fantasy of Moving Pictures," 58.

changes course and we lose sight of things that fall out of view in the distance; and yet, the sense that we must remain vigilant to bear witness to the scene remains. This is the orientation of Benjamin's Angel of History.

Prelinger's anamorphic repositioning of his rescued process plate footage, with its reflective nostalgic mood towards space and time as well as the triumph over its former life as a commodity, is thus an apt allegory for the city-symphony-in-reverse itself. The phantom ride, like the city symphony, is a product of a medium in its youth in times concerned primarily with the notion of progress. The repositioning of the process plate, like the repositioning of various archival footage in the city-symphony-in-reverse, is a product of a medium in its golden years, a medium with plenty of secrets still left to reveal, but dangerously close to the edge of oblivion. The reversal of direction, and therefore spectatorship, that occurs between the phantom ride and the repositioned process plate provides the appropriate bookends for the medium: the one becomes an allegory for the other. Prelinger's decision to collect and present process plates demonstrates his keen awareness of the power of anamorphic collecting and filmmaking practices that aim at reframing documents as, and against, spectacle.

The Ruins of Two American Cities: San Francisco and Detroit

Recent theorists of the baroque, such as Helen Hills, have proposed the baroque as an antidote to decadence and decay. For scholars such as Hills, Benjamin, Gilles Deleuze, and Mieke Bal, who have sought to rethink and revive the baroque, the idea sheds light on the past through a "backward-looking address that is not simply retrospective, one that refuses to see as significant in the past only those aspects which received either contemporaneous recognition or some later more auspicious embodiment". Instead, according to Hills, they propose "an address that engages those aspects that have been more particularly or more profoundly lost".[157] In this way, a baroque historicity takes on a baroque reflective nostalgia that brings into being that which has been lost at the same time as it delimits the terms of evidentiary experience. City-symphonies-in-reverse construct baroque evidentiary experiences in order to combat two decaying organisms, to be understood both literally and figuratively: the archive (archives, the archival image, and the concept of the archive itself), and the city (its physical decay, its history, and its socio-political

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[157] Helen Hills, *Rethinking the Baroque*, (Burlington: Ashgate, 2011), 4.

relationship to modernity). Through what Benjamin referred to as ruins, the outmoded materials of the not-too-distant-past, city-symphonies-in-reverse take a baroque approach to the past in order to find what has been left behind unrecognized and unmourned.

The *Lost Landscapes* programs depict the modern city as a process, as opposed to a fact. The process is that of building and tearing down; repetition of movements; passageways connecting and disconnecting people. The protean nature of the city is emphasized through implicit questions to the local audiences: what do you recognize because it remains in the city today? And, what is recognizable only because you remain? What do you see that is no longer recognizable to anyone? And what will soon no longer be recognizable without you?

In their present states, San Francisco and Detroit appear to represent the furthest poles of twentieth century urban progress. In comparing their extremes, however, what they have in common is their inaccessibility to the progeny of the generations of people who strove to modernize their cities in the mid-century, the period represented in Prelinger's archival footage. Detroit's crumbling infrastructure makes maintaining a life in many parts of the city extremely difficult; while San Francisco's influx of highly paid tech transplants has driven housing costs to the point that many "native" San Franciscans are unable to live in their city. The result of the modernization that was so intensely pursued over much of the twentieth century, then, has been, for both cities, a displacement of their people. Therefore, in both cases the inhabitants and descendants of the city represented in the footage shown in each respective *Lost Landscapes* program are largely unable to be present to identify their history because they no longer live there. The local audiences for the San Francisco and Detroit *Lost Landscapes* films are, then, a privileged few who have escaped the catastrophe of forced migration out of their hometowns. What exists now in each city is the future of the people we see in Prelinger's archival footage. These urban subjects dreamt of, and invested in, the creation of their cities as places their progeny could live. The reality is that few of their descendents are able to do so.

There are currently hardly any large sites in San Francisco that anyone would call ruins. San Francisco is a peninsula, surrounded by water on three sides, and unable to grow to accommodate the ever-increasing demand for space within the city limits. Thus, the idea that any designed space would be allowed to remain fallow and decay in San Francisco is contrary to the practical demands of a wealthy growth-oriented city at capacity. While you can find buildings in

need of repair, particularly in the slums of the Tenderloin, and other impoverished districts like Hunter's Point and the Excelsior, older architecture is either well-preserved or torn down and replaced with modern, and increasingly more luxurious, housing.

There are a few actual ruins that are worth mentioning in this context in San Francisco. The most identifiable San Francisco ruin is probably the Sutro Baths, footage of which is included in many of the *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco* films. The enormous nineteenth century structure containing heated indoor swimming pools (the world's largest), a natural history and archaeology museum (the Egyptian mummy was rather popular), as well as restaurants and performance spaces, were evidence of innovative glass, iron, wood and concrete engineering combined with a modern city's interest in the health, education and aesthetic pleasure of its residents. Accommodating up to 10,000 people at once, the baths drew the whole city to the cold and windy ocean to bathe in salt water for 70 years. In 1964, they were closed and demolition began. The remaining structure burnt down in 1966.[158] The site still remains at Lands End as ruinous testament to another life the city once led.

And then there are the missing places that have left no traces on the cityscape. The city's lack of ruins and memorials make it difficult to remember what had been possible in the past. The *Lost Landscapes* screen becomes an access point to the city's former heterotopias.

Figure 12 Playland at the Beach frame grab from *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco*.

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[158] "Sutro Baths History," National Park Services webite. https://www.nps.gov/goga/learn/historyculture/sutro-baths.htm (Last accessed, May 12, 2016).

For instance, long gone spectacle and play sites, such as Seal Stadium in the Mission district (1931-59), Playland at the Beach (1928-1972) (Figure 12), the Pan Pacific Expo of 1915 (which once inhabited what is now the Presidio and the Marina districts), and the Golden Gate International Exposition of 1939-40 on Treasure Island, arouse audible joy in the audience whenever they are included in the programs, even amongst those viewers who do not call San Francisco home. In 2014, after a new bridge had been built beside the Oakland section of the Bay Bridge, and had been opened to the public, the older bridge was slowly being disassembled. (Figure 13) An uncanny, yet humourous, cyclical visuality surfaced near the beginning of *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco, 9* when 1930s footage of the building of the San Francisco Bay Bridge, in which huge sections stood but were not connected to each other, provoked a spectator to exclaim, "Hey, it looks just like that now!"[159] (Figure 14)

Figure 13 San Francisco Bay Bridge during demolition in 2014. Note the newly constructed bridge behind it.

Figure 14 Frame grab from *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco, 9*, San Francisco Bay Bridge during construction 1935 or 1936.

The audience responds affirmatively. The footage of the Bay Bridge's birth became an allegory for its death. The fact that San Francisco has few ruins to visit does not mean that the city's

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[159] *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco, 9*, screened at the Internet Archive, San Francisco. December 19, 2014.

inhabitants do not need to experience its ruins. The *Lost Landscapes* programs provide an alternative experience of urban ruins through the traces that unexpectedly remain in the margins of the moving image archive.

Conversely, Detroit today is a city struggling under the weight of its ruins, both physically and in the cultural imaginary. From 2010-2012, several feature-length documentaries and a series, were released exploring the current state of the city.[160] Many of these films engaged in the trendy practice of "ruin porn," presenting the crumbling architecture of Detroit for visual pleasure.[161] Prelinger has come out against this practice[162] because it fetishizes physical destruction and prematurely declares the death of a city that residents are still working to revive. Instead, *Lost Landscapes of Detroit* focuses on media ruins of a thriving inhabited Detroit to show what once was, and what may be again.

One of the media ruins that Prelinger routinely uses to establish a sense of the outmoded in relationship to the modern city is a one-minute opening clip, excerpted from a sponsored film and used in all the versions of the *Lost Landscapes of Detroit* programs (including *Yesterday and Tomorrow in Detroit*). The clip comes from a 1950s auto industry advertisement, *Key to Our Horizons* (1952, 11mins),[163] commissioned by Chevrolet to underscore America's cultural and economic dependence on automobiles. *Key to Our Horizons* was produced by the Jam Handy Organization, and is an excellent example of institutional advertising. "Rather than promoting

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[160] See, *Detroit Wild City* (2010), an uncanny trip through the ruins of Detroit; *Requiem for Detroit?* (2010), British filmmaker, Julien Temple's "ruin porn" documentary about the city's decay; *Detroit Lives* (2010), a three part Vice productions series featuring Johnny Knoxville; *Redefining Dreamland* (2011); *Urban Roots* (2011), about how Detroit communities are transforming vacant lots into subsistence gardens; *Detropia* (2012), about artists who try to take over the fallen Detroit; *Burn* (2012), about Detroit firefighters.

[161] In a 2009 interview, Detroit photographer James Griffioen was the first to use the phrase "ruin porn" to describe the morbid fascination with photographing Detroit's abandoned and decaying spaces. In the years that followed, but especially in 2011, major American news outlets, such as the *Huffington Post* and the *New York Times*, ran feature stories on the "ruin porn" of Detroit. See, Thomas Morton, "Something, Something, Something . . . Detroit: Lazy Journalists Love Pictures of Abandoned Stuff," *Vice* (August 1, 2009).

[162] In his introductions to *Lost Landscapes of Detroit* and *Yesterday and Tomorrow in Detroit* programs Prelinger would often warn his audiences that the presentation they are about to see would not engage in the aims of "ruin porn". For instance, in his introduction to a February 10, 2010 screening of *Lost Landscapes of Detroit*, he stated: "This isn't going to be a narrative of urban decline or the 'ruins porn' that's become fashionable. Rather, it's a collection of amazing and almost-all-lost footage that celebrates a vibrant, busy and productive Detroit from 1917 through the 1970s. The idea is to bring these images back to Detroiters for their contemplation and use as they rebuild their city for the future." For a transcript of his introduction to this screening, see, Denise Dalphond, "Lost Landscapes of Detroit," *Denise, DJs, & Detroit* (blog), February 11, 2010. http://denisedjsdetroit.blogspot.ca/2010/02/lost-landscapes-of-detroit.html (Last accessed, June 23, 2017).

[163] Watch the full 11minutes of *Key to Our Horizons* online here: https://archive.org/details/KeytoOur1952

the products of the company, these films are about promoting the corporate view, or promoting the corporation as an entity," explains Prelinger.[164] Even though they are some of the most ideologically transparent sponsored films, and thus fascinating records of corporate agendas in different time periods and industries, to date little scholarship exists on institutional advertising films.

The Detroit-based Jam Handy Organization (JHO) that produced *Key to Our Horizons,* "was perhaps the longest-lived American media production company," making over 25,000 "educational, training, and promotional films for a wide spectrum of businesses, associations, and government agencies."[165] Henry Jamison "Jam" Handy (1886-1983) established the company in his belief that film could deliver on the educational theories and promises advanced by various sociologists in the early twentieth century.[166] In Prelinger's study of the JHO, he found that their film work fell into roughly three types: first, "Films promoting a specific product or product lines"; second, "Films promoting a corporate image or brand" (institutional advertising); and third, "Advocacy films promoting particular positions" on policy.[167] The JHO had a lasting relationship with General Motors and made a great number of films over many decades for their Chevrolet division that fell into each of these types. In its general promotion of car culture versus the specific promotion of one of their products, *Key to Our Horizons* contrasts with another JHO production done for Chevrolet in the same year, *A Great New Star* (1952, 12mins),[168] a theatrical commercial for the 1953 Chevrolet BelAir, famous for Dinah Shore's performance of the song, "See the U.S.A. in your new Chevrolet". The lack of an explicit sales pitch in *Key to Our Horizons* helped General Motors to promote the notion that everyone needed a car, and that the automobile industry was the main pillar of the American economy, in venues that their other films could not go, such as classrooms.

Technologies of vision, the urban environment, and American ideology around commerce, car culture and modernity converge in the one-minute opening clip from *Key to Our*

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[164] Vonderau, "Vernacular Archiving: An Interview with Rick Prelinger," 60.

[165] Rick Prelinger, "Smoothing the Contours of Didacticism: Jam Handy and His Organization," *Learning with the Lights Off: Educational Film in the United States*, Orgeron, Devin, Marsha Orgeron, and Dan Streible, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 339.

[166] Ibid., 338-9.

[167] Ibid., 342-3.

[168] Watch the full 12 minutes of *A Great New Star* online here: https://archive.org/details/GreatNew1952

Horizons. The Detroit setting is important because the period from which the film emerges puts us in Detroit's "Motor City" glory days. In this period Detroit was considered the most modern city in America, and was represented as such in the media. As a media ruin, Prelinger's audience understands the clip as already ironic.

The one-minute clip from *Key to Our Horizons* that Prelinger uses to start his *Lost Landscapes of Detroit* films requires a short description. We first see a black and white moving image of a busy street with tall buildings and many 1940s and early 1950s era automobiles driving down the street. A voice-of-God narration runs throughout the entire clip. It begins, "This picture, as you can see, was taken in a busy American city." (Figure 15) We then see a still image of the same street from the same perspective; this image shows the same buildings but the street is devoid of cars. "This picture was taken at exactly the same time and at the same spot." (Figure 16)

Figure 15 Detroit cityscape photographed with a motion picture camera.

Figure 16 Detroit cityscape photographed with a daguerreotype camera.

The voiceover continues, "Question: how was it done? A modern motion picture camera photographed the traffic in action, while the Daguerre camera, the great-great-granddaddy of all cameras, was used to photograph the buildings alone." We see the same scene, but now two cameramen stand next to each other in the foreground facing away from us. (Figure 17) The man on the left is wearing a 1940s era short-sleeved shirt, tucked into slacks, as he peers through the viewfinder of a film camera. The man on the right wears a nineteenth century style coat with tails and has a waxed moustache, as he examines a pocket watch next to a covered camera. "The action of this camera is so slow that there isn't time for moving objects to register on the film,"

the voiceover informs us. We then see a close-up of the old camera lens and wooden casing. (Figure 18)

Figure 17 Detroit cityscape with camera operators in foreground: motion picture cameraman on the left; daguerreotype photographer on the left.

Figure 18 Close-up of daguerreotype camera.

"On the other hand, the buildings, being stationary, gradually formed a sharp clear image," the voiceover continues. The lens cap is placed on the camera and it is covered up with its dark cloth, showing the fragility of the outdated object. "Why use the daguerreotype?" asks the narrator. We are shown a close-up of hands holding the still photograph of the street scene taken by the daguerreotype, showing only buildings. The emptiness of the street in the photo reinforces the obsolescence of the mechanism that produced it. "To show that any picture of America without automobiles is hopelessly out of date," the narrator triumphantly answers. It should be noted that Prelinger presents the clip without any on-screen identifiers of the production's title, its producers, or its commissioners.

The last line of this clip needs to be unpacked a bit. There are two meanings of "picture of America"—one that refers to the photographic (still) image of a modern American city, and one that refers to the mental image representative of the state of the nation's modernity. Modernity is implicit in both, tying together what we see with nationalistic mythology. From the present perspective of a Detroit without automobiles, that is, without automobile manufacturing jobs and without a robust population to drive around the city, there emerges a schism between the ideological notion of the future of the modern American city and the visible signs of that future in car culture. "Hopelessly out of date" also carries two meanings related to the two meanings for "picture": first, the technology (the daguerreotype) is passé because it has been

superseded in technological efficiency by the speed of the motion picture camera; and second, the mental image of a vast, largely rural America has been transformed by the automobile and no longer represents the pace and potential of the country. The power of the automobile has transformed America into a smaller and more urban country. In the mid-century Detroit was at the center of automobile manufacturing and therefore at the center of the modernization of America by the automobile. "Out of date" positions the past as passé and the present as the future, regardless of the sustainability of current practices. The present vision of technology and ideology is upheld as the answer to the problems of the past and as the dream of a future. This dream contains a strong notion of automatic progress—a dream that today's notion of modernity is the vision that will set Progress on its proper course. The concepts of Progress, modernity, technologies of visibility and movement are all intimately linked in this clip. Ideology is tied to visibility—seeing is believing a particular narrative. Old technology must be shown to be outdated—its possible benefits cannot be acknowledged in the face of the new. Movement and speed are tied to the ideology of Progress—the first to the finish line wins, all others can be added to the trash heap. The two most celebrated modern technologies, motion pictures and automobiles, are tied together through the concepts of movement and visibility—modernity only has room for the speediest of inventions.

The "hopelessly out-of-date" character of this first clip of archival footage positions the spectator to read against the grain, and to consider the goals of the original piece of corporate propaganda within the present context. The state of modernity, visuality, car culture, technology, film, photography, and especially Detroit as a modern city, a city whose identity was arguably more dependent on the notions of modernity and American automobile manufacture than any other in that period of American history, can be read historically against the backdrop of Detroit's demise, of modernity's demise, of film's demise, to provide a richer understanding of the dreams contained within this clip's creation.

Against this backdrop, the spectator might discover that she can derive more meaning from the presentation of this media ruin by anamorphically reading subtler details of its features. She can then begin to decode this dream of the past for its future, a dream that the fruits of American labor will flow freely through the streets of every city. The narrator's voice, in the style of the day, is filled with certainty about the vision of an America that Detroit will make possible. This voice-of-God style of narration, popular to the point of dominance of such "non-

fiction" presentations of the 1950s, has been overcome to a large extent by other narrative styles, such as more subjective voiceovers and interactive modes of documentary filmmaking. A present day audience would find the voice-of-God narration outdated itself, and treat it with more skepticism than the original intended audience. Though voice-of-God is still often employed today, especially in television documentaries, the didacticism of its tone has been softened, making this 1950s example suspect in its unabashed claims to certainty. Contemporary audiences would question the narrator's credibility. At the time of the making of Prelinger's *Lost Landscapes of Detroit* in the early 2010s, even audiences outside of Detroit would have heard of Detroit's decline due to its dependence on only one industry, the automobile industry, and its subsequent physical decay. The spectator is thus positioned at odds with the original context of the material in a manner that makes conspicuous its fundamental ideological conceits.

Other subtle details of the clip become noticeable by virtue of their incongruity with the present and begin to reveal the ideological roots of its creation. The use of the "great-great-granddaddy of all cameras" is comically misleading and does not accurately depict the state of still photography at the time the sponsored film was made. Photography is characterized as passé at a time when it was anything but—the cameras that produced still images were then as efficient as moving image cameras, if not more so. A still camera contemporaneous with the film camera depicted in the clip would have been as easily adept at capturing the cars in the photo as the film camera. The daguerreotype is used in contrast to the film camera to provide drama even if the comparison is misaligned, because the popularity of cars and that of the daguerreotype are not contemporaneous. Few to no photographers in mid-century America would have used the daguerreotype. The care that is taken to make the daguerreotype image is clearly contrasted with that of the moving image cameraman's. The daguerreotype's operator must take several actions in order to make his picture that his modern counterpart does not. He keeps time for the exposure with the aid of a pocket watch; he carefully places the lens cap on the camera; and he covers it up with its dark cloth. The need for excessive accompaniments and the additional time taken to use them accentuates the inefficiency of the older technology. Efficiency as a goal of the modern mechanism is thus highlighted in this contrast between the two camera operators. The dress of the daguerreotype's operator indicates that of a nineteenth century gentleman, positioning the act of producing "pictures" through this method as hobby of the elite rather than the business of the day. The moving image camera operator is clearly dressed for business in his short-sleeved shirt

and slacks, foregoing the blazer and hat that was the popular dress code of the day for gentlemen. He is a worker who cannot be bothered with fancy dress when there is work to be done. These details create the impression that the still photograph, film's precursor, is a fussy, immature, and incompetent technology, clearly superseded by the moving image in its capacity to be used to represent the modern state, city and man. The comparison between daguerreotype and motion picture camera was designed as a spectacle to confuse the audience into accepting a particular narrative of Progress that suited the automobile industry.

This first clip, therefore, sets the tone for the interpretation of all the fragments of archival material displaying Detroit within the dreamworld of modernity—as a city of cars and as a filmed city. The clip links the modernity of film with the modernity of the automobile in the urban environment. Its placement at the beginning of the *Lost Landscapes of Detroit* program sets up our expectations to see more automobiles in what follows and to link their appearance with the eventual failure of modernity in this particular urban environment. The opening film clip conveys the old historicist's vision of the past only to subvert its logic through its reframing. The repositioning of the spectatorship from old historicism to new starts with this clip and continues through the entire presentation by holding the notion of the outmoded in question.

