

MEMORIES MADE IN SEEING: MEMORY IN FILM AND FILM AS MEMORY

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ABSTRACT

Memories Made in Seeing considers the relationship between memory and film through examining what is its cultural and experiential effect, how it can show and write memory and History. Four post-war films - *Muriel, or the Time of a Return* (Resnais, 1963), (*nostalgia*) (Frampton, 1971), *Level Five* (Marker, 1996) and *Memento* (Nolan, 2000) – that are complex manifestations of thought in practice, which trace and examine film's ability to distinctly embody and produce memory, and are part of a dialogue in form and time.

To contextualise and consider memory's effect, it is charted from the advent of film (the nineteenth century's 'memory crisis', the founding and understanding of modern memory, the related ideas of Proust, Bergson and Freud), through the twentieth century (the development of a more subjective reckoning, the seeming impossibility of memory (and understanding) that followed World War II's trauma), till its millennial disposition (multi-various considerations, the inception of prosthetic memory, the seeming need for nostalgia). The case studies' varied forms and alignments consider the tension between the demands of narrative resolution and the mutable and open-ended nature of memory, and how different film practices seek to utilize and appraise its perceived function, relevance and production.

These films are also a record of viewing experiences, which influence one another and create a narrative of personal engagement that forms and substantiates recollection. To examine this conceptual process further I contend the tension between narrative (something fixed by duration and intention) and memory's imperatives (formal and personal) form an axis of experimentation and exploration and this correspondence is central to comprehending the ways in which films represent and invoke forms of subjective and cultural recollection. I propose that film's unique and associative account of memory's evolving resonances becomes a series of palimpsests, which emphasize that the experience of film is an act of re-writing and recollection and misrecollection. This context tethers the subject, is the point of initiation, and explores how memories, which are made when seen, are mutable, historical and present, essential.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

Signature: Andrew Vallance

Date: 1 March 2017

INTRODUCTION



Fig. 1 *Muriel, or the Time of a Return* (1963)

Memories Made in Seeing is concerned with the entwining of film and memory; it will consider the conceptual advent of this pairing, its historical precedent, theorised and recollectable affect. This evolving relationship will be traced through a succession of four independent but connected case studies - *Muriel ou le Temps d'un retour* (*Muriel, or the Time of a Return*, Resnais, 1963), (*nostalgia*) (Frampton, 1971), *Level Fire* (Marker, 1996) and *Memento* (Nolan, 2000) - films that encompass contrasting approaches to practice and production and emphasise different forms of aesthetics and techniques, but all, in their own ways, offer distinct authorial visions borne of a disciplinary and critical awareness, and an ambitious and mindful commitment to film's processes and its history. These films treat and relate memory through a set of particular conceptual approaches, and this study will analyse these relationships, questioning what is memory's exact filmic purchase - does this time-based medium offer a unique treatment, which makes manifest a distinct form of memory.

A number of filmmakers and theorists see film as being a peculiarly compliant and appropriate vehicle for an engagement with memory, as Ben Brewster observes, 'film has functioned as a machine to produce and reproduce what is outside the cinema as a set of memory images. These images are retrospective, but they are insistently immediate.'¹ However, Belinda Morrissey cautions that 'while memory is the bedrock of cinematic representation, allowing us to "see" that which we could never and have never seen; it remains a most unsatisfactory foundation for any

¹ Brewster, B. (1977) 'The Fundamental Reproach (Brecht)', *Cine-Tracts*, 2, Summer, p.48

sort of understanding.² Memory's meaning is contextual, changeable and determined by a myriad of social, historical, personal factors and these definitions can be understood in a number of different ways, as R. J. A. Kilbourn elucidates, '(1) the *process* of recollection or retrieval; (2) the *form* or "place" in which memory-content is both stored and lost (the archive); and (3) the mnemonic content itself.'³ The case studies all, one way or another, deliberately invoke memory, they consciously suggest and reinforce its presence, and considering their varied examples proffers the question, what is to be gained from this invocation - how, and why, do these films' seek to be part of this compact?

Film, through its technological imperative, binds images to time and has the ability to take on the appearance of reality. As one image, shot, sequentially follows another, until its total durational limit has been reached, film is seen, and remembered, like no other medium. Part of film's appeal is that it exists seemingly for, but apart from, us, the audience, as Stanley Cavell observes 'film awakens as much as it enfolds.'⁴ Films' movements may be fixed, but they transcend time when they become part of our world, our consciousness, with certain scenes and images becoming 'tangible and self-conscious',⁵ familiar and powerful memories. Film and memory seem in many ways to be intrinsically connected, for as Cavell writes, 'Memories of movies are strand over strand with memories of my life.'⁶ This sense of instinctive oneness concerns the influence of social and cultural imperatives, the affect of time and experience, but how do films foster this relationship, what is it about their form - how do they make and become memories, part of history?

Approach, method, application

Memories Made in Seeing's method and composition emerged from a combination of deductive and inductive approaches that came into focus during the process of research. Through this investigation certain questions suggested themselves; a number of films, identified by themes and tropes, have an evident correlation and interest in memory, but does this

² Morrissey, B. (2011) 'Impossible Memory: Traumatic Narratives in *Memento* and *Mulholland Drive*', in: Sinha, A. and McSweeney, T. (ed.) *Millennial Cinema: Memory in Global Film*, London and New York: Wallflower, p.97

³ Kilbourn, R. J. A. (2012) *Cinema, Memory, Modernity: The Representation of Memory from Art Film to Transnational Cinema*, London: Routledge, p.3

⁴ Cavell, S. (1979) *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*, enlarged ed., Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, U.K.: Harvard University Press, p.19

⁵ Grainge, P. (ed.) (2003) *Memory and Popular Film*, Manchester: Manchester University press, p.9

⁶ Cavell, S. (1979) *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*, enlarged ed., Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, U.K.: Harvard University Press, p.xviii

propensity adhere to any particular period, how does this reflect History, what are the cultural implications, how do form and content affect this process?

This study comprises of two parts; the first, ‘Out of Time: Memory and its Relationship with Film’, establishes the context and range of this study through considering the founding of modern memory (and the continuing influence of its conception), how memory’s definition is mutable and contextual – something which is emphasised by the analysis of films in Part 2 - the relationship between memory and film (how it has been proposed, theorised and given form) and film’s viewing space (how this plays a part in what is remembered), it also acts as a filter to view film’s memorious compact through; the second part, ‘In Time: Films and Other Memories’, consists the four case studies - *Muriel*, (*nostalgia*), *Level Five* and *Memento* - which consider memory’s effect and presence through film and its developmental application in post-war cinema.

In this study memorious is understood to mean memorable, to evoke memories, to be full of memories, for instance in Jorge Luis Borges’ short story *Funes the Memorious*,⁷ the subject, Ireneo Funes, remembers everything he encounters, he cannot forget. The endeavour to discern film’s memorious compact is central to this enquiry and the that memory’s evolution and development can be known through films’ distinct articulations, which in turn offer an essential means to examine form and subject. Memory’s perceived meaning and importance, which is context reliant, will become defined through the theoretical and contextual analysis in Part 1 and the case studies in Part 2.

Part 1, ‘Out of Time: Memory and its Relationship with Film,’ traces, over three chapters, how film’s cultural and theoretical relationship with memory has evolved. (Ch. I) ‘Crisis and Intuition: Proust, Freud, Bergson and Memory’s Revelation’; considers the advent of modern memory, how it arose out of the nineteenth century ‘memory crisis’, which will be discussed in this chapter, the way in which it corresponds to the emergence of film, and how much of the early twentieth century’s intuitive conceptualising, particularly the ideas of Marcel Proust, Sigmund Freud and Henri Bergson, still mark today’s reckoning of what memory may mean.

(Ch. II) ‘Against History’s Grain: A New Century and the Need to Remember’; considers Walter Benjamin’s vision of historical materialism, the emergence of subjective historicised narratives, the trauma of post-World War II and the necessity to remember, but its seeming impossibility, and the need to find the appropriate means to show, describe what had happened – working with this dilemma was fundamental to the development of a critical form of filmmaking which sought to answer these complex questions and came to establish a way of approaching memory and film.

Also, the primary case studies will be placed in an historical context, their particular manifestations, indicating the timeliness of their respective methods and how these works offer a way of approaching and understanding, the relationship between creative concerns, form and history. (Ch. III) ‘Attributed Importance: Appraising and Describing film Memories’; considers how film is discussed, invoked, and endeavours to place it within a theorised and philosophical framework (if this is possible), whilst acknowledging the inherent difficulties in quoting film, the effect of transposing its movement into text, what this mediation can contribute to our understanding and the effect of recounting and analysing memories. It will elucidate how film tropes, aesthetics and techniques, like flash-backs, have come to be associated with memory, and how certain themes, subjects, types of filmmaking, like noir, are thought to have memorious value, and in conclusion it offers a contextual analysis of film’s contemporary place, its relationship with new media and what this may suggest about the representation of memory.

Part 2, ‘In Time: Films and Other Memories,’ considers, through four case studies, the development of post-World War II film - a time unlike any before it that saw the constitution of new formulations and insights - and its relationship to memory. These films will introduce different formal and conceptual interests, concerning historic, personal, future, post-modern forms of memory production and their representation. (Ch. IV) ‘Muriel, or the Time of a Return: About Memory (and Imagination)’; Alain Resnais’ film suggests an aware and challenging set of specific post-war conditions - ruination, lost inhabitants, a forlorn post-war nation (and continent), history’s trace and the need to rebuild - asking how can the past be remembered, what is the purpose of remembrance and how can a film represent these questions?

(Ch. V) ‘(nostalgia): These Times are Personal’; Hollis Frampton’s film consists of a series of photographs that are seen to burn and turn to ash, which are accompanied by seemingly related narrated autobiographical incidents. The film’s construction invites recollection, and the viewer is an active element in its memorial scheme as its form and content embody memory’s necessity whilst emphasising its uncertainty; however, does his material and method become overwhelming and render his film a conceptual sleight-of-hand? (Ch. VI) ‘Level Five: History, Technology and the Melancholic Turn’; Chris Marker’s film searches for, and endeavours to make sense of, History (and his own practice). It considers how private and public experience can be made known, reflected upon, how technology, personally and institutionally, affects the past’s representation and recollection; can History ever be made present? (Ch. VII) ‘Memento: Fettered and Systematic Recollection’; Christopher Nolan’s film offers a puzzle to be solved, and its solution is to be found within the film’s generic lineage, its referential relationship to all that proceeds it; what is the effect of its strategic hybridity, which would suggest creative intelligence within the safety of genre, and how is memory represented in this form?

These films exemplify specific alignments of history and form, the development of memory over the latter half of the twentieth century, before the true advent of digitisation – john Mullarkey writes that ‘there is no such thing as film per se but only and ever particular films, and that the singular empirical reality of each.’⁸ It is my contention that by going back, remembering these responses to memory’s incessant necessity, that its contemporary filmic development and the complexity, significance of these relations can be further contextualized, historicized, as that which is deemed past becomes present once again. This combination of works aims to produce telling conjunctions and elucidate advances in subject awareness; each film has a discernible resonance, place and position, which are filtered through an instinctive and critical appreciation.

These films all have distinct relationships with memory and their importance, as culturally and memory film exemplars, is initially related and defined in the second chapter ‘Against History’s Grain’, and in further detail in their individual chapters. The meaning attributed to memory, as mapped through these films’ varied practices, develops through each chapter and the accrued and coalesced understanding - this aids and abets the contextualising of Part 1 and develops its ideas further by thinking through practice. The films are sequenced chronologically, their particular forms, histories and associations all contributing to analytic consideration, and are conceived like a film programme, a purposeful collection, with the examination of one film informing the next, and so on, as each individual film influences, in some way, what proceeds and follows it. The selection is a new constellation and its connections reveal a particular understanding of film and memory’s process and purpose over this most formative of times; this contention is explored in ‘Against History’s Grain’ and further elaborated through the case studies connections and associations. This combination of works attests to film’s unique memorious purpose, how their rendering of memory creates a distinct understanding of recollection and emphasis the importance of communicative method.

A number of publications have been devoted to this subject, and my consideration of these various sources and my memories of films, compliment and compound one another, the experience of one associating, suggesting another and this additive process forms a disciplinary framework; this is one of the ways in which this study contributes to subject-related knowledge; an overview of the relevant literature is part of the proceeding theoretical considerations. The effort to bring something of a film into a text is to invoke its memory and this moving from one medium to another foregrounds the subjective nature of this undertaking where experiences are retrieved, re-visited and newly constituted. Film’s expansive cogitations are, as Mullarkey

⁸ Mullarkey, J. (2009) *Philosophy and the Moving image: Refractions of Reality*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p.216

suggests, ‘resistant to one theory alone’⁹, and are open to interpretation, personal and critical reflection, which, of course, can alter with time and thought, and as Deleuze suggests, ‘a theory of cinema is not “about” cinema, but about the concepts that cinema gives rise to and which are themselves related to other concepts.’¹⁰ *Memories Made in Seeing*’s textual analysis is attuned to film’s purpose and potentiality, aware that the memory of a film can actually produce many connected, and sometimes unexpected, other films.

⁹ Ibid, p.6

¹⁰ Deleuze, D. (1989) *Cinema 2*, Tomlinson, H. and Galeta, R. (trans.), London: Continuum, p.268

PART 1.

OUT OF TIME: MEMORY AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH FILM

Memories
Are hunting horns whose sound dies in the breeze
Cors de chasse, Guillaume Apollinaire (1910-12)

I. CRISIS AND INTUITION: PROUST, FREUD, BERGSON AND MEMORY'S REVELATION



Fig. 2 *Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat* (1895)

In order to understand (and define) what might be termed as modern memory it is necessary to place it in context and this development originated in the latter part of the nineteenth century. This chapter will trace this conceptual shift, how it came out of a ‘memory crisis’ and came define the next century’s forms of remembrance. Essential to this consideration are the perceptions of Proust, Freud and Bergson, who were all instrumental in the formulation of a new, intuitive, subjective understanding of memory. These ideas were to become the twentieth century’s guiding references. Their influence will be contextualised and their memory models’ relationship with film (and its theorization) assessed: what relevance do these notions still have?

These new ideas of memory emerged concurrently with film first being seen. Film’s century, which could be measured from the Lumière’s *L'Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat* (*Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat*, 1895) to Godard’s *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1998), and in this time film had expansive social and cultural purchase as its technological innovation and creative application came to describe this period, a task that it was perfectly suited for, as Benjamin wrote, ‘a certain art form aspires to effects which could be fully obtained only with a changed technical standard, that is to say, in a new art.’¹ The Lumière’s and Godard’s films, in distinct ways, encapsulate

¹ Benjamin, W. (2007) ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’, in: *Illuminations*, Arendt, H. (ed.), Zohn. H (trans.), New York: Schocken, p.230

cinema's promise, Alison Landsberg writes that the Lumières 'inaugurated the cinematic era on December 28, 1895, at the Grand Café in Paris, with the projection of *Arrivée d'un train*',² the film's onrushing locomotive, speeding directly at the camera (and therefore the audience) symbolising film's emotive power and future shock. Antoine de Baecque perceives that these works denote the beginning and end of the twentieth century³, and, considering this, Laura Mulvey suggests that, 'cinema will increasingly become a source of collective memory',⁴ a development that James Monaco emphasises: 'Film is our collective memory'.⁵ This awareness, that the way we view film has changed, and that it will increasingly become a means to review the previous century, has also affected its production. Regarding Godard's film, Giorgio Agamben comments, 'cinema enters a zone of indifference where all genres tend to coincide, documentary and narrative, reality and fiction. Cinema will now be made on the basis of images from cinema'.⁶ Cinema may depict the collective history of the twentieth century, but according to Kilbourn this period's collapse of memory is 'largely cinema's fault', as all has become subjective and personal.⁷ This suggests that all that would make film a persuasive advocate renders it questionable, that its memory value must be understood within the context of film and its attendant disciplinary and cultural considerations and associations.

