Bo Jackson Says Hello: The Essay Film and the Archive

Samuel Burd

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Signed by the final examining committee:

Michael Zryd, Examiner

Examiner

Catherine Russell, Thesis Supervisor(s)

Thesis Supervisor(s)

Approved by Marc Steinberg, Chair of Department or Graduate Program Director

Dean Annie Gérin

ABSTRACT

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My essay film *Bo Jackson Says Hello* recuts the television broadcast of the 1989 Baseball All Star Game. Most of its material is taken from a VHS home recording which includes the commercials, local news and a *Tonight Show* rerun. The voice-over assumes the tone and rhythm of the baseball broadcast. With the exception of one shot at the film's end, all the material is found footage. The film runs through the game while ranging across black culture in the US, labor history, the US relationship to the Global South and the decline of empire, all treated with a light touch. It redeems an event once considered of general interest by arguing for a different sort of mass appeal. The languid pace of baseball is ideal for an essayistic treatment, inviting viewers to take a similar approach to other elements of American popular culture. A tragicomic tone flirts with nostalgia while the film juxtaposes past images to create new perspectives, even as the world embodied in those images slips away.

Link to the film

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My survival over the past ten years is hard to imagine without my family. I will never shake the child in me who wants to make my parents proud. I have been blessed with a sister who I would die for and who sometimes wants to kill me. Her happiness over the past decade is part of what makes it - despite my struggles with illness - the happiest of my life. The other part has been falling for and proposing to my fiancée Whitney. The only thing I look forward to more than finishing this thesis is starting our life together. This project is dedicated to my grandparents, who are always on my mind.

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Introduction

"I'm able to stay close to the game. And that's what's most important to me. Being close to baseball is something that I always wanted….I hope that I will always be close to the game." - Joe Morgan, Hall of Fame Induction Speech (1990)

When I set out to make a film about seven years ago, I had two goals. I wanted the film to have what Thomas Waugh calls a "political use-value." I also wanted it to be good in the common sense way people use the term, meaning well-made, engaging or imaginative. I assumed the goals would overlap, that a film's goodness would enhance its use-value by making its political content more impactful, and that a film with a high use-value would probably not be shoddily made. Yet it was impossible to know while making the film what its political use-value might be. It would also be hard to demonstrate such an impact once the film was done, since that impact would depend entirely on criteria that seemed arbitrary. To the extent that any aesthetic criteria are arbitrary, these seemed especially so, since nobody seemed to agree on what made a film politically useful; since political situations always change, it seemed that the criteria for political usefulness must as well. The political convictions and passions I carried into the process gradually sublimated into the day-to-day editing and putting together of the film and the satisfaction that came with producing something well-made. Although I ended up including what casual viewers would recognize as political content, I was constantly wrestling with what it meant to call the film political, what its use-value might be.

This process of wrestling with the question of political usefulness brought me to the essay film. If I could not reach an answer about whether the film would be politically useful or what

that would mean, I could at least adopt a form which could capture onscreen the process of a mind working things out. While representing this process might end up seeming like a performative affectation, it absolved me in the moment of the need for the film to be "about" something, and this absolution freed me to experiment and see where the process took me, in the hope that I would end up somewhere useful. I excused this process of searching by affirming the well-worn observation that the word essay is taken from the french essai, meaning attempt. My uncertainty over the film's usefulness also brought me to a media object that I already had a passionate feeling for, as if that sentimental attachment could substitute briefly for the political significance I was searching for, and eventually transmute into the latter. This attachment, grounded in my childhood fixation on a recorded baseball game, would, for the time being, substitute for the passion of political commitment. Ideally through the artistic and essayistic wrestling with the broadcast, the strength of that sentimental attachment would somehow become something more useful to a wider audience.

Beneath this conviction was the sentimental notion that one's childhood attachments tap something deep in the essence of the self, and that by investigating such attachments the essay can elevate the personal to shared significance. On the one hand this choice seemed an escape from the responsibility of political commitment by delving into nostalgia, especially into a sport which has spent a great deal of time and money using nostalgic appeals to market itself. On the other hand, I figured I could reclaim or justify my nostalgia by treating that material politically, or by finding political connections running through it. I would introduce political use-value by unearthing or arguing for the political usefulness of a media product, or I would use the creative treatment of that product to create usefulness where none existed. Between these two options the truth lied. This balance of discovery and creation, of unearthing and devising out of whole cloth,

seemed an essential part of what Catherine Russell described as an archive-based artistic approach in which "diverse sources are juxtaposed, and…structured so as to produce new knowledge about cultural history," (21) in which one conceived of "documents that are mysterious and secretive until their energies are released in flashes of recognition" (8). These flashes are "sparks" that the artist creates "in the presence of the viewer" (8).

I had been sick when I decided to make this film, and unsure if I had a future in scholarship or art. Since one symptom of multiple sclerosis is cognitive impairment, I didn't know if my mind was up to the task. I dramatically thought of making the film as part of my recovery, a way to prove to myself that I could still be useful. I think this is another reason I chose the essay. I wanted to show my mind was still capable of such movement as the essay illustrates, what Cynthia Ozick calls the "movement of a free mind at play" (Ozick, "She…"). I also appreciated the found footage approach because it meant I did not have to create new images. Finding what already existed seemed less intimidating; it also matched a need I had begun to see in my own life, a process of picking up the pieces and starting again, making something useful of what was stalled or defunct and breathing new life into it.[1] If this formulation was sentimental, then the sentimental register was also something I could explore, especially with respect to baseball and to the media archive, where its connection to nostalgia was easy to see.

The found footage essay film finds an idiosyncratic way into history, breathing life into defunct or common moments by addressing them in a highly individualized, uncommon or eccentric register. Before the viewer encounters the committed film - and before the filmmaker hopes this encounter will launch the viewer into the world with the goal of changing it - there is

[1] The only image in the film I shot myself is a short clip near the film's end of Bo Jackson lifting his Most Valuable Player trophy from the 1989 All Star Game, taken from the back of one of his baseball cards. No doubt this is another piece of self-aggrandizing projection on my part. I did it!

this collision of idiosyncratic sensibility and common subject. As one hopes the viewer will be launched into the world by encountering the film, so one hopes the collision of filmmaker and subject will enact some political potential in defunct objects and in the people acting on them; once accomplished, this potential may, through inspiration, extend to the viewer. A common claim about baseball is that it is a team game played by individuals. The connection to the essay here is clear: a common cause can be served by the idiosyncratic treatment of shared objects. As Thomas Waugh writes in the introduction to his book on committed documentary *Show Us Life*: "There is no simple rigid formula of committed filmmaking that can be applied to every historical problem. Let a hundred flowers bloom" (Waugh 7).