Turning Backgrounds into Foregrounds to Subvert Notions of Automatic Progress

The visual presentation of the modern city remains paradoxical. On the one hand it exists as a festival of visuality, a spectacle of display, a delight to the all-eyes gawker. But as darkness descends, it unfolds its mysteries and visual understanding becomes elusive. The surface becomes a shield, an envelope which conceals a deeper and more sinister system beneath it. The kaleidoscopic display gives way to a phenomenon that demands a gaze that is both more penetrating and less certain, the x-ray vision of the detective, based no longer on the *badaud's* simple visual consumption or even on the *flâneur*'s repertoire of social types, but on a perspective alert for clues, anomalies, and singularities, signs that allow one to track down subterranean systems and pierce through the disguises and pasteboard masks of the city.
—Tom Gunning[169]

Why does historical footage often seem to retreat into the background while contemporary imagery seizes the foreground? Why do historical images tend to appear smaller than life, while contemporary images often seem larger than life, hyperreal, more revved up?

–Rick Prelinger[170]

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[169] Tom Gunning, "From the Kaleidoscope to the X-Ray: Urban Spectatorship, Poe, Benjamin, and *Traffic in Souls* (1913)," *Wide Angle* 19.4 (1997): 53.

Don't presume that new work improves on old.

–Rick Prelinger, Manifesto point #2

Gunning's revision of Benjamin's city spectators, seen here as visual sponges, tranquilly consuming and categorizing the urban environment, into "alert" detective spectators when confronted with the city as mediated by the movie image, aptly describes the shift demanded by the archival city film in the twenty-first century, and is especially true of the *Lost Landscapes* programs. They demand of their audiences a particularly probing gaze.

The effect of blowing up ephemeral films, largely meant for smaller screens, is that audiences adopt one of two positions in relation to the visible evidence, according to Prelinger: we either become ethnographers or cultural geographers.[171] But in either case, the search for answers about who these people are/were/will be cannot be attempted without the anamorphic shift that brings the background to the foreground and the desire to focus our voluntary attention toward what was once incidental. The notion of "backgrounds into foregrounds" anamorphosis should be taken literally and figuratively. Literally, in the sense that the spectator must train their eyes to look in the backgrounds, to search the margins of the frame, where the original filmmakers did not intend the eye to spend time, to find evidence of physical objects that can tell us more about how people lived. Figuratively, one must consider the worldviews operating in the background of the material, the subtext of ideology that makes the world we are witnessing possible.

The collector brings the mythic past to bear upon the seamless appearance of modernity: "The opposition between modernist and collector is emblematic of the opposition between enlightenment and myth, that is, myth as a form of reversion to the past that does violence to modern life."[172] Prelinger's collecting practice focuses primarily on works that contain mythic signifiers formerly submerged by the use-value of the work. The rhetoric of sponsored films adopts a decidedly positivistic approach to conveying information to their intended viewers. But read anamorphically from a historical distance, the mythological foundations become more

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[170] From Rick Prelinger's keynote address, entitled "We are the New Archivists: Artisans, Activists, Cinephiles, Citizens," at the *Reimagining the Archive* conference at UCLA on November 13, 2010.

[171] Master class with Rick Prelinger, February 13, 2014.

[172] Ackbar Abbas, "Walter Benjamin's Collector: The Fate of Modern Experience," *New Literary History*, Vol. 20, No. 1, Critical Reconsiderations (Autumn, 1988): 218.

apparent. At the end of *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco, 8*, for instance, we see a 1968 BART sponsored film, *A Progress Report from BART: Along the Way*, that begins by overlaying idyllic shots of the city with a faux folk song, whose refrain is "We're building a dream for tomorrow."[173] The film goes on to list the many virtues of a public transportation system that traverses the Bay Area, tunneling under water and through hills. It details some of the construction elements. It provides rationales for why residents should feel positive about inconveniences due to the construction. Already primed by Prelinger to view the footage anamorphically, the audience roars with laughter at the attempt to insert the goals of the urban establishment into a musical form that springs from the grassroots. The voiceover heroicizes the planning, the workers, and the merits of the system itself, leaving no room for self-critique. It valorizes the project as one of many that the system enacts on its path to "progress" even as it violently rips up the city in the images it provides. BART was a major urban modernization project that linked cities and towns in the Bay Area such that its residents could undertake commutes over greater distances. The class issues involved in the project are predictably invisible in BART's "progress report". Prelinger's goal "to interrupt and problematize received mythologies" by creating "tension between the normative messages in ephemeral films and the substance of the images themselves"[174] is in evidence here. By exposing the mythological underpinnings present within the original material, the collector exposes the dialectic of enlightenment and myth as they work together to create an inescapable sense of modernity and its attendant notions of progress.

The redemptive acts of collecting, displaying, and critically evaluating vulnerable film fragments play a strong part in the appeal of watching the *Lost Landscapes* programs. We know quite well when watching them that were it not for Prelinger's effort to rescue the works, and more importantly, without his forethought that these works were worth rescuing when their custodians began to think of them as cumbersome trash, we would not be able to share these views, nor share in the idea that they could help us create a meaningful future. The further back we go into other eras of a city's history in photography or film, the more estranged we become from the people in the images. While watching a *Lost Landscapes* film of one's hometown, one

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[173] *Lost Landscapes of San Francisco, 8*, screened at the Sebastopol Documentary Film Festival, March 29, 2014. The whole BART-sponsored film can be seen here on youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9NxWHafeVLA
[174] Cook, Herrera and Robbins, "Interview with Rick Prelinger," 182.

might ask, "Who were these people who inhabited this city before me?" and perhaps even, "What were their visions of the future that enabled them to put their best efforts into creating the city?" As we take our topographical journey through San Francisco or Detroit in Prelinger's film programs, we find layers of dreams building up and coming down; we can perform a visual archaeological dig.

Many of the archival film clips presented in the *Lost Landscapes* series are of astonishing sites (and sights). The spectator is confronted with the idea that the city's former inhabitants had explored options for city life that disappeared not because they were no longer relevant, enjoyed or needed, but because they were replaced by something more modern. In many cases, Prelinger chooses footage that shows evidence of many astonishing forgotten possibilities of the city, establishing a precedent for a reemergence of desirable urban plans in the future, and posing the question, if progress is automatic, if it is the good toward which our most modern social and material production moves, why would the society that produced the scenes in these films not continue? In this way, the audience is led to think about their viewing of the archival material as a study of what could be again in the future.

Storytelling Vs. Evidentiary Experience

Because, you see, the cinema suffers more from flawed thinking than from a total absence of thought.
–Jean Vigo[175]

Prelinger argues that the current turn to "storytelling" in documentary filmmaking is undermining the value of evidentiary experience in documentary spectatorship. He decries the recent trends in documentary filmmaking that reduce visible evidence to spectacle and deny the potential evidentiary experience that could result from presenting archival material to the public without an overarching narrative goal:

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[175] From his talk, "Towards a Social Cinema," delivered before the second screening of *À propos de Nice* on June 14, 1930. Jean Vigo, "Towards a Social Cinema," Stuart Liebman, trans., *Millennium Film Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Winter 1977-78): 21-24.

As an archivist, I felt most filmmakers weren't letting archival images fulfill their potential. […] The images were manipulated into over-narrativized "stories" whose trajectory was controlled by the script and modulated by music, and much of the time were reduced to little more than "eye candy." The emphasis on documentary "storytelling" took power from images and gave it back to words.[176]

Clearly not all documentaries produced in the twenty-first century rely on narrative arcs, archival material as "eye candy" and manipulative music, but, in a survey of the guidebooks readily available to documentary filmmakers since 2000, I have found evidence that "storytelling" techniques comprise a dominant recommended strategy for bringing the historical world to the screen, while alternative strategies are downplayed at best and neglected completely at worst. For instance, in a recent proliferation of documentary filmmaking guidebooks it appears that documentary and "storytelling" have become virtually synonymous terms.[177] *Archival Storytelling* opens with the words, "Filmmakers tell stories," giving a good idea of what kinds of filmmakers and filmmaking will be excluded from the conversation. And further, *The Shut Up and Shoot Documentary Guide* presents the question, "what **story** do you want to tell and why?" as the key question any documentary filmmaker needs to ask and answer first before they begin.[178] Documentary film guidebooks first published before the turn of the twenty-first century, and subsequent editions, such as *Directing the Documentary* by Michael Rabiger (first published in 1987, now in its sixth edition) and Alan Rosenthal's *Writing, Directing, and Producing Documentary Films and Videos* (first published in 1990, now in its fourth edition), provide historical overviews that include documentary strategies that are not based on "storytelling" techniques.[179] However, even in these examples, non-linear, poetic, or essayistic

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[176] Prelinger quoted from the official *No More Road Trips?* website: http://nomoreroadtrips.blogspot.ca/ (Last accessed, June 14, 2015).

[177] A discussion of how and why this trend has come to be would be a worthwhile pursuit, but unfortunately it falls outside the scope of this study. See, Dorothy Fadiman, and Tony Levelle, *Producing with Passion: Making Films That Change the World* (Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese, 2008); Nancy Kalow, *Visual Storytelling: The Digital Video Documentary,* A Center for Documentary Studies Publication (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University 2011); Sheila C. Bernard, *Documentary Storytelling: Making Stronger and More Dramatic Nonfiction Films.* (Amsterdam: Focal Press, 2007); Anthony Q. Artis, *The Shut Up and Shoot Documentary Guide: A Down & Dirty DV Production*, (Amsterdam: Focal Press, 2007); and Bernard, Sheila C, and Kenn Rabin, *Archival Storytelling: A Filmmaker's Guide to Finding, Using, and Licensing Third-Party Visuals and Music* (Amsterdam: Focal Press, 2009).

[178] Artis, *The Shut Up and Shoot Documentary Guide.* 7. Emphasis in the original.

[179] See, Michael Rabiger, *Directing the Documentary* (Boston: Focal Press, 1987); and Alan Rosenthal, *Writing, Directing, and Producing Documentary Films and Videos* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996).

documentary strategies are generally not elaborated upon, whereas what amounts to "storytelling," whether or not it is explicitly called that, is. For instance, in *Directing the Documentary*, Rabiger includes a nine-page discussion of films that employ "Non-chronological time" and "Time as Non-Relevant," in his unit, "Dramatic Development, Time and Story Structure," but, as the title of the unit, where these discussions take place, indicates, "storytelling" is still the dominant recommended strategy. Given the number of mass-produced guidebooks that focus on documentary filmmaking as an exercise in "storytelling," many of which produce updated editions every few years, it follows that documentary defined as "storytelling" is the preferred filmmaking strategy within the documentary marketplace in the twenty-first century. As a result, many mainstream documentary productions in the twenty-first century foreground historicists' master narratives, pushing the archival experience to the background, where archival material is often used illustratively to support the narrative. While I agree with Prelinger that "storytelling" documentaries should not be pushed as the only way to make a documentary, it is undeniable that promoting them has helped to make documentaries more profitable, entertaining, persuasive, and as a result, prevalent. But the danger of promoting "storytelling" documentaries to the exclusion of other styles means the further marginalization of documentaries whose objectives lie outside of profit, entertainment, propaganda, and activism.

"The greatest sin of contemporary documentary films is that they control your emotions; they don't let you think," decries Prelinger.[180] Affective devices are an ubiquitous aspect of nonfiction film, influencing comprehension and belief at least as much as evidence, visual or verbal. Many spectators seek out documentary for its affective dimensions, and evidentiary experience provides its own affective pleasures and pains as well. The problem that Prelinger has identified in contemporary documentary film practices, however, is that they manipulate emotional responses to archival material through their formal choices, greatly reducing the spectator's range of possible thoughts and feelings. Mainstream documentaries impose story structures that are known to produce particular emotional reactions in the spectator. Because the spectator is provided little opportunity to cultivate their own thoughts and emotions regarding the archival material when mainstream storytelling structures are present, they do not cultivate

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[180] Rick Prelinger in an interview for the NPR Podcast *The Organist*, released on February 17, 2015. http://www.kcrw.com/news-culture/shows/the-organist/episode-47-no-more-road-trips

evidentiary experience through their own spectatorship; the potential of the archival material to disrupt assumptions about the past goes unfulfilled.

In response to the reduction of archival material to illustrative use in mainstream documentary, independent archive-based documentary has been in the spotlight in recent years, though it still remains extremely marginal and underfunded.[181] Excessive emphasis on "storytelling" has thus created a bit of a backlash and inspired some filmmakers to pursue alternative strategies of representing the historical world by making the archival material primary. This emphasis on "storytelling" exposes a "deeper problem facing historically/archivally oriented docs," observes Prelinger.[182] The "storytelling" he is referring to, he defines as "a highly traditional representational strategy that in recent years has come to imply the omnipresence of characters (good and evil), a narrative arc and a conventional act-based structure in which seemingly insurmountable problems are frequently solved."[183] Reducing the political context of the documentary's topic to an easy-to-consume empathy for the characters, banalizes and subordinates it, placing the focus on the entertainment and redemption of the (frequently bourgeois) viewer, rather than the attempt to represent and make sense of complex, ambiguous, and often contradictory historical phenomena. Prelinger sees this reduction of documentary to the simplest of dramatic structures as unnecessary and insulting to the audience.[184] To anamorphically reposition spectatorship of the archival material against this dominant paradigm means bringing it to the fore while the narrative is pushed to the background. The *Lost Landscapes* programs brush against this particular paradigm of "storytelling" in contemporary documentary production.

Prelinger also points out that defining documentary in terms of "storytelling" is dangerous because it closes off different kinds of documentary experience, and evidentiary

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[181] For example, films like *Senna* (Kapadia, 2011), *Amy* (Kapadia, 2015), *Let the Fire Burn* (Osder, 2013), *Our Nixon* (Lane, 2013), *Warsaw Uprising* (Jan Komasa, 2014), *The Pruit-Igoe Myth* (Chad Friedrichs, 2011), *The Black Power Mix Tape* (Göran Olsson, 2011), *Teenage* (2013), and *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu* (Ujica, 2010) have gained attention in documentary film circles for their critical use of archival footage, and some have even enjoyed mainstream success, such as *Amy*, which won the Academy Award for Best Documentary in 2016. As exceptions that prove the rule, such films show that there is both a strong interest in documentaries that critically engage the archive, and that there are too few being made in the 2010s.

[182] Rick Prelinger, "Taking History Back from the 'Storyteller's," *BlackOysterCatcher* (blog), 22 June 2009, http://blackoystercatcher.blogspot.co.uk/2009/06/taking-history-back-from-storytellers.html

[183] Ibid.

[184] Ibid.

experience. This situation has ramifications for both filmmakers and audiences. Innovation in the tradition that does not adopt the dominant "storytelling" paradigm is often discouraged, underfunded, unscreened, and increasingly not even recognized as part of the documentary tradition in mainstream forums. Audiences do not have the opportunity to experience a range of formal strategies to bring the historical world into focus through film. Moreover, and in a more political vein, the focus on the individual that triumphs over adversity in "storytelling" documentaries ultimately serves neoliberal interests by presenting a picture of humanity that is based solely on the isolated, the exceptional, and the unique, rather than the collective.[185]

Prelinger's own film practice lies outside of these trends. Drawing on film-historical antecedents such as found-footage film, essay film and the travelogue (as a subset of essay film), his *Lost Landscapes* films offer a counterpoint to the dominant focus on narrative development and social actors as stars in mainstream documentary film. He uses found-footage film strategies to bring about what Russell calls an "aesthetic of ruins," which is "always also an allegory of history, a montage of memory traces, by which the filmmaker engages with the past through recall, retrieval, and recycling."[186] Furthermore, found-footage filmmakers employ a "movement within dialectical images," which Russell explains "[interrupts] narrativity as a symbolic system."[187] The allegorical disruption of narrative that found-footage filmmaking accomplishes through its "overlapping and coextensive aesthetics of realism, modernism and postmodern simulation […] implies a certain randomness, a seriality without necessity, rendering the logic of narrative necessity null and void."[188] Prelinger's metahistorical nonlinear kairological approach to recycling his collection of ephemeral films presents precisely such a challenge to the notion that nonfiction film needs to engage in familiar narrative strategies in order to create meaningful experiences with the historical world and its representation.

Throughout his *Lost Landscapes* film programs, Prelinger also maintains an embodied subjective enunciative position and communicates directly to the spectator in an essayistic mode that makes the creation of a subject of representation, to be followed and analyzed on the screen, superfluous. As Laura Rascaroli argues, the essay film focuses on the marginal and contingent in

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[185] Ibid.

[186] Catherine Russell, *Experimental Ethnography* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 238.

[187] Ibid., 240.

[188] Ibid.

order to combat the authority of grand narratives.[189] The idiosyncrasy and partiality of the enunciator's vocal commentary "purposefully weakens his or her authority by embracing a contingent personal viewpoint," thereby highlighting and deflating " the authority of the traditional documentary" and "its aura of objectiveness" by comparison.[190] Traditional cinematic realism, both fiction and documentary, does not display embodied enunciators, but rather tends to hide the perspective from which the film issues by using disembodied camera angles, or voice-of-God commentary.[191] In contrast, essay film spectators are interpellated to connect with the enunciator, leading to a more personal spectator experience.[192] Prelinger's use of essay film techniques, such as embodied vocal commentary, serve to question the perceived necessity of narrative stability and coherence in nonfiction, opening up current documentary discourse to the benefits of evidentiary experience and partial knowledges of the historical world. Furthermore the travelogue, and especially the travel lecture film, offers a structure for the live presentation of visible evidence that brings together education, pleasure and community without relying on dramatic "storytelling" arcs. Indeed, as Ruoff argues, the travelogue's "episodic narration offers an alternative to both the linear cause-and-effect structure of classical Hollywood cinema and the problem-solution approach of Griersonian documentary."[193]

Prelinger has written and lectured extensively about the "evidentiary value" of ephemeral film for film, cultural and historical studies. In a 2013 lecture Prelinger described the characteristics of "a new evidentiary cinema" with the following points. New evidentiary cinema…

- seeks evidence in a broad spectrum of documents (home movies, etc.)
- celebrates localism and place
- [is] linked to participatory archives projects
- exploits the recognition of the familiar as a route to parsing the unfamiliar
- [is] interactive and informal
- [employs an] Elizabethan model of spectatorship

[189] Laura Rascaroli, *The Personal Camera: Subjective Cinema and the Essay Film* (London; New York: Wallflower Press, 2009), 5.
[190] Ibid.
[191] Ibid., 13.
[192] Ibid., 14.
[193] Jeffrey Ruoff, "Introduction," in *Virtual Voyages: Cinema and Travel*, Jeffrey Ruoff, ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 11.

• [is] pro-story, anti-"storytelling"

• avoids overdetermining audio, narration, editing

• lets sequences play; paced for rejoinders

• relies, upon other things, on the attraction of the image itself[194]

The ultimate goal of the new evidentiary cinema, asserts Prelinger, is a configuration of montage and presentation practices that "Lets images speak for themselves in all of their ambiguity."[195] The ambiguity of the visible evidence is key to drawing spectators into a personal relationship with the material because it presents the remnants of the past as mysterious and open to interpretation. "Evidentiary cinema privileges original documents, putting them before an audience whose appreciation of the evidence completes the film. I produce a portion of the film; the audience makes the rest," insists Prelinger.[196] Prelinger's new evidentiary cinema thus requires the audience to learn to make their own narratives out of the archival materials, rather than letting the filmmaker impose his.

The value of evidentiary experience for the public lies in its potential to help people see the limitations of representing and understanding the past, present and future. Maintaining a focus on the concrete records of everyday life can help us to identify and challenge dangerous universalizations in the form of ideology. In observing the inconsistencies between the concrete and the universal through a build up of evidentiary experience, the power of the universal to capture every instance of expression within its bounds weakens. The nuances of the concrete are then able to come into historical consciousness to create new possibilities.

As one learns to read archival images anamorphically, no matter the source, one builds evidentiary experience. Extensive experience with the moving image archive over time provides an individual with tools for understanding the challenges of constructing consistent master narratives capable of explaining everyday life at different times and in different places. When we actively foster evidentiary experience, we must ask ourselves at every moment, "If this image is evidence of the past, what then does it convey? How might this piece of footage provide

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[194] Rick Prelinger, "The New Evidentiary Cinema," UC, Santa Cruz lecture, February 2013.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Rick Prelinger, *No More Road Trips?,*" *Prelinger Library* (blog), March 8, 2013, http://nomoreroadtrips.blogspot.ca/ (Last accessed, June 13, 2017).

evidence for worlds hidden in plain sight? How might this image contest the ease with which we accept dominant narratives?" Evidentiary experience does not provide many opportunities for the construction of new dominating narratives, but it does provide ample partial knowledge that prevents us from accepting dangerous totalizing narratives out of convenience or ignorance.

The key feature of the counter-archive lies in its ability to challenge and contradict historical assumptions and dominant narratives. Finding such archival material that is capable of standing up to widely held beliefs about the past is possible only when the historian lets the archive reveal itself, when she disavows the hermeneutical circle, and allows herself to be surprised by what she finds. We must distinguish between, on the one hand, looking for something specific to confirm a narrative one already has in mind, and on the other, engaging with the archive to discover a new perspective on the past.