Film's century may have passed, and it is apparent that digital developments may have surpassed it as the cinematic material of choice, but its influence, and memory, is still very present in the audio/visual conception and division of space and time. Film is in many ways defined by technology and arguably this can be best understood in its waning – Rosalind Krauss observes, 'obsolescence, the very law of commodity production, both frees the outmoded object from the grip of utility and reveals the hollow promise of that law'.⁸ This sentiment, 'like the last gleam of a dying star',⁹ would suggest the end of a technologically driven cycle, one which began with the expression of need, as Krauss's, by way of Benjamin, metaphorical notion, a de-coupling of form and function, allows for film to become a prized commodity, once again, only now a more

² Landsberg, A. (2004) *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, New York: Columbia University Press, p.13

³ Mulvey, L. (2006) *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image*, London: Reaktion Books, p.24

⁴ Ibid, p.25

⁵ Monaco, J. (1978) *Alain Resnais: The Role of Imagination*, London: Secker & Warburg, p.85

⁶ Agamben, G. (2002) 'Difference and Repetition: On Guy Debord's Films', in: *Guy Debord and the Situationist International*, McDonough, T. (ed.), Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, p.315

⁷ Russell J. A. Kilbourn (2012) *Cinema, Memory, Modernity: The Representation of Memory from Art Film to Transnational Cinema*, London: Routledge, p.28

⁸ Krauss, R. (2000) *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*, New York: Thames and Hudson, p.41

⁹ Ibid

exclusive one; film is essentially unique, as D. N. Rodowick emphasises, ‘the aesthetic experience of cinema is in essence non-repeatable’, as each screening leaves a print marked by history and hastens its ultimate decay.¹⁰ Considering cinema, and its time, Frampton wrote, in 1983, that ‘Cinema is the last machine. It is probably the last art that will reach the mind through the senses;’¹¹ does it then follow that once this machine is gone the form will be irrevocably altered? Mulvey links film’s materiality, and the possibility of decay, to human consciousness and the ‘recognition of the intractable nature of time itself.’¹² This conjunction, of life and film, would suggest that with film’s virtual replacement, an instinctive understanding is lost, and that new standards of definition and preservation break, or at least change, the nature of moving images’ relationship with the individual and their recollection.

The nineteenth century’s memory crisis

For the Greeks ‘Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory, was also the goddess of wisdom, the mother of the muses [and was then] the progenitor of the arts and the sciences’,¹³ a confluence that suggests pertinent links between film’s form and function, and its mnemonic potential and as the twentieth century progressed the primacy of mechanical media and the technical verisimilitude that came to symbolise it challenged the written word. In doing so it drew on the traditions of the older theatrical arts and transplanted its methods of narrativisation¹⁴ into a new spectacular form, compressing and linearizing its forbear, showing what was once described, developing its own adaptive methodology as Kilbourn contends, ‘cinema has evolved into not merely a “reflection” but an indispensable index of human experience – especially our experience of time’s passage, of the present moment, and, most importantly perhaps, of the past.’¹⁵ This ability, to show and encounter the representation of recognisable occurrence suggests that film is imbued with memory and cannot be understood without considering it as an essential part of its affect.

¹⁰ Rodowick, D. N. (2007) *The Virtual Life of Film*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, p.20

¹¹ Frampton, H. (2006) ‘For a Metahistory of Film: Commonplace Notes and Hypotheses’, in: *On the Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters: The Writings of Hollis Frampton*, Jenkins, B. (ed.), Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, p.136

¹² Mulvey, L. (2006) *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image*, London: Reaktion Books, p.31

¹³ Radstone, S. (2000) ‘Working with Memory: an Introduction’, in: *Memory and Methodology*, Radstone, S. (ed.) Oxford: Berg, p.2

¹⁴ Carroll, N. (2008) *The Philosophy of Motion Pictures*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, p.224

¹⁵ Kilbourn, R. J. A. (2012) *Cinema, Memory, Modernity: The Representation of Memory from Art Film to Transnational Cinema*, London: Routledge, p.229

Memory is a complex set of actions, a subjective process of recollection and forgetfulness - we are often unconscious of a memory until we retrieve it - the past is never gone, and through an individual's existence memories are always being recast anew. As Eric Kandel, the Nobel Prize winning biologist, observes, remembering 'frees us from the constraints of time and space and allows us to move freely along completely different dimensions.'¹⁶ Remembrance implies personal relations with what has been, and as time draws an event away, and its direct actuality decreases, memory evolves and alters with each recollective context and this process of reiteration contributes to the rationalisation and narrativizing of past experience. Neuroscience now suggests that when we remember, our neuronal structure changes, a process termed reconsolidation (this is similar to Freud's 'retroactivity', a 'mode of belated understanding or attribution of sexual or traumatic events.')¹⁷ Kandel divides memory into explicit (or declarative) and implicit (or procedural) memory; the former refers to what we say we remember, the 'conscious recall of people, places, objects, facts, and events', and the latter unconsciously 'underlies habituation, sensitization, and classical conditioning, as well as perceptual and motor skills'.¹⁸ These memories can be short or long term, the former denoting immediate impressions and responses, thoughts and reflections, and the latter, what we might term knowledge, that which has been learnt and processed. All that is encountered is initially stored in the short-term memory and, if these experiences are deemed important, necessary, they are transferred to the long-term memory, and it is at this stage that meaning is really attributed.

Memory is created in time and takes on different meanings at different times. This formulation, the acceptance of subjective reckoning, of different experiential plains, emerged towards the end of the nineteenth century. Prior to this, Landsberg writes, 'Whether in the form of "organic memory" or national history, memory in the nineteenth century was commonly imagined as collective, handed down from one generation to the next.'¹⁹ The development of another (seemingly more contemporary) understanding of history, one imbued with interpretation and preference,²⁰ arose out of the 'memory crisis' in which 'the perceived discontinuities between the past and the future were questioned and was partly 'prompted by fears that the past embodied in

¹⁶ Kandel, E. R. (2006) *In Search of Memory: The Emergence of a New Science of Mind*, New York/London: W.W.Q. Norton & Company, p.3

¹⁷ De Lauretis, T. (2008) *Freud's Drive: Psychoanalysis, Literature and Film*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 118

¹⁸ Kandel, E. R. (2006) *In Search of Memory: The Emergence of a New Science of Mind*, New York/London: W.W.Q. Norton & Company, p.132-3

¹⁹ Landsberg, A. (2004) *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, New York: Columbia University Press, p.7

²⁰ Carr, E. H. (1987) *What is History?*, 2nd ed. London: Penguin books, p.12

cultural memory was irretrievably lost.²¹ The fear, that Susannah Radstone indicates, equated to the desire to formulate an understanding that better suited the newly constituted age; as Scott McQuire suggests, this period ushered in ‘a new consciousness of time: the desire to leave the past behind in order to create the present competed with the sensation that time was running too fast, or in some way out of synch with itself.’²² This was a conscious, even antagonistic²³, demarcation, one that was most distinctly expressed in the observational and intuitive models of memory and time created by Proust, Freud and Bergson.

The late nineteenth century saw a different set of societal relations emerge. Marx and Engels’s visionary work, *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), encapsulated emancipatory aspirations and proposed a new future:

‘All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and relations with his kind.’²⁴

These sentiments are imbued with a conviction that change is immanent, that the old order must be replaced. 1848 was to be a year of unprecedented insurrection with uprisings all over Europe. However, these actions were all ultimately repressed, but these bloody defeats were to be a salutary lesson for future revolutionaries and in 1917 the Romanovs were deposed and the first Communist state was founded. This was a time of opportunity but also uncertainty. Marshall Berman writes that Marx and Engels’s words ‘resonate at once with self-discovery and self-mockery, with self-delight and self-doubt.’²⁵ A radical modern spirit, with a designated terrain was fermenting as Berman, quoting Nietzsche’s *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), iterates:

‘At times like these, “the individual dares to individuate himself.” On the other hand, this daring individual desperately “needs a set of laws of his own, needs his own skills and wiles for self-preservation, self-heightening, self-awakening, self-liberation.” The possibilities are at once glorious and ominous.’²⁶

Individuals were attuned to change and the city was becoming the symbol of modernity - a site to trace history’s movement, a place of seemingly irrepressible energy that tamed natural elements, social and formal invention - where modern man (and woman) was situated. Baudelaire, in *Crowds*

²¹ Radstone, S. (2000) ‘Working with Memory: an Introduction’, in: *Memory and Methodology*, Radstone, S. (ed.) Oxford: Berg, p.7

²² McQuire, S. (1998) *Visions of Modernity: Representation, Memory, Time and Space in the Age of Camera*, London: Sage Publications, p.119

²³ Ibid, p.121

²⁴ Marx, K. and Engels, F. (1992) *The Communist Manifesto*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.6

²⁵ Berman, M. (1988) *All That is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, London: Penguin books, p.23

²⁶ Ibid

(1869), observed, ‘It is not given to every man to take a bath of multitude; enjoying a crowd is an art; and only he can relish a debauch of vitality at the expense of the human species.’ His conurbation has a dynamic menace, an intoxicating and unnerving air and is populated by restlessness, driven, faithless individuals. This was also a time of rapidly developing technology, and the development of the film camera, by Louis Le Prince in 1888, enabled durational experience to be captured and reviewed for the first time. Benjamin believed such development occurred out of necessity, writing that ‘technology has subjected the human sensorium to a complex kind of training [and] There came a day when a new and urgent need for stimuli was met by the film.’²⁷ Kilbourn connects this innovation with memory’s intuitive orientation, writing that ‘the collapsing of History into personal, subjective memory, via the photographic image – an image that prompts the memory of another image, in an endless vista of *petite madeleines*.’²⁸ His allusion to Proust’s transformative encounter suggests the interjection of external stimuli, its unconscious passage and the connectedness of memory’s trajectory.

Modern times, new recollections

‘[If we were to] seek in our memories to ascertain what were the impressions that were destined to influence us to the end of our lives, the outcome is either nothing at all or a relatively small number of isolated recollections which are often of dubious or enigmatic importance.’ ‘Screen Memories’, Freud, 1899²⁹

Freud suggests that memories can have a seemingly arbitrary element, that significant and insignificant recollections can arrive unannounced and correspond with and/or confuse in equal measure, that any notion of an authentic, unchanging memory is problematic, he observes, ‘I feel surprised at forgetting something important; and I feel even more surprise, perhaps, at remembering something apparently indifferent.’³⁰ Freud’s screen memory (*deckerinnerung*) is a composite memory – where a later memory masks a repressed earlier experience – the former memory is recognized and it endeavours to defend the individual from the consequences of the latter. Kandel writes that, ‘for a memory to persist, the incoming information must be thoroughly processed. This is accomplished by attending to the information and associating it meaningfully

²⁷ Benjamin, W. (2007) ‘On Some Motifs in Baudelaire’, in: *Illuminations*, Arendt, H. (ed.), Zohn. H (trans.), New York: Schocken Books, p.175

²⁸ Kilbourn, R. J. A. (2012) *Cinema, Memory, Modernity: The Representation of Memory from Art Film to Transnational Cinema*, London: Routledge, p.28

²⁹ Freud, S. (1914) ‘Screen Memories’, in: *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, Brill, A. A. (trans.), London: T. Fisher Unwin, p.320

³⁰ Ibid

and systemically with knowledge already well established in memory.³¹ The unconscious, a place out of time, was where Freud believed that perception and memory came together; Derrida observes that ‘Memory [for Freud] is thus not a psychical property among others; it is the very essence of the psyche.’³² This prioritises personal experience, locating memory in the present rather than distant past, making it the stuff of personal understanding rather than that of History. This also indicates the ‘crucial role of memory in the structure of the individual psyche’,³³ how identity is formed (and found) from conscious (ego derived) and unconscious drives. The search for identity, personal knowledge, memory, is perceived as being like a ‘labyrinth’ in which ‘protagonist must journey as in the katabases’³⁴ Freud, in ‘A Note upon the “Mystic Writing Pad”’ (1925) uses a child’s toy as a material metaphor to explore memory’s method:

‘If we imagine one hand writing upon the surface of the Mystic Writing Pad while another periodically raises its covering sheet from the wax slab, we shall have a concrete representation of the way in which I tried to picture the functioning of the perceptual apparatus of our mind.’³⁵

His description of the Mystic Writing Pad suggests that memory is like a palimpsest, that traces of preceding memories always remain, marking the unconscious, impervious to time. This recalls the classical art of memory, an orator’s tool, in which the first act was to fix memories on to a series of loci (places), which ‘are like wax tablets which remain when what is written on them has been effaced and they are ready to be written on again.’³⁶ This perception also resonates with Proust’s memorious narratives; his testimony to memory’s enveloping power is his seven volume magnum opus, *À la recherche du temps perdu* (*In Search of Lost Time*), which was originally published between 1913 and 1927. In the first volume, *Du Côté de Chez Swann* (*Swann’s Way*), he describes a fateful, now totemic, occurrence:

I raised to my lips a spoonful of tea in which I had soaked a morsel of the cake. No sooner had the warm liquid mixed with the crumbs touched my palate than a shiver ran through me and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary thing that was happening to me.

Undoubtedly what is thus palpitating in the depths of my being must be the image, the visual memory which, being linked to that taste, is trying to follow it into my conscious mind. But its struggles are too far off, too confused and chaotic; scarcely can I perceive the neutral glow into which the elusive whirling medley of stirred-up

³¹ Kandel, E. R. (2006) *In Search of Memory: The Emergence of a New Science of Mind*, New York/London: W. W. Norton & Company, p.210

³² Derrida, J. (1972) ‘Freud and the Scene of Writing’, *Yale French Studies*, 48, p.77-8

³³ Landsberg, A. (2004) *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, New York: Columbia University Press, p.15

³⁴ ‘Greek for “a going down, a descent”, refers to an underworld journey undertaken by a hero in quest of special knowledge.’ *Ibid*, p.29

³⁵ Freud, S (1925) ‘A Note upon the “Mystic Writing Pad”’, *General Psychological Theory*, London: Simon & Schuster, p.212

³⁶ *Ibid*, p.23

colours is fused, and I cannot distinguish its form, cannot invite it, as the one possible interpreter, to translate for me the evidence of its contemporary, its inseparable paramour, the taste, cannot ask it to inform me what special circumstance is in question, from what period in my past life.³⁷

The madeleine became a symbol (for memory); a means to re-encounter what has been and make it present once again. In ‘Picturing Proust’ Benjamin observes that ‘an event remembered has no bounds, being simply a key to all that came before and all that came after it.’³⁸ Recognition is aided by familiarity, as previous knowledge influences understanding, drawing upon established schemas to aid this process, and that which is seemingly incongruous is filtered out. Proust communicated his dawning awareness in meditative prose; the rhythm of his words have their own memorial form, embedded in the desire not to forget, as Benjamin writes: ‘As everyone knows, Proust did not, in his work, describe a life as it had been but a life as the person who had lived it remembered that life.’³⁹ Proust’s practice was one of self-absorbed contemplation of (re)imagining life in textual detail, interpreting and interrogating his memory, reworking and refining his writing - his polymorphous sentences were only curtailed at the point of no return, the actual printing of the manuscript.

Taste may have been a catalyst, but it is the image that follows that demands further inspection - Benjamin writes that ‘most of the memories we seek come to us as visual images. And even the things that float up freely from *mémoire involontaire* [which is ‘much closer to forgetting than what is usually referred to as memory’⁴⁰] are largely isolated visual images – as well as being somewhat mysteriously present.’⁴¹ This is contrasted with *mémoire volontaire*, ‘the memory of the intellect.’⁴² As with Freud’s conception of the unconscious, that which settles upon us unexpectedly and is unbound by time and exists ‘beyond the reach of the intellect, but can enter consciousness as a result of a contingent sensuous association’,⁴³ is prized and is the key to accessing all that cannot be forgotten.