This thesis describes and puts into scholarly context a film I made, *Bo Jackson Says Hello*, which focuses on the broadcast of the 1989 Baseball All Star Game. *Bo Jackson* stages an encounter between a broadcast event intended for mass consumption and a highly individualized reflection on that event delivered through editing and voiceover. The main material of the film comes from a recorded copy of the Lower Hudson Valley broadcast of the game which my father recorded on VHS when it originally aired, along with the local news and *Tonight Show* rerun that followed it. I watched this tape over and over as a child, more than the other games that my father thought important enough to record. Making the film was in part an effort to understand why that broadcast had such a hold on me, and implicitly an argument that an intuition or experiential appeal can be the basis of an artistic response. It also came from an unspoken assumption that returning to and understanding the magic of a childhood fixation might help enliven me now, stuck as I was in an illness that left me fatigued and listless and seemed to have claimed for itself a great deal of that spark. While I was making the film, the idea that things were better in my personal past sublimated into an analysis of similar tired convictions about

sports and nation, and I became interested in how these nostalgic evocations were deployed and represented in media and what uses they were put to. The idea that things were better in the past is a defeatist belief with a dark potential future, as self-preservation might entail a return to the past by any means. By subjecting a destructive way of thinking to scrutiny, these investigations can show members of a culture the habits and techniques they use to deceive themselves. Though not enough to heal a person (let alone a people), such emergent self-knowledge can help interrupt a self-destructive trajectory. Or not.

By working with a personal copy of a national broadcast, I was arguing for the importance of both the personal or marginal and the shared or major in archival work. It was a tremendous relief to know despite my illness that around me in my home were already the necessary beginnings of an archival-based filmmaking practice, and that all one needed to do to start was transfer it to digital. It was also encouraging to know that people could access a form of the object elsewhere, since its pretensions to significance were, at one time, spoken for. There is a democratic spirit to this approach, as if one could dust off any castoff object and get to work on it and, by doing so, elevate it (and oneself, in this case) back to significance, a process of personal and political rejuvenation and the beginnings of something that can be done repeatedly. It was important that this object be one that was once made for mass public consumption, something which would be rescued and made publically useful again in a different way. There is also an argument to make for using highly personal material as the basis of one's archival approach, where mass appeal lies in the fact that everyone has specific examples of a form anyone can recognize and have a common emotional reaction to - home movies, for example. But here the idiosyncratic treatment of a mass object is the point - making the large small, as it were, then making it large again in a different way - rather than enlarging the personal. It is also

to show that anyone can do the same. Finally, it is a testament to a media environment in which it is more possible than ever to share such objects widely. Anyone with a digital copy of something, or the ability to convert to digital, can upload and offer it online as an object of significance to others.

Much of the outside material in the film was downloaded from Youtube. This process, while technically illegal, is extremely common and the programs to do so are available for free online. I would consider this degree of copyright violation a kind of soft lawbreaking, and part of this kind of archival filmmaking's appeal for maker and viewer is not just that something not originally intended to be acted on is being acted on, but that a rule is being broken. There is still an impermissible aspect to the approach that distinguishes it and gives it urgency. Something is being done that shouldn't be, something out of sync with acceptable practice, a violation of the official aura around a mass copyrighted media object that carries with it the aura of the profane; if this too is overstated, so was the object's original aura of officialness. Apart from legal questions, one can deflate the power of the original and its pretensions, but one can also honor and use that power so that its strength becomes yours - the quality of its editing and sound design, for example, or how well-made the commercials are. The danger is that one's practice becomes rote. With essay films and archival works there is always the risk of faux-profundity, where the filmmaker falls in love with his or her own voice or becomes overinvested in the archival object's aura of self-evident significance.

In *Bo Jackson* I move between humor and seriousness, trying to imitate the televisual "flow" of the original broadcast and to ward off portentousness by staging appeals to significance with a light hand. I also wanted to create a flow or exchange between criticism and appreciation. Baseball is the most essayistic sport, possessed of a timeless, meandering or

pastoral quality which matches that of a certain kind of essay. My mimetic aspiration is to imitate this flow as well and encourage a kind of thoughtfulness or mental flexibility in the viewer. Jane Gaines landed on the concept of "mimesis" (84) when she took up the "theoretical connection between documentary film and social action or change" (90); specifically she evoked the bodily effect of the activist film, both how that effect is felt in the body, and how the body of the spectator and the collective body of the audience are constituted and moved to action by this effect. Jonathan Kahana notes that Gaines's gloss on mimesis is open. For her the moment a viewer is moved to action by a film is hard to pin down, and this difficulty is a problematic as well as a generative part of a radical aesthetics:

> By opening the question of when and how a political effect can be said to occur, Gaines establishes what Foucault calls a problematic. As opposed to the idea, which can be grasped through its representation, a problematic is a reflection on thought, or a context for thinking. More precisely, it is a way of thinking about how thought and experience are related: 'for a domain of action, a behavior, to enter the field of thought,' say Foucault, 'it is necessary for a certain number of factors to have made it uncertain, to have made it lose its familiarity, or to have provoked a certain number of difficulties around it.' This temporary suspension of received wisdom poses problems for politics, since politics in the usual sense implies a well-defined terrain, population, or institution on which action can be taken now (Kahana 27).

This suspension of wisdom also poses problems as well as problematics for filmmakers. The question of how a political effect occurs is open, and so understanding the best way to create an effect which is hard to define is even more open, or an extra degree removed from the goal of

real world effect. If this openness is intimidating for a filmmaker, it is also freeing. There are no rigid aesthetic standards to abide by.

Comparing Walter Benjamin and Guy Debord in her book *Archiveology*, Catherine Russell writes that Benjamin's approach to "dismantling the society of the spectacle" is "more engaged." For her, Benjamin's conviction is more firmly rooted in the Marxist idea that intellectuals ought to take up the technologies of production, in this case the technologies which produce the images through which capitalism transmits ideology and maintains control of thought and action (2). This call to intellectuals to involve themselves in cultural production and the making of meaning is also an invitation for intellectuals to become artists. In language that "may seem overblown," Benjamin calls on them to take up these technologies in order to join the fight against "fascism and its spiritual qualities" (1). For me, his focus on the ability of the intellectual to make a difference by intervening, even to risk public exposure, ridicule or embarrassment, as all artists must do, makes his project more humanistic, approachable and less abstract than Debord's totalizing vision, which can be alienating in its impersonalness, the political promise of which lies in the idea that describing the problem of image culture is enough (Debord).

What Russell calls the "overblown" character of Benjamin's argument and the affected, artistic, "surrealist poetics" he adopted, make his approach expansive, creative, ambitious and amorphous enough to take on the challenge of mass spectacle - in its very massiveness and its many incarnations (2). It also invites intellectuals to match his artistry in their own work. To somewhat bastardize Gaines, the meeting of Benjamin's writing and audience creates an audience of artist-intellectuals. This meeting invites the audience to tackle a seemingly random choice of cultural product, for the artist-intellectuals - creative enough in their ambition and

aesthetic approach - are suited to handle both major and minor targets. No cultural product is safe.

An archival or found footage practice that draws on Benjamin's ideas need not avoid more personal or marginal material. However, it is clear that Benjamin had the products of mass culture and spectacle, and the fascist culture they drew from, in mind. "It is inherent in the technology of film, as of sports, that everyone who witnesses these performances does so as a quasi-expert," he wrote in his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," and I would argue the same is true today, or has long been true, of television, the medium through which the majority of sports in the US is experienced (Benjamin 114). This also seems true of the culture of sports - Benjamin gives the example of "a group of newspaper boys leaning on bicycles and discussing the outcome of a bicycle race," (114) though one could easily think of others. This sense of ownership would seem to make sports and television solid sources for a certain kind of archival, even popular filmmaking. Someone might feel excited at answering back to something they feel was made for them or are expected to have an investment in, something created to make them think of themselves as part of a shared audience. Moreover, knowing that cultural products that no longer command the public's attention were once conceived as mass spectacles diffuses their power by encouraging in the viewer a posture of reflective distance, making them somewhat quaint, redolent of a time when people were expected to be captivated by them. These objects stand not just for themselves but a certain attitude the audience was expected to bring to them, an attitude now understood to have passed and which becomes an object of analysis itself.