Conclusion

Since each scene in the *Lost Landscapes* programs is presented with minimal information, we must therefore rely on our own experiences to make sense of the visible evidence throughout. We learn quite quickly that the aim of our spectatorship is to search the image for points of recognition. Thus, our embodied lived experience of the urban environment provides the foundation through which the images become intelligible. In addition to an embodied experience of the city, the *Lost Landscapes* series relies on embodied interaction with the theater space and its other inhabitants, as well. Collaborative and competitive at once, the interactive component requires the spectator to search the images, and interpret as many of their features as possible to participate in the communal event. Prelinger's insistence on a spontaneous DIY soundtrack and "Elizabethan" collaboration from his audience during his screenings accomplishes several goals. First, a participatory mode of historiography is prioritized. Participants claim ownership over the images through speech. They lay claim to the historical image by providing contestable evidence of their lived experience and comparing it with some of the image's features. Second, the screenings can serve as an ice-breaker for, and instigator of, potentially difficult conversations about how urban communities see themselves and where they want to go. Prelinger admits his ultimate goal with the *Lost Landscapes* programs is to help start a conversation about what kind of city people want to live in. By providing opportunities for his audiences to examine together

past cityscapes, Prelinger is creating spaces for a conversation on the future of the city through embodied, localized, subjective views. And finally, Prelinger's baroque strategy of collection and presentation serves to redeem not only the fragments of the past in the ephemeral films that he presents, but also the fragments of the present carried by each participant. In this way, Prelinger demonstrates through his life's work that historical materialism is a viable strategy for exposing the limits of historicism and cultivating historical consciousness collectively.

<center>**IV.**</center>

<center>**The Charlatan's Archive:**</center>

<center>*My Winnipeg*</center>

> More and more my dreams find their settings in the department stores of Tokyo, the subterranean tunnels that extend them and run parallel to the city. A face appears, disappears... a trace is found, is lost. All the folklore of dreams is so much in its place that the next day when I am awake I realize that I continue to seek in the basement labyrinth the presence concealed the night before. I begin to wonder if those dreams are really mine, or if they are part of a totality, of *a gigantic collective dream of which the entire city may be the projection.*
> –Voice-over narration from Chris Marker's *Sans Soleil* (1983)

In his vocal narration as "Krasna," the travelling cameraman whose missives are read aloud by an unnamed female voice in *Sans Soleil*, Chris Marker suggests we might view the city as a projection of the collective unconscious of its inhabitants. Such a vision of the modern city finds its cinematic realization, perhaps even more forcefully, in another essay film: Guy Maddin's *My Winnipeg* (2007). With its emphasis on disappearing and reappearing traces, the uneasiness of folklore, mystical subterranean "arteries," secret basement levels, paranormal activity, and always a focus on the role of the unconscious in the making of historical consciousness, *My Winnipeg* maps the city according to a personal and collective mythological landscape, where the factual past is as worthy of representation as the subjectively perceived past, the forgotten past, the anecdotal past, the fantastical and conditional-tense past.

In *My Winnipeg*, Maddin claims that Winnipeggers have failed to establish and nourish a mythological landscape of the city's past, and for this reason residents and foreigners can be made to believe, or at least entertain, a great many alternative renderings of the past. Faked archival footage plays with archival discourses and exposes what the archive cannot. Thinking about *My Winnipeg* in terms of the baroque is a helpful analytic tool because it connects the film's counter-archival work to other works that employ baroque tactics to intervene in the discourses of positivism and classical values. Rather than presenting its own reliable, coherent, totalizing historical narrative to occupy the apparent void, *My Winnipeg* instead presents a

meditation on memory, forgetting, nostalgia, partial knowledge, fakery, and the limits of historical representation.

Temporal coexistence runs throughout *My Winnipeg*, making it another example of the baroque perspective on temporality, and contributing significantly to the formation of constellations of historical moments, the interpretation of which motivates the creation of a "dialectical image" (a Benjaminian concept that I will elucidate further in the chapter). Constellations can be thought of as heuristics that help us to link and map moments, objects or images, up till now perceived to be distant from and unconnected to each other. In this way, the film rejects a *chronological* presentation of the past in favor of a *kairological*, or timely, one. Kairology is time seen from an embodied subjective historically conscious perspective. The kairological emphasizes the qualitative elements of fortune, or crisis, that can link moments in time together from a particular vantage point, as opposed to seeing time as a sequence of events linked by cause and effect. The result, for *My Winnipeg*, is a richly layered pastiche of temporal moods that allow for a personal investment of meaning for both the filmmaker and spectator.

Michael Burns, the programming director of the Documentary Channel, commissioned *My Winnipeg* in 2006, asking Maddin to make a film about Winnipeg. Burns did not want a conventional, fact-based city film, however. Rather, he told Maddin: "And don't show me the frozen hellhole everyone knows Winnipeg is. Enchant me. Enchant me."[1] Given free reign to portray the city from his own idiosyncratic perspective, Maddin set out both to represent and to reimagine its mythic past. But Maddin is no typical sponsored filmmaker, nor is he motivated merely by the chance for self-aggrandizement. He perceives a real problem in what he sees as Winnipegger's, and even Anglo-Canadians', silent relationships to their own pasts. In stark contrast to Quebec, with its self-assured motto, "Je me souviens [I remember]," and to their ever self-mythologizing American neighbors to the south, Winnipeggers, and Anglo-Canadians, according to Maddin, generally,

> shrink from things, and instead of looking through the mythologizing telescope proudly,
> with chests swollen, and then broadcasting as loudly as possible what [they] see, bigger

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[1] Guy Maddin, *My Winnipeg* (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2009), 131.

than life, Canadians sort of meekly pick up the telescope and look through the wrong end and see their lives as smaller than life, and don't say anything about it.[2]

Maddin takes it as his mission to make his own relationship with his hometown, the isolated and relatively unknown city of Winnipeg, emblematic of the mythological potential that Canadians possess. But *My Winnipeg* is not a straightforward presentation of Winnipeg's urban history, and plea for its significance; rather, Maddin wields his "mythologizing telescope" with the acumen of a charlatan showman in the tradition of Orson Welles, forging his way towards a deeper understanding of the effects, and affects, of a localized historical consciousness.

"The Documentary Channel presents" is displayed prominently in the film's opening credits, thus from the start, the film positions the audience to read the film in the documentary mode; we are oriented towards the command—"Believe!"—that documentary insists of its audience. However, elsewhere in the film's paratext, Maddin undermines the documentary imperative to believe by calling *My Winnipeg* a "docu-fantasia," self-consciously displacing easy generic identification by combining the seemingly conflicting notions of documentary and fantasy, and foregrounding the film's hybridity of fiction and nonfiction. Reviewing his corpus, we find that his films have autobiographical elements, often depicting a protagonist named Guy Maddin, always played by a different actor, never Maddin himself, though they do not attempt documentary realism in any way. Characteristic of Maddin's oeuvre—a dozen features and even more shorts—is a highly fantastical melodramatic style that consistently mimics a silent film aesthetic through the mise-en-scene, lighting, score, costume, make-up, gesture, intertitles, and some aspects of cinematography, all of which conspire to routinely deny the spectator a comfortable position from which to interpret the narrative. To mitigate the narrative and formal distanciation, and establish an alternative rational for viewing, Maddin's films focus on humor, spectacle, and visual pleasure.

As *My Winnipeg* opens, most spectators are prepared to try to comprehend the film's subjects—its director, Maddin, and the city, Winnipeg—as authentic members of the historical world, which they are, as well as to *suspend disbelief* to accommodate the "fantasia," suggested through both the paratext and early signals within the film. *My Winnipeg* consistently and

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[2] From an interview between Guy Maddin and art critic Robert Enright (who appeared in Maddin's *Cowards Bend the Knee*) included on the Criterion Collection edition DVD of *My Winnipeg* (released in 2015).

unrelentingly chooses a figural representation of the past over a literal one, whether or not the footage is staged or archival. Alliteration, repetition, analogy, metaphor, metonymy, allegory—every type of poetic trope is joyously celebrated and privileged over documentary realism as a rule in the film. And yet, the documentary framework, the factual existence of the film's two primary subjects, Winnipeg and Maddin, and the strategic use of archival footage and photography complicate the incredulity of the film with the desire to find correspondences to the historical world, even if partial, within its presentation.

A baroque heterogeneity in film technologies, forms, and genres dominates *My Winnipeg*. The film was shot on a $500K budget over ten days on "Super-16mm film, 16mm film, Super-8mm film, mini-DV video, HD video, and cell phone".[3] The black and white footage simulates a silent film aesthetic, which is punctuated by bits of color from time to time. Melodrama, burlesque, travelogue, auto-documentary, comedy, satire, lyrical avant-garde, conditional tense documentary, "mondo" film, early cinema, fantasy, and city symphony represent the many moods and influences that conspire to give *My Winnipeg* its unique address, somewhere between a confessional and a circus.

The film is loosely structured as an essayistic autobiographical documentary of a man named Guy Maddin, conveying a personal and collective history of the city from which he originates, and from which he claims he wants to escape, through reenactments and "archival" footage. His desire to leave Winnipeg results from the way it makes its citizens long too nostalgically for their youths, and yet neglect collective memory. The project he sets up as the premise of the film is a kind of self-therapy through which he can understand his situatedness better and thus rid himself of these longings for dreamy idealized personal and collective pasts to "free [himself] from the heinous power of family and city and escape once and for all." As we join the filmmaker/subject on a fantastical journey through his psyche, his childhood home, his neighborhood, and his city, a mixture of commonplace and odd formal devices are employed to tell his story. Maddin presents us with real archival footage and photography; *clearly* faked archival footage; *unclearly* faked archival footage (likely indistinguishable from period footage to the layperson); jittery silent film type intertitles that comment on the narrative in flashes; dramatic reenactments of Maddin's childhood; further dramatic enactments and reenactments of

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[3] William Beard, *Into the Past: the Cinema of Guy Maddin* (University of Toronto Press, 2010), 313.

scenes from the city's past, at times incorporating dance, and at other times, edited with archival footage or animation; and visually poetic shots and sequences.

Adding authority to what realism the film has to offer, Maddin provides the voiceover himself. Here, he offers many detailed stories of his childhood and the city's past. Some of the biographical and historical particulars he provides are more or less accurate, while others are highly embellished or outright fabricated. With factual elements, he routinely uses simplification and hyperbole to make the statements cleaner and more noteworthy. For instance, his sister Janet *was* a Canadian track and field champion who participated in the Pan-Am Games, but she won a silver medal, not a gold as Maddin claims, before being inducted into the Manitoba Sports Hall of Fame; and Winnipeg *is* the coldest city in the *Western Hemisphere*, but not the world, as Maddin brazenly asserts. Alternatively, his assertions that the woman appearing as his mother in the film is his real mother, and that he was born in the Winnipeg Maroons' hockey stadium are outright apocryphal.

The vast majority of the film is shot in black and white, a trope that, in our current colorful and technologically varied era, connotes age, the past, and history, especially when combined with archival footage, or made to resemble it. Maddin's silent film style of image creation, a trademark of his oeuvre, almost seamlessly counterfeits visual qualities of the archival footage with which it is cut together, providing parodic critique of documentary's reliance on the archival image in the process. Unmistakably, the substitution of fabricated imagery for "authentic" images, and fake stories for "the facts" are endemic of Maddin's hybrid strategy that makes use of a heightened and often ambivalent figuration to question authenticity, subjectivity and historiography in the documentary genre.

In an attempt to get closure from his familial past, such that he may make a clean break with the city and leave it behind, Maddin endeavors to "film his way out" by reconstructing his personal past within, and alongside, the collective past of his city. He claims that he has rented his childhood home in order to reconstruct childhood memories with actors hired to play family members. 1940s B-movie star, Ann Savage, portrays his mother, Herdis Maddin. At 86, Savage was five years younger than the (still-living) Herdis was at the time of filming. Although Savage is presented as Maddin's mother, it is not clear from the opening credits whether or not she actually is. We might think of her more loosely, within the dream logic of the film, as his

surrogate cinematic mother—a tough-talking, femme fatale, cult movie star muse (Savage is best known for playing the formidable Vera in the 1945 noir *Detour*)—though she is conflated with his mother in his familial history. Incongruously, Maddin chose to represent his siblings at the ages they would have been in the early 1960s, a move that makes more sense when we learn that his brother, Cameron, died in 1963 at sixteen. Portrayed by teenage actors, they are more than 40 years younger than the real-life siblings would have been in 2007. Maddin himself is absent from the mise-en-scene altogether, except for a couple quick home movie shots and photos of him as a toddler. (Figure 1) Both his deceased father and future occupants are always present in the reclaimed family home. They pretend father has been "exhumed and reburied in the living room beneath a mound of earth concealed by the area rug". (Figure 2) And the landlady who has sublet the apartment to Maddin comically refuses to leave. This choice, to represent the family as a temporally confused subjective reconstruction exemplifies what might be called a distinctively baroque strategy for the representation of historical relationships at the personal and collective level.

Figure 1 Guy Maddin as a toddler.

Figure 2 An area rug supposedly conceals Maddin's father's corpse in the familial reenactments.

Body parts are used as metaphors and metonyms for the geography of Winnipeg. An aerial view of the fork in the two rivers, the Red and the Assiniboine, which created the basis for the establishment of the city as a settlement by luring humans and "furry animals" that could be eaten to the same place, is superimposed over a shot of a woman's bare lap, whose shape is analogous to the fork in the rivers, and whose plastic figural relationship inspires a rhetorical

figural interpretation: as a woman brings new life into the world through her loins, so too does this fork in the river that led to the birth of Winnipeg. The filmmaker/subject, here, folds two different scales of his "naissance" into one layered image, his own and his hometown's. "The forks, the lap, the fur," is repeated several times, along with "mother" in voiceover and intertitle, as a visual representation of each figure appears and morphs into the succeeding one. The fork is also visually compared to arteries, as are the railroad lines that may provide an exit from the city; the text "Arteries" appears on screen, and Maddin verbalizes "Arteries" in his voiceover, as well. Winnipeg is located in the "heart" of the continent, which is depicted through concentric circles pulsing and extending out from the city's position on a map of North America twice within a few minutes. (Figure 3) This corporeal, poetic verbal and visual imagery refigures the city as a dynamic organism, providing more living organic shape to Winnipeg than is given to Maddin himself in any literal way in the film.
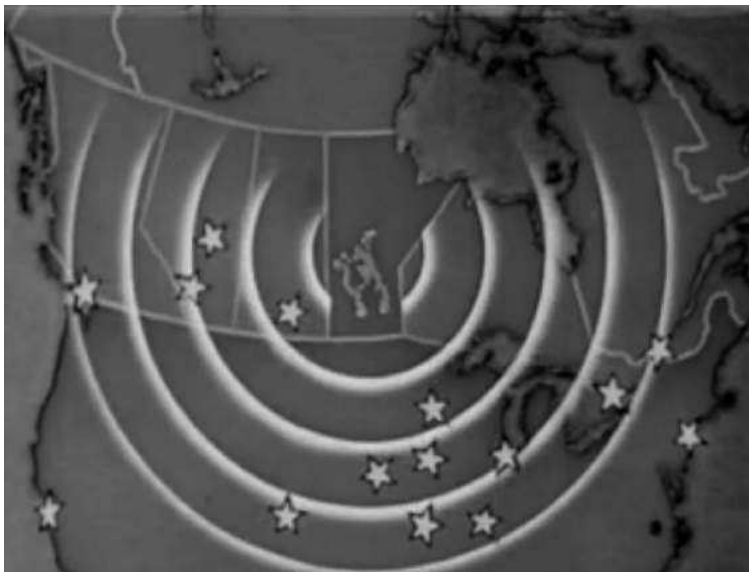
Figure 3 Winnipeg is in "the heart of the heart of the continent," according to Maddin.

If authenticity is what we want from the subjects we bear witness to in documentary, then *My Winnipeg* is arguably one of the most philosophically "authentic" cinematic representations of subjectivity, in that it is faithful to idiosyncratic internalized slippery representations of the subject at the expense of external objective predictable ones. It mirrors the free association and logic of the subconscious rather than an externalized, disembodied view. In this way, the film effectively exposes and challenges the positivist demand that documentary provide a particular

kind of authenticity to the audience, one that is founded in scientific objectivity and always coincides and corresponds with established histories.

Reflexivity and the Cinema of Attractions

My Winnipeg is invested in the strategies of the "cinema of attractions". The cinema of attractions is a cinema of monstration (display) and risk, argues Tom Gunning: "From comedians smirking at the camera, to the constant bowing and gesturing of the conjurors in magic films, this is a cinema that displays its visibility, willing to rupture a self-enclosed fictional world for a chance to solicit the attention of the spectator."[4] Visual risk, in the tradition of the cinema of attractions, characterizes much of *My Winnipeg*'s hybrid-documentary strategy, which walks the line between credulity and incredulity, undercutting the stability of Maddin's fantastical and historical narrative trajectories, and calling attention to the film's own constructedness throughout.

The film opens with two reflexive displays. Breaking first with the "self-enclosed" fictionalized world of Maddin's family life that will form one thread of the narrative, and then breaking with the uncomplicated realism of the archival world that forms another, Maddin establishes a reflexive mode at the beginning of the film that serves to complicate easy comprehension of the goals and uses of fiction and archive in the essayistic fake documentary. As the opening credits roll, we see several takes of actress Ann Savage, in the part of "Mother," repeating her lines as Maddin feeds them to her off-screen (Figure 4), and then a title, "The Documentary Channel presents," followed by a montage of local archival spectacles set to the old-fashioned, schmaltzy sounding song, "Wonderful Winnipeg,"[5] surrounding the main title shot. By revealing from the start the willingness to take the viewer behind the scenes and expose the reconstruction process, as well as provide a plethora of views of the city and its people going back to the early twentieth century, Maddin positions the spectator as an invited guest, from whom the methods of production will not be withheld, within this cinematic world. The opening shots of Savage's outtakes and retakes suggest a staged, fictionalized representational strategy

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[4] Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction[s]: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, Wanda Strauven, Ed. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, [1986] 2006), 382.
[5] "Welcome to Winnipeg/Wonderful Winnipeg," by Swinging Strings (vocal by Jim Wheeler), recorded June 22, 1967.

that is already exposed as the fake that it is from the outset. The spectator's expectations are thus set towards viewing the film from behind the scenes, that is, from a position of privilege that is capable of separating fiction from nonfiction. But such confidence placed upon the spectator from the commencement of the film is a ruse.

Figure 4 Ann Savage as "Mother" awaiting Maddin's feedback on her take in the first shot of *My Winnipeg*.

Similarly, the archival display of charming scenes from Winnipeg's past—street shots with Model-Ts in view, heavily bundled-up men having a tug-of-war, hockey games, ice-skating, group jump roping, snow-shoe racing, dancing, tobogganing—create a contradictory sense of the archive's capacity to signal an authoritative base from which the film issues its documentary evidence. While the multiple direct looks at the camera might indicate complicity with the cameraman, they might also serve to strengthen the authenticity of footage. (Figures 5-8) Today, the direct look at the camera can produce these two rather incongruous effects, whereas in early cinema it simply engendered closeness between performer and spectator. As Tom Gunning explains, "An aspect of early cinema … is emblematic of this different relationship the cinema of attractions constructs with its spectator: the recurring look at the camera by actors. This action, which is later perceived as spoiling the realistic illusion of the cinema, is here undertaken with brio, establishing contact with the audience."[6] When (social) actors acknowledge the camera with a smile or a wave in true cinema of attractions fashion here, it suggests both a push towards

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[6] Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction[s]," 382.

documentary realism and an attempt to use direct address to draw the spectator further into the intimate spaces of family and community that *My Winnipeg* inhabits. When social actors look at the camera, an opening is created with the spectator that functions as an effective attempt to gain trust, at the same moment that it reveals the illusion, and in revealing the illusion, it admits to the illusory nature of the medium and its viewing modes. This choice of archival material at the start of the film provides a lure of authenticity and intrigue upon which the film will then capitalize.

Figure 5-8 Winnipeggers from the archive acknowledge the camera in several shots at the beginning of the film.