Landsberg, considering Freud’s ‘Screen Memories’, emphasises the developmental importance and collative affect of memory and images, writing that ‘Freud seemed to recognize that this

³⁷ Proust, M. (1981) *In Search of Lost Time: Volume 1, Swann's Way*, Moncrieff, S. C. K. and Kilmartin, T. (trans.), London: Everyman’s Library, p.45-7

³⁸ Benjamin, W. (2008) ‘Picturing Proust’, in: *One Way-Street and Other Writings*, Underwood, J. A. (trans.), London: Penguin Books, p.128

³⁹ Ibid, p.303

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 127

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 141

⁴² Kilbourn, R. J. A. (2012) *Cinema, Memory, Modernity: The Representation of Memory from Art Film to Transnational Cinema*, London: Routledge, p.215

⁴³ Ibid

problem arises from the fact that memories are mediated through representations.⁴⁴ Sight has always been entwined with memory, as Bertrand Russell contended, in *Analysis of Mind* (1921), ‘memory demands images’.⁴⁵ The philosophical privileging of images seems to have had its origins with Aristotle: ‘there is something in us like a picture or impression’.⁴⁶ This is further emphasised by Frances Yates, who writes, ‘Simonides’ invention of the art of memory rested not only on his discovery of the importance of order of memory, but also on the discovery that the sense of sight is the strongest of all senses.⁴⁷ The linking of memory and image is based on an empirical truth, that when we see an image we instinctively understand it has discernible pastness, as it represents a time before our encounter.

Memory is like cinema

For Proust past and present flowed freely through time and his insights, in part, would seem to be indebted to Bergson, whose lectures on intuitive philosophy he attended at the Sorbonne. Bergson was the first philosopher to appraise film and the mechanical reproduction of images; he elucidated that photography stops time and cinema shows it.⁴⁸ In *Creative Evolution* (1907) he sought to consider film’s effect and how it might be a metaphor for memory; he saw an analogy between the process of thought and film, how cutting from one shot to the next in some ways aped our comprehension of reality, as he observed in a 1914 interview:

‘I realised it [cinema] could suggest new things to a philosopher. It might be able to assist in the synthesis of memory, or even the thinking process. If the circumference [of a circle] is composed of a series of points, memory is, like the cinema, composed of a series of images. Immobile, it is in a neutral state; in movement, it is life itself.’⁴⁹

Actuating a different, new, philosophical axis, which Russell perceived as ‘the revolt of the modern man of action against the authority of Greece’,⁵⁰ was indicative of Bergson’s ambition, and in surveying his metaphysical influence (in conjunction with Freud’s psychological insight) John Ward writes: ‘Rejection of intellect in favour of life, which is

⁴⁴ Landsberg, A. (2004) *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, New York: Columbia University Press, p.15

⁴⁵ Cited in: Warnock, M. (1987) *Memory*, London: Faber & Faber, p.20-21

⁴⁶ Ibid, p.15

⁴⁷ Yates, A. F. (1992) *The Art of Memory*, London: Pimlico, p.19

⁴⁸ Kilbourn, R. J. A. (2012) *Cinema, Memory, Modernity: The Representation of Memory from Art Film to Transnational Cinema*, London: Routledge, p.29

⁴⁹ Michel, G. ‘Henri Bergson Nous Parle Au Cinema’, *Le journal*, 20.02.14, p.7, in: Douglas, P. ‘Bergson and Cinema: Friends or Foes?’ in: (1999) *The New Bergson*, Mullarkey, J. (ed.), Manchester: Manchester University Press, p.220

⁵⁰ Russell, B. ‘The Philosophy Of Bergson’ in: *Logical and Philosophical Papers 1909-13*, Slater, J. G. (ed.), (1992): London/ New York: Routledge, p.320

characterised by its continuity and its susceptibility to intuitive understanding, is neatly compatible with the belief that through dreams, drugs or automatic response we can arrive at some deeper awareness of ourselves.⁵¹ Writing in the era after Méliès and the Lumière brothers' initial cinematic presentations, Bergson was concerned with film's apparatus, rather than its aesthetics and technique. He considered the film camera, because of its inherently mechanistic nature, unable to truly represent human perception: 'The application of cinematographical method therefore leads to a perpetual recommencement, during which the mind, never able to satisfy itself and never finding where to rest persuades itself, no doubt, that it imitates by its instability the very movement of the real.'⁵² In 'Bergson and Cinema: Friends or Foes?' Paul Douglas observes that for Bergson cinema may be 'flawed in its technological heart, film may never represent the indeterminacy of immediate experience. Nonetheless, it can evoke the mechanisms of memory.'⁵³ Bergson's interest in filmic temporality reflects what Mary-Ann Doane has described as 'the emergence of cinematic time'.⁵⁴ Mulvey contends that there are 'three different kinds of cinematic time: the past of registration, the fictional time of the story, and the present, or remembered, time of viewing'.⁵⁵ Film has a controllable temporal and spatial facility, and when a film cuts into continuous durational time a radical displacement occurs, and all film plays with, in one way or another, this division.

Bergson believed that time could not be replicated, that no two moments are identical, and the present will always be inscribed with the memorial residue of the past, a notion that could describe the viewing of film. He perceived of two forms of time, a linear time of mechanical motion and intellect, and a heterogeneous time that is intuitive and continuous. For him 'duration means invention, the creation of forms, the continual elaboration of the absolutely new',⁵⁶ and cinema was seen as the perfect means to investigate this understanding. He saw the workings of memory in the indivisible, unstoppable nature of time, a coming together of past and present, whilst looking towards the future and he hypothesised that intuition enabled an understanding of reality and its mobility, while intellect bestowed the pragmatic ability to grasp this situation.

⁵¹ Ward, J. (1968) *Alain Resnais, or the Theme of Time*, London: Secker & Warburg, p.117

⁵² Bergson, H. (1911) *Creative Evolution*, Mitchell, A. (trans.) London: Macmillan, p.324

⁵³ Douglas, P. (1999) 'Bergson and Cinema: Friends or ?' in: Mullarkey, J. (ed.) *The New Bergson*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, p.220

⁵⁴ Doane, M A. (2002) *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, The Archive*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press

⁵⁵ Mulvey, L. (2006) *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image*, London: Reaktion Books, p.24-25

⁵⁶ Bergson, H. (1911) *Creative Evolution*, Mitchell, A. (trans.) London: Macmillan, p.11

Freud asserted that ‘time and memory are incompatible’⁵⁷ because consciousness is part of, and in, time, whereas memory is outside time. With this regard Doane writes that ‘Memory is representation itself; time is inconceivability. Time is antithetical to the notions of storage and retention of traces.’⁵⁸ She comments that this was a ‘rare point of contact between Bergson and Freud.’⁵⁹ Freud believed that time, leaving no trace, could not be represented, and his interest was in ‘that aspect of time which is not accessible to ordinary vision.’⁶⁰ This undertaking was the preoccupation of Étienne-Jules Marey, an early pioneer of cinema, who strove to reveal the reality of actual movement through his chronophotograph - the photography of time.



Fig. 3 *Arab Horse Gallop* (1887)

Benjamin writes that only ‘photography, with its aids (slow-motion sequences, close-ups), will tell him [the spectator, how people really are]. Only photography can show him the optical unconscious, just as it is only through psychoanalysis that he learns of the compulsive unconscious.’⁶¹ The camera allowed that which previously went unnoticed to be revealed. This facility, Richard Allen writes, also ‘redeems aspects of shared experience and invests it with new inter-subjective experience’,⁶² as the artwork takes on communal possibility. However, Benjamin cautioned, mechanical reproduction also ‘reduces the scope of the play of the imagination’⁶³ - like

⁵⁷ Doane, M A. (2002) *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, The Archive*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, p.45

⁵⁸ Ibid

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ Ibid, p.46

⁶¹ Benjamin, W. (2008) ‘Brief History of Photography’ in: *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, Underwood, J. A. (trans.) London: Penguin Books, p.176

⁶² Allen, R. W. (1987) ‘The Aesthetic Experience of Modernity: Benjamin, Adorno and Contemporary Film Theory’, *New German Critique*, no.40, Winter, p.233

⁶³ Benjamin, W. (2007) ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’, in: *Illuminations*, Arendt, H. (ed.), Zohn. H (trans.), New York: Schocken, p.186

Proust he gave importance to *mémoire involontaire* and *mémoire volontaire*, privileging the former and placing photography and film in the less authentic realm of the latter. Landsberg observes whilst Benjamin was composing his *Arcades Project*, his last and incomplete work, ‘the opposition between *mémoire volontaire* and *mémoire involontaire*’⁶⁴ lost their original application. Located in the Paris arcades, once the most modern of urban apparitions, and conceived as a study, the consolation of place, history and the individual, ‘an account of memory in which memory is lodged not in the individual body as either *mémoire volontaire* or *mémoire involontaire* but in configurations of material objects.’⁶⁵ This new culture invoked mediated memories and that which can be expressly identified as authentic diminished. In this conception he foresaw the commodification of experience and new forms of mass identification.

In 1916, the year of D. W. Griffith’s *Intolerance*, Hugo Münsterberg published *The Film: a Psychological study: the Silent Photoplay*. His consideration of film’s effect would seem to be influenced by Bergson’s observations:

‘The motion which he sees [the spectator] appears to be a true motion, and yet is created by his own mind. The afterimages of the successive picture are not sufficient to produce a substitute for the continuous outer stimulation; the essential condition is rather the inner mental activity which unites the separate phases in the idea of connected action.’⁶⁶

Münsterberg, like Bergson, knew cinema to be illusion, which has the affect of reality. He believed the film spectator was responsible for bringing its succession of images together and making sense of them. When describing memory Münsterberg offers a conception similar to Bergson’s conjecture. He contends that ‘Memory looks towards the past, expectation and imagination toward the future.’⁶⁷ For Bergson there are two types of memory, ‘image-memory’, habitual and representational, and ‘pure memory’ - Mullarkey writes that ‘pure memory is not a mental duplicate referring to the historical past, rather, the past really persists into the present and this survival actually manifests itself in our recollections!’⁶⁸ Bergson believed that the past may seem to overwhelm the present, with only the most pressing ‘snapshots’ managing to insert themselves into our memory, and that cinematographical technology provided a means to describe this time slice. Our memories may resonate, like chimes at midnight, but the actuality of what we have experienced soon dissipates, and memory finds its own purpose. Ward writes that ‘pure memory which is “perfect from the onset” alone has aesthetic value because it forms the

⁶⁴ Landsberg, A. (2004) *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, New York: Columbia University Press, p.17

⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶ Münsterberg, H. (1970) *The Film: a Psychological study: the Silent Photoplay in 1916*, New York: Dover Publications, p.30

⁶⁷ Ibid, p.44

⁶⁸ Mullarkey, J. (1999) *Bergson and Philosophy*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, p.52

raw material of art.⁶⁹ This suggests that time is overwhelming and only art can make sense of its passage (and our consciousness); memory is more than a preserving agent, it is also a creative catalyst.

Münsterberg, unlike Bergson, was interested in film's content and technique and through it he found a different metaphorical application, one in which the cutting between different temporal plains, and narrative strands, informs an understanding of memory and its place in time:

‘Memory breaks into present events by bringing up pictures of the past: the photoplay is doing this by its frequent cut-backs, when pictures of events long past flit between those of the present. The imagination anticipates the future or overcomes reality by fancies and dreams; the photoplay is doing all this more richly than any chance imagination would succeed in doing.’⁷⁰

This linkage was to become influential, as Maureen Turim's observation emphasises, ‘Memory, in its psychoanalytic and philosophical dimensions, is one of the concepts inscribed in flashbacks.’⁷¹ *Intolerance*'s photoplay indicated film's narrative and temporal complexity, how it could describe the world in a unique fashion, and in stressing ‘the active mental process of phenomenon’, Monaco writes, ‘Münsterberg established a vital basis for theories of film as an active process.’⁷² His sense of film's material disposition, the communing between shots, the memories that they invoke, describes sentient inference, all that potential exists in, and in-between, times, film's manifest possibility.

Bergson saw the advent of cinema and he lived to witness its development. *Citizen Kane* (Welles, 1941) was released in the year of his death, but he never recanted his fundamental criticism, that film's technological reliance made it unable to truly represent experience. For Bergson, cinema was but one of the many metaphors he utilised to fathom space and time. His method, according to Russell, may have been ‘mere play on words’,⁷³ an ‘imaginative picture of the world, regarded as a poetic effort... in the main not capable of either proof or disproof’ and which ‘always exalts the sense of sight at the expense of the other senses’,⁷⁴ but it is arguably Bergson’s turn of metaphorical phrase, and other-worldly countenance that continues to make his theories approachable and productive. Gaston Bachelard observes that ‘in the last analysis, his images are

⁶⁹ Ward, J. (1968) *Alain Resnais, or the Theme of Time*, London: Secker & Warburg, p.14

⁷⁰ Münsterberg, H. (1970) *The Film: a Psychological study: the Silent Photoplay in 1916*, New York: Dover Publications, p.74

⁷¹ Turim, M. (1989) *Flashbacks in Film: Memory and History*, New York and London: Routledge, p.2

⁷² Monaco, J. (1981) *How to Read a Film: The Art, Technology, History, and Theory of Film and Media*, revised ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.315

⁷³ Russell, B. ‘The Philosophy Of Bergson’ in: (1992) *Logical and Philosophical Papers 1909-13*, Slater, J. G. (ed.), London/New York: Routledge, p.333

⁷⁴ Ibid, p.336

rare, it is as though, for him, imagination were entirely metaphorical.⁷⁵ Even though Russell found scant reward in Bergson's writings, he became curious enough to visit the cinema for the first time, and later wrote to his lover, Lady Ottoline Morrell, 'At last we went out to a cinematograph to see if it bore out Bergson's philosophy, which it did.'⁷⁶



Fig. 4 *Citizen Kane* (1941)

In his consideration of cinema Bergson chose to concentrate on its mechanised deliverance. He saw its technological bias as a fundamental hindrance to its ability to communicate thought, so imbued as it was with illusionistic manipulation. The rapidity of edits has increased over time, with shots being afforded less duration, but this, according to Bergson, is of little consequence, as he was interested in the metaphorical application of film's ability to specify duration, for he believed, 'Time is an invention or it is nothing at all.'⁷⁷ His confrontation of new technology and its claims of visionary emancipation continue to have interest as his thesis challenged the material conceit of moving images (and the illusion of movement that they create) and drew attention to the discrepancy between our perception and the actuality of what we encounter.

In distinct and connected ways, Proust, Freud and Bergson elucidated memory's procedure in a way that foreshadowed later neuro-scientific approaches, as Kandel observes, 'idea that different aspects of visual perception might be handled in separate areas of the brain was predicted by

⁷⁵ Balchelard, G. (2014) *The Poetics of Space*, Jolas, M. (trans.), London: Penguin Books, p.96

⁷⁶ Russell, B. 'The Philosophy Of Bergson' in: (1992) *Logical and Philosophical Papers 1909-13*, Slater, J. G. (ed.), London/New York: Routledge, p.318

⁷⁷ Bergson, H. (1911) *Creative Evolution*, Mitchell, A. (trans.) London: Macmillan, p.361

Freud at the end of the nineteenth century.⁷⁸ Adorno, with regard to Proust, had also acknowledged this insight, stating that his work ‘is a single effort to express necessary and compelling perceptions about men and their social relations which science can simply not match.’⁷⁹ The contemporary efforts to map memory’s composition indicates instinctive reasoning’s profound realisation, an understanding that preceded the molecular evidence, as Proust and Freud prized unconscious memories, perceiving them to hold more revelatory importance, personal truth.⁸⁰ This perception was to be taken on by Benjamin, and others, in the developing century. The next chapter will consider this conceptual progression, the need to remember and represent a time of great change and bloodshed, the challenges in formulating an appropriate response to History.