One can justify the randomness of one's choice of subject matter - in my case, a VHS copy of the 1989 Baseball All Star Game - in terms of its randomness. Then again, what Russell

calls an "ever-expanding image bank" accentuates the political and aesthetic necessity of focus and discrimination. Acting on a product self-consciously conceived as being for a mass audience can deflate its pretensions to significance, specifically its ability to move masses of passive spectators, while attempting to use its mass character and techniques for one's own purposes, political or aesthetic. Doing so can also change a product originally conceived or presented as an agent of nowness into an object of reflection, or one that encourages a reflective posture in the viewer. This is one interpretation of what it would mean to turn such an object into cinema.[2]

This challenges what Stephanie Marriot calls one of live television's defining features or major claims on its viewers, which is to elicit or encourage passive absorption, the belief that it speaks but cannot be talked back to. It also challenges the idea that any mass product reduces or flattens differences among spectators. Each viewer receives something uniquely; each can answer back in a unique way. This is especially clear when one remembers that mass television broadcasts are at once national and local, creating and addressing two audiences simultaneously. Viewers experience local commercials alongside national ones and local material bracketing the national broadcast, an inbuilt variety that questions exactly what the event is or how it should be described, even as the meaning of these events or the stories told about them settle or simplify in popular memory.[3] This fractured or decentered quality is one reason the essay form suits a creative archival approach to the live television broadcast. As scholars and writers from Adorno onward have noted, the essay is at home with partiality, de-systematization, and informality; these are its familiar if not primary registers. The narrative skeletons as supplied by both the

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[2] This is a light bastardization of Godard's observation that one looks down at television and up at cinema (Macheret, "Jean-Luc Godard and Television…").

[3] While *Bo Jackson Says Hello* uses material from the Lower Hudson Valley broadcast of the 1989 All Star Game, a Youtube search pulls up a copy of the broadcast from Rochester, NY, with different local commercials, both converted from VHS home recordings.

story of the game and of the broadcast becomes something the essayist can move within, undercutting or reaffirming at will.

Bo Jackson Says Hello

Bo Jackson Says Hello begins with a series of shots from baseball movies of people walking through a tunnel into a baseball stadium. The stadiums open before them and send them into other worlds. But the voiceover adds that the other worlds of the stadiums have since been broken; the new stadiums are open in design, making the field visible from anywhere. This means that there are no tunnels from outside to inside, no break from one world to the next. It also means that baseball movies are now a record of this dynamic, perhaps the only way one can experience it; they have become an important part of cultural memory. Finally it suggests that the baseball movie one is about to watch will add to that memory and, by collecting these examples, offer an opportunity to reflect on it, and on the nostalgic register the film has introduced.

The film's opening also tracks the movement from a small to a large place. The tunnel is not only about visibility but also an entrypoint into history, specifically the history under discussion - the 1989 All Star Game broadcast, and the events and ideas the film will justify connecting to it. The essay film that follows is a record of my own idiosyncratic entryway into this history, an attempt to make sense and structure of it. It is also, as the many different opening clips suggest, one possible attempt among many. It is likely that any number of efforts to make a film of the same broadcast, given all the material the broadcast contains - not only baseball but commercials, and the material after the broadcast too - would produce a different film and alter the nature and significance of the event.

If *Bo Jackson Says Hello* is one of many possible essay films about the broadcast of the 1989 Baseball All Star Game, it is also a fairly typical example of the essay film form. In his well-known essay "In Search of the Centaur," Phillip Lopate writes that his preferred or paradigmatic essay film features a commanding singular voiceover which aims to assert a "collective historical per-sona, a first-person plural, even when the first-person single is held in abeyance" (Lopate 20). In *Bo Jackson* this desire to achieve a collective persona is aided by the frequent inclusion of the broadcast's announcers. The voiceover draws heavily on them, maintaining the broadcast's credibility by borrowing from their credibility as narrators (To borrow a phrase from Film Studies, this allows for vocal and stylistic interventions without breaking or abandoning the broadcast's *diegesis*). Including the announcers holds, or is an attempt to hold, the voiceover's idiosyncrasy in abeyance, balancing its desire to differentiate itself against the necessity of speaking to a wider audience. As the voiceover seeks to work with rather than against these original narrators, so the film gathers related events and associated clips around the center of the baseball broadcast, and attempts to work in conjunction with them. The goal is a fairly seamless creation, which borrows from the seamlessness of the original and aims to bring the national object down to earth without deflating its pretensions to significance.

In his celebrated essay analyzing the "mythic spectacle" of the Super Bowl, Michael Real writes that mass professional sports in the United States "may account for more than a small part of the national cohesion and identity" (35). Yet his claim that the mass spectacle of sports interrupts regimented industrial time with something more seasonal or primal is not just a feature of the social criticism of capitalist society but an abiding feature of play discourse generally. From the nineteenth century scholar Johann Huizinga onward, scholars of play have maintained that the nature of play as a generative, resistance activity lies in the ability of players to carve out

timeless moments within so-called real time. These are moments with their own durations and laws that allow players moments of creative and psychic freedom upon which to build intellectual and emotional resistance to present hardships (Huizinga 94). I wouldn't suggest that watching mass sporting events, rife as they are with the deleterious ideological baggage that Real describes, is a revolutionary activity which allows participants to imagine or explore other ways of being. Still, the idea of "leisurely sun-filled afternoons at an early twentieth century ballpark" still has a powerful hold on baseball's mythology, and I would argue more than a measure of truth in it (36). This leisurely ethos seems to make a baseball game an appropriate vessel for the personal essay. An essay film about baseball might then be a playful practice set within a game whose defining feature is its dedication to carving out timelessness, a feature which has put sportswriters and fans at odds with Major League Baseball management's recent additions of rule changes designed to speed up games (Nathan). Then again, the general demands of a broadcast schedule have long pressed up against defenses of the game's integrity, or the desire to protect its manufactured play time by resisting incursions from outside forces.[4]

Although Real's comparison of football and baseball is a bit out of date - that baseball now has a "pitch clock" means its timescale is not determined wholly "organically, when the last batter is retired" - it is still far less dependent on the clock than other major sports and sports broadcasts. At the same time, the pitch clock and other time-saving devices have given old games like the 1989 All Star Game a nostalgic quality for fans who miss the days when baseball was "timeless," and also when it could still claim the status of National Pastime; indeed, even baseball's designation of past-timeness has passed, doubling its nostalgic claim. This bittersweet

[4] The idea that baseball is a pure embattled playspace survives despite the best efforts of the game's historians. Harold Seymour launches his three volume history of the game by insisting that baseball is a "business," not a "sport," as he sets out to take apart its mythological beginnings (Seymour 3). More recent scandals over performance-enhancing drugs are presented as attacks on fair competition despite the fact that non-white ballplayers were unofficially barred from competing for almost half a century.