Even as it winks to the viewer by suggesting that it might be a trick, establishing approximate eye contact between the archival subjects (who will not be seen again in the film) and the spectator is a canny way of creating a visual bond that will bank credulity as the film proceeds into murkier territory. Whereas reflexivity in documentary has moved towards a behind-the-scenes strategy to present a no-tricks-up-our-sleeves realism, the cinema-of-attractions type of reflexivity, which depends on direct address, has the effect of drawing the spectator into a deeper relationship with the visual and aural details of the scene. Direct address

in voiceover and in the gaze of archival subjects projects a spectacle of sincerity, earnestness, and authenticity that the spectator must then probe for signs of falsity. Moreover, this early archival montage provides most of the veritable archival shots in the film, creating a sense that the archive will supply its conventional authority to the film. And yet, what follows this montage, throughout the majority of the rest of the film, is faked archival footage, much of which is quite difficult to distinguish from authentic archival images, and reenactments. As Jaimie Baron claims, "The lure of the found document calls to us even if we know that the archive effect can be (or is) simulated."[7] Only a few more minutes of real archival footage can be found after this initial onslaught. The real archival footage is therefore presented here at the opening only to build a confidence and rapport with spectators that will influence their viewing strategies when choosing between belief, disbelief, and the suspension of disbelief. But we only need that small amount of lure to be caught on fake documentary's hook.

My Winnipeg exhibits other aspects of the cinema of attractions, as well. One of the attractions of early cinema was to be found, not on the screen, but next to it: the film explainer, lecturer, narrator, or *bonimenteur*. "He is there both to amplify the shock and to attenuate," writes Germain Lacasse; "he informs the spectator that he will see something unexpected, which will be surprising, disturbing, even frightening."[8] Furthermore, Lacasse casts the film lecturer as an agent of "vernacular modernism" for his role in introducing a new technology to a local audience using the "local cultural elements: language, accent, practices, and context."[9] Maddin adopts an essayistic direct address in the early cinema tradition of the *bonimenteur*, the lecturer as fabulator, as opposed to Andersen's lecturer as pedagogue in *Los Angeles Plays Itself*. Instead of bringing modernity to his audience through this role, Maddin brings off-modernity, postmodernity and the baroque, with all of its attendant uncertainties and contradictions. We must look at the archive, or what we assume to be archival, differently when extensive fabulation is employed. When the narration is incredulous, the message of the film can only be borne out through a process of exploration shared between author and spectator. Maddin's *bonimenteur* figure exposes the limits of documentary discourse by employing the "powers of the false". That

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[7] Jaimie Baron, *The Archive Effect: Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History* (London: Routledge, 2014), 55.

[8] Germain Lacasse, "The Lecturer and the Attraction," in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, Wanda Strauven, Ed. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 182.

[9] Ibid., 188-9.

is, he presents the image as an excessive object of possibility in order to inquire about its potential for revelation.

My Winnipeg also makes full use of a dominant strategy for attaining camera movement in early cinema of attractions: the train. Throughout the film, views of Winnipeg's streets are often seen through the windows of a train, or a phantom ride. We know we are on a train, even when we are on streets with no tracks, because we can hear the chugging on the soundtrack. (Figures 9-12) This constant impossible movement through the city at once suggests a tour ride and oneiric transport.

Figure 9-12 One of the framing devices of *My Winnipeg* is to present the filmmaker's avatar and the spectator as if on a dream phantom ride through the city together. Thus, many of the exterior shots of the city are presented as though we are seeing them from the front, back, or sides of a train.

My Winnipeg could also be seen as a cinema of attractions "trick" film, focused primarily on tricking the audience into believing the faked archival footage to be revealing components of

Winnipeg's secret history. As Gunning explains, "Many trick films are, in effect, plotless, a series of transformations strung together with little connection and certainly no characterization. […] The story simply provides a frame upon which to string a demonstration of the magical possibilities of the cinema."[10] Early cinematic "nonfiction" had its own version of the "trick" film, as well, which relied on restaging current events, such as the Boer War (1899-1902) and the Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901) and passing them off as documentary evidence, in order "[t]o satisfy the public's demand for dramatic news" at a time when camera crews had difficulty capturing events as they happened in a manner sufficiently engaging to the viewer.[11] In the earliest years of filmmaking, production companies such as Edison, Pathé, and Mitchell and Kenyon all relied on faked footage to bring scenes of historical import to their viewers. While most production companies reduced or suspended the practice of making fake "newsreels" after the Boer War, Mitchell and Kenyon continued this practice up until the start of WWI.[12] Such faked actualities astounded audiences by making them feel close to the action in far off lands. Maddin's "tricks" provoke inquiry many layers beyond the initial excitement generated around technical prowess. The magical possibilities of the cinema in the case of *My Winnipeg* revolve around creating an illusion suspended between fiction and nonfiction viewing modes as his essayistic erotetics slowly set in. The spectacle of the archival image can be inspected and contemplated for its historical value at the same time as it is enjoyed for its visual excitation, a quality that fake documentary footage has exploited from the early days of cinema into the present. But perhaps not all spectacles are visually exciting until the moment the spectator is called on to inspect them. The audience must be provoked into a relationship with the image that requires more of their gaze, and involves the imagination. Maddin accomplishes this provocation through his reflexive setup and his *bonimenteur* voice-over persona.

By the end of *My Winnipeg*, the focus has anamorphically switched from the people in the pictures to the backgrounds. Maddin echoes Thom Andersen's backgrounds-into-foreground strategy when, at the very end of the film, rather than at the beginning as Andersen does, he

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[10] Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction[s]: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, Wanda Strauven, Ed. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 383.
[11] Robin Whalley and Peter Worden, "Forgotten Firm: A Short Chronological Account of Mitchell and Kenyon, Cinematographers," *Film History*, Vol. 10, No. 1, *Cinema Pioneers* (1998): 37-8.
[12] Ibid*.,* 37.

wistfully observes, "At some point, when you miss a place enough, the backgrounds in photos become more important than the people in them." (Figures 13 & 14)

Figure 13 &14 Maddin's last words in *My Winnipeg*, voiced over these family photos, suggest to his viewer that nostalgic longing can be satisfied by an anamorphic viewing of the photographic evidence of former homes.

Maddin suggests an anamorphic cure for the longing for home. Here, we see an array of family photographs, but we see them differently than we saw the archival images presented earlier in the film. After nearly an hour and a half of examining the surfaces of the multilayered images and montages for evidence of Winnipeg's past and the reliability of our guide, the call to

prioritize the background of the photographic record feels consistent with the visual work the spectator has already had to do. The experience of parsing out an urban history from sources of varying reliability has prepared the spectator to accept the anamorphic suggestion as an applicable strategy not just to indulge in the unreflective nostalgia of going through one's family photographs, but to find clues that aid in the pursuit of a reflective nostalgia that reuses images in the service of collective memory.

Powers of the False

[H]istory is untrue; true history is irretrievable; and fake histories can be real.
—Alexandra Juhasz and Jesse Lerner[13]

Rhetoric, then, far from revealing the ethical inferiority of the "biased" film, invites the powers of the false into documentary.
—Laura Marks[14]

With increasing frequency, philosophers, historians, and film scholars have aroused skepticism around our ability to construct and represent sufficiently comprehensive, reliable, and just historical narratives. This has been especially true since works by historical philosophers who question the role of power in our reconstructions of the past, such as Walter Benjamin and Michel Foucault, have entered into the canon of the wider humanities. The intensity of distrust in historical representation has been a driving trend within documentary film scholarship where the representation of the historical world is the prime objective of its object of study. While Alexandra Juhasz and Jesse Lerner call into question the very possibility of retrieving "true history" at all, Laura Marks argues that "classical documentary's ideal of truth is itself a fiction."[15] The all-too-easily-presumed authority of documentary images, rhetoric, and narratives, which have been naturalized to such an extent they may be used to convey any

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[13] Alexandra Juhasz, and Jesse Lerner, *F Is for Phony: Fake Documentary and Truth's Undoing*, Visible Evidence Series, Vol. 17 (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2006), 17.

[14] Laura U. Marks, "Signs of the Times: Deleuze, Peirce, and the Documentary Image," in *The Brain Is the Screen: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Cinema*, Gregory Flaxman, Ed. (New York: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 201.

[15] Ibid.

version of "truth" one wishes to project, are the very sources of contention that hybrid-documentary exposes, simultaneously suspending, multiplying, and placing under review the notion of cinematic "truth".

Marks questions classical documentary's ideal of truth, which is precisely the emphatic, positivist, politically expedient notion of truth that Friedrich Nietzsche sought to undermine more than a century ago by reversing its terms: "Everything that has hitherto been called 'truth' has been recognized as the most harmful, insidious, and subterranean form of lie".[16] The reversal of truth and lie within the documentary idiom is the first step in finding documentary's potential to convey a Nietzschean exposé of submerged authoritarianism in representation, and conversely, authenticity through the counterfeit. The trick to discovering the Nietzschean revelatory capacity of the "lie" is to understand the power that the "lie" delivers us when it is recognized as such, and the difference between a "dishonest lie" and an "honest" one (which will be discussed presently). This power resides in discovering the utility that the "lie" provides, and which "truth," in many cases, cannot. One cannot say, "Maybe, but let's keep looking!" to a fully sanctioned and determined "truth"; once an idea, an image, or a concrete statement has been branded with the power of the true it enters into the rigid, unambiguous, fiercely protected confines of certainty. As alluring as the certainty of "truth" might be, it is utterly paralyzing to explorative thought and progress; it kills the imagination and with it our capacity to envision life otherwise—the imagination's greatest gift. When Nietzsche writes that everything we think is true is a dangerous lie, he provokes his reader to think of alternatives to what has become naturalized, inviolable, and normalizing. Nietzsche dislodges truth and lie from their formulation as ethical speech acts, and reformulates them as heuristics for metaphysical thought and cultural critique.

Drawing heavily on Nietzsche, Gilles Deleuze theorizes the productive blend of truth and lie as the "powers of the false," in his book, *Cinema 2: The Time Image*. He argues that "[i]t is the power of the false which replaces and supersedes the form of the true, because it poses the simultaneity of incompossible presents, or the coexistences of not-necessarily true pasts."[17] By articulating the past as moments of multiplicitous possibility, we can convey a world in which

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[16] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Ecce Homo" [1908] in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, Walter Kaufman, Trans. (Toronto: Random Literary Classics: 2000), §8, 790.

[17] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 131.

our own moment in history may be reevaluated such that who and what we are can be seen as still open, still becoming, and more dependant upon situated, embodied perspectives than we may have previously realized. This "simultaneity of incompossible presents" delivers the cinematic subject (perceiver and perceived) into the realm of simultaneous possible subjectivities and figurations, which strongly suggests a more postmodern conception of subjectivity itself. Laura Marks credits Patricia Pisters with the observation that Deleuze's time-image "blurs the distinction between documentary and fiction, and fake documentaries are the current apotheosis of this tendency."[18] Deleuze does not discuss the distinctions between the viewing modes of documentary and fiction, but challenges each to ascend to the opening of possibilities that the crystalline image makes possible through its use of the explicitly virtual spaces of the time-image. The issue of truth and lie are to become, in Deleuze's reformulation of virtual space-time, an issue of opening up the potential of the textual, hermeneutic, and cinematic. The most basic metaphysical question, "what is this reality?" is as likely, or unlikely as it were, to be given definition through a non-fiction exploration as through a fiction one. Under this Nietzschean framework which Deleuze employs, he finds an opening up of the field of "truth" and "lie" where the (hybrid)documentary can forge unique cinematic experiences.

Deleuze outlines Nietzsche's critique of truth in the same breath as he praises Orson Welles' ability to bring this critique to light within his oeuvre, but especially in his last film *F for Fake*, also an essayistic hybrid-documentary, asserting that "[i]n the Nietzschean fashion, Welles has constantly battled against the system of judgment: there is no value superior to life, life is not to be judged or justified, it is innocent, it has the 'innocence of becoming', beyond good and evil…"[19] *F for Fake* profiles a chain of forgers and argues for their value in a world in which power dictates the voices that will be heard and considered authentic or relevant. After Nietzsche and Welles, Deleuze grasps the figure of the forger as "the character of the cinema" explaining that "[the forger] provokes undecidable alternatives and inexplicable differences between the true and the false."[20] A passage from *Genealogy of Morals*, clarifies Nietzsche's perspective on honesty and judgment, and also on "truth" and "lie," which will in turn contribute to our

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[18] A paraphrase of Laura Marks' interpretation of Patricia Pisters' interpretation of Nietzsche as his thought relates to documentary genre conventions. See Marks, "Signs of the Times: Deleuze, Peirce, and the Documentary Image," 201.

[19] Ibid., 137.

[20] Ibid., 132.

understanding of Deleuze's assessment of Welles' work in *F for Fake*, and by extension, those films that we might now call essay films:

> Our educated people of today, our "good people," do not tell lies—that is true; but that is *not* to their credit! A real lie, a genuine, resolute, "honest" lie (on whose value one should consult Plato) would be something far too severe and potent for them: it would demand of them what one *may* not demand of them, that they should open their eyes to themselves, that they should know how to distinguish "true" and "false" in themselves. All they are capable of is a *dishonest* lie; whoever today accounts himself a "good man" is utterly incapable of confronting any matter except with *dishonest mendaciousness*—a mendaciousness that is abysmal but innocent, truehearted, blue-eyed, and virtuous. These "good men"—they are one and all moralized to the very depths and ruined and botched to all eternity as far as honesty is concerned: who among them could endure a single *truth* "about man"? Or, put more palpably: who among them could stand a *true* biography?[21]

To unpack this quote a bit within the context of Nietzsche's argument in *Genealogy of Morals*, "dishonest lies" are those lies that come from thinking in black and white, thinking in terms of good and evil, and thinking that one can have certainty in knowing the difference between the two and that nothing lies between. Jean-Paul Sartre would call this hubris "bad faith." "Dishonest lies" are those claims that are passed off as absolute and singular truths, when in actuality, other alternatives and perspectives can and do exist. They are unreflective, unrelenting, and very powerful when spoken by those with authority and repeated often. When "truth" is limited to a singular possibility, everything else is constructed against it as a lie. The "honest lies" then are those that preserve the possibility of unknown unknowns and multiplicitous perspectives, those that open up the potential for thought, those that meditate on metaphysics through the imagination. The "honest lie" is an experiment in opening up a field of knowledge for perspectivism.

My Winnipeg: Few Historical Truths, Many Honest Lies

The authentic archival footage in *My Winnipeg* comes from only a few sources and amounts to about two or three minutes of screen time over the course of the film. Maddin's moving image

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[21] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Genealogy of Morals III" [1887], in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, Walter Kaufman, Trans. (Toronto: Random Literary Classics: 2000), §19, 573-4. Original emphases.

archival sources include: shots from a twenty-minute reel of film shot in 1935 for the Holly Snowshoe Club's 35th anniversary; his own family's home movies; and a few seconds of a Fox Newsreel that reported on "If Day" in Winnipeg in 1942. Archival photographs also appear from time to time, for instance postcards of the Happyland amusement park (Figure 15); family photos; press photos of the Wolseley Elm scandal and the 1919 General Strike; and period street photography of Winnipeg's grand buildings that provide a setting for the "recreations" through back projection. And yet, the archival images are positioned so strategically, especially in the beginning of the film, that they continue to suggest reading the faked footage as archival; they provide an "archival effect," even as the images become more noticeably faked. Within the first twenty minutes of the film, Maddin has used over half of the archival footage and photography that will appear in the entire film. As if in answer to Maddin's imperative refrain, "Stay awake!," the spectator will try to alert herself to the different registers of documenting, staging, and scripting in the image, but ultimately, what *My Winnipeg* shows is that even when we do identify an authentic piece of archival material, it provides little more insight into the narrative of the past than the staged spectacle, if any at all. However, what does provide more insight in our relationships with the past is the opportunity to contemplate the representation of historical plausibility through a destabilization of the authority of the voice and image that spurs spectator incredulity and speculation.

Figure 15 A postcard of Happyland.

My Winnipeg fudges its history to expose the limits of historical possibility. As Baron argues, "fake documentaries that produce the archive effect in 'inappropriate' ways remind us that the veracity and meaning of any document is always open to debate and question."[22] Maddin narrates early on: "We Winnipeggers are so stupefied with nostalgia, we're actually never quite sure; I never really know anything for sure." According to Juhasz and Lerner, nostalgia in cinema relies on the possibility of stable and coherent historical narratives, conveying the past "as the perfect artifact of an alternative and pure state hitherto undocumented."[23] Falsifications in *My Winnipeg* can be seen as manners of resisting the way in which the notion of authenticity is used to construct unalterable "truths." In this way, *My Winnipeg* has much in common with fake documentary. Juhasz and Lerner articulate nostalgia's relationship to authenticity in the fake documentary: "Fake documentaries keep unreal their historical evidence so that they can resist incorporation into a project of nostalgia. The past needs to remain fragmented—'imperfect and improvisational'".[24] Displaying false histories by using fake archival footage, as Maddin does, reminds us that the image is a slippery thing, which can easily slide from one interpretation to another, depending on who happens to be constructing it, what they are willing to disclose, and the type of authority they may claim. "Simulations and manipulations of found documents… may teach us to be more critical of the archive effect," writes Baron, "such critical skepticism may encourage a more active, discerning kind of spectatorship … such films may also lead us to doubt any found document's truth-value as well as its accepted meaning."[25] Thus, instead of a nostalgia for "authenticity," a concept which can so easily be made to appear stable through manipulations of the image and conventions of authority, the counterfeiting of history encourages a revelry in finding new potential in the image as its truth value is destabilized, and its ability to tell subtler "partial truths" is explored. "By counterfeiting history," Juhasz and Lerner explain, "fake documentaries challenge the status of visual evidence by reminding us that much of what we may want to see or know is undocumented, unspoken, disallowed, mistranslated, misremembered, and misrepresented."[26] This terrain is precisely where Maddin

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[22] Baron, *The Archive Effect*, 77.

[23] Juhasz and Lerner, *F Is For Phony*, 15. Emphasis added.

[24] Ibid., 15.

[25] Baron, *The Archive Effect,* 50.

[26] Juhasz and Lerner, *F Is For Phony*, 14-5.

chooses to play. Instead of conveying a nostalgia for authenticity, Maddin presents a charlatan's strategy for reflective nostalgia by counterfeiting history.

Pasts that are "undocumented, unspoken, disallowed, mistranslated, misremembered, and misrepresented" make up the majority of our personal and collective histories for various reasons ranging from trauma, to taboo, to forgetfulness, to lack of resources, to lack of access, to corruption, to accident. Those pasts that are accurately documented, spoken, allowed, translated, remembered and represented make up so few, if any, of the histories we see and know, but the stories we tell sound convincing enough. Thus, there is a wide swath of the past that must be related to in terms of obtaining and revaluing partial knowledges. But we are very inexperienced with such relationships, especially in documentary film, where definitive, uncomplicated knowledges are often the most sought after.

The need to envision an undocumented past is as pressing in the reconstruction of personal memory as it is for collective memory. *My Winnipeg* makes room for and produces the notion of a mythological repressed that seeks expression within collective memory. In the middle of the film the voiceover stops for about four minutes and we are treated to a ballet "re-enactment" of a 1939 séance held within the provincial legislative building, "the world's largest Masonic temple," according to Maddin. Present for the séance are ballet dancers, "Winnipeg's most respected city fathers, including 'The Incorruptible' Mayor Cornish, and the madams or shop stewards of our illustrious brothel collectives," claims Maddin. The dancing supernatural medium represents the co-founder of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Gweneth Lloyd, played by Jacelyn Lobay. First nations figures play a prominent role in the oneiric séance, as integral to the uncanny mood of the sequence as the mournful, yet sweet symphonic score. This sequence may at first seem absurd. Maddin's assertion of a hidden Masonic and pagan influence ("That's the Greek god Hermes atop our dome, disguised as the Golden Boy by an armful of wheat," he remarks before falling silent) speaks to a vague knowledge that there are multiple ancient mythic systems of valuation at work within and around government that cannot be acknowledged in the official records. (Figures 16-19) Equally, the inclusion of sex workers in the rituals of powerful men does not seem far-fetched upon reflection. Their influence upon the civic leaders, however, would have to be left out of the historical record so as not to tarnish their memory, or bring disgrace to the institutions that ostensibly host only the most morally inclined public servants.

Figure 16-19 A 1939 séance held in the legislative building, involving prominent politicians and their female companions turns into a ballet sequence under The Golden Boy's watch.

By pausing his incessant vocal commentary, Maddin gives his audience a chance to contemplate what they cannot see through the archive, that which has been suppressed, deliberately hidden, or is too taboo for inclusion. The silence of the narrator signals the importance of bearing silent witness to the expression of the mythological repressed as it demands inclusion, and yet does not give up all of its secrets.