⁷⁸ Kandel, E. R. (2006) *In Search of Memory: The Emergence of a New Science of Mind*, New York/London: W. W. Norton & Company, p.303

⁷⁹ Adorno, T. W. (1984) ‘The Essay as Form’, Hullot-Kentor, B. and Will, F. (trans.), in: *New German Critique*, No.32, Spring – Summer, p.156

⁸⁰ It is worth noting that a number of films have inspired and influenced contemporary investigations. In 2013 American scientist Steve Ramirez succeeded in planting a false memory in a mouse’s brain⁸⁰ (‘Creating a False Memory in the Hippocampus’, *Science*, 26.07.2013, Vol. 341 no. 6144, p. 387-391) to further understand what is known about our memory’s capacities, and inspiration for his experiment was derived from cinema: he stated that ‘Hollywood has asked these questions before; here’s a lab that studies memory. Maybe I can get better insight into these movies [he references *Total Recall* (Verhoeven, 1990) and *Inception* (Nolan, 2010), amongst others, films that actively suggest more than one time frame] and at the same time get some fundamental insight into how memory works.’ Beck, T. (2013) ‘Inception-Style Memory Experiment Performed On Mice Was Inspired By The Movie ‘Total Recall’’, *Fast Company labs*, 07.08.2013, [online] available at: <http://www.fastcolabs.com/3015419/inception-style-memory-experiment-performed-on-mice-was-inspired-by-the-movie-total-recall> [accessed 15 July 2014]

II. AGAINST HISTORY'S GRAIN: A NEW CENTURY AND THE NEED TO REMEMBER

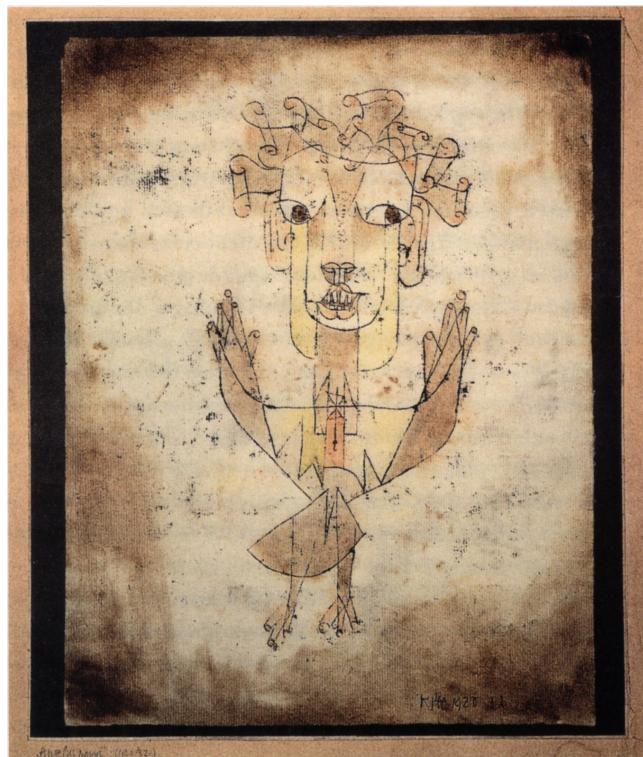


Fig. 5 *Angelus Novus* (1920)

As the twentieth century advanced radicalism and tragedy seemed to be its twin imperatives. Benjamin, considering history, envisaged an angel, after the Paul Klee drawing *Angelus Novus*, who would ‘awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed.’¹ This entity is being propelled into the future by a storm that Benjamin terms ‘progress.’ These winds make no distinction, some would wish to intervene, but the storm ‘blowing from Paradise’² is beyond the angel’s powers, and the twentieth century’s trajectory reinforces this sense of fatalistic burden.

This chapter will consider Benjamin’s historical materialist vision, its relation to subjective histories, the trauma of the World Wars, and, for film, World War II particularly, the need to remember seemingly impossible actions and find the means to articulate them. A number of post-war films were to take on these memories and new critical practices were to offer a way into

¹ Benjamin, W. (2003) ‘On the Concept of History’, in: *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 4, 1938-40*, Eiland, H. and Jennings, M. W. (ed.), Jephcott, E. and others (trans.), Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, p.392

² Ibid

this inconceivable subject. Film's creative and conceptual response to time and its infractions will be considered and how cinema became an essential expression of remembrance, with films such as *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (Resnais, 1959), *Le Chagrin et La Pitié* (*The Sorrow and the Pity*, Ophuls, 1969), *Tout va bien* (Dziga Vertov Group, 1972), *Shoah* (Lanzmann, 1985), indicating the concerns of their own eras and aspiring, in their own ways, to make, and be part of, History.

Traditionally history was considered to be impersonal, the story of public events 'that have occurred outside the archive of personal experiences'³; a belief that 'constructs rather than reveals.'⁴ In considering History's development, how it was recorded and understood, and its twentieth century reformulation, it becomes apparent that film was, in some way, party to this subjective review. This evident re-imagining of History, its representation on film, has been derided, seen, as Michael Chopra-Gant writes, 'to present a simplified and hyperbolic version of the past'⁵ but can film actually aid our understanding of the past, offering another film oriented history?

Film's facility for verisimilitude affords it seemingly historical validity, in its fictional and non-fictional forms, which makes even dramas appear to be laden with documentary substance: as Michael Witt observes, all films 'serve to haphazardly document human attitudes, cultures, customs, behaviour, clothing, and so on, thereby providing the historian with an incomparably rich audiovisual archive of the world.'⁶ As time passes a film's history, and the history of its time, influence its reading. Memories of other times are often given credence by moving image documentation and/or dramatization, as they communicate an idea of what has been with believable authority.

New concepts of history and memory

The nineteenth century's memory crisis had partly occurred due to a mismatch between technological developments, societal changes and a historical narrative, which was perceived as being independent from such matters - Benjamin characterised this situation thus: history 'displays its Scotland Yard badge', a procedural tendency 'that showed things "as they really

³ Kilbourn, R. J. A. (2012) *Cinema, Memory, Modernity: The Representation of Memory from Art Film to Transnational Cinema*, London: Routledge, p.225

⁴ Chopra-Gant, M. (2008) *Cinema and History: The Telling of Stories*, London: Wallflower, p.54

⁵ Ibid, p.87

⁶ Witt, M. (2013) *Jean-Luc Godard, Cinema Historian*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p.23

were" was the strongest narcotic of the century.⁷ Carolyn Steedman suggests that that by the nineteenth century History had 'usurped the functions of memory', and that it 'might be understood as just one more technology of memory, one of a set of techniques developed [by the academy] in order that societies might remember.'⁸ This debilitating acceptance of history's inevitability often leads to the seeking of solace in the past, but as E. H. Carr cautions this is 'a symptom of loss of faith and interest in the present or future.'⁹ This foregrounds memory's subjective nature, the inference that it influences any reading, that history's record is the product of interpretation.¹⁰

Marx's work is ingrained with a historical understanding that is founded in economic interpretation, an analysis of society (and class struggle) that suggests the possibility of a different, radiant future. Benjamin, in 'On the Concept of History', writes that, 'Thinking involves not only the movement of thoughts, but their arrest as well. Where thinking suddenly comes to a stop in a constellation saturated with tensions, it gives that constellation a shock, by which thinking is crystallized as a monad.'¹¹ He believed history must be challenged, there was an implicit desire to forsake that which has passed for History, the march of victors, and to establish a new causal agency that declares 'knowledge within the historical moment is always knowledge of the moment. In drawing itself together in that moment – in the dialectical image – the past becomes part of humanity's involuntary memory.'¹² This has a redeeming purpose that is bound up in an emancipatory progress, and the arbiter of this, the historical materialist, must uncover that history which is mostly hidden. It also suggests that memory is changeable, that it can be shaped by contextual parameters that service external imperatives. As the twentieth century progressed a new understanding – in which history was seen as a 'social process' formed of individuals¹³ – became accepted.

History, Foucault offers, is the 'most erudite, the most aware, the most conscious, and possibly the most cluttered area of our memory; but it is equally the depths from which all beings emerge

⁷ Benjamin, W. (1999) *The Arcades Project*, Eiland, H. and McLaughlin, K. (trans.), Cambridge, Massachusetts/London: Harvard University press, p.463

⁸ Steedman, C. (2001) *Dust*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, p.66

⁹ Carr, E. H. (1961) *What is History*, 2nd ed., London: Penguin Books, p.25

¹⁰ Ibid, p.40

¹¹ Benjamin, W. (2003) 'On the Concept of History' in: *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 4, 1938-40*, Eiland, H. and Jennings, M. W. (ed.), Jephcott, E. and others (trans.), Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, p.396

¹² Benjamin, W. (1999) *The Arcades Project*, Eiland, H. and McLaughlin, K. (trans.), Cambridge, Massachusetts/London: Harvard University press, p.403

¹³ Carr, E. H. (1961) *What is History?*, 2nd ed., London: Penguin Books, p.55

into their precarious, glittering existence.¹⁴ Steedman writes that this interpretation suggests that History ‘has provided a way of thinking about what is in that particular place’ - memory.¹⁵ And to interrogate it we should not be ‘concerned with History as *stuff*’ its content, but focus on its ‘process, as ideation, imaging and remembering.’¹⁶ This is a place populated by people and their ideas and thoughts. For Benjamin there can be no homogeneous universality, no cultural embrace with history’s officiators, because the ‘historical materialist keeps his distance from all of this. He has to brush against the grain.’¹⁷ Through his multifarious understanding he developed a critical shift in cultural interest, as he sought ‘historical significance in “the rags, the trash” of commodity culture’, and emphasised the ‘transitory and shifting meanings of historical phenomena.’¹⁸ He was fascinated with contemporary being, the ephemera of life, its mercantile interactions, its patterns and resonances, the places flâneurs haunt and Baudelaire once dwelt: ‘what intoxication it is in the city of opportunity, in this network of good fortune, to multiply oneself, to make oneself ubiquitous and be on the lookout for the approach of lady luck at any one of ten different street corners.’¹⁹ This place, a truly modern manifestation, enabled the locating and reflective pursuit of his social and cultural preoccupations.

Benjamin’s desire was to see revolutionary change and for the arts to contribute to this, as he writes, ‘history decays into images, not into stories’;²⁰ the dialectical image was to be a provocation, an incendiary means of deliverance and delivery of history. Film, for Benjamin, writes Allen, ‘represents the “real” as the synthetic traces of fragmented and fragmentary perceptions of modern urban perception.’²¹ Benjamin, in ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’, compares the cameraman to a surgeon, suggesting ‘Magician and surgeon compare to painter and cameraman. The painter maintains in his work a natural distance from reality, the cameraman penetrates deeply into its web.’²² This movement affords a gathering

¹⁴ Foucault, M. (1974) *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, London: Routledge, p.219

¹⁵ Steedman, C. (2001) *Dust*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, p.67

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ ‘Paralipomena to ‘On the Concept of History’ in: Benjamin, W. (1999) *The Arcades Project*, Eiland, H. and McLaughlin, K. (trans.), Cambridge, Massachusetts/London: Harvard University press, p.407

¹⁸ McQuire, S. (1998) *Visions of Modernity: Representation, Memory, Time and Space in the Age of Camera*, London: Sage Publications, p.177

¹⁹ Benjamin, W. (2005) ‘The Path to Success, in Thirteen Theses’, in: *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, 1927-1930*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, p.146

²⁰ Ibid, p.476

²¹ Allen, R. W. (1987) ‘The Aesthetic Experience of Modernity: Benjamin, Adorno and Contemporary Film Theory, *New German Critique*, no.40, Winter, p.234

²² Benjamin, W. (2007) ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’, in: *Illuminations*, Arendt, H. (ed.), Zohn. H (trans.), New York: Schocken, p.233

of knowledge à la Vertov's man with a movie camera, in which the camera becomes a scientific-like instrument for revealing truth. This social conception would see film as a revolutionary means to undo cultural bounds and emancipate the image, writing that 'for the first time in world history, mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual'.²³ This faculty stripped away a work's 'cult value',²⁴ and made it present, permitting the audience to take a more critical stance. Adorno observes how 'Benjamin did not elaborate on how deeply some of the categories he postulated for film - exhibition, test - are imbricated with the commodity character which his theory opposes.'²⁵ In this regard Adorno emphasised that 'There can be no aesthetics of cinema, not even a purely technological one, which would not include the sociology of the cinema';²⁶ and how this social inscription needs to be considered and understood otherwise film will always fail to deliver on its 'promise'²⁷ – that it tantalises but this is only ever a distraction, an illusion. For Adorno 'all truly modern art assumes the function of dialectical theory'²⁸ and his critique of film, first published in 1966, iterated one of the main concerns for critically engaged filmmakers, how should they situate the 'spectator as subject'?²⁹

Depicting the impossible

After the profound tragedy of Auschwitz Adorno asserted that it was no longer possible to write poems.³⁰ Radstone suggests that his dictum was not intended to be an embargo but work must counter its 'impossibility', that 'If the entire field of representation was contaminated by this event whose incommensurability precluded adequate representation, then art was the only – albeit the apparently impossible – hope'.³¹ History needs to be remembered, but how to represent that which is not representable?

²³ Ibid, p.224

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Adorno, T. W. (1981-82) 'Transparencies on Film', Levin, T, Y. (trans.), *New German Critique*, 24-5, Autumn/Winter, p.202

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Hansen, B. M. (1982) 'Introduction to Adorno', *New German Critique*, 24/25, Autumn/Winter, p.197

²⁹ Ibid, p.191

³⁰ Radstone, S. (ed.) (2000) *Memory and Methodology*, Oxford: Berg, p.5

³¹ Ibid, p. 6

This time was a time of ‘bruised’ memory, as Carol Mavor observes, its frequency being a blackened blue.³² *Hiroshima Mon amour* (1959) is one of her key references. Resnais’s first feature would ponder this (seemingly impossible) need to comprehend, tell history; it begins with a startling set of images - intimate, dark, ash covered, entwined male and female forms - and an exchange between its protagonists, which sets the film’s tone.



Il: You saw nothing in Hiroshima. Nothing.

Elle: I saw everything. Everything.

Fig. 6 *Hiroshima Mon amour* (1959)

In these words the imponderable inexplicability of being is voiced; what does it mean to see Hiroshima? The film’s protagonist, the woman from Nevers, who is in Hiroshima to make a film about peace, visits the rebuilt city’s Peace Memorial Museum, which is dedicated to the memory of 6 August 1945, but how can the horror ever be really known or shown? This is the film’s paradox, but it also indicates that some have seen, and cannot forget, their burden is to bear witness to all that which cannot really be known by others - questions are asked knowing there cannot be an answer; it is the posing of the question which is of paramount importance. The conscious depiction of temporal space may be an immemorial preserve, but the compulsion to do so is induced by a need to show what is now and what has been.

‘Do you know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember nothing?’ wrote T. S. Eliot in *The Wasteland* (1922). This last century sentiment expresses the desire to know, but the

³² Mavor, C. (2012) *Black and Blue: The Bruising Passion of Camera Lucida, La Jetée, Sans soleil, and Hiroshima mon amour*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, p.53-76, p.114-160

acknowledgement that real history (and its memory) is incomprehensible: Landsberg suggests there is a need to remember impossible occurrence because, ‘it is about finding ways to “burn in” memories so that they might become meaningful locally, so that they can become the grounds for political engagement in the present and the future.’³³ Film would offer a form of hitherto unknown memorial, consideration, with its distinct facility for depiction being a uniquely communicable, and emotive, semblance of experience. To return to Adorno: how can all that needs to be remembered be made known, what is its appropriate form and how is this vision communicated?

To write of memory and its filmic formulation and resonance it is necessary to establish a sense of context, an indication of some of the events, experiences that occurred and have a bearing, one way or another, on the films that occupy this study. The post-World War II, Cold War era was a time of opposing grand narratives, unresolved trauma, pressing fear and uncertainty. It was also a time when the old order saw its precessions diminish, power fade, and the political and cultural tide turn and ideas that once resided in the surety of empire and certified dominions were challenged; internal and external tensions were exacerbated as claims for independence and new freedoms were pressed with a resolute determination. This season of upheaval was also the occasion to try and quantify all that had been, find the means to represent it, consider what should constitute society and how its citizens could contribute to its social cohesion and economic stability. If poetry could not be written in this climate, if memory is impossible, how could this place be truly recognised, exposed? The need to know and process, in some way, present memories - so filled with guilt and pain - actually saw a cultural blossoming, with experiments in narrative, documentary and experimental filmmaking, that saw filmmakers endeavour to express thought, to use practice as a means to contemplate, analyse and agitate.