register is common to essay films and films working with found footage, the latter of which not only chronicle the past but are themselves constituted of past relics, oftentimes of defunct image technologies suggesting a defunct world or way of thinking. In *Bo Jackson* the nostalgia for an older version of baseball (and an older way of watching baseball) is conveyed through an antiquated medium or image technology. It is also compounded by the fact that Major League Baseball has for years trafficked in nostalgia, evoking a noble past to sell itself to an aging audience.[5]

Consequently *Bo Jackson Says Hello* opens with the nostalgic lament that "Baseball movies got the entrances right. You walked through the tunnel and stepped into another world," before decrying the rise of the new stadiums, in which the tunnels were gone and the fields visible from anywhere inside. Gone is the sense of rupture between worlds, of the movement from outside to inside, and the accompanying cultivation of a new headspace apart from the humdrum of secular time and space. At the same time, the layering of the voiceover over similar scenes in baseball movies chronicling this phenomena suggests that this experience survives in past cultural products, and the role of movies as archives of actual experience and places where this headspace can be reclaimed. The act of walking into the stadium is here linked to walking into the movie theater, which is less about the theater itself than the state of mind that walking into the theater engenders. The essay film will be this world apart, where one can approximate this experience. Opening with entrance shots from baseball movies doubles as the viewer's entrance into the world of baseball movies, asking what it means to treat a baseball game (or

[5] This is true as well of how MLB has sold the public financing of private throwback stadiums (the nostalgic wave began with Camden Yards in a poor section of Baltimore, along with the by-now familiar failed promise of neighborhood renewal), often to the detriment of cultivating a multiracial fan base. As comedian Chris Rock memorably declared, addressing why black viewers left baseball during its nostalgia spree: "You know the good old days of Ruth, Dimaggio, Emmett Till!" (Rock).

broadcast of one) as a movie - what it means to make it cinematic, and what we can learn by doing so.

A memorable image from the film shows a man directing traffic at an intersection after power has been knocked out at the traffic lights; he circles his arm as he holds a torch, and we know from the voiceover, which has described the image somewhat earlier, that he is doing this after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake in Oakland and San Francisco. Occurring about a quarter of the way through the film, this image reflects the film's narrative structure and stylistic framework. The "camera-stylo," in Alexandre Astruc's phrase, extends outwards from the center and describes an arc around the fixed point of the baseball game (Astruc, "The Birth of a New Avant-Garde…"). No matter how far the narration and the images move from the center, they never depart completely; at times the stylus is drawn in, as one would the compass needle, and the narration returns to the game. The film bounces between the original broadcast material, including commercials and what comes after the broadcast, and material related by association to that broadcast, an association oftentimes generated by the voiceover. This dialectical structure reflects the basic tension between chaos and order, as represented by the earthquake itself and attempts in the aftermath to reimpose order. There is the narrative order of the game, which proceeds inning by inning, and the many interruptions which pull the film's narrative away from the game before snapping it back. (The essayist can be described here as a finesse pitcher who keeps the viewer off balance, changing speeds and using movement to dazzle; in this sense the editing style aims to take on some aspect of its subject).

The demands of art draw one into a consideration of aesthetics but also a commitment to the world outside the art. The art should neither be a manicured object or a purely liberal exercise in navel-gazing. With respect to the 1989 All Star Game, the task is to make a film

about the broadcast *matter* politically without forsaking completely the broadcast's value as an entertainment that appealed to thousands of people, to dissect its appeal without destroying it. There is a similar dynamic at play in the grey area or fissure where the essay lives, between the impulse to make claims and to skeptically interrogate one's desire for certitude. I tried to capture this tension in a nostalgic evocation that wraps up the opening sequence: "The game would've stayed real if the video games had stayed cartoonish," I say. "Now the video games got real and life's cartoonish. I can't tell them apart." Then I undercut my own schtick: "That's not true." Investing in the voiceover's authority while keeping it highly idiosyncratic is a way to make claims or advance perspectives without being tied to them. It is something of a defense the essay puts up in order to avoid the accusation of narcissism on the one hand or narrowness and dogmatism on the other, casting itself as a moving target.[6] The same is true of the authority of the announcers and the broadcast generally and the ideologies the broadcast might represent.

I am taken with Dziga Vertov's idea that movement is at the heart of the montage process and the kino-eye's power to make a world. I would argue this prizing of movement applies to the essay and the essay film in particular, captured by the circling, intersecting or darting structure I try for in the film. As Vertov writes in a characteristically euphoric passage: "I free myself from human immobility, I am in constant motion, I draw near, then away from objects, I crawl under, I climb into them" (Vertov 4). *Bo Jackson's* structure embodies this kind of movement, with the All Star Game as the object that is drawn near and pulled away from, and also perhaps in terms of the stitching one finds in a baseball, the thing which runs into and out of the object and binds it together, maintaining its integrity as an object. (The commercials are already stitched into the

[6] Lopate summarises this perspective in his "Centaur" essay: "An essay is a continual asking of questions - not necessarily finding "solutions," but enacting the struggle for truth in full view. Lukacs, in his meaty essay "On the Nature and Form of the Essay," wrote: 'The essay is a judgment, but the essential, the value-determining thing about it is not the verdict (as is the case with the system) but the process of judging'" (19).

broadcast, and have been restitched perhaps, with the voiceover also stitched through *them*). The stitching metaphor also recalls Laura Rascaroli's invocation of Deleuze's "interstitial," where the essay film moves through the spaces that lie between things - in the case of film, between images, oppositions and shots, to produce, in her words, "a metahistorical form which critically and self-reflexively comments on its own activity as it reorders, reframes, and reinterprets history" (16). In a more basic sense, the interstitial as practiced in *Bo Jackson* involves the threading of the voiceover and narration through a series of oppositions, images, and themes, smooth like a pitcher's delivery and suggestive of the "flow" that Raymond Williams and others identify as live television's primary mode of address (Williams 86).[7]

Bo Jackson himself is both the stable point to which the film returns and the subject of a marketing campaign whose meaning, significance and power the film uses to show that stability and meaning are contingent, deliberately shaped and context-specific. Jackson's malleability as a symbol is the Nike campaign's subject: the refrain "Bo Knows" is uttered by different sports stars in various contexts, while Bo transforms outfits to fit each role; the final appearance of Bos Diddley and Jackson, both with guitars, is an on-the-nose argument that Bo Jackson can, as a symbol, play any tune he wishes. Bo's essence as both man and symbol, his two-sidedness, is manifested in his godlike ability to play two sports, encapsulated in the image of him on a baseball card with a baseball bat resting over football shoulder pads. The voiceover wryly calls that burden "the weight of history," but it is also more simply the weight of the film, which he

[7] Jane Feuer suggests in her work that the "flow" or diegesis in television includes the commercials. The viewer is primed to experience them as part of the broadcast rather than as interruptions: "Television as an apparatus strives to break down any barriers between the fictional diegesis, the advertising diegesis, and the diegesis of the viewing family, finding it advantageous to assume all three are one and the same" (Feuer 613). *Bo Jackson Says Hello* interrogates this diegetic union without blowing it up or "blasting" it, in Benjamin's phrase, completely.

carries. The film uses his star power to anchor the viewer's attention while his at-bats launch baseballs as well as reflections on race, labor, Latin American and US imperialism.