In an early sequence, Maddin's vocal commentary, inter-titles, and imagery sets the tone for the poetic aspects of the film, and establishes two of the motifs that recur in the characterization of Winnipeggers: amnesia and dream. Snowy street shots are intercut with sleepy train passengers. In voiceover he declares, "Winnipeg, always winter. Always winter. Always sleeping. Winnipeg. Winnipeg. Winnipeg," and later: "It must be the sleepiness which keeps Winnipeggers here. If only I could stay awake. Pay attention to where I'm going, where I've been, and get out of here. Stay awake! Stay awake! Stay awake!" Then, an inter-title: "Who's Alive?" Voiceover: "We sleep as we walk, walk as we dream." Another intertitle:

"Always lost!" Maddin repeatedly emphasizes this sleepiness as an essential quality of Winnipeggers, one that they need to be shocked out of in order to confront their pasts and presents. "Why are we so sleepy? Why can't we just open our eyes? … We sleep. We sleepwalk. We sleepwalk," laments Maddin. This sequence is hypnotic in its verbal, musical, and textual rhythm, as well as in its imagery. The strong emphasis on sleep clues the viewer into an appropriate hermeneutic for what follows: we are on the inside of the film's subjects, inside Guy Maddin's sleepy unconscious, and inside the city's as well.

If this film could be said to document anything with any real fidelity, it would be the associative movement of Maddin's unconscious mind through time and space within his hometown; his unconsciousness is represented by the train itself, as it floats improbably through Winnipeg. Maddin continually warns his audience, his fellow Winnipeggers, and himself to "stay awake!" throughout the film, as the train whistle provides a matching visual and aural alarm. This call, this interpellation, positions all subjects, on and off screen, as though in a half-dream state: we are all here within the film slipping between consciousness and unconsciousness, "reality" and a dream, though we are never quite sure which is which. There is even a fairly consistent figure presented throughout the film of a man on a train, presumably a stand-in for Maddin's own missing form, who, in trying to escape the city, also must fight the pull of sleep. (Figure 20) This man seems to catch and embody all of Maddin's references to befuddlement, dream, struggle to wake, forgetfulness, and desire to abscond from that which confounds—all metaphors for the experience of interpretation, hovering between certainty, doubt and confusion in the essayistic fake documentary. Instead of the familiar documentary subject of positivism, one who we might expect to comprehend as an object of study by the end of the film, we are presented with the figure of the "dreamer" who has multiple signifiers—the man on the train and his traveling companions, all of whom are half asleep throughout the film; sleepwalking Winnipeggers, who attempt, in their mobile slumber, to return to their "old dreamy domiciles" with city-sanctioned keys; Maddin's self-referential voice demanding alertness of himself; and we, the spectators, who, in our semi-conscious states sitting in the audience, follow Maddin down rabbit holes, as he demands that we "stay awake!"

Figure 20 Maddin's sleepy train-riding avatar, portrayed by Darcy Fehr.

Maddin continues with this sleep metaphor. The suggestion of the presence of the unconscious mixes with what might be interpreted as "authentic" documentary evidence, but is both archival and faked archival footage, stressing the fluidity of the representation: "Dreams. Dreaming. Dreaming. Every night I have the same happy dream that I'm back in my childhood home," muses Maddin in voiceover. The accompanying image for these words is home-movie footage of a young boy circa 1960, running around with an older little girl. What follows is a description of this boyhood home atop more photographic evidence of Maddin's nuclear family. However, as he continues in his description of the hair salon, attached to the family's house and run by his mother and aunt, the cuts become quicker, as visually poetic, newly created images of close-ups of hair being cut and silhouettes of women spraying hair product are introduced to stand in for what Maddin knows from memory, but documentary evidence cannot provide. Laura Marks confirms the need for such substitutions; she writes that "[w]hen the people's experience cannot be represented in discourse, *the story must be creatively falsified in order to reach the truth*."[27] That is, the closer we get to representing the logic of the unconscious mind, the more helpful the fantastic is in providing a more or less accurate allegorical understanding of its existence. This combination of documentary evidence and the recreation of figures from memory acknowledges that when cinema attempts to tell a "true" story of the past, there are often gaps that need to be filled in. Whether the document has gone missing, was never recorded, or has

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[27] Marks, "Signs of the Times: Deleuze, Peirce, and the Documentary Image," 202. Original emphasis.

been deliberately suppressed, such stylized reenactments show the need for creative representation in addition to visible evidence in the representation of "reality."

Psychogeographical and Ambulatory Influences

Time and space are fluid within the psychogeographical drifts of the city-symphony-in-reverse. Maddin claims he was inspired to make an ambulatory film by the many walks he took with his girlfriend's dog, Spanky, who appears in the film as himself, and as the Maddin family's long-dead Chihuahua, Toby. Further conflating time and space, he calls Spanky his "guide dog through time" as he follows him through snowdrifts on nighttime walks while ruminating on the Winnipeg of yore. It quickly becomes clear that Maddin's reliance on Spanky's navigatory prowess is firmly tongue in cheek. Showing that the film is much more than an aimless stroll through a dark cold city, Maddin models a historical cognitive mapping of the city, serving as the viewers' guide through space and time.

In 1958, Guy Debord published "Theory of the *Dérive*" in *Internationale Situationniste* #2 in which he refers to a 1952 study by the French sociologist Chombart de Lauwe, who, over the course of a year, followed a university student's movement within Paris. De Lauwe found that her "itinerary form[ed] a small triangle with no significant deviations, the three apexes of which are the School of Political Sciences, her residence and that of her piano teacher."[28] The revelation that urban dwellers exhibited such extremely limited trajectories of movement within the city sphere provoked the Situationists to endeavor to discover how the city managed to contain human circulation within prescribed and limited channels. The purpose of the *dérive*, or drift, was to "alert people of their imprisonment by routine," writes Simon Sadler. By becoming aware of the rut they had gotten themselves into, drifters could then begin to embrace the radical potentials of modern urban experience and inhabit the city in new ways: "Cutting freely across urban space, drifters would gain a revolutionary perspective of the city."[29] With the addition of a fourth dimension, time, we can conceive of a historico-psychogeographical *dérive* in which the subjects discover which areas *and* eras, in their

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[28] Guy Debord, "Theory of the Dérive." *Internationale Situationniste* #2, 1958. http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/2.derive.htm
[29] Simon Sadler, *The Situationist City* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1998), 94.

particular city, are frequented most readily as a matter of course, and which ones tend to be left out of collective memory and imagination. City-symphonies-in-reverse are fertile grounds for historico-psychogeographical *dérives* in general since this kind of temporal movement necessitates a degree of mediation and virtuality, but *My Winnipeg* shows up for this task most immediately as a result of its subconscious ambulatory structure and its multi-layered historical hermeneutic.

The direct inspiration to shoot the film as a kind of *dérive* came from particular early nonfiction films, a fiction film, and literary works. Maddin cites as influences the travelogues his aunt Lil took him to see as a child, city symphonies, such as *Berlin*, *Man with a Movie Camera* and *À propos de Nice*, and Oskar Fischinger's obscure four-minute strolling diary film, *Walking from Munich to Berlin* (1927), in which he shot a second of footage intermittently as he walked between cities. From Fischinger's film, Maddin takes an aesthetic of glimpses of the people and streets of Winnipeg as he passes through the city, many of which are seen through the windows of the train that drifts improbably through the city. Frederico Fellini's twenty-something band of creative young men who kill time in a coastal town after a friend's shotgun wedding in *I Vitelloni* (1953) provided an initial inspiration for the sleepwalking movement from place to place. [30] Fellini's film reminded him of a time in his life when he and his friends worked to re-enchant the city by inhabiting its everyday spaces in curious ways. The main goal and strategy of the Situationist movement in their psychogeographical practices were similar: the rejection of the capitalist imperative to place work on the top rung of priorities, seeking instead to reinvigorate everyday life by infusing banal urban spaces with enchantment and psychic energy. Furthermore, although they are not directly acknowledged influences, the persistent motif of (sleep)walking through the city in *My Winnipeg* recalls three surrealist antecedents that sought to map the psychogeographical experience of Paris and reimagine the city in terms of subconscious desires even before the Situationists: the novels, *Nadja* (André Breton, 1928) and *Le Paysan de Paris* (Louis Aragon, 1926), and the city symphony, *Rien que les heures* (Alberto Cavalcanti, 1926).

My Winnipeg's ambulatory narrative finds its roots not only in antecedent films but also in contemporary literature. Notably, Maddin found inspiration in the novels of German writer

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[30] From the interview between Guy Maddin and art critic Robert Enright included on the Criterion Collection edition DVD of *My Winnipeg*. He also mentions these films as influences, excepting *À propos de Nice*, in an interview with Michael Ondaatje in November of 2008 published in: Guy Maddin, *My Winnipeg*, Toronto: Coach House Books, 2009, 130.

and scholar, W.G. Sebald, whose work is full of restless, roaming, ruminating narrators. Regarding such novels as *The Rings of Saturn* (1995), *Austerlitz* (2001) and others, "Sebald's works provocatively portray place as fluid, unanchored, and interpolated with the disparate geographies traversed by the narrator and his biographical subjects."[31] Movement through liminal spaces in order to reflect on the "situated" places one has just come from is a common theme in both Sebald's and Maddin's work. For *My Winnipeg*, Maddin borrows from Sebald the notion of a "walking adventure" that allows the author to create "digressions upon digressions and still be going somewhere,"[32] an unusual technique for a film about personal and collective pasts, but nevertheless an appropriate one for moving away from the chronological and towards the kairological. Moreover, memory and its technologies have as significant a place in Sebald's work as in Maddin's. In Sebald's work, photography, especially, is "most often discussed in relation to the crisis of memory, with particular focus on Sebald's questioning of photography's referentiality and mnemonic capacity," which often exceeds the technological to critique "the discourses and practices of modernity."[33] In this sense, too, Maddin and Sebald share common ground.

Transgressive Satire: *My Winnipeg* as Burlesque and Mondo Film

Fake docs are "both parody *and* satire," according to Juhasz and Lerner.[34] This assertion conveys the objective of the fake doc to specifically target "another work of art or coded discourse" in order to critique larger "moral or social" structures.[35] As a satirical essay film, *My Winnipeg* recalls several minor literary and film traditions. From the ancient Greek and Roman traditions of Menippean Satire, Juvenalian Satire, mythopoeia, burlesque satire, to the baroque Spanish Golden Age's Conceptismo, to the pan-European baroque Fool's Literature, as well as the

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[31] Christopher C. Gregory-Guider, "Traveling Places in the Works of W. G. Sebald," in *Contemporary Literature*, Volume 46, Number 3, Fall (2005): 422.

[32] Maddin, *My Winnipeg*, Coach House Books, 131.

[33] J. J. Long, *W.G. Sebald: Image, Archive, Modernity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 5.

[34] Juhasz and Lerner, *F Is For Phony*, 2.

[35] Ibid., from Linda Hutcheon's *Theory of Parody*, as quoted by Juhasz and Lerner.

mondo film and the (primarily francophone) early film practice of the *bonimenteur*, *My Winnipeg* shows the influence of many provocative antecedents.[36]

Burlesque is a humorous style of satire whose goal is to ridicule established figures—people, institutions, and nations, as well as genres, styles, and forms—in a blithe and festive manner. It can be traced back to ancient Greek literature (for example, Homer's the *Batrachomyomachia [Battle of the Frogs and the Mice]* and Aristophanes' comedies), experiencing a resurgence of popularity in Spanish baroque poetry (for example, Cervantes' sonnets), and in the musical theater and cabaret of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Grotesque exaggeration, caricature, trickery, subversion of "good taste", as well as outright risqué elements, feature prominently in the burlesque tradition. Broader and cruder in its mimicry than parody, burlesque relies on a perceptible gap between the seriousness of a subject and its treatment, that is, what is trivial is made grave, and vice versa:[37] "[Burlesque] bids us to cast aside the prevailing deadly serious world view so that we might see and enjoy ourselves in all our complexity: imperfect, illogical, and irrational, yet vital and irresistibly comical creatures."[38] Though we can find many isolated burlesque features throughout the film, Maddin puts the burlesque tradition fully to work in a sequence of outrageous, sexually charged, yet light-hearted, tall tales towards the end of the film.

The comic sexual satire sequence of burlesque begins when Maddin spuriously claims to have been born in the old Winnipeg hockey arena, an arena that the city is in the process of demolishing to his great dismay. The trauma of the destruction of Winnipeg's symbol of Canadian masculinity (he calls the arena his "male parent") kicks off a fantastical reverie where Maddin is not only born, but breastfed, employed (as a stick boy), and given to a memorable if not formative sexual experience (a crush on a Soviet hockey player). (Figures 21 & 22) The sequence ends with a fantasy about a dream hockey team, called the Black Tuesdays, made up of former Winnipeg hockey players dead or alive. Maddin represents the players as elderly brutes, their aged and brutalized faces displayed in close-up. The hockey arena is made to host the entire life cycle of the Canadian male. Taboos abound here, homoeroticism, bodily fluids ("Urine,

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[36] Due to spatial limitations, I will focus only on burlesque satire and Mondo films here.

[37] Encyclopædia Britannica, "Burlesque," http://www.britannica.com/art/burlesque-literature (Last accessed, June 8, 2017).

[38] Adrienne L. Martín, *Cervantes and the Burlesque Sonnet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 3.

Breast Milk, Sweat"), old age in sport, and attraction to Cold War/opposing team "enemies" are presented within the context of youth, destruction and hockey, which could be seen as violating the mythological purity of Canadian masculinity through the country's favorite pastime, hockey. Transgression, particularly of gender, is a prime objective of the burlesque. The destruction of the Winnipeg Maroons' arena seems to ask the question, what does it mean to be a Canadian man in the absence of hockey? Maddin makes light of Canada's national obsession in order to question the notion that hockey is the only common denominator of a male Canadian identity.

Figure 21 Maddin claims that he was born in the Winnipeg arena.

Figure 22 He recounts a story in which he has a sexual awaking as a young boy that motivates him to steal the jersey of an USSR player and wear it while practicing his shots.

Writing on burlesque in the nineteenth century, Richard Grant White saw its key quality as its monstrosity.[39] The scene that follows the destruction of the hockey arena (and thus Canadian masculinity) is a "reenactment" in which Maddin's mother is goaded by his siblings into cooking for them. Here, the children and the mother transgress their roles to reveal the monstrosity that lurks beneath the surface within the family unit. The children are merciless in their insistence that "Mother" get up and cook for them, eventually releasing a parakeet to "spray [its] filth in her hair." (Figures 23 & 24) Maddin then tells a story about his mother killing, with a single blow, a 75-year-old myna bird that had startled her. "Mother" refuses to nourish her kids and they retaliate even though they are capable of feeding themselves; behind closed doors the Canadian family is less polite, and more monstrous, than we might have thought.

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[39] Robert C. Allen, *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 25.

Figure 23 & 24 Maddin's "mother" is tortured with a parakeet by her hungry children.

The most astonishing scene in the film comes on the heels of the monstrous-family-with-birds scene. It begins factually enough with a stable fire at Whittier Park in the early winter of 1926 (never mind that the actual fire that burnt the stables at Whittier Park happened in 1934), and spins into a yarn about the aphrodisiac qualities of picnicking in a garden of frozen horse heads. Of all the scenes in the film this is the one that people want to believe the most even though it is perhaps the most fantastical. One reason may be that, after the animated reenactment of horses escaping the fire only to be trapped in a rapidly freezing Red River, the faked archival footage of 1920s lovers strolling around the frozen horse heads appears quite authentic. (Figures 25-28) By this point in the film, there has been a build up of obvious fictions, and the audience is waiting to be dazzled by an unbelievable but true story. When asked in interviews and Q and A's about the veracity of this tall tale, Maddin is stubbornly resolute that the event happened, daring moviegoers to do their own research and call his bluff. The grotesque and provocative nature of this scene performs the function of a burlesque satire of Maddin's audience who want to believe that something so intensely bizarre, and yet not political in the least, could occur and be forgotten only to find its moment of recognition 90 years later. That audiences would prefer to recognize themselves as the redeemers of this story, an extremely improbable (if not impossible) defiance of the laws of physics, is telling of what kinds of pasts we are comfortable bringing into our historical experience. The horse heads scene acts as burlesque fetish, because what follows are scenes of increasing fascination around political and sexual transgression.

Figure 25-28 An animated sequence of horses running from a fire in the Whittier Park stables leads into faked footage of the horses frozen in the river. Lovers find excitement in visiting the horse heads.

"Burlesque is emblematic of the way that popular entertainment becomes an arena for 'acting out' cultural contradictions and even contestations and is exemplary of the complexities and ambiguities of this process," writes literary scholar Robert C. Allen.[40] "The Incorruptible" Mayor Cornish's Golden Boy pageants (Figure 29) and "orange Jello days"[41] take a shot at the way the first mayor of Winnipeg is officially revered and yet his memory conceals corruption. Francis Evans Cornish became the first mayor of Winnipeg in 1874 at the age of 43. And yet, this sequence presents the participants in a mixture of early-to-mid-twentieth-century fashions, with Mayor Cornish depicted as a white-bearded elderly gentleman though he died in 1878 at the

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[40] Ibid., 27.

[41] The orange of the jello is emphasized by its colorization while the rest of the frame remains in black and white. These "Orange Jello Days" may well represent a dream-like associative reference to Mayor Cornish's membership in the "Orange Order", a Protestant fraternal organization that came to Canada from Northern Ireland and influenced Canada politics throughout the nineteenth century.

age of only 47. By depicting Mayor Cornish at an age of reverence and by persistently repeating his honorific, "The Incorruptible", as we watch him participate in a sexually charged ritual of public appreciation of male beauty, Maddin pokes fun at the way time washes away the indiscretions of politicians and sanctifies their memories. The fantastical treatment of this historical figure may prompt some viewers to look into his record and assess the appropriateness and utility of a spotless legacy in his case. According to the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, previous to becoming mayor of Winnipeg, Cornish was elected Mayor of London, Ontario in 1861, where he "had a popular following but gained a reputation as the 'rowdy' mayor, being charged by opponents with bigamy, assault, drunkenness, and boisterous public disputes," and "was defeated in 1864, it is said, when members of the city council called out the militia to ensure an honest election."[42] The *Dictionary* entry goes on to detail Cornish's many attempts at voter fraud in both London and Winnipeg, including "kidnap[ping] his opponent on the eve of the election"! *My Winnipeg* trivializes the memory of the city's first mayor to provoke reflection on our own tendency to overlook the transgressions of the past in order to nostalgically paint the past as a more moral place capable of providing a foundation for our essential goodness.

Figure 29 "The Incorruptible" Mayor Cornish inspects a Golden Boy pageant contestant.

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[42] Hartwell Bosfield, entry for "Cornish, Francis Evans," in the Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 10, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 1972, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/cornish_francis_evans_10E.html (Last accessed, December 10, 2016).

My Winnipeg is part of a tradition of spectator exploitation that employs the discourses of nonfiction to playfully question the terms of credulity. Here, we can include early "trick" films; *Ripley's Believe It Or NOT!* attractions (including their books, museums, television shows); mondo films; and even P.T. Barnum's exploits inside the circus ring and out. Maddin invokes *Ripley's Believe It Or NOT!* as a source for the Wolseley Elm sequence, in which he tells the story of a tree surrounded by asphalt in the middle of Wolseley Avenue whose claim to fame was that it was the smallest park in the world according to *Ripley's Believe It Or NOT!*. To back up the story of the 1957 scandal of its destruction we are provided with all authentic archival stills.[43] (Figure 30) This sequence is the only one in the film for which Maddin does not create or add any of his own visuals, which is ironic, since it is presented as potentially unbelievable through Maddin's reference to *Ripley's Believe It Or NOT!*. Maddin's brand of nonfiction exploitation film combines varying levels of authenticity within the same space and leaves it to the spectator to sort out their relationship to all of it, playing on audiences' desires to bear witness to "unbelievable" tales and decide for themselves if these tales occupy a place in the world they share. *My Winnipeg* differs from mondo films in the tone of its address to the spectator and the degree to which it aspires to repulse or shock. Maddin keeps the tone light, personal, ironic, and friendly, unlike the damning faux-journalistic tenor of the early mondo films.

Figure 30 Archival photograph of women protecting the Wolseley Elm in 1957.

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[43] George Siamandas, "The Tale of the Wolseley Elm," *The Winnipeg Time Machine*, http://timemachine.siamandas.com/PAGES/winnipeg_stories/WOLSELEY_ELM.htm (Last accessed, Dec. 10, 2016).

Often dismissed from scholarly evaluation as "trash," mondo films derive from a number of other cinematic genres, aesthetic styles, and discourses, including burlesque, travelogue, ethnography, pornography, "cinema of attractions," circus sideshows, newsreel, and journalism, and are deserving of greater attention for their contributions to documentary and pseudo-documentary discourse. In the mid-2000s several film theorists sought to redeem the mondo film, reevaluating their contributions to critiques of media and spectatorship during globalization. Mark Goodall, sees mondo films not as trash but the opposite, as "'transgressive' works of art," observing that "[t]he political perversity of the mondo film can arguably be viewed…as a harbinger of many aspects of contemporary globalizing media production and consumption."[44] Doug Bentin argues that the viewing pleasure of mondo films derives from the active viewing they demand from their spectators: "through purely cinematic means a viewer finds pleasure in proving or disproving the apparent believability of one scene versus another with the use of visual evidence. The viewer in this position becomes arbiter of verisimilitude."[45] Like mondo films, *My Winnipeg* contains countless clues that hint that footage has been faked, some clearer than others. As with mondo films, the sheer variety of views, themes, and representational strategies packed into *My Winnipeg* can easily overwhelm the spectator.