In the post-war films of Italian Neorealism and other works European society was seen to be in flux, between pre and post war generations. Rossellini’s war trilogy *Roma Città Aperta* (*Rome Open City*, 1945), *Paisà* (1946), *Germany, Year Zero* (1948) moved from the actuality of war to its effect, and indicated that something had fundamentally changed, that Europe needed to be rebuilt and also re-thought. This was a time of near and present memory, in which the horror and hardship of war, and its aftermath, had been replaced by the binary pull of geo-politics, and personal place and affect was being questioned as never before. In Antonioni’s *L’Avventura* (1960) a young woman disappears from an island in the Mediterranean. The film is a mystery without conclusion. Her lover and best friends search but their investigation does not offer any conclusive evidence and is but a temporary distraction from unfulfilled and isolated lives. In

³³ Landsberg, A. (2004) *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, New York: Columbia University Press, p.139

Bergman's *The Silence* (1963) two sisters are on a night train journeying home. They stop in a fictitious central European state, which is mobilizing for war, in the town of Timoka, where an incomprehensible language is spoken. The sisters try to make sense of their claustrophobic situation, but they seem unable to communicate, and the ties of family and nationality are seemingly destructive. The film's characterisation invokes all that has been and that which may happen, the memory of Europe's self-destruction, subsequent ideological partition and possible future conflict. At this time Europe appeared to be enjoying an economic recovery, but as the panicked run on the Rome stock exchange in Antonioni's *L'Eclisse* (*The Eclipse*, 1962) illustrates, the future is far from being assured and the memories of recession and political repression are never far away. The prevailing sensibility of these films is of a rootless searching, a profound uncertainty about the future, but they also show the active advancement of film's thinking form.

Many of the characters in these films enjoyed a new affluence but they lacked direction; they pursue sensual pleasure, but the depicted cold-war world is without sustaining spiritual belief and that which preoccupies the characters' lives does not satisfy them, they want something more, before they also disappear. The final scene of Rossellini's *Viaggio in Italia* (*Journey to Italy*, 1954) emphasises this listlessness. The film's protagonists, Katherine and Alex Joyce (Ingrid Bergman and George Sanders), a disconnected couple considering divorce, only rediscover their love when they become caught up in a religious procession. Its ritualistic veneration, an echo of the past, shocks the couple out of their stupor allowing instinct and memory to override self-regard, as if they are trying to recover some forgotten promise, a sense of belief, which is now absent.



Fig. 7 *Journey to Italy* (1954)

There is a widely held belief that ‘the sense of personal identity that each of us has is a sense of continuity through time’,³⁴ suggests Mary Warnock, and that a ‘person and “his” [or ‘her’] past are one and the same’³⁵ - how is this past made known and what is its purpose? Steedman writes, that ‘the modern way of being in the modern world’ is ‘expressive of a fever to know’ the past³⁶ in which it ‘has become a place of succour and strength, a kind of home.’³⁷ This is largely a means of defining identity, but this ‘search for what is lost (in an individual past or a public historical past) alters it, as it goes along, so that every search becomes impossible.’³⁸ This may be understood, but there is still a desire to seek that, which might authenticate, in some way, our existence and confirm our place and belonging. This sense can be formed through personal memories and more expansive histories; it can also be sought through other sources. This narrative investigation is developed further in chapter IV, ‘Muriel, or the Time of a Return: About Film, Memory and Imagination.’

The post-war era may have been traumatized, numbed - again and again new inhumanity was perpetrated - but this did galvanize new thinking, forms of resistance, which found political, social and cultural form. This sensibility is evident in Resnais’ *Muriel, or The Time of Return* (1963), which eschews the usual filmic tells, that indicate changes in temporal location, and shows all time as a whole, without structural differentiation, as imagined by Bergson. His film would dissect time and topography, foregrounding the temporal effect on the personal and physical environment.



Fig. 8 *Muriel, or the Time of a Return* (1963)

³⁴ Warnock, M. (1987) *Memory*, London: Faber & Faber, p.75

³⁵ Ibid, P.63

³⁶ Steedman, C. (2001) *Dust*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, p.75

³⁷ Ibid, p.76

³⁸ Ibid, p.77

The formal experimentation and philosophical resonance that Resnais's first films advanced are sedimented in time, shards to be perused, indicating something of the past's relation to other pasts, for as Bergson observes, 'What I call "my present" has one foot in my past and another in my future.'³⁹ Resnais is not generally considered to be a political director, but *Muriel* advances a form of film imagination, which offers a myriad of resonances, which challenges the spectator to think about time, form and narrative experience. He was interested in personal histories, the depiction of the intricacy and mystery of relationships, place and history, what Marguerite Duras, who wrote *Hiroshima mon amour*, referred to as 'false documentary'.⁴⁰ In the mid-century to consider history was to perceive the effect of war. France may have found some peace, but the marks of conflict were inescapable and all works that sought to depict the contemporary realm had an implicit or explicit political sensibility as they were scarred by contact and memory.

Documentary and the need to remember (all that has Just past)

The relevance of memory directly relates to the age of its inception, and times and places of discernible trauma necessitate a more pressing need to remember, to better understand what has occurred, but this is a perilous preoccupation, for the reason and means are always contestable. Carr observes that 'before he [the historian] begins to write history, he is the product of history',⁴¹ a sentiment that can be applied to other adjudicators of the past; *Night and Fog* (Resnais, 1959) and *Shoah* (Lanzmann, 1985), both reflexive documentaries that are direct reflections and representations of the Nazi programme of racial extermination, are products of different ages and this perspective, affected by historical proximity to the subject, societal and cultural discernment and methodological developments indicate that the need to remember may have some constancy but all else changes with time. Regarding *Night and Fog* McQuire writes that it 'it respects history's demand to show "what really happened" while acknowledging the impossibility of ever really showing what happened'.⁴² Concerning the Holocaust, Jean Baudrillard writes 'forgetting extermination is part of extermination, because it is also the extermination of memory, of history',⁴³ and the production of this 'artificial memory' does not provoke real regret, only its simulacrum.

³⁹ Bergson, H. (2004) *Matter and Memory*, Paul, N. M. and Scott Palmer, W. (trans.), New York: Dover Publications, p.194

⁴⁰ Cited in: Monaco, J. (1978) *Alain Resnais: The Role of Imagination*, London: Secker & Warburg, p.35

⁴¹ Carr, E. H. (1961) *What is History?*, 2nd ed., London: Penguin Books, p.40

⁴² McQuire, S. (1998) *Visions of Modernity: Representation, Memory, Time and Space in the Age of Camera*, London: Sage Publications, p.155

⁴³ Baudrillard, J. (2006) *Simulacra and Simulation*, Glaser, S. F. (trans.), Michigan: University of Michigan Press, p.49

Both Resnais and Lanzmann's films, in distinct ways, seek to make the past memorable, still relevant and contemporaneous once again, for as Ward states: 'Auschwitz did not end in 1945: it exists in all we are.'⁴⁴ David Rodowick states, 'the aesthetics and the ethics of film are closely linked to historical powers of documenting',⁴⁵ in that when a subject is filmed the process aids and abets the forming of History. Allen writes, regarding the importance of historical conceptuality, that 'the task of a historically informed film theory is to formulate the way in which individual subjectivity is articulated with "trans-individual" subjectivity over time'.⁴⁶ These films do more than invoke the past; they make History present through reflective film practice and act as agents for active preservation, real encounters. 'History does not exist until it is created',⁴⁷ writes Rosenstone, and it is continually being rewritten in this act of coming into being, and films can recreate the past in a way that is not possible in any other medium.



'A frontal look at horror.' Claude Lanzmann⁴⁸

Fig. 9 *Shoah* (1985)

⁴⁴ Ward, J. (1968) *Alain Resnais, or the Theme of Time*, London: Secker & Warburg, p.18

⁴⁵ Rodowick, D. N. (2007) *The Virtual Life of Film*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, p.74

⁴⁶ Allen, R. W. (1987) 'The Aesthetic Experience of Modernity: Benjamin, Adorno and Contemporary Film Theory, *New German Critique*, no.40, Winter, p.240

⁴⁷ Rosenstone, A. R. (1995) *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to our Idea of History*, Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, England: Harvard University Press, p.43

⁴⁸ Cited in: LaCapra, D. (1998) *History and Memory After Auschwitz*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, p.101

History's remembrance correlates with society, as Tom Conley, with reference to Marc Augé and his memories of War World II, writes, there is an implied 'duty to remember',⁴⁹ not just for Augé but his generation, that the occupation of France cannot be forgotten and it should be actively remembered, lest we forget its compromises and entanglements. But, when the past is encountered, it is never what it once was and memories fall 'into partially historical, partially personal forms of memory'.⁵⁰ Marcel Ophuls' *The Sorrow and the Pity* (1968) centres on the wartime inhabitants of Vichy-controlled Clermont-Ferrand - it shows fascist and opportunistic collaborators, resistance fighters of various allegiances, and all manner of other citizens - emphasising that history resists simple narratives and that memory is partial, rarely unaffected by the passage of time and is re-cast to suit the prevailing ethos. Its scope challenged the established Free French legend, a complex, often conflicting, and involved account that exposed self-serving revisionism, but this reality was problematic for those invested in the myth and as a result the film was subject to state censorship.

Bill Nichols, in *Representing Reality*, writes 'Documentary offers access to a shared, historical construct. Instead of *a* world, we are offered access to *the* world'.⁵¹ But which world and how is it offered? In the introduction to *Imagining Reality* Kevin Macdonald and Mark Cousins write that John Grierson 'has a lot to answer for' in defining the only documentary films worth making as 'utilitarian, pedagogic and impersonal'.⁵² But as Stella Bruzzi points out, Grierson's understanding was not inflexible, describing documentary with reference to Robert Flaherty's films as 'the creative treatment of actuality'.⁵³ This telling phrase, which was also iterated by Maya Deren to different ends,⁵⁴ indicates the inherent contradictions within the form - reality is manipulated through technical imposition, and the results are made manifest through critical and ideological exposition. In this context actuality is bound up with notions of authenticity. In Grierson's model, as invoked by Macdonald and Cousins, the documentary film poses and responds to questions, for instance 'what was Vichy controlled Clermont-Ferrand like?' and the resulting investigations form the film.

⁴⁹ Augé, M. (2007) *Casablanca: Movies and Memory*, Conley, T. (trans.), Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, p.87

⁵⁰ Ibid, p.88

⁵¹ Nichols, B. (1991) *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*, Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, p.109

⁵² Macdonald, K. and Cousins, M. (ed.) (1996) *Imagining Reality: The Faber Book of Documentary*, London: Faber & Faber, p.xi

⁵³ Bruzzi, S. (2000) *New Documentary: A Critical Introduction*, London and New York: Routledge, p.5

⁵⁴ Deren, M. (1985) 'Cinematography: The Creative Use of Reality', in: *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, 3rd ed., Mast, G. Cohen, M. (ed.), Oxford: Oxford University Press

Documentaries are not ‘a direct reflection of the past’,⁵⁵ and as Nichols emphasises, ‘the notion of any privileged access to reality that exists “out there”, beyond us, is an ideological effect.’⁵⁶ Material is structured in a manner that creates its own meanings and history is appraised from this assemblage, arranged with linear adherence, and the form’s own precedents. The value assigned to authenticity is founded in the interrogation of History and the history of film (which every film contributes to) and in the way that the viewer is provoked to reflect on what has been seen, heard, Rosenstone suggests the best historical films will:

1. Show not just what happened in the past but how what happens means to us.
2. Interrogate the past for the sake of the present. Remember that historians are working for the living, not the dead.
3. Create a historical world complex enough so that it overflows with meaning; so that its meanings cannot be contained or easily expressed in words.⁵⁷

Films may represent, consider historical experiences, but their treatment is always more than a factual presentation. Baudrillard contends ‘cinema contributed to the disappearance of history’ and was responsible for its ‘secularization’⁵⁸ and it can only can reanimate, be a semblance of, all that it has hastened the demise of. However, Rosenstone believes, ‘film has been part of a search for new ways to express a relationship to the past’,⁵⁹ that in a time when History’s course can be individuated the reflexive film’s attention offers new ways of considering what has been, an ‘*intransitive middle voice*’, one that can operate between scholarship and poetry, be an expression of experience.⁶⁰ This potentiality can facilitate a varied, textured register, a place of thought, beyond any omnipotent presence. In the latter part of the twentieth century a new form of documentary, the cinematic essay, developed, a self-reflexive work, which could consider all that had been through personal relation and reflection, Jay Ruby observes, ‘To be reflexive is to be not only self-aware, but sufficiently self-aware to know what aspects of self are necessary to reveal.’⁶¹ Its categorisation alluded to its literary forebear, in its expression of authorial ideas, and showed them through images and accompanying spoken and framed text, Marker’s *Lettre de Sibérie* (*Letter*

⁵⁵ Rosenstone, A. R. (1995) *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to our Idea of History*, Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, England: Harvard University Press, p.33

⁵⁶ Nichols, B. (1991) *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*, Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, p.107

⁵⁷ Rosenstone, A. R. (1995) *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to our Idea of History*, Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, England: Harvard University Press, p.239

⁵⁸ Baudrillard, J. (2006) *Simulacra and Simulation*, Glaser, S. F. (trans.), Michigan: University of Michigan Press, p.48

⁵⁹ Rosenstone, A. R. (1995) *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to our Idea of History*, Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, England: Harvard University Press, p.15

⁶⁰ Ibid, p.225

⁶¹ Ruby, J. (1977) ‘The Image Mirrored: Reflexivity and the Documentary Film, *Journal of the University Film Association*, vol. 29, vo. 4, Fall, p.4

(*from Siberia*, 1958) is thought to be one of the first examples. Nichols, who has proposed ‘the most influential genealogy’ according to Bruzzi,⁶² writes,

‘Realism provides unproblematic access to the world through traditional physical representation and untroubled transference of psychological states from character to viewer (by means of acting style, narrative structure, and cinematic techniques such as point-of-view shots). Reflexive documentaries will employ such techniques only to interrupt and expose them.’⁶³

This coming together of essayistic investigation and audio/visual montage suggested a subjective voice, subject awareness and historical position, and uses tense and tone to convey ideas; a formulation that would seem to be explicitly imbued with memories and is further explored in chapter VI, ‘Level Five: Technology, History and the Melancholic Turn.’ This practice’s evolution saw it emphasise experiences and social developments, often perceived injustices, which occurred beyond the mainstream’s remit. Films that offer reflexive knowledge, that indicate film’s scope, form, reason, also reinforce the idea that history can be pluralistic and this mode’s questioning of form and content, Nichols writes, can heighten consciousness in the viewer;⁶⁴ this challenge is like Benjamin’s desire to undo the perception of History’s stately progress.

A radical challenge to film’s narrative inclination

The European critical theories from the 1960s onwards developed a confrontational critique of narrative cinema, as Mulvey, observes, that a ‘politically and aesthetically avant-garde cinema is now possible, but it can only exist as a counterpoint [to mainstream film].’⁶⁵ In this understanding narrative cinema was perceived as a ‘cinema of consumption’⁶⁶ that offered seamless continuity, identification, ‘the hold of the image’⁶⁷ and psychological disclosure, in which, ‘it tells the truth against which we can measure the [film’s] discourses.’⁶⁸ This approach

⁶² Ibid, p.1

⁶³ Nichols, B. (1991) *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*, Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, p.57

⁶⁴ Ibid, p.61

⁶⁵ Mulvey, L. (2003) ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’, in: *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Harrison, C. and Wood, P. (ed.), Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, p.984

⁶⁶ Ibid, p.4

⁶⁷ Heath, S. (1981) ‘Repetition Time: Notes Around ‘Structural/Materialist Film’’, in: *Questions of Cinema*, Bloomington: Indiana Press, p.170

⁶⁸ MacCabe, C. ‘Realism and the Cinema: Notes on Some Brechtian Theses’, *Screen*, 15 (2), in: MacCabe, C. (1985) *Theoretical Essays: Film, Linguistics, Literature*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, p.146

directly attacked classic narrative cinema's unifying gaze, its closed discourse, defining experimental film in oppositional terms; it was to be everything classic cinema was not, a challenge to the dominant ideological position, politicising issues and articulating its critique at the level of form and content, exposing illusionist practice and its embedded methodology. Indicative of this approach, Jean-Louis Baudry asks, 'does consumption of the product bring about a "knowledge effect", or is the work concealed?'⁶⁹ Michele Aaron summarises this position as, 'The film apparatus produces the subject and positions the spectator as false author of the image.'⁷⁰ Benjamin had suggested that the audience's identification with the film camera allowed them to achieve a mobile vision, that 'the audience takes the position of the camera; its approach is that of testing.'⁷¹ In most instances the technical means of presentation remains hidden, and, as Baudry observed, if the cinematic apparatus breaks down 'the spectator is bought abruptly back to discontinuity', and the audience's state of suspended disbelief is broken as the illusion is revealed.⁷² The influence of technology mediates our relationship to the illusion. For Baudry the technical passage that excited Benjamin had become a means of suppression, a cultural commodity within an ideological system.