The contingency of both history and identity is embodied in the observation which occurs late in the film that "The All Star Game took place one hundred fifty years to the summer that Abner Doubleday did not invent baseball." The understanding of history as both real and falsified creates a sense of anxiousness over the malleability of identity, that it is provisional and constructed, and that one has a responsibility, never exhausted, to intervene in and craft it. After the film's opening, the footage transitions to an overhead shot of the stadium while the beginning of the Star Spangled Banner plays. Within this beginning is already embedded the sense of an ending; while the images flash through various players listening, the voiceover comments ironically on the moment Ronald Reagan, recently out of office and in the booth visiting, fell from his horse that year on Independence Day, "seven days earlier on July 4," spoken in an impression of Reagan's voice (It goes on to say that this is "embarrassing to admit in the house of the singing cowboy," a reference to Gene Autry, then pictured, who owned the California Angels at the time. A short speech by Reagan towards the film's end listing the advanced ages of Autry, Jimmy Reese, and himself half-seriously affirms that a generation was coming to an end). Like the components of the jets flying overhead and NBC at the time of the broadcast, Reagan was a product of General Electric (like Jackson, a symbol as much as a man). He was also, like the jets, a decommissioned object now paraded around for entertainment, his symbolic meaning exhausted and repurposed, much like the sounds of images of the broadcast itself. As it uses the material of the broadcast, *Bo Jackson* creates a new history and mythology which either replaces or stands alongside the old. Likewise the moment of Reagan's exit from office, purportedly the beginning of the so-called end of the Cold War and of communism, is also the

beginning of the end of a certain kind of mythologizing, as the former head of empire appears cartoonishly enfeebled at precisely the moment when the empire would seem to be at its strongest.

This sense of things ending returns towards the final third of the film's running time, when the narrative flashes to an extended meditation on the connection between baseball and September 11. "God Bless America" displaces "The Star Spangled Banner" as the patriotic sports song of choice, while shots of Reagan's funeral, when Irish tenor Ronan Tyan, the man who sang "God Bless America" at Yankee Stadium during the heady jingoistic heights post-9/11, sings "Amazing Grace" over Reagan's coffin, the transition from pre-game exaltation to dirge making the original pre-game festivities seem more like a dirge in reflection; both now seem to mark stages in the decline and fall of a certain kind of Cold War imperial certitude, the beginning of the decline of empire and the beginning of the end of the idea of the end of history. As the voiceover notes, Tynan himself was soon let go over racist comments, Katie Smith's rendition of "God Bless America" dropped because of racist recordings, and Reagan exposed through his bumbling efforts to speak during the broadcast as not being in control of his faculties, his mind is going long before his body went (Reagan had awarded Smith the Presidential Medal of Freedom, and Tynan sang to George H.W. Bush on his deathbed). But these efforts to deflate mythology in real time are also mainstream, if on the local level, as the local news anchors ask Len Berman, the sports reporter on NBC New York, if he would like to comment on Reagan's play-by-play efforts. "No," he says, after a pause.

The mythologies in question were never as totalizing as they seemed in memory or media. As the unnamed reporter notes of Candlestick Park in the post-earthquake footage towards the film's beginning, there were cracks in the foundation of mighty Candlestick Park,

and no way of knowing how long they had been there. Bo Jackson in retirement retains a certain luster, out in the woods hunting as a kind of superannuated American frontier legend. In the Latin America section, attention moves from Mark McGwire, whose status as a deflated home run king the film tracks in an earlier section, to tell of Felipe Alou's run-in with Dominican opposition leader Juan Bosch, a legend himself in the Global South whose connection to baseball is that he seems the only Dominican not to have one. A later discussion by the announcers of Bo Jackson's two sports prowess - "He might be the first 40/40 man and 500 yard man" - is overwritten by the voiceover, which discusses not only the imperial and Christian supremacist roots of international adoption but also Abu Ghraib interrogator Eric Fair, who, like Harry Holt, the father of international adoption, had a bad heart; Holt returned to the United States with eight adoptees in tow, while Fair returned with PTSD to a Wade Boggs poster on the wall of his childhood bedroom. Baseball, history, and cultural critique braid around one another to form a complete expression. The point is not completely to deflate or demythologize Bo Jackson or Ronald Reagan, or mythologize Holt, Fair or Bosch, but to deepen the associations for each, so that a consideration of one brings the viewer into contact with the others and related concerns. The voiceover's observation towards the film's end that the game "took place 150 years to the summer that Abner Doubleday did not invent baseball" then acknowledges the purposeful construction in all efforts to interpret history and make meaning, to see history, as the commercial for the Broadway show *Cats* suggests, through one's own eyes.

A negative interpretation of the image of the man rotating his arm at the intersection is that it connotes a failure of the film's approach, which is to circle around a fixed point or theme but never penetrate it. Nor is it enough to say that not reaching the point is the point, because the goal of a committed or political project is precisely to have one, to beat back arbitrariness even if

one's project of changing the world is doomed to fail. Another way to interpret this image is in relation to the Cold War, and specifically to the year 1989, a loaded year by Western political standards, ostensibly the year that Communism was defeated and Western capitalist values triumphed. I admit to a deliberate circling of this issue because the over-mythologizing of the year and this ostensible victory does not need further inflation, and also because part of deflating it is treating it as simply one feature of a broader cultural landscape. A racist joke cracked during *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson*, or the audience's ambivalent reaction to the introduction of credit cards to the Soviet Union, is enough to communicate a different perspective. But my ambivalent sense of this history's accuracy or usefulness mirrors my sense of ambivalence about the committed product. I would like to register a tension between the need to make serious, solid claims about history and culture while maintaining a sense of skepticism and even humor at the idea of one's own and others' sense of certitude, of the very concept and practice of historical and ideological sweep.

This skepticism of systematization is a feature and strength of the essay. In *Bo Jackson* the Cold War legacy emerges glancingly in the semi-intelligent presence of Reagan struggling to speak in the booth, and in the voiceover's pithy or oblique references to McCarthyism's anti-labor legacy: its observation that *Field of Dreams* star Amy Madigan refused to clap when stool pigeon Elia Kazan received a Lifetime Achievement Oscar, for example, or that Warren Beatty, who did clap, directed the movie *Reds*, and that the man who wrote the book *Reds* was based on, John Reed, shares a name with an outfielder who homered in the longest game in Yankees history, "the baseball equivalent of a Russian novel." Meanwhile, a celebrated instance of self-determination in baseball, when National Leaguers broke off and formed their own league in the early 1900s, ended after one year, with the players bankrupt and branded as Bolsheviks.

Odd or forgotten moments, idiosyncratic or amusing details are outgrowths on history's body that the essay wears lightly, engaging in a humorous or bittersweet dialogue with historical failure without being pinned, branded or defeated by it.