Reminiscent of *Ripley's Believe It Or NOT!* before them, mondo films exploit their spectators' epistemological limitations within a world experiencing information overload. *Mondo Cane*'s (1962) theme song, "More" (by Riz Ortolani and Nino Oliviero), although ostensibly a love song, expresses the tensions surrounding abundance in a world where "more" easily becomes too much, which could be seen as the central theme of the mondo film itself. For instance, one of the four appearances of "More" in *Mondo Cane* provides ironic commentary to a nearly eight minute sequence of over-indulgence in Hamburg's red light district. It starts out in the bars and dancehalls as people imbibe, flirting with, mugging for, and confronting a camera that insists on capturing them in the midst of their indulgence. The vocal narration muses sardonically, "Life is joy; is gaiety; is mental deftness; is physical fitness; social grace; serenity; the power to forget; but most of all, the absence of any memory or sense of death." The vocal

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[44] Mark Goodall, "Shockumentary Evidence: the Perverse Politics of the Mondo Film," in *Remapping World Cinema: Identity, Culture and Politics in Film,* Stephanie Dennison, and Song H. Lim, Eds. (London: Wallflower Press, 2006), 119.

[45] Doug Bentin, "*Mondo Barnum*," in *Docufictions: Essays on the Intersection of Documentary and Fictional Filmmaking*, Rhodes, Gary D, and John P. Springer, Eds. (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland & Co, 2006), 144.

narration ends and the theme song's melody moves through the triumphant swells of a waltz while people drink; then to the drama of a march after the bars have closed; and to a lone accordion version, accompanying inebriated pedestrians along the Reeperbahn Strasse in the early morning hours as they wobble, pass out, and start fights. Finally, the sequence ends with the orchestra happily rejoining the tune as drunks dance about in the streets in full daylight. Life is excess and avoidance.

In both the mondo films and *My Winnipeg*, the visual spectacle provides more information than can be processed within the hermeneutic suggested by the vocal commentary. Information overload, like high levels of inebriation, comes about when our limits are unknown and we become seduced by the idea that more is better. With more to process comes doubt around what to prioritize and what to believe. Every metaphysical and ontological claim becomes suspect in the dizzying post-consumption aftermath. Documentary narrative is helpless here to combat these effects; mondo films' voice-of-God narration is often untrustworthy, clearly biased without being subjective or personal, and missing when you need it most. Every attempt to directly bring certainty through narrative only adds to the dubiousness of the effort. mondo films expose a deep distrust with the efforts of nonfiction film to cut a path through the crisis of information overload, while at the same time providing excesses in visible evidence that demand both affect and critique. Whereas the contemporaneous *cinema direct* movement dealt with this anxiety around the credibility of visible evidence by doubling down on the potential truth-telling capabilities of the medium, mondo films took the opposite tact, creating an excess of opportunities to disbelieve or to test the structures of representation that request our credulity. Mondo films subscribe to the notion that we must go to our moral and aesthetic limits and beyond to discover what they are, and how we might learn to process them.

Information overload is a perennial condition, an idea that has been referenced and proposed as a modern crisis for hundreds, if not thousands, of years whenever a new technology has come along that increases access to parts of the world heretofore inaccessible. Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the printing press in 1450 led to a sudden proliferation of texts that overwhelmed the European intelligentsia. One response to textual abundance was to devise new systems of categorization, summarization, annotation, housing and cataloging. Notably, Denis Diderot wrote a lengthy article in his *Encyclopédie* (1755) explaining that the aim of the project was to manage information overload scientifically, making it a central contribution to the French

Enlightenment. Equally important to dealing with the crisis of *copia* was the cultivation of the skills of selection, and interpretation: "an explosion of book production during the early modern period led to the development of a broad discourse on modes of textual practice."[46] The early twentieth century sociologist, Georg Simmel theorized information overload within the modern cityscape in his essay, "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1903), arguing that the overload of sensations in the urban world caused people to become anesthetized to their busy environments, which led to slower reactions to changes. Today, we are still dealing with the effects of information overload caused by the invention of photographic technology even as its initial analogue medium is being replaced by a new digital one. We can see evidence for this claim especially well in documentary film studies where the meaning of visible evidence is increasingly unfixed. As Bill Nichols observes in his chapter on the video of the Rodney King beating in his book *Blurred Boundaries* (1994), when it comes to the visible evidence provided by the moving image, we always have simultaneously too much and not enough information to conclusively determine its meaning. Works that keep ambiguous or make strange the meaning of the visual and verbal information that they convey, like mondo films, go some distance in requiring their audiences to acknowledge epistemological, ontological, and moral crises that more "tasteful" works tend to suppress.

Unlike Ripley's attractions and mondo films, *My Winnipeg* was made at a time when access to information is at everyone's fingertips through the Internet and smart phones. As part of the exploitation genres, *My Winnipeg* exploits our credulity in the face of the overwhelming ease of accessing information, daring us to make use of our resources. But the issue is not just that information is overwhelming in itself and that people are often too lazy to use it to confirm or deny claims to knowledge. The primary issue is that information tells only part of the story, and the part that it tells is alienating to the acquisition and transmission of experience.

In his 1936 essay, "The Storyteller," Walter Benjamin contrasts storytelling with information.[47] There are several dangers that come about when a culture relies solely on information to guide their actions and record their history, according to Benjamin. First,

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[46] Daniel Rosenberg, "Early Modern Information Overload," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Volume 64, Number 1, (January 2003): 2.

[47] Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller: Observations on the Works of Nikolai Leskov," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 3, 1935-1938*, Howard Eiland, Michael W. Jennings, and Walter Benjamin, Eds. (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Belknap, 2002), 147.

information is authoritarian, it speaks as if it can capture the essence of the event and declare its final truth. The domination of information, with its insistent voice of authority, diminishes the importance of individual contributions, none of which can stand in for the whole, and pushes out the collective work of storytelling. Reports, facts, and information present themselves as "the pure 'in itself,' or gist of a thing."[48] Information must always appear "understandable in itself" and "plausible" even if the situation is complex and astonishing.[49] It is shot through with explanation, which means it makes all the psychological and rational connections for the audience already, leaving nothing for them to parse. The value of information is momentary, according to Benjamin.[50] It lives in the present only and is not concerned with the larger picture except to appear as a likely explanation. Storytelling, on the other hand, is sustainable and remains potent over time. It can provoke astonishment and reflection even much later. Information creates its own authority because it is about now; in information, current events are detached from the context of time. Information reduces everything to a superficial, one-dimensional statement of now. Information is contingent, but hides its contingency in its presumed authority. These features are incompatible with storytelling, which relies on interpretation, personal relevance, and future application.[51]

Benjamin identifies two essential types of oral storytellers: the explorers and the local historians.[52] These two figures provide listeners with a perspective on the world outside of their spatial and temporal scopes, respectively. The explorer transmits experience of travel, drawing closer the far-off landscapes that most people will never experience first-hand. This figure is a witness to the world, and his story links his listeners to that larger world. Similarly, the local storyteller puts experiences and events into a context of different times, and her story links the audience to their past. In this way, both are needed to give historical breadth to the community. Benjamin begins his Storyteller essay by asserting a decline in storytelling, which leads to a decline in the ability to share experience, and is indicative of a devaluation of experience in

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[48] Ibid., 149.

[49] Ibid., 147.

[50] Ibid., 148.

[51] Benjamin's notion of storytelling should not be confused with the narrative of a film, or the trend in documentary filmmaking termed "storytelling" or "story". Benjamin emphasizes the communication of experience, and the necessity of an engaged audience, making it a concept that is perfectly compatible with a cinema of attractions that eschews a coherent narrative.

[52] Benjamin, "The Storyteller," 144.

general.[53] Benjamin is concerned with the question, who are the storytellers in our world now that the oral tradition has diminished? Maddin is similarly concerned with this question. In an interview with Robert Enright, he observes that the modern replacement for the mythologizing that used to happen around the campfire is filmmaking.[54] Robert Ripley and mondo filmmakers created their attractions by going to places unseen by their audiences and assembling what they found into questionable presentations displaying the potential range of actuality. Neither were very concerned with journalistic or scientific integrity over the power of the sensational and the experiential. Maddin adopts the role of the local historian in a similar spirit that Ripley and mondo filmmakers adopted in their roles as adventurers.

Dialectical Images and Conditional Tense Documentaries

Pedagogic side of this undertaking [the Arcades Project]: "To educate the image-making medium within us, raising it to a stereoscopic and dimensional seeing into the depths of historical shadows."
– Walter Benjamin[55]

For Benjamin, we cultivate our historical consciousnesses by creating dialectical images. The dialectic image, as Benjamin theorized it, represents the far end of the nostalgia spectrum, what Svetlana Boym calls, "reflective nostalgia". The affect of longing to make a connection with the past provokes a range of responses on a continuum from historically conscious to historically unconscious, all of which can be thought of as nostalgic. The dialectical image represents one end of the spectrum, and "unreflective nostalgia," the other. Unreflective nostalgia is the conventional notion of a representation of the past as a home reduced to its most superficial, idealized, and sentimental parts. The focus is primarily upon the *nostos*, the homecoming. Conversely, reflective nostalgia focuses on the mystery of the *algia*, what a longing for a connection with the past means for us as historical subjects.[56] The concept of the dialectical image comes from Benjamin's work in the *Arcades Project*, and Susan Buck-Morss' supporting

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[53] Ibid., 143.

[54] From an interview between Guy Maddin and art critic Robert Enright, included on the Criterion Collection edition DVD of *My Winnipeg* (released in 2015).

[55] "The words are Rudolf Borchardt's in *Epilegomena zu Dante*, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1923), 56-57." Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 458 [N1,8].

[56] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xviii.

text, *The Dialectics of Seeing*. The dialectical image is a relationship to the past defined by its explicit critical, redemptive, proactive, and progressive stance. The Benjaminian notion of the dialectical image engages allegorically with the heterogeneity of the past, advancing the use of multivalency and possibility in historiography in a way that is lacking in the unreflective nostalgic image and traditional historicism.

For Benjamin, intelligible and constructive history comes through the clash between felicitous moments of the past and present. The true function of historiography then is to make these moments possible, such that the meaning of a forgotten past can be awoken in the moment of the present, which in turn can also be enriched by the collision. These meanings are furthermore *allegorical* in nature. That is, a new element emerges through the collision that belongs to both and neither moment. This new element is what Benjamin calls the dialectical image:

> For while the relation of the present to the past is purely temporal, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: not temporal in nature, but figural. Only dialectical images are genuinely historical—that is, not archaic—images. The image that is read—which is to say, the image in its now of its recognizability—bears to the highest degree the imprint of the perilous critical moment on which all reading is founded.[57]

In the making of a dialectical image, then, the "what has been" and the "now" are seen to form a relationship in which each stands in the other's place in a figurative capacity. That is, like meanings combine with other such meanings, such that a picture of where these moments overlap emerges. Reading this image requires a critical mind in the sense of being able to rupture the potential paths of interpretation away from what is established and known, and into the realm of the possible and shocking—what Benjamin refers to as "awakening." The individual who engages in such an act of interpretation must not only be able to perceive in the past that which is found with their own time, but also, and perhaps more importantly, they must consider those trajectories of the past whose legacy was cut short—its unfulfilled potential, whose absence is still felt as a void. According to Benjamin, this act of interpretation is necessary to the creation of a "genuinely historical" relationship with the image. Such a relationship opposes itself to the

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[57] Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 462-3 [N3,1].

perpetual consumption of phantasmagoria, transmitted by unreflective nostalgia, which in its most commodified use, only ever presents us an image of the past as already slain by the myth of automatic progress—a dead object of interest, not one of importance. The function of this dead object of interest, laid out for our consumption by unreflective nostalgia, is to secure the meaning of such past moments. Sprengler suggests that the continued engagement in nostalgia is a result of unresolved "fin-de-millénnium anxieties".[58] Nostalgia is thus cast as an activity in which people participate as a way of coping with an overwhelming and difficult present, a present, she suggests, that demands an evaluation of current progress toward collective social, cultural and spiritual goals.

The anxiety that motivates a nostalgic flee from the present into the past is also capable of providing the impetus for a different relationship with the past: a productive movement towards the creation of an allegorical relationship between the crises of the present and similar moments in the past, which forges the dialectical image. Catherine Russell sees anxiety around "the uncanny reality of an apocalypse culture of amnesia" as a key motivator in 1990s and earlier textual production that employs the allegorical technique of dialectical image. The dialectical image is most effectively executed through the technique of found-footage filmmaking, she contends, though not all found-footage films take up this type of engagement with the past.[59] The concepts of "unreflective nostalgia" and "dialectical image" can, thus, both be used as indicators of particular anxieties around the present's relationship to the past, though they have very different historiographical objectives.

The historiographical objective of dialectical image lies in awakening the subject to the realm of possibilities between past, present and future. Cinematic representation, as Benjamin himself acknowledged, has a great potential for creating the constellations of dialectical images that can lead to the flash of recognition he calls awakening. One such mode of filmmaking that is particularly ripe to stimulate dialectical images, and yet has not been adequately explored, but we do find in abundance in *My Winnipeg* is the conditional tense documentary.

"What if?" What if we used the documentary form to map out historical possibility? How might such a cinematic speech act serve our historical needs, and what would we call it?

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[58] Sprengler, *Screening Nostalgia*. 1.

[59] Russell, *Experimental Ethnography*. 243.

Glenn Erickson suggests the term "negative subjunctive" stories for films like *It Happened Here* (Kevin Brownlow and Andrew Mollo, 1965), which speculates on what would have happened if the Nazis had won the Battle of Britain, and two others from the same year, usually considered radical pseudo-documentaries, *The Battle of Algiers* (Gillo Pontecorvo) and *The War Game* (Peter Watkins).[60] Such films take an alternative reality premise through the many steps to its logical conclusion. *My Winnipeg* is much less straightforward, but no less subjunctive in its tense. More recently, Paul Ward, continuing to think in terms of "tense" for the way it connects subjects to time and history, has suggested "conditional tense documentary" as an alternative classification for a diverse body of films that "attempt to represent historical events in such a way as to draw attention to their provisional or conditional nature."[61]

The creative treatment of historical possibility, not the creative treatment of actuality, largely forms the basis for Maddin's "docu-fantasia." It is a rare example of what we might call a conditional *perfect*-tense documentary, imploring the audience to consider what could have been, alongside what was. Ward theorizes the "conditional tense documentary" in terms of its unique address: "the 'mock' aspect of the texts opens up a space where the viewer's relationship to [historical] events needs to be interrogated."[62] "What if?" appears on intertitles and in the narration at several key moments in the film when Maddin invents figures that serve to reconceive those moments in the past that could have been different, or to imagine a view of the past from an angle that was not documented. (Figure 31) For instance, Maddin follows a fairly factual report of the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike with a fantasy of the event from the point of view of scared middle-class schoolgirls, their parents, and their Catholic schoolteachers, who fear the "Bolshevik rapists," the moniker given to the striking workers by the newspapers. What if we saw a milestone moment in the history of the labor movement in Canada from the perspective of those who would have felt threatened by it, or those who were content to support the status quo? Maddin pokes fun at those on the "wrong side of history" in this comic sequence, but he also shows the heterogeneity of views that could be expressed about any historical event, making full use of the powers of the false to represent possible and incompossible pasts.

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[60] See Erickson's review of *It Happened Here* for his thoughts on "negative subjunctive" stories: http://www.dvdtalk.com/dvdsavant/s100here.html

[61] Paul Ward, "The Future of Documentary? 'Conditional Tense' Documentary and the Historical Record," in *Docufictions: Essays on the Intersections of Documentary and Fictional Filmmaking,* Gary D. Rhodes, John Parris Springer, Eds. (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland & Co, 2006), 271-2.

[62] Ibid. 270.

Figure 31 One of the many intertitles displaying the question, "What if?" throughout the film.

As Juhasz argues, "fake documentaries can also use fiction to unanchor from reality's constraints and freely imagine anything a person might fight for or desire in a real world that never was but may yet be."[63] For example, in an act of tongue-in-cheek restorative nostalgia, which, due to its irony then becomes reflective nostalgia, Maddin invents "Citizen Girl," the type of woman who he imagines would be the "page three girl" of the *Winnipeg Citizen*. (Figures 32 & 33)

Figure 32 & 33 The Winnipeg Citizen is mischaracterized as a pro-labor daily newspaper. Maddin then imagines the "page three girl" of such a paper would be a heroine, Citizen Girl.

Recasting the publication as "a collective newspaper that got the workers' word out during the 1919 strike, the only collective daily paper in the world" is his first bit of wishful thinking. In fact, the *Winnipeg Citizen* was an *anti*-labor paper, published for one month during the 1919

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[63] Juhasz and Lerner, *F Is For Phony*, 16.

strike (May 19—June 20); it vehemently opposed the strike, often accusing its leaders of being Soviets and trying to incite a revolution.[64] In Maddin's fantasy, Citizen Girl, a working-class heroine, committed to the spirit of Winnipeg, would reverse the destructiveness of time and reassemble, with the wave of a hand, all of the historic sites that Winnipeg had lost over the years, restoring it to how it was during Maddin's childhood. Maddin exclaims that he needs to be able to believe that she will take care of his Winnipeg so that he can leave the city behind. Citizen Girl is Maddin's Angel of History. Although both figures would like to rebuild what has been lost, Benjamin's Angel of History differs from Maddin's Citizen Girl significantly: the Angel of History is not permitted within the allegorical fantasy space the power to resurrect the past, whereas the figure of Citizen Girl fully indulges idealized nostalgic longing by removing all prohibitions to resurrection. She is represented as a progressive, socialist even, but she seeks to restore the past in a comic takedown of the desire for a unified identity through restorative nostalgia, which can overtake any part of the political spectrum. Specific locations, especially the markers of childhood experiences, like the hockey arena, Eaton's, and the Wolseley elm, are the focus of Citizen Girl's magical wish fulfillment. (Figures 34 & 35)

Figure 34 & 35 Citizen Girl restores all the old landmarks of Winnipeg.

Perhaps there could be no greater nostalgic fantasy than to have one's home returned to the precise configuration it had in one's infancy. In Citizen Girl's "progressive" act of defiance, there might even be an underlying further wish that, if the city space could reconfigure around the time of Maddin's childhood, he could go back to infancy to relive his life, preventing or

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[64] The *Winnipeg Citizen* was published again for thirteen months and thirteen days, according to Maddin in his annotations to the *My Winnipeg* script, in 1948-49. Curiously, he does not acknowledge the reactionary political character of the *Winnipeg Citizen* in these notes. For digitized issues of the paper, see
http://manitobia.ca/content/en/newspapers/Winnipeg%20Citizen/1919

redeeming certain personal losses (his teen brother Cameron's suicide, perhaps). The invocation of a socialist savior to take us back to an earlier, younger, version of the city invokes the specter of Marxist predictions and warnings, and the ideological question at the heart of the twentieth century, was the progress-obsessed capitalist experiment worth it?

My Winnipeg revives forgotten moments in the city's past that are not only surprising, but expose the cost of forgetting such events, especially in a time of crisis. In one particular sequence, a wartime publicity stunt, "If day," is retold according to Maddin's imagination using both archival and staged footage. (Figures 36 & 37)

Figure 36 & 37 Maddin's recreations of "If Day," here depicting Nazis firing upon the Golden Boy, are cut together with actual footage of 5,000 "Rotary Club volunteers wearing costumes rented from Hollywood" on "If Day" in 1942.

On February 19, 1942 the Greater Winnipeg Victory Loan Campaign organized a simulated Nazi invasion: a public, interactive performance in the streets of Winnipeg, enacting what they anticipated would happen in their own city if the Nazis won the war. The actors were allowed by the government to occupy and administer the province for the whole day, and thus, the performance was, in fact, materially invasive. The hoax was intended to scare citizens into purchasing Victory war bonds. It did. Winnipeg's, and much of Manitoba's, quotas were over-filled with a few weeks.[65] The event itself was a conditional tense experiment, albeit conducted for state interests. Maddin's retelling of the event within a conditional tense documentary adds another layer of historical space to be contemplated.

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[65] Michael Newman, "February 19, 1942: If Day," Manitoba Historical Society, *Manitoba History,* Number 13, Spring 1987, **http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/13/ifday.shtml** (Last accessed, June 8, 2017).