In the 'The Two Avant-gardes' (1975) Peter Wollen defined the radical cinema in binary terms, 'in Europe today there are two distinct avant-gardes. The first can be identified loosely with the Co-op movement [and by affiliation non-European films like (*nostalgia*)]. The second would include film-makers such as Godard, Straub and Huillet [and by association the radical documentaries of Marker].'⁷³ Despite there being 'points of contact' the fundamental contention was to be one of politicality and how this was to be made manifest. He writes,

'[The supporters of Godard] are constantly forced to assert that being "political" is not in itself enough, that there must be a break with bourgeois norms of diegesis, subversion and deconstruction of codes – a line of argument which, unless it is thought through carefully or stopped arbitrary at some safe point, leads inevitably straight into the positions of the other avant-garde.'⁷⁴

His formulation privileges an avant-garde who would work with some form of critically aware narrative. Later, Wollen was to say 'for me the problem is to find a way of working with

⁶⁹ Baudry, J. L. (1986) 'Ideological effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus', in: *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*, Rosen, P. (ed.), New York: Columbia University Press, p.287

⁷⁰ Aaron, M. (2007) *Spectatorship: The Power of Looking*, London and New York: Wallflower, p.14

⁷¹ Benjamin, W. (2007) 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in: *Illuminations*, Arendt, H. (ed.), Zohn. H (trans.), New York: Schocken, p.229

⁷² Baudry, J. L. (1986) 'Ideological effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus', in: *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*, Rosen, P. (ed.), New York: Columbia University Press, p.291

⁷³ Wollen, P. (1975) 'The Two Avant-gardes', *Studio International*, November/December, p.171

⁷⁴ Ibid, p.174

narrative.⁷⁵ This politicized position would trace its lineage from the Avant-gardism of early Soviet cinema and Brechtian theatre, whose aphorisms - ‘for art to be “unpolitical” means only to ally itself with the ruling group’,⁷⁶ and ‘it is a dangerous illusion to think that any sort of revolutionary statement can be made in an essentially reactionary style’⁷⁷ – came to define the approach of the political avant-garde. Writing in the early 1980s Heath commented,

‘Alternative practices are alternative in so far as they transform the relations of representation *against* representing, against the universalising conditions of exchange; representation held to use (a definition of Brechtian distanciation), that is, to division, disunity, disturbance of the (social) contact (of film).’⁷⁸

Brecht considered his work to be a prelude to action. His radicalism, exposing the illusion of naturalism through the representation of reality, through his theories of distanciation (Verfremdungseffekt), Epic theatre (Episches theatre) and later the teaching play (Lehrstücke) sought to engage his audience in a form of critique, one that would de-naturalize society, show that its structures are a construct, not pre-ordained, and, therefore, it can be changed and the intention of a truly revolutionary practice is to make this occur. His work posed primary radical questions: how should populist forms be used to enliven and mobilise an audience, and how oppositional can the political vanguard be before alienating the very audience it wishes to reach?

Straub and Huillet’s *History Lessons* (1972), based on Brecht’s ‘fragment novel’,⁷⁹ *The Business Affairs of Mr. Julius Caesar* (1939), exemplifies film’s interpretation of his techniques. The texts that Straub and Huillet base their films on are not reverentially realised; it is never forgotten that they have a pre-history, another context, as Walsh writes, ‘just as Brecht liberates us from the normative image of Caesar, so Straub/Huillet free us from visual/aural chains of cinematic illusion.’⁸⁰ But, as Anja Kirschner, talking more recently, has commented, in a reversal of radical cinema’s critique, the critical avant-garde’s ‘attack on narrative filmmaking have largely been worn out or co-opted. If anything, “criticality” itself has become an empty or aestheticised posture in contemporary art – shorn of any actual political position or engagement.’⁸¹ Her

⁷⁵ ‘Crystal Gazing: An Interview with Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen’, *Screen/Framework*, 19, 1982, p.19 cited in: O’Pray, M. (1996) ‘Introduction’, in: *The British Avant-Garde Film 1926-1995: An Anthology of Writings*, O’Pray, M. (ed.), Luton: University of Luton, p.16

⁷⁶ Cited in: Granham, N. (1972) ‘TV Documentary and Ideology’, *Screen*, vol.13, no.2, p.67

⁷⁷ Ibid

⁷⁸ Heath, S. (1981) ‘Contexts’, in *Questions of Cinema*, Bloomington, USA: Indiana University Press, p.242

⁷⁹ Walsh, M. (1981) *The Brechtian Aspect of Radical Cinema: Essays by Martin Walsh*, London: BFI Publishing, p.77

⁸⁰ Ibid

⁸¹ Kidner, D. 2011, ‘More than a Feeling’, *Frieze*, 142, October, [online] available at: <http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/more-than-a-feeling/> [accessed 14 May 2014]. It is

sentiment suggests a divide, critical and artistic, between current practice and earlier radical film; Straub and Huillet's films consider a situation - its social, historical, cultural conditions - and indicate that a critique is not possible whilst operating within a classic realist form.

In 1968 Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin formed the Dziga Vertov Group with the expressed intention of making political cinema. The last feature film that they produced was *Tout va bien* (1972). The film embodied a political subject (industrial unrest, its media coverage and personal responsibility), form (the adaptation of Brechtian ideas within a narrative structure) and commercial strategy (the self-reflexive casting of stars Jane Fonda and Yves Montand),⁸² as Godard and Gorin sought an engaged but broad audience, whilst being aware of their potential indifference to the film's politics. The film's form suggested that the audience for politics and cinema are not necessarily one and the same, and that working with dominant codes, however subverted, is justified by the intention of bringing them together, but Adorno warns, "The demand for a meaningful relationship between technique, material and content does not mix well with the fetishism of means."⁸³ After the dissolution of the Dziga Vertov Group, Gorin commented that, 'the very idea of trying to think through the lens of a guy [Brecht⁸⁴] who was thinking through the '30s seems to me, now, extraordinarily backward; what kind of madness tries to delay the time and space of history?'⁸⁵ A statement that suggests context is essential, that method has distinct application and even though history may provide precedents, they do not inevitably transfer across time and situation.

interesting to note that Kirschner, with her creative partner David Panos, made *Empty Plan* (2010), which is concerned with Brecht's time in Hollywood.

⁸² When Godard cast Brigitte Bardot in *Le Mépris* (1963), then France's if not Europe's biggest star, any budgetary concerns soon dissipated. However, this had repercussions, as Joe Levin, the film's American producer, perceived the film to be a Bardot vehicle. Godard's first cut did not feature nudity, but Levin insisted 'Bardot *was* nudity', and that this was what he 'had paid for.' Godard duly acquiesced and a naked star was inserted. MacCabe, C. (2003) *Godard: a Portrait of the Artist at 70*, London: Bloomsbury, p.153

⁸³ Adorno, T.W. (1982) 'Transparencies on Film', *New German Critique*, No 24-5, Autumn, 1981 – winter, 1982, p.204

⁸⁴ Brecht wrote and directed only one film *Kubel Wampe (Who Owns the World?)*, 1931). His diary entry from 27 March 1942 indicates his reasons for abandoning cinema: 'Film has monstrous weakness in details [...] the audience no longer has any opportunity to change the artists' performance. They are not assisting at a production, but at the result of a production that took place in their absence.' Cited in: Brewster, B. (1977) 'The Fundamental Reproach (Brecht)', *Cine-Tracts*, 2, Summer, p.45

⁸⁵ Walsh, M (1981) *The Brechtian Aspect of Radical Cinema*, Griffiths. K (ed.) London: BFI, p122

Victor Burgin, in the coda to *The Remembered Film*, writes that he is not content with the classifications which resulted from film's academic ascendancy in the 1960s and 70s⁸⁶, and contests that 'the question of ideology is at least as much one of unconscious processes as it is of consciousness. Consciousnesses may be synchronized in a shared moment of viewing, but the film we saw is never the film I remember.'⁸⁷ This process, of informed critical discernment, requires a viewer who can perceive a work's totality, mustering interpretive knowledge to decode the given work. The sociologist Bourdieu suggests that 'art perception involves a conscious or unconscious deciphering operation', and any 'deciphering operation requires a more or less complex code which has been more or less completely mastered.'⁸⁸ If a work is to be understood Bourdieu's method would indicate that all cultural encounters are filtered through the audience's relative and prior knowledge.

The end of the century and history's realignment

As the 20th century waned the political certainty that had largely shaped it was being recalibrated, the fall of modern history, the collapse of the Soviet Empire, economics seemingly replaced politics and by the century's end neo-liberal capitalism had apparently swept all before it. Francois Hartog, in *Regimes of Historicity*, contends that the Berlin Wall's fall changed the way that history is perceived, that prior to this event the Western regime of 'historicity' was future-oriented, but post-1989 it became present-oriented and in doing so Modernity's linear projection was forsaken and the distance between present and past with diminished.⁸⁹ The past, in this conjecture, finds its meaning from the present, as this is formed through memory, the remembrance and assessment of history, a realignment that duly indicates the post-modern-anxiety, as after 1989's fall certainty was rent asunder, as 'Everywhere the order of time ceased to be self-evident.'⁹⁰ Marker, in a rare interview, conducted by email and published in *Libération* (2003), writes that 'What interests me is history, and politics interests me only to the degree that

⁸⁶ 'Althusser distinguishes a two-pronged process of subject formation taking place in ideology's acting through the ISAs: *interpellation* and *(mis)recognition* [...] An individual is interpellated – assigned a name, place and identity – by society's various institutions. This name, place and identity is accepted by the individual who cannot help but recognise him or herself in these prescriptions.' Aaron, M. (2007) *Spectatorship: The Power of Looking*, London and New York: Wallflower, p.8

⁸⁷ Burgin, V. (2004) *The Remembered Film*, London: Reaktion Books, p.110

⁸⁸ Bourdieu, P. (1993) *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, Cambridge: Polity Press, p.217

⁸⁹ Hartog, F. (2015) *Regimes of Historicity: Presentism and Experiences of Time*, New York: Columbia University Press, p.3

⁹⁰ Ibid

it represents the mark history makes on the present.⁹¹ Marker's last film was to be *Level Five* (1996) and represents the end of an era - the socially aware global observer of political action would now find sanctuary in techno-archival examination, the ordering of history – the film is concerned with future memories, investigating the damage of the battle of Okinawa. The film's protagonist, Laura, tries to comprehend the last battle of World War II through a computer game. The bringing together of these elements questions the balance between personal and archival evidence, how it is appraised, and the technological cast of history.

Level Fire, produced at the dawning of the digital age, considers the use of computers as a research tool, and how material is accessed and assessed; how will the programmatic storage of information, with its often fragmented display, affect engagement, and will this influence actual memory? In this new universal archive images are like echoes, which Marker expresses through form, the contemplation of technology, the connotations for personal and collective past, present, future. *Level Fire* also indicates Marker's interest in new media, as a site of resistance and investigative tool, but what now of the promise he saw?



Fig. 10 *Level Fire* (1996)

⁹¹ Douaire, D. and Rivoire, A. (2003) 'Marker Direct', *Libération*, March 5, 2003, [online] available at: <http://www.filmcomment.com/article/marker-direct-an-interview-with-chris-marker> [accessed 15 March 2014]

Memory is entwined in developing and enveloping technologies, and cinema itself, as Kilbourn claims, can also be defined, ‘as memory, or “meta-archive”; “prosthetic memory” writ large.’⁹² This memory, which he associates with cinema, is the antithesis of the natural variant, and formed through its aesthetic and technical properties, its totality. In *Histoire(s) du cinéma*’s (Godard, 1998) mixed multiple video channels, one image superimposed upon another, we see a subjective meta-history; Lev Manovich writes that ‘this technique can be interpreted as the representation of ideas or mental images floating around in our minds, coming in and out of mental focus.’⁹³ Godard’s project was cinema’s history(s), therefore the twentieth century history(s), as expressed through the referencing, and bringing together, of films; Agamben contends ‘There’s no need to shoot film anymore, just to repeat and stop. That’s an epoch-making innovation in cinema.’⁹⁴ He writes that there are ‘two transcendental conditions of montage: *repetition* and *stoppage*.⁹⁵ These actions renew and herein ‘lies the proximity of repetition and memory. Memory can give us back what was, as such [...] memory restores possibility to the past.’⁹⁶ In this configuration, revisiting the past is not an act of nostalgia, but a reassertion of history’s potentiality. This formulation in the service of practice, but this is no longer a matter of political preparedness and is more like a philosophical proposition, which, like Marker’s latter work, *Level Five* for instance, is concerned with History.

In our present era Radstone contends that our understanding of memory is weighted ‘towards a “memory” aligned with subjectivity, invention, the present, representation, and fabrication’,⁹⁷ which emphasises the individual and local perspective over that of grand narratives, which is one of the concerns of chapter V, ‘(nostalgia): These Times are Personal.’ Frampton’s (*nostalgia*) (1970) is rooted in conceptual practice (his films are now very much part of the experimental and art canon),⁹⁸ and the individuals who populate it – once just friends and now icons - locate it in

⁹² Kilbourn, R. J. A. (2012) *Cinema, Memory, Modernity: The Representation of Memory from Art Film to Transnational Cinema*, London: Routledge, p.45

⁹³ Manovich, L. (2001) *The Language of New Media*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, p.152

⁹⁴ Agamben, G. (2002) ‘Difference and Repetition: On Guy Debord’s Films’, in: *Guy Debord and the Situationist International*, McDonough, T. (ed.), Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, p315

⁹⁵ Ibid

⁹⁶ Ibid, p.316

⁹⁷ Radstone, S. (ed.) (2000) *Memory and Methodology*, Oxford: Berg, p.9

⁹⁸ In 2007 The National Maritime Museum, London, screened his mammoth and unfinished work *Magellen*. It had last been seen at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1980. It was originally imagined as a 36-hour film sequence, which was to be shown on specific days over a period of a year and four days (the Magellen calendar). When Frampton died in 1984 it was unfinished but eight hours of material had been completed (30 individual films). Two years later the Artist Film and Video strand of the London Film Festival screened all seven films that

the fabled artistic milieu of 1960s New York. It is composed of a series of photographs and autobiographical episodes, a form of audio/visual diary distilled for public scrutiny. Steadman writes, that in ‘the practices of history and of modern autobiographical narration, there is the assumption that *nothing goes away*; that the past has deposited all of its traces, somewhere, somehow.’⁹⁹ Frampton’s film is emblematic, a means to discern time: a time for Frampton when photographs were no longer pertinent and images needed to become temporally active and have eternally connected and audible memories. The film proposes a personal (ironic) puzzle (a contextual exercise that requires knowledge beyond the text to truly begin to comprehend its different layers) that would test narrative expectations and show the power, and limits, of image and text – the past may still seem discernible, but its remnants are smoke.