Audiences and Endings

In *Bo Jackson* the images of people clapping after the player introductions double as an applause line for the film as a whole. There is also the contemporaneous television audience and, more centrally, the film's audience, which bears an indirect relation to the former and defines itself both in relation and in opposition to it. That contemporaneous audience was prey to what Jane Feuer calls the techniques of liveness, an ideological construct and set of techniques used to promote "social unity" through the impression or "'imaginary' of presence and immediacy" ("The Concept of Live Television…" 38). It also dealt with what Robert Stam calls the "signifying practice" of local news, one with "recognizable ordering procedures" that reduce "the infinitude of available news items to a highly limited and predictable set of stories" while using various on-air techniques to maintain the illusion of presentness or spontaneity (Stam 32). *Bo Jackson* re-orders and re-limits those stories by focusing on those local news segments which emphasize 1980s wealth and excess. It also emulates local news's tendency to lighten the heaviest subjects with humor and simulates presentness with its own spontaneous interventions. The voiceover points out in a characteristic moment that a commercial for Ronald Lauder's mayoral campaign is an affirmative response to Donald Trump's full-page advertisements, published on May 1, 1989 in four New York newspapers, calling for the execution of the Central Park Five (Wilson), but adds in a nauseating aside that Lauder and Trump collaborated on a scent

characterized by notes of mint and cucumber, committed to the local news mantra of ending stories on a light note and leaving a good smell behind.

Both the techniques of live broadcast and their intended effects become subjects in *Bo Jackson* ("that's a super slo-mo camera," says the announcer Vin Scully, "and it's remarkable"), and though Feuer and other TV scholars have described them at length, I will not here.[8] I will say that audiences of television and of films about television are understood and think of themselves as members of an audience, with different relations to the object being experienced. The television audience is primarily conceived as a receiver, assailed by what Feuer calls the "illusion…that [television] is an 'interactive medium,'" while the film audience here is defined by its critical position vis-a-vis the object (613). The process of critiquing a mass object can be, if not a mass one, then carried out self-consciously as part of a movement or group with an attendant sense of mission or ideological purpose. Conceiving of oneself as a part of a class with an historical perspective, or set within a history one can understand is, at the risk of sounding "overblown," the first step to challenging capitalist culture.

Benjamin writes in his "Work of Art" essay that "in great ceremonial processions, giant rallies and mass sporting events, and in war, all of which are now fed into the camera, the masses come face to face with themselves" (132). The political significance of this encounter is, like a pop-up in a baseball game, in the present day and with respect to the essay film, up for grabs. The public is a critical public, yet it is also absorbing the material "in a state of distraction" (119). Benjamin wrote towards the end of that essay that such distracted reception "finds in film its true training ground. Film, by virtue of its shock effects, is predisposed to this form of

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[8] The local news segment in *Bo Jackson* is mainly concerned with connections between the spectacle of wealth and reactionary politics (in the case of the commercial for Ronald Lauder's mayoral run, that connection is really between wealth and homicidal racism, as the heir to the Estée Lauder fortune runs to the right of Rudy Giuliani on a platform wholly committed to eliminating the "rapists" and "cop-killers" (re: black people) by restoring the state's death penalty).

reception" (120). My concern is that the critical essay film may be a kind of defanged aestheticism. In place of actual politics one gets lost in one's idiosyncratic response to random cultural objects, an essayistic sublime, relishing in one's powerlessness by miring in self-expression. But I am hopeful about the essay film's ability to make creative use of distraction, to disarm by its flexibility and move through or around ideological impasses and ingrained ways of seeing and knowing. In this way it uses but is not bound by the past. As Russell writes in reference to archiveology: "The author is not only a producer, she is also a builder and a destroyer, constructing new work out of old and making new ways of knowing out of the traces of past experiences"(8). By shuffling and juxtaposing, calling attention as well to how media objects themselves were constructed, "archiveology converges with the essayistic. The objective is to produce new modes of thinking about the past, which, in keeping with Benjamin, is also about futures that did not happen, or previous futures we may still encounter" (21).

Linda Williams critiques Frederic Jameson's insistence on the "depthlessness" of postmodern culture, represented by the "weakening of historicity" in the new "image culture" (Williams 10). For Jameson the proliferation and thereby cheapening of images, and the attendant questioning or undercutting of verisimilitude - of the "historical referent," as Williams puts it - has made it impossible for people to define themselves as social actors against an agreed upon "grand narrative"of history, and thus represent the interests of peoples or classes - in other words, to be political in a mass way (10). But Williams is right that the "depthlessness of the simulacrum" is not absolute (10). For it is precisely that malleability of older ways of defining history, and of one's awareness of that process and of one's potential to affect that definition, that allows for class formation to begin again. It begins anew with every turn or revolution in critical

application, every rotation of the arm. This is even true when the object being critiqued is a representation of the masses themselves; the engaged intellectuals Benjamin called for can define themselves as members of a group by watching and critiquing how their group is looked at, even in the most extreme cases or under the most extreme conditions.

Closing his "Work of Art" essay, Benjamin considers the Futurists' elevation of the aesthetics or filming of war as the purest expression of the concept of art for art's sake. This degree of self-alienation is the final aesthetic stage of fascism, as well as the basis for a political response. I am not here interested in drawing out the long-recorded connections between sports and war beyond the visual that leads the broadcast: of two sides lining up facing one another, ready to battle in a non-deadly way. The bloodless spectacle we have just experienced is matched by the commonly told story of the Cold War, which also ended, we are often told, without a shot fired, even as the voiceover notes that the economic shock therapy about to hit Russia "would kill some 3 million people." So too in the background the climate crisis is heating up, as the uncanny vessel of a Coca Cola commercial, over the familiar fizz of a poured glass, warns that "the oceans are drying up," and the local news touches somewhat unbelievingly on the weather: "No more tornadoes I hope." When all is recorded, in sports as in war, everything is bloodless, merely aesthetic, and yet, one gets a sense of the real impact of events barely held at bay and, as the foundation of perception cracks, of the truth bursting through; in short, of the world beneath the images, and the extreme violence to come. As Benjamin wraps up:

> "Fiat ars - pereat mundus," says fascism, expecting from war, as Marinetti admits, the artistic gratification of a sense perception altered by technology. This is evidently the consummation of "l'art pour l'art." Humankind, which once, in Homer, was an object of contemplation for the Olympian gods, has now become one for itself. Its self-alienation

> has reached a point that it can experience its own annihilation as an extreme aesthetic pleasure. *Such is the aestheticizing of politics, as practiced by fascism. Communism replies by politicizing art* (122).

That mankind is an object of contemplation for itself is one feature of the essay as practice. This practice produces the opposite of self-alienation. Rather, through reflection, the movement of one's mind and the creative possibilities of art, one experiences one's own *creation* as "an extreme aesthetic pleasure." This is another meaning of what I would call the essayistic sublime. A certain engagement with the "ever-expanding image bank" also supplies the artistic gratification of a sense perception changed by technology, one in which history in the form of images and sounds is available for the committed artist to work with and shape as he or she wishes. War cannot permanently and wholly supply the artistic gratification of humanity's sense perception, since the technologies changing those perceptions are themselves constantly changing. Even in Benjamin's time the totality of his sentiment may have seemed "somewhat overblown."