The 1942 hoax projects a dystopian future for the single purpose of soliciting funds to prevent a very specific, contrived, historical outcome. It follows a commonly employed method of population control through propaganda: the creation of a problem within the spectacle of the historical world (Nazis, swine or bird flu, terrorism, the sub-prime mortgage loan crisis), which leads to the fearful reaction of the people who are desperate for and, in fact demand, a solution, which in turn is provided by the same people who created the problem within the spectacle, giving them the power/resources/control that they originally desired but could not obtain without a panicked public. These crises may very well be real in the material sense, but within the spectacle they are exaggerated, abstracted, and distorted, which makes them into very different kinds of problems, the outcomes of which are projected as possibly, and even probably, catastrophic, requiring the population to give something up (rights, money, focus on other goals) and submit to the authority that answers their call for help. In the case of "If day," the performance of an extreme possible present serves to close down historical interpretations. The shock it provides is one that locks its subjects into a historical trajectory, reaffirming and strengthening the status quo, and ultimately allowing them to fall back into their slumber. Questions like: "what kinds of thoughts and practices present in Nazism also exist in our own society?" and "how might we prevent future instances of injustice?" never emerge. Money is given. Nazism is averted. End of story.

The spectacle of *My Winnipeg*, on the other hand, exposes the 1942 hoax as a cynical and manipulative publicity stunt exacted on the citizenry, using their fear and lack of knowledge to control them. Because the film presents this sequence in a melodramatic, parodic manner, there is the sense not only of the severity of this controlled action upon the people, but also of its unbelievability. In hindsight, this manipulation appears excessive and shameful, motivating its repression in the collective memory. In an interview with *CineAction!*, Guy Maddin and interviewer John Semely comment on the strangeness of this collective amnesia:

> JS: Again, when you look at something like the "If Day" sequence in the film, where Winnipeg staged this fake, War of the Worlds-style Nazi invasion to help sell war bonds, and it seems again to just be blurring this line between fact and heavily psychologised fact. And for me at least, to go back and find out that that was something that actually happened, well it's more bizarre than nearly anything you could cook up.

GM: And it says something really interesting about us too, because it happened and no one remembered. It says a lot about us Canadians and our failure to self-mythologize. I mean, when I talk about mythologizing, I'm not talking about making things up, I'm talking about repeating things even. I grew up in Winnipeg and had never heard about If Day, and it went on during my parents' lifetime. And you think they'd talk about it. My dad was a great raconteur, but it never occurred to him to mention "If Day." But what makes "If Day" interesting for me isn't just that it happened, but that it happened and we'd forgotten it.[66]

What Maddin alludes to here is a very real anxiety around collective amnesia. The most shocking feature of this amnesia is that even though the event was not thought of as commonplace, dull, or banal, it is was still forgotten. We expect that we will forget the trivial, but not what we perceive as the exceptional. Maddin identifies the source of this amnesia as a specifically Canadian "failure to self-mythologize," which may also indicate that a lack of engagement with the past is not merely a problem for Winnipeggers but a problem for the nation, as well. By reviving the image of "If day" to an audience that in all probability will question its veracity, and indeed must question it, for not only is it strange and unknown to them, but it is also presented in the film as dubious, *My Winnipeg* implicitly poses the question: how can we look forward with clear vision if we cannot look back with it? The temporal waters are muddy, indeed.

"If Day" as a particular example of a forgotten past event could be seen as a metaphor for the way in which past relationships to possibility are disregarded in the march toward the outcome of these past events—the "actualization" of the future that chronological historiography exhibits as though it could not have been otherwise. The representation of "If day" in *My Winnipeg* shows that it is imperative that we reclaim past events for the purposes of reexamination and comprehension. At the time of the actual event, the spectacle did not allow for certain questions to emerge, pushing instead for a single prescribed outcome. As a détourned image of the past, this representation of "If day" can now be deconstructed and seen within a pattern that has sought not to awaken the population of Winnipeg, but to keep them suspended within their unreflective nostalgic slumber.

The collective amnesia about which Maddin worries in the *CineAction!* interview above maintains a strong presence throughout the film as he builds the image of a city that has fallen

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[66] John Semley, "Still Mining his Winnipeg: an Interview with Guy Maddin," *CineAction*, 78, (2009): 68.

into a state of historical hibernation. Winnipeg is characterized from the beginning as "snowy" and "sleepwalking." This constant evocation of the city as frozen, cold, always winter, covered in snow, and concomitantly, sleeping, dreaming, dreamy, sleepwalking, gives the impression that it has fallen into a stasis, yet moves about thoughtlessly nonetheless. These verbal motifs form a continuous commentary for the archival and fantasy images of the city's past. The blanketing of the city with snow and sleep becomes a metaphor for the blanketing of the city's history with unreflective nostalgia. In a beginning sequence, Maddin, in voiceover, wonders how the city's physical characteristics may be related to the historical (un)consciousness of its citizenry:

> The train tracks cross the streetcar tracks and in turn cross the streets and the alleyways, everything beneath thin layers of time, asphalt, and snow. Are these arteries still here today? Are they dug out every night and reconcealed every dawn? We Winnipeggers are so stupefied with nostalgia we're actually never quite sure. I never really know anything for sure…

Unreflective nostalgia is associated with confusion, ignorance, and sleep, here; and damningly, it is posited as an identifying feature of the Winnipegger. The digging out of the arteries refers literally to snow removal, yet it also can be read as a metaphor for the historiographer's struggle to unearth those threads of the past hidden in the material reality of the city itself, only to have its residents cover over these pasts with unreflective nostalgic images, burying their contribution to the possibility of a lucid forward movement at every turn.

A good illustration of how to use the techniques of dialectical image to expose the effects of a lack of critical ethos perpetuated by unreflective nostalgia, comes from two linked sequences in *My Winnipeg*. In the midst of repetition about dreams and the "enchantments" of winter, we are presented with the long forgotten turn of the century amusement park, Happyland—"Our own Dreamland," Maddin proclaims. Through an ironically cheery excitement for a place where Winnipeggers had used the most modern technology of the day to display and affirm their belief in progress, Maddin critiques the notion that nostalgia can point to an unproblematic past without consequences. At the end of the sequence of animated fairgrounds, old postcards depicting the layout of Happyland, and archival footage of Winnipeggers engaging in winter sports, Maddin proclaims sweetly "Happyland, keeping us

happy." Suddenly, in the next breath, his tone changes, "All a dream, all a dream. I need to wake up! Keep my eyes open somehow. I need to get out of here." This dramatic reversal provides a moment for reflection upon the presentation of the uncomplicated nature of modernity within the city history. The images give a sense of pastness, as they combine with the verbal repetition of "Happyland" to solder the concept of happiness to Winnipeg's past, despite, and perhaps due to, the imprecision of the park's location in time and space. He mentions that the park was built in 1906, but does not indicate that it only operated for three years, and was eventually torn down in 1922. It floats within the phantasmagoria of Winnipeg's collective memory as a symbol of the city's essential propriety. The unreflective nostalgia for a Winnipeg without the worry or difficulties of the present, which this sequence provides, is a tempting comfort. But the self-conscious histrionic turnaround of the voiceover indicates that this comfort is dangerous for the movement toward social change.

Much later in the film the idea of "Happyland" is revived. Maddin recounts the annihilation of Happyland attributing its destruction to a stampede caused by "the pained cries rising up from between two mating pte-wink-pte, or homosexual bulls—held to be sacred for their double spirit by the Ojibwa", implicating native Americans in the downfall of the attraction by association. He claims that the bison destroyed the park in ten minutes. (Figures 38 & 39) In reality, the park was sold two years after it was built for 1/25 of its construction cost and then closed permanently a year later due to the public's lack of interest.[67] The historical record is unclear on the state of the ruins between the park's closure and its redevelopment. At this point in the film, however, Maddin makes the specious claim that the dispossessed First Nations people disassembled the ruins of the old Happyland amusement park to build a rooftop shantytown. (Figure 40-43)

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[67] Jen Cameron, "The brief, glorious life of Happyland," *Winnipeg Free Press*, May 26 2015, http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/our-communities/metro/The-brief-glorious-life-of-Happyland-305064751.html (Last accessed, Dec. 16, 2016).

Figure 38 & 39 Maddin attributes the destruction of Happyland to a stampede initiated by the cries of homosexual bison.

Figure 40-43 An archival photograph of First Nations people in Winnipeg (top, left) is followed by an aboriginal rooftop shantytown made of the ruins of Happyland.

Maddin's voiceover constructs a new fate for this relic of the past: "Aboriginal Happyland. Forgotten Happyland. Forgotten people, Happyland." The reconstruction of the Happyland ruins into functional material shelter for the forgotten and expelled native people becomes a metaphor for the alienation caused by unreflective nostalgia in the face of a real, present, and urgent need for a strong engagement with history that will provide disenfranchised people with the tools to surmount the poverty of their material circumstances, not merely dress up their shabbiness with a faded and illusory ideal.

Maddin's Happyland fabulation, the conversion of a story about an idealized past into a materially poignant present, is a good example of how the nostalgic image can be détourned and made into a dialectical image. Buck-Morss provides beneficial clarification for the definition of dialectical image that is relevant here. She writes that it "refers to the use of archaic images to identify what is historically new about the 'nature' of commodities."[68] In Maddin's words, "these forgotten souls, forgotten families … sweep up every last piece of happiness they can," as they supposedly clamor for the detritus of a culture whose products are manufactured only to be sold as symbols. The irony and wretchedness of the present come into focus, here: the superlative notion of happiness is fused to the commodity, a nostalgically perceived amusement park, in a manner that belies its actual use value. These homeless, forgotten, native people whom Winnipeggers conveniently keep out of sight, have comically, and poignantly, confused the signifier with its referent in Maddin's fusion of a past "Happyland" with a present humanitarian crisis. The irony that Maddin communicates with his dialectical image is that the material ruins of Happyland would be more useful to the First Nations people than a romanticized memory of a place that continues to conspire to keep them out of view, while asserting the purity and good will of their oppressors' ancestors. By bringing together a signifier of an idealized past together with the material realities of the continued impoverishment of native peoples in the present, Maddin creates a conditional tense documentary dialectical image that exposes the contradictions of a modernity that labels itself progressive and yet ultimately provides nothing more than a conveniently whitewashed identity for the privileged.

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[68] Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1989), 67

Benjamin advocated montage as a method of representation that through juxtaposition would be capable of bringing about the dialectical image.[69] As Buck-Morss explains, the kind of montage used for the creation of a dialectical image is one "whereby the image's ideational elements remain *unreconciled*, rather than fusing into a 'harmonizing perspective.'"[70] She cautions that montage as a technique can just as easily be used for illusion by erasing all evidence of "incompatibility and contraction" through seamless construction. What must be created and preserved in the montage to obtain a dialectical image is a visible "gap between sign and referent," otherwise the two will fuse into a "deceptive totality"—the sign's relationship to the referent will be naturalized, contributing one more brick in the wall of the phantasmagoria of capitalism, where image predominates over material reality.[71] Benjamin strongly encourages practitioners of montage to use captions to help accomplish the task of reflexively disrupting the connection between the sign and the referent.[72] Maddin achieves precisely such a disruption through his ironic narration and reflexive parodic imagery in these two scenes, and at many other points throughout the film.

Ultimately, Maddin's film succeeds in disrupting any harmonizing principle in the creation of Winnipeg's past by maintaining consistent focus on the dangers of using cinema in the creation of the past as nostalgic image. For instance, the motifs of dream, sleep and winter, in *Winnipeg*, contribute to a reading of the cinematic spectacle as an allegory for the dreamworld of modernity, and its attending myth of automatic progress.[73] After the initial credits, the film begins with several people asleep on a train, trying to get out of Winnipeg. The train is a metaphor for modernity, and its passengers are figures for the modern urban subject. They are falling asleep and repeatedly told to "wake up!" as they chug incessantly on, with no particular destination other than "out of here!"—out of the city, Winnipeg, that has slowed on its road to

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[69] From *The Arcades Project*, Konvolut N, Benjamin writes: "Method of this project: literary montage. I needn't *say* anything. Merely show. I shall purloin no valuables, appropriate no ingenious formulations. But the rags, the refuse—these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to come into their own: by making use of them. [N1a, 8]

[70] Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, 67. Emphasis added.

[71] Ibid., 68.

[72] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, Hannah Arendt, ed., and Harry Zohn, trans. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), 226.

[73] The dreams of progressivism and the dreams of the "dreamworld" that Buck-Morss evokes in her account of Benjamin's theory should not be confused. The former is more akin to visions of justice, while the latter, to phantasmagoria, to use a Benjaminian term, or spectacle, to use a Debordian term, though these are not the same. The former are active and engaged politically and historically, while the latter are passive and disengaged from such.

progress. Maddin laments the disappearance of particular symbols of the modern Canadian city, such as the prosperous department store (Eaton's), the professional hockey team (the Jets, which moved to Phoenix, Arizona in 1996, and returned to Winnipeg in 2011), and strong unions that could shake up the bourgeoisie, providing evidence of Winnipeg's floundering on the road to modernity. As the train passengers sleep, they dream that modernity, represented by the train, will take them where they want to go, as a matter of course and without their attention. The scenes depicted through the windows are often surreal, not possible views from a train, which critiques the faith in modernity's course of automatic, unconscious progress, as nothing more than submersion within a dreamworld.

Conclusion

The charlatan is a much-maligned figure, and yet, he is closely related to the trickster archetype that has helped people see beyond the dictates of authority and tradition for millennia. In their current conventional form, documentary films' emphases on absorbing information and accepting the narrative coherence imposed upon the subject matter create spectators whose biggest fears are that they will be tricked, misled, or persuaded to believe something based on false evidence. But I argue that the charlatan can be motivated by higher goals than self-interest, and in archive-based and documentary filmmaking, charlatans can be very productive for discovering the limits of historical representation. And even those charlatans with bad intentions, real con men, can often tell us more about the institutions we believe in than the supposed "pure of heart." Following a Nietzschean and Deleuzian line of philosophical thought, a charlatan, or trickster, in the city archive breaks the rules of historiography to expose their illegitimacy; ridicules the seriousness with which we regard our institutions and public figures to suggest that they are not beyond reproach; questions outmoded reliances on narrative to provoke an investigation of the image; and plays with the conventions of realism to show us its historiographical limitations.

A charlatan approaches the archive as an idea that is always already incomplete and insufficient to our needs, and yet, it still provides a significant source of inspiration and wealth. *My Winnipeg* is a film about our relationship to the archive and the past. It recognizes the problem of survivorship bias in the archive, and the influence of mythologization on what

survives. Like Orson Welles before him, who also embraced charlatanry as a productive mode, Maddin undermines the authority and privileged status of the archive in order to play with its sanctified limits.

Maddin blazes a contradiction-filled path from nostalgic unconsciousness, to awakening, to historical consciousness in his baroque mixture of representational modes and temporal coexistence. The veracity and coherence of the historical narratives are deprioritized in order to focus the spectator's attention on the limits of historical representation and the necessity of using one's own embodied and subjective experience of the past in the creation of collective memory. Maddin bemoans Winnipeggers' lack of engagement with the past throughout the film. He demonstrates a spectrum of nostalgic styles and a provocative mixture of essayistic, fake, and conditional tense documentary strategies to help cultivate the affect and intellect necessary to develop a historically conscious attitude towards the city.

V.

Conclusion

The archive does not give access to history: it is, or aims to be, the condition of historicity itself. –Sven Spieker [1]

In this dissertation, I have brought together several baroque concepts, several cities, several types of moving image collections (as well as one collection of transgressions), several strategies of presentation and representation, several local film cultures, and several types of "auteur" figures into an investigation into what happens to film spectatorship and historiography when the city symphony's present-tense avant-garde exuberance is made to dialectically reflect upon itself in the twenty-first century. I have argued that city-symphonies-in-reverse recover and reinvigorate the city symphony tradition by keeping the focus equally on the city as subject, the filmmaker as commentator, and the spectator as a dynamic observer, in pursuit of an avant-garde pedagogy for historical consciousness through their treatment of archival materials. Whereas a prevalent trend in mainstream documentary has been towards increasing narrative cohesion and maintaining a tight focus on often only a single human subject of representation, city-symphonies-in-reverse explore the documentary and historical possibilities of a baroque cinema of attractions where the relevant subjectivities are those of the filmmaker and spectator above the onscreen subjects.

Taken as a conceptual and representational strategy to create consciousness around the solidification of epistemological ideals and structures that threaten to close off alternative avenues of communication and thought, the baroque, divorced from its periodization, is a persistent force of critical resistance that can be traced through 500 years of classical, Enlightenment, and positivistic attempts to explain and control social life. The historical consciousness that emerges in opposition to the classical ideals of totality, coherence, and continuity is a baroque mode of viewing the past. This mode of viewing perceives characteristics crucial to understanding the limitations of historicity, for example, fragmentation of records, narrative necessities, and unique subjective experiences in the present, the existence of which are made invisible in documentary films. The baroque approach to the archive is necessary for

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[1] Sven Spieker, *The Big Archive: Art From Bureaucracy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), 174.

historical consciousness because it helps us to form more views of how we can create relationships with the past through different media, that is, views that incorporate reflexivity on the limits of experience and media into their framework. Some may find the baroque approach unsatisfying due to its lack of certainty, continuity, and resolution, but others may find it invigorating to be called upon to use one's own perceptual and cognitive abilities to make meaning and redeem traces of the past that do not fit neatly into conventional narratives. I believe I have shown in this study that the baroque can, and should, be employed in the study of archive-based filmmaking since the archive itself is a baroque collection of objects.

Much of the literature on archive-based filmmaking draws from Walter Benjamin's media theory because it emphasizes the fragment, montage, redemption, allegory, collections, and ruins, key aspects of the archive. Benjamin's insights are crucial to understanding the reuse of the archive. However, what I have shown is that the key aspects that have drawn scholars to Benjamin's work go back to a baroque conception of existence, representation, and historical understanding. When representing the nature of the archive, these key aspects are frequently present because the archive itself is a baroque form of historical consciousness. In its excess, heterogeneity, and many enfolded perspectives, it thwarts the values of classicism and positivism at every turn.

As possibly the most public and accessible historical medium, documentary film can play an important role in bringing the past to bear on current struggles, but it must create a larger space for subjectivity and a détourned spectatorship in order to do so in a meaningful way. The films in this study show that documentary film is capable of creating new spectatorships that contribute to the growth of historical consciousness. Documentary film can utilize the moving image archive to help resist the dangers of perpetuating historical understanding as the pursuit of a rarified, objective historical knowledge. Instead, documentary film can take a Benjaminian historical materialist approach, and revive representational strategies for resisting dominant modes of spectatorship developed first in other mediums (essay, anamorphosis, and nostalgia, for instance).

City-symphonies-in-reverse participate in documentary discourse without being beholden to it. They are both documentaries and not documentaries. They are both metadocumentaries and essay films. They reject documentary discourse, and yet they have much to say about it. The

notion of the essay film is especially important for city-symphonies-in-reverse because without it we would have trouble understanding how such films challenge contemporary documentary film expectations. The essayistic in film aims to keep questions around documentary discourse open.

Walter Benjamin presents a philosophy of history that circumvents dominant narrative strategies, with their attendant weaknesses, opening up the possibility of a poetic image-based historiography instead.[2] Benjamin objects "not to storytelling as such, or even tradition, but the idea of history and time that comes with the attempt to break it down into stories. … [historicism's] greatest sin is that it still maintains an idea of history as progress."[3] In the attempt to make history teleological, historians fall into many traps—excluding experiences that do not conform to the narrative, relying on simplistic notions of cause and effect, and wrapping up the story with a neat conclusion, to name a few. City-symphonies-in-reverse are doing the work of teaching a Benjaminian historical materialism through a montage of audio-visual archival experiences that take issue with the notions of historical coherence, continuity, and totality through narrative. "Old historicism" is still a force to be reckoned with in cinema. When we use linear narratives to construct our historical relationships, we too often enact notions of purity, symmetry, polarity, and cohesion that we imagine to be borne out by the record, but are not. Instead of finding what we could not have anticipated in the archive, it becomes a tool for confirmation bias. Working from the record without expecting it to create a narrative that coheres with our assumptions or other narratives, frees us to think about how we will make future relationships with the past through documents that may or may not confirm our assumptions or beliefs.

Benjamin's commentary in *The Arcades Project* was often "cryptic".[4] It makes readers work on the material Benjamin quotes, noticing, or not, what he suggests, as well as finding their own way through it. Susan Buck-Morss observes: "the *Passagen-Werk* makes of us historical detectives even against our will, forcing us to become actively involved in the reconstruction of

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[2] Paul Naylor, *Poetic Investigations: Singing the Holes in History* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 21.

[3] Ewan Porter, "Story-time and Image-time," in *Art in the Making: Aesthetics, Historicity, and Practice*, Kerstin Mey, ed. (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2005), 62.