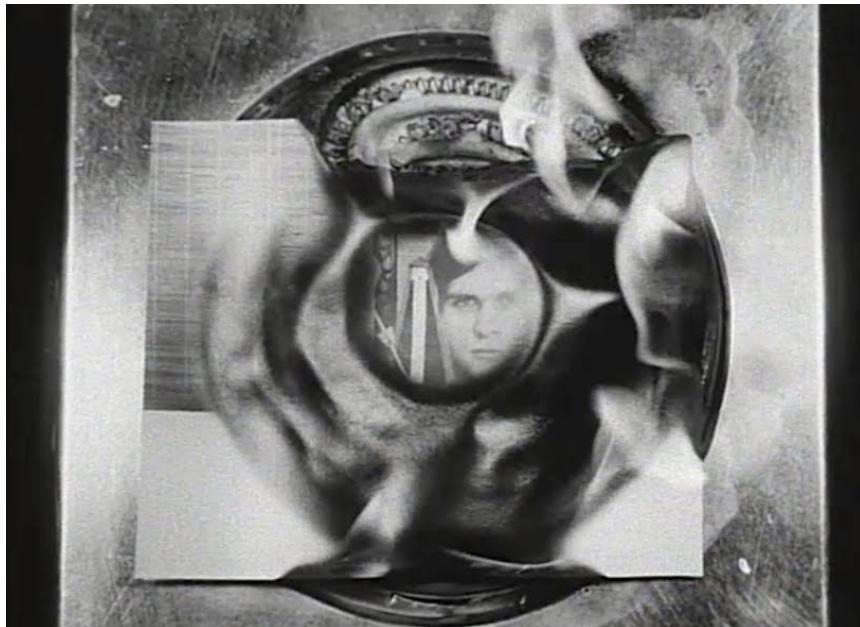


Fig. 11 (*nostalgia*) (1971)

In the twenty-first century, memory, Kilbourn argues, is by definition collective, and this could be recognised as ‘artificial or prosthetic’, and furthermore ‘no memory is impersonal or objective’;¹⁰⁰ this understanding is an aspect of the analysis in chapter VII, ‘Memento: Fettered and Systematic Recollection.’ The forgetful protagonist of Nolan’s *Memento* (2000) operates beyond Los Angeles city’s limits, a liminal place in which other American memories dwell. He

comprise *Hapax Legmena. (nostalgia)*. It is now available as a Criterion Collection DVD (*A Hollis Frampton Odyssey*, 2012).

⁹⁹ Steedman, C. (2001) *Dust*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, p.76

¹⁰⁰ Kilbourn, R. J. A. (2012) *Cinema, Memory, Modernity: The Representation of Memory from Art Film to Transnational Cinema*, London: Routledge, p.228

claims that he cannot form 'new memories', which is an emblematic statement - in America, at this juncture, an embattled Bill Clinton was serving out his second presidential term and by the end of the year George Bush would be waiting to replace him after a widely contested victory over Al Gore; a simple national agenda, one hewn from a mythologised past, a time of moral righteousness and unfettered action, had been accepted.

Radstone apprises that 'the scales may swing between, say, invention/tradition and reflection/representation, the "fragile value" of memory resides in its continued capacity to hold, rather than to collapse these equivocations.'¹⁰¹ This malleable definition adheres to contemporary notions of culture and its continual reformulation, in which its meaning evolves with time and place. Stuart Hall argued that culture 'is not so much a set of things', but 'a process, a set of practices',¹⁰² that 'representation connects meaning and language to culture'¹⁰³ and as 'meanings shift and slide, so inevitably the codes of culture imperceptibly change'.¹⁰⁴ This proposes that culture is subject to societal change and is not a set entity but evolves as society does.

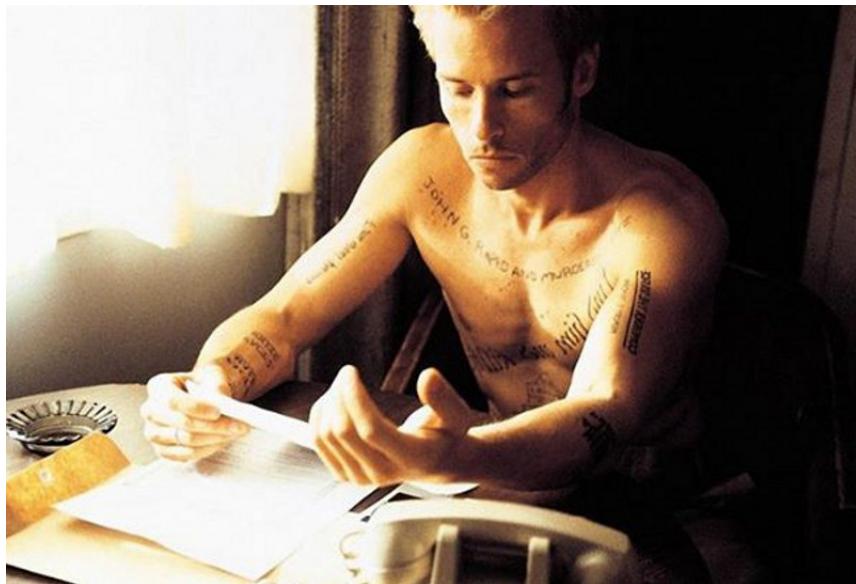


Fig. 12 *Memento* (2000)

Memento was originally released in the year of *Gladiator* (Scott), another film about male vengeance and adventure, and viewing it now it is clearly a mark in cinematic and personal time, a clever

¹⁰¹ Ibid

¹⁰² Hall, S. (1997) 'Introduction' in: Hall, S. (ed.), *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, London: Sage, p.2

¹⁰³ Ibid, p.13

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p.62

contrivance that ushered in a new century and indicated its cultural spectrum and orientation, a contemporary vision found in a referential mining of past cinematic moments. Nolan's film shows a form of collective film memory, has a post-classical structure, which would work with narrative and avant-garde strategies, and in this we see something of the database film's promiscuous formulation;¹⁰⁵ its generic, aesthetic and critical influences are reconstituted in an assimilated work in a recognisable mode. Aaron contends that 'contemporary or postmodern filmmakers increasingly exploit the contractual nature of spectatorship', and this in part is due to "films" fiction-status and moral judgements – [which] have diminished both in effect and frequency',¹⁰⁶ is the this critique applicable to *Memento* or does it actually create something arresting, new out of its past?

To review film, the development of a form, the flow of ideas, patterns of acquiescence and critique, is to identify its historic periodization; to see any film is to be appraised of a genre's invention, reference and method. Viewing *Memento*, for example, is to be reminded of a particular canonical variant, the influences that propelled Nolan and the external matrix that the film operates in. The accrued knowledge, which is brought to any film, interprets and reads, situating the film in a practical and critical, conscious and unconscious, schema - it is a meta-text pointing the way to film's past (and confirming its present). 'Prosthetic Memory', Landsberg's conception, would open 'up a world of images outside a person's lived experience, creating a portable, fluid, and non-essentialist form of memory.'¹⁰⁷ She suggests that this form functions', 'between a person and a historical narrative about the past, at an experiential site such as a movie theater or museum. In this moment of contact, an experience occurs through which the person sutures himself or herself into a larger history.'¹⁰⁸ This collective memory is derived from a representation of what has been and as the events of the past are retold, such as in *Schindler's List* (Spielberg, 1993), for all manner of sometimes contradictory purposes, a new history is offered to those who feel they should remember, but are actually after the fact. Memories may become commodified, co-opted to suit different forms and narratives, for they reside in history and are always subject to reinterpretation - new technologies can offer a more inclusive reckoning, but this can also make even obviously mediated memories appear authentic. Chopra-Gant suggests that between the 'historical film and criticism lies the prospect of a valuable syncretic mode of historical knowledge',¹⁰⁹ and that film can in fact offer a means of realisation that is beyond

¹⁰⁵ Cameron, A. (2008) *Modular Narratives in Contemporary Cinema*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan

¹⁰⁶ Aaron, M. (2007) *Spectatorship: The Power of Looking*, London and New York: Wallflower, p.89

¹⁰⁷ Landsberg, A. (2004) *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, New York: Columbia University Press, p.18

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p.2

¹⁰⁹ Chopra-Gant, M. (2008) *Cinema and History: The Telling of Stories*, London: Wallflower, p.102

traditional means and used conscientiously can contribute to historically changed dialogues; memory acquisition can also be reflective, empathetic, but aware of difference, and active, for it can be the precursor to action and this facility will be explored in more detail through the various case studies that constitute Part 2, ‘In Time: Films, Associations and Other Memories.’

When these various films become known they take on their own memorious form - Agamben contends that ‘images can have such a historical and messianic importance, because they are a way of projecting power and possibility toward that which is impossible by definition, towards the past.’¹¹⁰ They suggest ideas, bring forth memories, associations, evoke all manner of other influences and suggest numerous other related and seemingly instructive and timely films, as Augé comments that ‘to remember one film also means remembering film itself, that is, remembering images [...] as if in some way it had accomplished the labor of memory.’¹¹¹ These films suggest memory’s purpose, uncertainty, importance and potentiality and within their application something materialises as thinking is substantiated through practice.

¹¹⁰ Agamben, G. (2002) ‘Difference and Repetition: On Guy Debord’s Films’, in: *Guy Debord and the Situationist International*, McDonough, T. (ed.), Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, p.316

¹¹¹ Augé, M. (2007) *Casablanca: Movies and Memory*, Conley, T. (trans.), Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, p.10

III. RECOLLECTABLE IMPORTANCE: FILM'S APPRAISAL AND OTHER ASSOCIATED MEMORIES



'A memory of a first time.' Marc Augé¹

Fig. 13 *Casablanca* (1942)

Film's mnemonic facility, has for many, brought it and memory together, one invoking the other. This sense of something being created, added to the screen-bound images, is emphasised by Monaco², who comments, 'there is the image that exists for itself, the picture, and the image "made in seeing", the conception, which does not imitate so much as analyses or comments upon. The image is perceived reality.'³ This chapter will consider the relationship between viewer and film (a productive producer of memories), how this encounter has been theorised, the critical, textual, analysis of film (the mediation from one form to another), and the importance of place (a tethering context for the memory).

¹ Augé, M. (2007) *Casablanca: Movies and Memory*, Conley, T. (trans.), Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, p.11

² Monaco is indebted to Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651) whom he quotes: '... after the object is removed, or the eye shut, we still retain an image of the thing seen, though more obscure than when we see it. And this is it, the Latins call imagination, from the image made in seeing... IMAGINATION therefore is nothing but *decaying sense*; and is found in men, and many other living Creatures, as well sleeping, as waking... when we would express decay, and signify that the sense is fading, old, and the past, it is called memory. So that *Imagination* and *Memory*, are but one thing, which for divers considerations hath divers names.' Monaco, J. (1978) *Alain Resnais: The Role of Imagination*, London: Secker & Warburg, p.11-2

³ Ibid, p.12

Since the end of the twentieth century there has been a ‘growing preoccupation with memory and nostalgia’, observes Pam Cook, and ‘this has resulted in a startling proliferation of discursive intertexts and textual commentaries, whose origins and validity are not always clear, which have the potential to transform the way history is traditionally written and perceived’⁴ Emphasising this perspective Mullarkey writes that film should be seen ‘as a series of relational processes and hybrid contexts comprising the artists’ and audience’s psychologies, the cinematic “raw data”, the physical media of the film, the varied forms of its exhibition, *as well as all the theories relating themselves to these dimensions.*’⁵ These inclusive and variable understandings echo, in a number of ways, contemporary contemplation of memory and its workings. A work’s reputation is formed through public engagement and this may be occurring, more and more, through virtual and viral means, but in terms of film and video, this activity is still largely a supplement to some form of public screening, and its critical reception, which adds to a work’s provenance and traceable progress.

Public screening, private encounter

Film, more or less since its inception, has been a projected medium, and in this cinematic encounter memory is formed, and as Annette Kuhn observes, ‘a place can trigger or produce memories [...] Every place has its own inherent features, its own character; and these are independently instrumental in forming acts of memory.’⁶ Augé, in *Casablanca: Movies and Memory*, emphasises this association. He first saw *Casablanca* (Curtiz, 1942) sometime around the Allied liberation of Paris aged eleven or twelve as he recalls:

‘*Casablanca* was not my first film, but it was my first experience of time being induced by a work of fiction. Not only did the film begin to exist as a memory (a memory of a first time, of a ordinary, inaugural emotion sustained by a few mythic scenes), but in itself it dealt with memory and remembrance, with fidelity and oblivion.’⁷

In the book’s afterward Conley writes that ‘*Casablanca* becomes a memory machine’,⁸ a catalyst that ushers in impressions from the past that the author then ‘works with.’⁹ Augé’s first encounter happened somewhere in the Latin Quarter, and his memory of the experience still

⁴ Cook, P. (2005) *Screening the Past: Memory and Nostalgia in Cinema*, New York: Routledge, p.1

⁵ Mullarkey, J. (2009) *Philosophy and the Moving Image: Refractions of Reality*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p.10

⁶ Kuhn, A. (2002) *An Everyday Magic: Cinema and Cultural Memory*, London and New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, p.16-7

⁷ Augé, M. (2007) *Casablanca: Movies and Memory*, Conley, T. (trans.), Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, p.11-2

⁸ Ibid, p.80

⁹ Ibid, p.87

makes itself felt, as memory ‘is a place we revisit, or to which we are transported.’¹⁰ His recollection is expressly nostalgic, linked to another time, but the involved cinema procedure produces a complex experience that adds to all the similar, but different, memory sites, which represent, for Augé, what it means to experience a movie and being moved in time.

The cinematic formulation has fundamentally stayed the same since its invention; its technical presentation may have evolved, in terms of image resolution and audio dynamics, directed towards heightened verisimilitude, but the basic rudiments - image gathering, assemblage, projection - remain unchanged. This configuration, a means to affect attentive viewing, is in many ways an ideal, a unifying solution to the projection of film and video. The cinema audience is a collection of ordered individuals within in the confines of the projection space, and, as engaging as this form can be, each recalled film, despite being derived from the same source, will be partial and individualised; Robert Stam suggests, the cinema spectator ‘both is constructed and him or herself constructs, within a kind of constrained or situated freedom.’¹¹ When films are offered in cinema or cinema-like conditions, there is an acceptance by the viewer that irredeemable time is given, and it emphasises that other forms of media encounter maybe afford ease of access but do not facilitate the same degree of situational resolution.

The Invisible Cinema (Anthology Film Archives, New York, 1970-74) tried to define the cinematic experience to the nth degree. Designed by Peter Kubelka, constructed by Giorgio Cavaglieri, it was conceived to provide the perfect viewing conditions for experimental film,¹² as Kubelka elucidates, ‘Architecture has to provide a structure in which one is in a community that is not disturbing to others.’¹³ This configuration would allow unfettered concentration, but did this focus memory differently from standard cinema practice? Kubelka and Cavaglieri’s innovation may have heightened the viewer’s experience, but it did not fundamentally re-work it, because even in less perfected conditions something memorable can still occur. Moving images have the power to override even the most adverse conditions and become internalised with lasting effect.

Laura U. Marks suggests that ‘Most people agree that viewing single-channel work in a theatrical setting, or “cinema”, is an immersive experience, partly as a result of the viewer’s slight

¹⁰ Kuhn, A. (2002) *An Everyday Magic: Cinema and Cultural Memory*, London and New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, p.16-7

¹¹ Stam, R. (2000) *Film Theory: An Introduction*, Oxford: Blackwell publishing, p.244

¹² Connolly, M. (2013) ‘Shared Viewing: Moving Images in the Cinema and Museum’, *Millennium Film Journal*, no. 58, Fall, p.24

¹³ Cited in: Sitney, S, (2005) ‘The Search for the Invisible Cinema’, *Grey Room*, no. 19, p.111

disembodiment.¹⁴ Describing what she defines as the ‘Bergsonian [by way of Deleuze] experience of the movies’, she suggests that the ‘viewer’s perception actualizes only certain elements of the film, which remains dense with virtuality. The richness of the single-channel experience lies in the surplus of image, sound, meaning, and experience.’¹⁵ A film’s audience will always have different memories of a viewing experience – Stan Brakhage comments that ‘The capacity to remember *any* imagery from the flowing-river experience of motion pictures is exactly dependent upon one’s capacity to *name* what one has seen.¹⁶ In remembering, we privilege one reflection over another - the residue of cultural habit, social being, personal awareness and situation - and this set of preferences consciously and unconsciously forms a flow of memories, attendant sensations, a privileging of certain moments, which found our own films.