The found footage essay gets at the future by looking at the past. Reassembling pieces of audiovisual history allows one to remember as one wishes. Baseball, being a pastoral game, encourages one to take one's time. A romantic might say baseball is too slow or meandering for fascism, there being too many opportunities during its downtime for spontaneity. This is why I hate the new rules designed to speed things up, as they attempt to exercise a kind of authoritarian control over and abolish playtime, until there is little room for the psychic freedom afforded the viewer when the unexpected happens. Similarly the audiovisual archive offers too many opportunities for idiosyncratic intervention to be sanguine about the connection between fascism and mass spectacle; the notion of one's powerlessness in the face of such mass-ness, an idea that

fascist culture feeds on, is, when faced with the counter-massness of the archive, hard to sustain. One encounters in the very size and unwieldiness of that shared archive evidence of the possibility of humanity and history's destruction or disintegration into pieces. Especially as image technology becomes more common, one encounters endless chances to create and assemble, to use the archive to penetrate history and spectacle at discrete points and weave one's own idiosyncratic way through them. One may intervene in the making of history by exploiting cracks in the edifice. By burrowing in and reclaiming the narrative one can change, in the words of the voiceover, "take matters into your own hands".

The hope that the sense of artistic gratification one experiences by doing this is enough to counter the gratification delivered by the mass spectacle of war is a democratic one. Contrary to the perspective of the Futurists, it is an approach to shaping the future without making a fetish of it, as well as an effort to work with pieces of the past without falling into nostalgia. If this makes it prone perhaps to fetishizing old technologies or ways of seeing, it also encourages a rejection of passive absorption and a belief in the creative capacities of the committed artist. Before the viewer ever encounters the film, there is a feeling-generating collision between artist and material, and this encounter sends the former into history prepared to change it, as the ensuing encounter between film and viewer sends the latter out into the world. The process by which this happens remains mysterious, as the creative process remains, out of necessity, elusive, one that cannot ever be wholly accounted for. This is the secret to its ever-present possibility and promise of perpetual renewal, its revolutionary potential. If Communism responds to the aestheticization of war by politicizing art, then the artistic practice I am suggesting responds by making the viewer an artist-intellectual defined by a common commitment, concern, and joy in remaking the world.

Cinephilia and Conclusion

As Catherine Russell writes in *Archiveology*, there is a strong cinephilic component to the archive-based found footage practice.[9] Nostalgia has a deep potential connection to reactionary politics, as the valorization of the past can lead to a rejection of the so-called ruined or poisoned present. Baseball seemed a low-stakes way to engage with the question of nostalgia, and specifically with the memory and experience of something once loved, a mass spectacle perhaps past its prime. Part of the battle on display in *Bo Jackson* - politics being a playing of one team against another - is between an idiotic valorization of the past and the transformation of nostalgia into something productive, to find through one's emotional connection to the past a way of understanding and engaging productively with the present. Elsaesser writes that the possibility of loss is an ever-present part of this process; what he says here about cinephilia seems equally true of the way sports fans talk about their favorite games:

> [Cinephilia] has always been a gesture towards cinema framed by nostalgia and other retroactive temporalities, pleasures tinged with regret even as they register as pleasures. Cinephiles were always ready to give in to the anxiety of possible loss, to mourn the once sensuous-sensory plenitude of the celluloid image, and to insist on the irrecoverably fleeting nature of a film's experience (Elsaesser 27).

Elsaesser and others nostalgically evoke Paris in the late sixties as the apex of a certain kind of cinephilic culture that is permanently past, and perhaps what cinema is for France sports is for

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[9] With respect to the essay film and *Bo Jackson* in particular, there is a strong reliance on the highlighting of specific moments from the archive and the elevation of them to significance; this has something in common with what Paul Willemen called "the fetishizing of fleeting details over the film as a whole" in his essay "Through the Glass Darkly: Cinephilia Reconsidered." This applies to moments selected from the 1989 broadcast as well as the choice of the broadcast itself from among countless numbers of recorded games, including those I also have on VHS. What my choice of this game means from a personal standpoint I am still unsure of.

the US, or baseball once was, and perhaps TV is as well.[10] The love of television ought to have a name akin to cinephilia, as binging old shows (and old broadcasts) becomes more possible today with their increased availability on streaming services and places like YouTube. Perhaps it is appropriate that *Bo Jackson* contains a fair amount of political content, since, as many have pointed out, sports and political media in the US have largely merged, as emphasized not only by the contest between two teams but the fact that the formats of network panel shows on sports and politics increasingly resemble one another.[11]

A rhetoric of nostalgia now infests political media, the idea that we used to be a country less polarized where people could speak to each other, where elections used to be about issues, and people cling to evidence of the latter in local politics or human interest stories, where the sense is that even the ever-evanescent promise of civility is slipping away. In *Bo Jackson* the human interest story becomes an object of analysis, where it is explored through the story of Montreal Expos pitcher Tim Burke; a brief comment on the history of international adoption leads to a consideration of the aforementioned Eric Fair, and suggests that today's United States is a country of emotional orphans cut adrift from home and history, even nostalgia now impossible. "Disenchantment" is the word Elsaesser gives to a certain reaction to a nostalgia-based cinephilia, but it also applies to a certain kind of fan culture. His question - what

[10] Television commercials especially would seem to be a perfect vessel for this connection to the past. The desperate desire to attach to the present - and the sense of an experience in danger of slipping away - is a common commercial theme in *Bo Jackson*. I am thinking of the Coors Lite commercial and its propagandistic repetition of the mantra - "It's the right beer *now*" - over an overflowing glass of beer, which follows the slow-motion shot of Nolan Ryan's curveball; the viewer is slowly taken out of gametime by the break in speed and brought into immediate contact with the promise of sensuous experience, something to grab hold of (as the beer can drives towards the camera and pops open repetitiously from many angles) before it slips away.

[11] Matt Taibbi makes this point in his book *Hate, Inc*. The trend continues as well-known sportscaster Stephen A. Smith publicly mulls running for the Presidency of the United States in 2028.

are the uses of disenchantment? - with respect to found footage or archival-based filmmaking has a fairly obvious answer.

Television was not originally intended to be archived; at least, television archives were not going to be accessible in a mass way. The existence of saved television footage creates conditions for nostalgia where none were supposed to have existed. It propels a kind of furious search for evidence for something not intended to be saved, and this desire implies tremendous effort and responsibility on the part of the maker. Elsaesser quotes Raymond Bellour as saying that America immediately recognized in cinema's ability to reproduce reality the means of "inventing itself" (34). While Elsaesser thinks this observation "felicitous," it is perhaps also true that the US invents itself through television, and that using cinema to reinvent television, or using television to make cinema, is another way for the US to reinvent itself. For reinvention itself needs to be reinvented, or what is revolutionary practice for?

Elsaesser points out that a certain disillusionment with cinephilia itself was characteristic of the theoretical turn to semiotics in Film Studies in the 1970s. The idea that cinema was the harbinger of deleterious ideologies recalls a similar claim often made about professional sports in the US, what sportswriter Dave Zirin calls the Noam Chomsky (or Michael Real) argument: that sports teaches people to take arbitrary sides against one another instead of against power centers. But, as Zirin also argues, the very commonality of sports makes it the closest thing, perhaps just a close thing, to a shared culture in the United States. This gives critics of mass culture an opportunity to reach a broad public while tapping into untold stories of resistance and radicalism (21). Increasingly the same seems true, or is getting truer, of politics, which, for better or worse, has merged more and more with the culture of sports. These broad televisual spectacles are

ever-ripe for a committed and editing-based archival practice, since the audiovisual bank is so deep. As the archive grows, so does the potential for broad-based and selective interventions.