[4] Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1989), x.

the work."[5] Commentary does not seek to capture the totality of the image as narrative does. In the essay film, it presses the image and gives the spectator an opportunity to see how the image pushes back. Commentary need not aspire to totality, clarity, or continuity.

City-symphonies-in-reverse are meta-historiographical. They probe the limits of employing the moving image archive to write history, focusing on its power to provoke deeper levels of historical consciousness by pulling the spectator into an arena of personal reflection and speculation in the face of the archive. The filmmakers in this study model this kind of spectatorship within their films. Commentary is provided to undo positivistic narrative and common assumptions of the past based on what "must have occurred" given the laws of cause and effect and other simplified sequences of events. In all cases the moving image archive will contradict the narrative, even if it does so in the subtlest of ways, because archival images are always over-determined, exceeding our ability to comprehend their detail through narrative means.

What is significant about twenty-first century archiveology films is their refusal to engage in narrative historiography. In its own way, each film in this study stakes out a space for the development of historical consciousness and media consciousness through the archive without making any claims to write a "true" history. This is not to say that they do not engage with the terms of historiography, however. On the contrary, these terms are conspicuously and consciously suspended in negotiation throughout the films, allowing for subjectivity, embodiment, visual pleasure, and affect to take up a greater position within the cinematic experience in order to question assumptions too often taken for granted in the re-use of the archive.

We live in a time of archival crisis. The moving image archive is vulnerable to appraisal paradigms that could render the details of the last century's images irrelevant. If all we need is a sense of the period from the archival images as we listen to the story, then the twentieth century moving image archive can be reduced to some stock footage representing different times and places, and to the big events captured on celluloid. In this way, we can make room for the massive influx of digitally produced material of the twenty-first century. The focus on storytelling with the archive makes it possible to be blind to its importance and limitations as a

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[5] Ibid.

historiographical tool. In this moment, it is crucial that the public understands what is at stake in losing the visual unconscious contained in the moving image archive of the last century. Archival access must meet preservation in priority in the eyes of archivists, collectors, filmmakers, and publics or we may lose the ability to learn from the archive and assess our historical situations in ways not sanctioned by positivism. When the archive is taken on its own terms and experienced free from this subordination, it will always tell a different story, a not-fully-comprehensive story, a story that requires an embodied subject to decipher any part of it.

"Articulating the past historically does not mean recognizing it 'the way it really was,'" writes Benjamin.[6] Historicist narratives take an "objective" view of the past in which only one version of events is true. Therefore, when one "speaks the truth" of history, one does not have to stand behind what they say; they need only to appeal to a culturally or politically sanctioned narrative. The truth stands on its own and is not attached to anyone since it lacks perspective—it is objective. Certainly an historical object cannot be reduced to what we say about it, and yet, much of the use of the moving image archive in documentary film plays fast and loose with its archival material so as not to bog down the narrative with too many "unnecessary" details. Conversely, commentary in the form of essayistic subjective narration always issues from a particular source, usually an individual. This person points to elements that have stood out for him or her in the text or image, and asks his or her audience to look at them too. He or she is intimately attached to the perspective from which his commentary issues and thus must take care with what he says since he will be held accountable for it.

This dissertation has not aimed to show that narratives or storytelling are necessarily poor or immoral strategies for communicating a sense of the past, an underlying issue or problem that stems from the past, or employing in collective memory projects. I am not arguing that historical narratives are necessarily detrimental or pointless for all purposes—that they do not provide a satisfying viewing experience, spark the imagination, or create an entryway into a historical relationship. Many documentary films use historical narratives to persuade viewers to be attentive to particular crises. Often, the reductiveness of the historical narrative provides a shortcut in the service of promoting activism or a new position on a particular topic. But if we only experience the reuse of archival material in documentary as a prop for another objective,

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6 Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," in *Selected Writings, Vol 4*, Michael W. Jennings, and Howard Eiland, eds. (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 1996), 391.

then we have done a great disservice to ourselves and to the moving image archive. We need evidentiary experience to help us form our historical consciousnesses in order to combat the reification of experience and the cooptation of the archive in the process of historiography.

The inviolability of capitalism is challenged through the counter-archive. Capitalism attempts to capture all occurrences in its master narrative in which it is the inevitable outcome of all previous events. The city-symphony-in-reverse exposes capitalism's failure to control every path; its failure to suppress that which has outlived its usefulness in commodity culture. The archive here can be seen in terms of the political uncanny. The repressed visions of human life that capitalism once eradicated return to expose the illegitimacy of its power and to challenge its claims of mastery.

At a time when democracy and civic participation is not as strong as it might need to be to fight some of the catastrophic forces brewing on the horizon, city-symphonies-in-reverse reinforce the values of democracy, access, and personal relationships with time and place. They show us that no one person or group can lay claim to the history of a place. Not only do we all have the right to be a part of history, but in many ways the archive makes it impossible to be forgotten. City-symphonies-in-reverse show us that the documentary evidence upon which we might base our relationships with the past can be borrowed, stolen, or even fabricated to help us understand and communicate our historical needs.

City-symphonies-in-reverse pursue and play with a truism about the relationship between the archive and history, that "[t]he archive does not give access to history: it is, or aims to be, the condition of historicity itself."[7] By denying the audience a historical master narrative, "the conditions of historicity itself" can come into better focus. The city-symphony-in-reverse draws from surprising archival sources that are already fractured and fragmented as reliable historical documents before they undergo further fractures in the editing process.

The city-symphony-in-reverse's radical potential to break up the effects of historicism and its resulting historical narratives stems in a large part from their cinema-of-attractions properties: investigation of the image, deprioritization and interruption of positivistic narrative, and direct address to the spectator. By recovering the city symphony tradition for the twenty-first century, such works reinvigorate the "utopian promise of cinema" advanced by the 1920s avant-

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[7] Spieker, *The Big Archive*, 174.

garde and progressive media theorists of the twenties and thirties, such as Walter Benjamin and Siegfried Kracauer: "these earlier avant-garde thinkers and practitioners saw revolutionary possibilities (both political and aesthetic) in the novel ways cinema took hold of its spectator."[8] The concept of spectatorship went through a period of revaluation and politicization in the 1970s that as Gunning argues, neglected a "range of film practices throughout film history (in popular as well as avant-garde work) and the sorts of spectatorial activities they cued."[9] What the avant-garde thinkers and practitioners of the twenties and thirties saw was a medium that could create new kinds of subjectivities not only upon the screen but also in front of it. Aside from the obvious inheritance of the city as poetic subject, what today's city-symphonies-in-reverse bring with them from the original city symphony tradition is precisely this spirit, that film has a radical potential for creating new subjectivities.

City-symphonies-in-reverse are important contributions to the revolutionary work of cinema. They show that our everyday lives can be different because they have been different. They clear a space in the urban imaginary for utopian vision. Displaying the transformative potential of inhabitable space, whether we think the transformations have been for good or for ill, convincingly establish the protean nature of the city and its politics as the rule. In some instances we see progress and in others we find actualities that were left behind before their time.

The films in this study appear together within a five-year period, the last period in which celluloid will be used to capture new images routinely in the film industry. They appear at this time to remind us of the value of the celluloid we already have, and to focus attention on the city as a particular locus that can benefit from a strategic use of these archives. They are future-oriented without being prescriptive or subscribing to a lazy faith in automatic progress. Each recalls the city symphonies of the 1920s in some important ways, but ultimately there are very different visions of "the modern city," and its future, at stake in these films. The promise of modernity, so much of which was wrapped up in the promise of the cinema and the city to create more just forms of social organization, is in the process of being reevaluated and reformulated from below. City-symphonies-in-reverse do for the past what city symphonies did for the "present"—they depict localized everyday life with exuberant possibility. They create spectators that are focused on philosophical questions rather than particular subjects of representation to be

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[8] Tom Gunning, "Attractions: How They Came into the World," 32.
[9] Ibid.

exalted or reviled. They reflect a medium that is in transition, a medium that can create experiences unavailable through other means, and at the same time translate intermedial strategies for challenging the status quo in new ways.

I have proposed two different, yet entwined, remediations of the practice and concept of anamorphosis for the moving image archive, the first is temporal, archival anamorphosis, and the second is spatial, backgrounds-into-foregrounds anamorphosis. Jaimie Baron's notion of "the archive effect" offers a theory of spectatorship that relies on the spectator recognizing a previous context for the audio-visual material and perceiving a temporal difference between the footage and the now. In light of the archive effect, filmmakers can curate a radically different view of their found and archival materials through montage, sound and image pairing, voiceover, and other techniques, such that features of the original material that were imperceptible, or simply not noteworthy at the time of its making emerge to reveal various interpretations and perspectives that were not possible at the time of the footage's production. The moving image archive anamorphosis at play here is a shift in spectatorship that works from the lived experience of temporality, rather than the lived experience of spatiality. Conversely, background-into-foreground anamorphosis, a prominent strategy of shifting perspectives from the original focus of the frame to the margins, is a spatial shift that requires a repositioning of our visual perception.

City-symphonies-in-reverse recuperate and redeem the visible evidence of the previous century that can be found outside of official archival channels through anamorphosis. Anamorphosis is a redemptive tool when it becomes a critical methodology for archive-based filmmaking because it shows that meaning can be infinitely derived from texts through spatial and historical repositioning, and it aims at investing cultural objects on the edge of obsolescence with new life. Archival anamorphosis thus has the benefit of instigating a chain of potential virtues for publics at times when, outside of open-access platforms, they are prevented from using, participating in or directing the work of institutional archives that have holdings that may concern them. We can be less reliant on these institutions if we are able to develop our historical consciousnesses, interpretive skills, and historical narratives through alternative sources. The more sources of archival evidence that are potentially at the public's disposal, the harder it is for powerful entities to control and regulate archival evidence that may serve to uphold or undermine narratives that serve their interests. Evidence for past narratives that have been

destroyed to advance powerful agendas may not be completely lost through the destruction of an institutional archive. In this sense, archival anamorphosis creates new sources of visible evidence and democratizes their use at the same time.

The concept and practice of anamorphosis can be seen as an active engagement from both the producer and the consumer of the work. The producer provides a lure that, if taken by the consumer of the work, can produce an intersubjective experience of the text in which both must assume an embodied perspective to achieve. Many found-footage filmmaking and critical archival film practices depend on anamorphic spectatorship to accomplish their textual shifts. The more abstract, generalized, or disembodied the intended spectator of the original film that is then collaged and recycled, the more powerful the anamorphic shift. As a corollary, the anamorphic shift may also provide the spectator with the sense that she has more access to this filmic material, around which to perform her own hermeneutic exploration, as the recycled material is positioned more subjectively within the new text. If the filmmaker continues to model an idiosyncratic shifting of the material's meaning away from the abstracted dominant ideology of historicism, the material becomes free for other unique engagements, and the spectator is encouraged to find their own relationship with less resistance. The filmmaker thus plays with his or her own unquestioned authority over the text in order to free the spectator from the authority of the image's original intention.

The concept of anamorphosis is important to the way we understand archive-based film practices because it links them to a long tradition of Spectacle (in the Debordian sense) subversion that functions aesthetically and politically, including Renaissance painting, culture jamming, and other reflexive artistic practices. It provides a way of understanding the relationship between the author and spectator of these kinds of films; and it shows us the importance, relevance, and value of the focused reuses of the moving image archive that is facing erasure today if it cannot be redeemed.

City-symphonies-in-reverse shock us. They show us what we did not expect to see. They reveal that we do not have mastery over the past, and it is actually slipping through our fingers. The shock of the past is filled with both epistephilia and epistophobia. We watch what has already come to pass in the hopes of being surprised by something we did not know, but there's also a dread that there may be too much we do not know lurking in those images. This

uncanniness is further emphasized by the locality of the films. We inhabit the same spaces as the agents on the screen did, yet some are recognizable and some are not. Will our worlds be erased by future generations, too?

Archives have in the past been thought of as staid, inert, contained, passive, uninhabited, and disembodied spaces. And yet, city-symphonies-in-reverse challenge this view with their active, subjective, overabundant, exuberant multiplicity. What do the most florid baroque façades have in common with the millennial montage films in this study? They are over-determined in their meaning; they overflow with detail; they are unwilling to present a central image that is not overwhelmed by other elements; the eye is invited to investigate the entire scene.

In the introduction, I related that Charlotte Brunsdon conveyed curiosity as to why disciplines concerned with the city were infringing on film studies territory by taking up the city and cinema as an interstitial object of study, just at the moment when film and its continued study seemed to be fighting for their lives. Brunsdon expresses a bit of indignation over the assumption that film can be studied and taught just as well by scholars from outside the field, citing unquestioned attributions of auteurism and realism as particularly distressing interdisciplinary *faux pas*.[10] Despite this frustration with the uninitiated in the study of film, she writes, "it is not for film scholars to police the boundaries of the discipline, but instead to demonstrate how much richer film is when understood through attention to its complexities as an aesthetic and industrial medium."[11] It is my sincere desire that I have shown this level of appreciation for and knowledge of the film studies discourses by using them to illuminate my objects of study.

The moving image archive is a powerful record of twentieth century urban modernity, which makes its materials a rich source of evidence for a great number of disciplines. But, as we have seen in this dissertation, the moving image archive is not composed of just one kind of archival material; it is not contained in any one place; and its reuse does not anticipate just one kind of spectatorship. What might be thought of as the most likely source for a historical nonfiction film for a particular city—a municipal archive—has been shown to be the most

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[10] Charlotte Brunsdon, "The Attractions of the Cinematic City," *Screen*, 53:3 (Autumn, 2012): 224.
[11] Ibid.

unlikely source for cities with active film cultures over the twentieth century, such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Detroit. And for those with less active twentieth-century film cultural histories, such as Winnipeg and Oakland, municipal archives are still insufficient. Home movies, however, if one can get one's hands on them, are a potentially rich source of moving image archival evidence for almost any local past. Faking moving image archival evidence can also tell us much about what local historical narratives convey and where they fail.

I have touched on many different disciplines in this study, art history, media studies, philosophy, literature, and history. However, this study could only have originated in film studies because city-symphonies-in-reverse interrogate film history as much as they interrogate the notion of history itself. And to miss this crucial reflexive element of these city films would be to misunderstand their contributions and perspectives. Spectatorship is not only a film studies concept, but it is very important to the study of film, especially film works that contain such diverse material. A resuscitated notion of the cinema of attractions is invaluable for theorizing not only the intended spectatorial effect of early cinema, but a baroque collection and use of the moving image archive that relies on an activated anamorphic spectator. The notion of psychophysical correspondences helps us to understand the spectator who is also an embodied agent within the world of representation, comparing and qualifying their lived experiences with cinematic views. Conversely, the interdisciplinary aspect of this study has deepened my ability to reflect on my case studies, and film itself, by providing a larger theoretical frame in which these objects operate.

I have focused on anglophone North American city-symphonies-in-reverse in this study, and provided a short account of what I believe to be the first city-symphony-in-reverse, *Paris 1900*, but there are several other films that deserve to be analyzed for their avant-garde city-as-subject retrospective uses of the moving image archive in the twenty-first century—indeed as city-symphonies-in-reverse. I mentioned *Helsinki, Forever* briefly in the introduction, a film created by film critic, professor and former director of the Finnish Film Archive, Peter von Bagh, out of found and archival footage, fiction and nonfiction. Bagh provides a vocal commentary over a non-linear, non-chronological presentation of Helsinki through the moving image archive. Also from 2008, *The Memories of Angels* (Luc Bourdon, Montreal) and *Of Time and the City* (Terence Davies, Liverpool) present similarly relevant perspectives on their local film cultures and the need for a baroque retrospective of their respective cities. *The Memories of Angels* is

distinctive among North American city-symphonies-in-reverse in that it was commissioned by and draws from an institutional archive, the NFB (National Film Board of Canada); it depicts a bilingual, bi-cultural city; and it does not provide a vocal commentary. Commissioned for Liverpool's year as the European Capital of Culture, *Of Time and the City* is Davies's personal essayistic reflection of the city of his youth through the moving image archive. Two more films that came about in the 2010s, *Citation City* (Vicki Bennett, London, 2015) and *The Green Fog— A San Francisco Fantasia* (Guy Maddin, 2017) deserve inclusion in a longer study of city-symphonies-in-reverse, as well. "A patchwork of over 300 features either filmed or set in London," *Citation City* is an "audiovisual performance", explicitly inspired by Benjamin's *Arcades Project*.[12] And in 2016, the San Francisco Film Society commissioned Guy Maddin "to produce a collage of Hollywood movies shot in the Bay Area."[13] Initially inspired by Ruttmann's and Vertov's city symphonies, Maddin decided to reimagine Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958) through found footage—studio films and television shows set in San Francisco. *The Green Fog* has been screened only once so far, on the closing night of the San Francisco International Film Festival (April 16, 2017), accompanied by a live musical score provided and performed by the Kronos Quartet. There are no plans to release the film theatrically or otherwise. When this study is expanded into a book, I will add chapters on these films.

I believe that what I have done in this study could help with the analysis of many other fascinating retrospective city films. Although I think they treat the city, the archive, and cinema with a different approach than those films I have analyzed, and those films that I would like to analyze as city-symphonies-in-reverse, I have found several films that deserve attention for their exposure of particular city's pasts. Perhaps the best known, Patrick Keiller's *London* (1994) looks at the past of a particular city but does not create a strong intervention into discourses around the moving image archive. Like *My Winnipeg*, *London* is an essayistic docu-fantasia with a city as its subject and an unreliable narrator. It focuses on a year in the recent past, 1992, bringing in historical accounts to explain events of that year as needed. My focus has been on what city-symphonies-in-reverse can tell us about the moving image archive, but that does not mean that *London* could not or should not be considered in a study that focused more on the city

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[12] See *Citation City*'s official website, http://peoplelikeus.org/2014/citationcity/.

[13] Eric Kohn, "'Vertigo' Revisited: Guy Maddin Explores Hitchcock's Classic with Found Footage," *Indiewire*, April 15, 2017. http://www.indiewire.com/2017/04/vertigo-remake-guy-madden-the-green-fog-interview-1201805968/ (Last accessed, June 26, 2017).

and less on reflecting on the moving image archive. Films such as *Warsaw Uprising* (Jan Komasa, 2013) and *Let the Fire Burn* (Jason Osder, Philadelphia, 2013), which focus on presenting particular historical events through the moving image archive, could also be included in a study of archive-based films where the city plays a prominent role in the construction of historicity.

In a time when globally more people live in cities than not, and the instability of the world economy often forces people to move between cities to find work, city-symphonies-in-reverse demythologize urban histories, drawing attention to the need for urban dwellers to experience the city's history as both idiosyncratic and embroiled in the goals of modernity. People need to be provided with reasons to invest in their local communities, to feel a sense of pride in the struggle, to feel united as a people. City-symphonies-in-reverse may very well inspire, through allegory, other urbanites in far off places to attempt to redeem the specificity of their history, especially those fractured moments of progressivism in the past whose material traces had fallen away and then reemerged through the archive, finally ripe enough in moments of crisis to motivate a resurgence of the struggle that created them.

The potential for a city-symphony-in-reverse treatment of any particular city is closely tied to its film history. As we have seen each city-symphony-in-reverse in this study has drawn from a different type of moving image archive from fiction and experimental, to ephemeral and institutional. Los Angeles was the narrative film capital of the world in the twentieth century. Detroit was the sponsored film capital of the US in the same period. *My Winnipeg* is a great example of the potential for any city resident to create a city-symphony-in-reverse of a city that has little to draw from in terms of a moving image archive.

Just as the three figures in this study have borrowed their local moving image archive to look at it from particular vantage points—from the perspectives of the essayist, the collector, and the charlatan—I would like to encourage people from various perspectives to do the same for their home or adopted cities. I would like to see city-symphonies-in-reverse from different orientations toward cinema and the city. What does the local moving image archive look like in the hands of an architect from Rotterdam, an urban planner from Beijing, an engineer from Lagos, a photographer from Mexico City, a culture-jammer from Istanbul, a postal-worker from Lisbon, a surveillance technician from Tokyo, a poet from Kolkata, a video game designer from

Miami, a human rights activist from Tehran, a philosopher from Bogotá, and essayists, collectors and charlatans from anywhere? And what does the moving image archive of a particular city look like to an immigrant, foreigner, refugee, migrant, or tourist? As Prelinger proclaims, archives are justified by their use; they can, and should, be used by everyone. City-symphonies-in-reverse show that perspectivism and lived experience are crucial elements of a baroque historical consciousness that seeks to undo and exceed complexity-reducing forms of communication. We need more views from unusual sources if we are going to be able to continue to test the limits of cinema's historiographical potential and our global understanding of the future of the city. The lessons that will take us into the future on a progressive path are as close as scratching through the layers of the cities that we live in. In the age of global crises, city-symphonies-in-reverse provide a new motto: Think historically, search locally.

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