These new opportunities are part of what Elseasser calls "Cinephilia Take 2," that of "collector and archivist," or the "new" cinephilia, hardly new now or even then: "The new cinephilia of the download, the file swap, the sampling, re-editing and re-mounting of story line, characters, and genre gives a new twist to that anxious love of loss and plenitude, if we can permit ourselves to consider it for a moment outside the parameters of copyright and fair use" (40). But the promise of Cinephilia Take 2 is the challenge to copyright and fair use, if not necessarily its outright rejection, the easy and debonair ignoring, a mass "meh" that makes it, in all but name, fade away. As Thomas Waugh writes in his monumental work on the films of Joris Ivens, who died the year of the 1989 All Star game: "A fervent subscriber to the principles of fair use, copy left, creative commons, and ethical documentary, the author considers moral factors other than the intellectual property legalities of the French bourgeois republic applicable to the access to, and use, sharing, conservation, historiography, analysis, and validation of the films discussed in this book" (Waugh 11). Waugh's justification partly lies in the fact that public financing and unremunerated efforts by citizens played a great part in making Iven's oeuvre available for study. Mine is that technology has outstripped a tired old law; even Major League Baseball uploads old games onto YouTube, where they stand alongside recordings uploaded from people's private collections. This work of "preservation and re-presentation" promises a revolutionary ethos without being outwardly rebellious. It is perfect for a middle class middlebrow like myself and his middlebrow audience, who might find it titillating to break the rules when the rules are not particularly binding, or when technology has long outpaced them and their usefulness. After all, what copyrighted sporting event is not available for easy

download on YouTube, as Major League baseball scrambles to put commercials on them? It bears repeating that this practice confronts a new mobility of the image for producers big and small, both corporations and the cinephile, as each has new technologies and an expanding image bank to corral and draw on, conferring as well what Elseasser called "a new nobility on what once might have been mere junk" (41).

Beneath the promise of this kind of archival practice is the reality that the new cinephilia is always new, because images are constantly being made. So too is the past, as imagined through images, and as new things are made out of the "unlimited archive of our media memory," they will also

> encounter new moments of dis-enchantment, reestablishing the possibility of rupture, such as when the network collapses, the connection is broken, or the server is down. Cinephilia, in other words, has reincarnated itself, by dis-embodying itself. But what it has also achieved is that it has un-Frenched itself, or rather, it has taken the French (term) into a new ontology of belief, suspension of disbelief, and memory: possibly, probably against the will of the "happy few," but hopefully, once more for the benefit of many (Elsaesser 41).

I cannot say this has ever made me feel anxious or desperate, just excited at the possibility of accessing and making things. This might come down to a difference in temperament, for the frame of cinephilia presupposes the position of a collector, enjoyer or lover for its own sake, while Benjamin's artist-intellectual is a committed person defined by aptitudes or abilities, the responsibility of making interventions - in short, to act on those commitments. When it comes to the deleterious influences of mass culture, movies included, I always found myself drawn, as Russell is to Benjamin, to the Frankfurt critics and their appreciation of mass culture, which they

express through their skepticism toward it, a skepticism which, however critical, never really becomes disenchantment. For them disenchantment was never an absolute precondition, as it is in Elseaser's telling, for a certain engagement with cultural products, and neither was re-enchantment, a falling in love after engagement. Rather, the lover's attachment seemed to sublimate through their creative and critical engagement with objects; in Adorno's case, it was the essayistic journey through and around objects, the refusal ever to be still long enough to box it or oneself in. I have always felt, and Benjamin is an example, a kind of joyful creative energy in their reading that I don't find in most manifestations of Screen-era theory. This is not entirely fair to Screen or that legacy; still, I hold to the idea that, for the Frankfurt critics, it was not a fear or weariness of ideological baggage in general but of fascism in particular, full stop, which brought them back to the real, material world, not away from it into jargon and airy abstraction, which let them reflect on the world of images with a less jaundiced perspective and see, conversely and in their plainspoken way, more hope for the future.

Gaines was drawn to Frankfurt theorist Ernst Bloch's notion of the daydream, a place of imagination and possibility, which Bloch counterposed to the "Freudian nightmare" (10). Whereas the Freudian unconscious closed in on itself (nothing new existed in it), the daydream opened out - "its latency lies ahead" (Bloch 57). For Gaines this "utopianzing effect" was pure socialist fantasy and a feature of cinema in general, but the "world-improving dream" strikes me as a feature specifically of the kind of found footage filmmaking I have tried to pursue, where the notion of world-improvement quite literally means rebuilding a world already constituted by reordering and "reinscribing," to use Benjamin's term, images of it and by making television, the medium through which the world is beamed at audiences in "real" time, into cinema. This utopian dream or playspace, as Huizinga might have called it, is also a product of play or

playfulness, a fact suggested as early as Vertov, who in *Man with a Movie Camera* brought us into the editing room.

The joyful energy Vertov expressed was found not only in his manifesto but in the energy and conviction with which he insisted on capturing his fellow citizens, the relentlessness of his camera and its (and his) cranking motion. Within this dreamscape Vertov is propelled forward, animated by the conviction that a "fresh perception of the world" will both capture and bring that new world into being. The revolutionary society both exists to be captured by the kino-eye and is, as Seth Feldman writes, a construction deliberately created through filming and editing (Feldman 48-49); the two are not really the same (it is, after all, just a movie, and the kino-eye is not a fusion of man and machine but a metaphor), but one looks forward to the day when it could be, just as the right combination of images will finally launch the committed viewer onto the barricades or into the streets, to conduct traffic after disaster. When all else falls apart and revolutionary ideologies fail, you start to dream again.

In "Dream/Factory" Gaines points out that, through the "world-improving dream" of the movies, capitalism gives us glimpses of socialism we never get in our lifetimes (110). Such glimpses are part of every cultural product one re-edits with a committed eye; each is evidence of a world one has, through the application of one's critical intelligence, brought into being, the potential to remake the world reborn with every effort - as in the opening of *Man with a Movie Camera*, a new day dawns. As with Vertov and his camera, the eye and the machine, the meeting of engaged artist and object produces this potentiality, as the meeting of reinscribed object and viewer, or audience, creates the potential for committed response; so too does the spectacle and experience of "the movement of a free mind at play" offer in an essay film the dream of a fusion of mind and movie, of thought enacted on screen.

Bo Jackson ends by returning to the game's beginning, with the original recording of "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" running over the player introductions. Making the iconic strange by playing the original song - that is, with the full lyrics most haven't heard - is one way to reinscribe the familiar, and also bring the iconic nearer by accentuating its ethnic character. It also brings the viewer into a more intimate relation with the characters on screen: "Casey Casey knew all the game, knew the players by their first names." What has just passed was a more idiosyncratic and intimate treatment of the cast of players and the object than what one is used to. Lopate once wrote that "The heart of the personal essay is its intimacy" (*The Art of the Personal Essay* XXIII). I would argue that cultivating an idiosyncratic connection to shared objects - to media, but also to games, players, and teams - makes a kind of intimacy possible. It is through this intimate engagement that a new perspective emerges. One is possessed not only by an object but by a dream of one's making. That is to remake a world, one object or experience at a time.

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