Fig. 14 Invisible Cinema (1970-74)

When considering a film it becomes apparent that moments, certain resonances, rather than its actual narrative *per se*, have come to constitute what we think of as the film. Christian Keathley describes these ‘discarded’ details as being ‘cinephilic moments’,¹⁷ and suggests that the ‘links

¹⁴ Marks, L. U. (2012) ‘In the Single Channel: Experimental Media from Theater to Gallery’, *Millennium Film Journal*, no.55, Spring, [online] available at <http://www.readperiodicals.com/201204/2759925591.html> [accessed 24 July 2014]

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Brakhage, S. (2002) ‘The Lost Films’, in: *Chicago Review*, Vol.47 / 48, winter, 2001 – Spring, 2002, p.68

¹⁷ Keathley, C. (2006) *Cinephilia and history, or The Wind in the Trees*, Bloomington, IN: Iairy, ndiana University Press, p.7

between the cinema, personal memory, the anecdote (metonymy), and the uncanny are strong,¹⁸ that these cinephilic moments ‘seeks to illuminate the ways in which movies – especially moments from movies – displace themselves out of their original contexts and step into our lives.’¹⁹ In this a singular, personal, composite of the original is assembled, and if a film is revisited it often reveals forgotten nuances which correspond, in some way, to the viewer’s evolving memories and on-going preoccupations. Cavell, in *The World Viewed*, a book that relied on the author’s unreliable memory of the films that he had seen, writes that in ‘viewing a movie my hopelessness is mechanically assured; I am present not at something happening, which I must confirm, but at something that has happened, which I absorb (like a memory).’²⁰ For Cavell cinema makes us conscious of time passing, and film memory is a form of montage, of (personal) films past made present (once again) through appreciation, alignment and assimilation.

Techniques of film memory and the need to categorize

How is film remembered and why? Edward Branigan, considering the influence of a film, wonders, ‘is narrative comprehension affected by the particular way we imagine we are seeing events?’²¹ He suggests the answer concerns, ‘*how* an event is presented, how it happens, rather than *what* is presented or what happens’ is of importance, what is readable and the deduced ‘procedural knowledge and declarative (or postulated knowledge).’²² And this inference is affected by the ‘dynamics of a character’, ‘representation of the historical conditions’,²³ and how they determine the film itself. These considerations operate within certain historical protocols and pertain to the classic realist model, which is still seen to define narrative film structure.

Film, like other mediums, films have a tendency to fall into categories, if they are not deliberately made for them, but many films challenge genre-exclusive definitions, as Stam writes, ‘Are genres really “out there” in the world, or are they merely the constructions of analysts? Is there a finite taxonomy of genres or are they in principle infinite?’²⁴ Genre formulation can only be an approximation and often, more than anything, indicates a work’s periodization; Stam writes that the major issues in genre identification are, extension (confines of definition), normativism (given

¹⁸ Keathley, C. (2006) *Cinephilia and history, or The Wind in the Trees*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, p.151

¹⁹ Ibid, p.152

²⁰ Cavell, S. (1979) *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*, enlarged ed., Cambridge, Massachusetts/ London, U.K.: Harvard University Press, p.26

²¹ Branigan, E. (1992) *Narrative comprehension and Film*, New York: Routledge, p.64

²² Ibid, p.65

²³ Ibid, p.87

²⁴ Stam, R. (2000) *Film Theory: An Introduction*, Oxford: Blackwell publishing, p.14

genre criteria), monolithic (claims of singularity) and biologism (common-sense rationale).²⁵ But, despite these telling issues work does adhere, forms textual alliances, and an inclusive, hybrid, approach is required, one that searches for connections in an equivocal manner, formed from an individuated perspective. Todorov's influential critique of literary taxonomy suggests 'genre as such has not disappeared; the genres-of-the-past have simply been replaced by others', and works form new rules, genres, through example.²⁶ David Duff concurs with this view, writing that it's not possible to 'move beyond genre' but it is 'not a prescription and exclusion but opportunity'.²⁷ He may be considering literature but the same notion could be applied to film.

The juxtaposition of the selected films throws genres, categorisations, into relief and brings them into new constellations as all manner of memories flows between the different films. Frampton proposed that the historian of cinema 'is obliged to make himself responsible for every frame of film in existence. For the history of cinema consists precisely of every film that has been made, for any purpose whatever'.²⁸ This totalising position may be beyond reason, but it does emphasise the idea that all work is in reference, one way or another, to pre-existing forms. Mullarkey contends that 'Film is hybridity itself, or, in Bergsonian terms, creativity in the raw: which is only to say that the very messiness of film – which is fast approaching even further levels of divergent mess through new forms of media and spectatorship – merges with the same messiness of reality'.²⁹ Film may have the appearance of a language (something cognitivists dismiss³⁰) but it is more than a set of codes to be mastered; it is always a complex collection of effects, which are produced through particular aesthetics, techniques, histories and resonances, that generate relative meanings, memories, personal films, as Wollen writes: 'any reading of a film has to be justified by an explanation of how the film itself works to make this reading possible. Nor is it the single reading, the one which gives us the true meaning of the film; it is simply a reading which produces more meaning'.³¹ Histories form evolving hierarchies, Wollen writes, so that 'changes in the canon'³² are often linked to changes in production, and the emergence of new

²⁵ Ibid, p.128-9

²⁶ Todorov, T. 'The Origin of Genres', in: Duff, D. (1999) *Modern Genre Theory*, London; Routledge, p.195

²⁷ Duff, D. (1999) *Modern Genre Theory*, London; Routledge, p.2

²⁸ Frampton, H. (2009) 'For a Metahistory of Film: Commonplace Notes and Hypotheses', in: Jenkins, B. (ed.), *On The Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters*: Wollen, P. (2002) *Writings on Film of Hollis Frampton*, Cambridge, Massachusetts/London: The MIT Press, p.136

²⁹ Mullarkey, J. (2009) *Philosophy and the Moving Image: Refractions of Reality*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p.215

³⁰ Ibid, p.238

³¹ Wollen, P. (1972) *Signs and Meanings in Cinema*, London: Martin Secker & Warburg Limited, p.169

³² The key elements in the process of defining and refining canon(s), are the archives and collections of the relevant institutions, which chose to preserve certain works and whose curated

forms of practice³³ - assessments which are invariably rationalised through critical and academic adjudication.

There can also, as Keathley attests, other criteria, ones based in instinct, antidote, personal association and subjective evaluation.³⁴ This is exemplified by the development of experimental film, which ‘is broken and diverse’ and it has advanced, as Wollen writes, ‘by knight’s moves, going forward much of the time but always obliquely, sometimes aggressive, sometimes defensive according to a strategy that was always difficult to define and second-guess.’³⁵ This telling image of off-kilter movement is by way of Viktor Shklovsky. Frampton also uses this simile to imagine a developing history of cinema that encompasses all traditions.³⁶ Brakhage, thinking about lineage, commented, ‘no one has recognized that I (and all my contemporaries) are working in a lineal tradition of Méliès, Griffith, Dreyer, Eisenstein, and all the other classically accepted filmmakers.’³⁷ A film is always historical, and history is always present. Frampton would see the filmmaker as an agent of change, someone who attempts ‘to practice an art that feeds upon illusions and references despised or rejected by other arts.’³⁸ There is an acknowledgement of tradition but nothing is excluded and that which might be deemed productive is intuitively reconciled. His notion invokes something other than the expected order of things and suggests an operation of decoding, interpretation, of deconstruction, but no work is enough in itself as it always operates within critical limits.

Film’s referencing of memory is made known through a lexicon of tropes, which can be understood as being aesthetic, technical and content driven; aesthetic techniques, such as voice-over (present and past tense, first and third person), flashbacks, inter-titles, durational shots, repetition, audio/visual disjunction, still image(s), archival material, complex montage, jump-cuts (all manner of intercontextualities); and contents, such as history (memory and material), themes of memory (recollection and forgetting), physiological (emotional memory), autobiographical

programmes decide what can be publicly seen, academics and critics, who influence and form opinion, filmmakers and artists, who have their own relationship to historical and contemporary peers, and the engaged viewers’ advocacy.

³³ Wollen, P. (2002), ‘The Canon’, in: *Paris Hollywood: Writings on Film*, London/ New York: Verso, p.218

³⁴ Christian Keathley (2006) *Cinephilia and history, or The Wind in the Trees*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, p.4

³⁵ Wollen, P. ‘Knights Moves’, in: (2003) *Camera Obscura, Camera Lucida: Essays in Honor of Annette Michelson*, Allen, R. and Turvey, M. (ed.), Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, p.147

³⁶ Frampton, H. (2006) ‘For a Metahistory of Film: Commonplace Notes and Hypotheses’, in: *On the Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters: The Writings of Hollis Frampton*, Jenkins, B. (ed.), Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, p.131-9

³⁷ Frampton, H. (1973) ‘Stan And Jane Brakhage, Talking’, *Artforum*, January, p.76

³⁸ Ibid, p.138

(memoir), genre (mystery), trauma (communal and personal). The types of tropes and their forms may vary, with occurrence and resonance altering, but they have transformative temporal value: as Turim suggests, ‘flashbacks in film often merge the two levels of remembering the past, giving large-scale social and political history the subjective mode of a single, fictional individual’s remembered experience.’³⁹ This ‘subjective memory’ places dramatic exposition, the explanation of history within the personal experience of individual characters, their projected social position. These techniques can be found in all manner of films, but in combination they elucidate and indicate that plays of memory are being authored, which allow for the crossing and merging of temporal planes, the bringing together of different perspectives.

Memorious structures, in one form or another, exercise minds across all forms of filmic expression. When examining what might constitute a memory’s relation to film, and to discern its process and affect, there is a need to investigate different modes of production and creative approaches from different periods. Some films that have narrative assurance may refer to memory, but they do not risk memory’s true exposure, because these films, such as *The Manchurian Candidate* (Frankenheimer, 1962) and *Schindler’s List* (Spielberg, 1993) wish to define experience and delineate history. In these works history is illustrated, temporality services narrative explanation, and memory becomes a matter of certifiable contextual reassurance. Other films, however risk narrative flow and coherence in order to prioritise structures that emulate the fragmentary character of memory.

In *Sculpting In Time* Tarkovsky expressed the belief that the artist has a responsibility to represent something of necessary worth that contemplates life’s very meaning⁴⁰ and ‘by collecting together the films of different directors do we arrive at a picture of the modern world which is more or less realist and has some claim to be called a full account of what concerns, excites and puzzles our contemporaries’⁴¹ For Tarkovsky this notion of artistic truth, which was identified in cinema’s ability to record and show reality⁴², is only really to be found amongst the purveyors of cinematic mastery, the men that he would consider his artistic peers.⁴³ This vision corresponds to Deleuze’s conception of the medium; ‘great directors of the cinema may be compared, in our view, not merely with painters, architects and musician, but also with thinkers’⁴⁴ this notion is

³⁹ Turim, M. (1989) *Flashbacks in Film: Memory and History*, New York and London: Routledge, p.2

⁴⁰ Tarkovsky, A. 1986, *Sculpting In Time*, Hunter-Blair, K. (trans.), Austin: University of Texas, p.85

⁴¹ Ibid, p.87-8

⁴² Manovich, L. (2001) *The Language of New Media*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, p.295

⁴³ Antonioni, Bergman, Bresson, Dovzhenko, Chaplin, Dreyer, Fellini, Kurosawa, Vigo and Buñuel. Tarkovsky, A. 1986, *Sculpting In Time*, Hunter-Blair, K. (trans.), Austin: University of Texas, p.150

⁴⁴ Deleuze, D. (1986) *Cinema 1*, Tomlinson, H. (trans.), London: Continuum, p.3

borne out in the actual cinematic process and its cultural bearing, a sense that art can make sense of existence, a belief that Bergson also shared.⁴⁵ These films, that ‘think’, are but one stratum, all be it rarefied, of film’s totality. Mullarkey suggests that any critical approach should be ‘a messy mix of methodologies and eclectic, random examples, rather than exemplars that illustrate one’s point perfectly.’⁴⁶ Considering the substance of this research it would seem imperative to follow memory’s model and allow the juxtaposition and association of films and ideas, instinctive and instructive acts, which make manifest preference, experience and add (unexpected) streams of thought and resonances. This accumulative association is akin to the Kuleshov Effect,⁴⁷ as one image influences the next and so on. This analogy also could suggest memory’s affect and film’s complimentary invocation.

The critical and intuitive reading of film

When encountering a film there is a distinction between what we see and how we remember it, that the passing between film and memory draws on reflective and contextual necessity: how to make known, verbally and textually, that which is recollected but not directly quotable. Writing about film is, in some ways, analogous to communicating a memory: both are present in the telling yet both reside in this past experience. In this, Garrett Stewart draws a distinction between ‘reading’ and ‘interpretation’, stating that ‘interpretation settles for the rhetoric of effect rather than probing its structural logic’,⁴⁸ suggesting that the ability to ‘read’ film is an analytical tool that allows critical awareness. Rodowick cautions that ‘we tend to view films under the assumption that we are also “reading” them, while we may in fact be *mis*-reading them.’⁴⁹ Also, he contends that, ‘Writing may capture succession. Yet it fails to reproduce film’s peculiar quality of an automated, ineluctable movement.’⁵⁰ Robert. A. Rosenstone reflects that attempting to communicate all that has been encountered, cannot ever be ‘more than the palest

⁴⁵ Ward, J. (1968) *Alain Resnais, or the Theme of Time*, London: Secker & Warburg, p.14

⁴⁶ Mullarkey, J. (2009) *Philosophy and the Moving Image: Refractions of Reality*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p.6

⁴⁷ ‘The Kuleshov Effect [named after the influential film experiments of editor Lev Kuleshov which formed the basis of Soviet montage theory] describes how subsequent images change the meaning of previous ones when they are cut together: the same image of an unexpressive face intercut with a laughing baby is interpreted as happy by one audience, but intercut with a dying soldier is interpreted as sad by another.’ Ibid, p.207

⁴⁸ Stewart, G. (1999) *Between Film and Screen: Modernism’s Photosynthesis*, Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, p.23

⁴⁹ Rodowick, D. N. (2007) *The Virtual Life of Film*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, p.156

⁵⁰ Ibid, p.21

reflection of the experience and meaning of film',⁵¹ but despite this it is still worthwhile because it can indicate, connect, reference.

When describing a film, in text, a conversion occurs, that according to Raymond Bellour, asserts the 'absolute privilege of written expression'.⁵² In 'The Unattainable Text' Bellour writes that film and literature are not incompatible, but film is not directly 'quotable', and as a result, a process of mediation occurs, an undertaking that he characterises as 'a kind of principled despair' that 'constantly mimics, evokes, describes'.⁵³ Affirming this observation Cavell suggests that when 'speaking of a moment or sequence from a film we, as we might put it, cannot *quote* the thing we are speaking of.' He describes his memory of films being 'like dreams', and contends that the disparity between what is seen and written, experienced and remembered, suggests that 'movies have achieved the condition of music'.⁵⁴ For him film, like music, exerts an imaginative hold beyond the work's physical bounds, in which seemingly forgotten moments can return unexpectedly as strongly as our own experiential memory. Adorno, in 'Essay as Form',⁵⁵ writes, 'thought does not advance in a single direction, rather the aspects of the argument interweave as in a carpet',⁵⁶ a notion that chimes with Benjamin's advice in 'One-way Street', 'Work on a good piece of writing proceeds on three levels: a musical one, where it is composed, architectural one, where it is constructed, and finally a textile one, where it is woven'.⁵⁷ Benjamin brings a multifarious past into the present, a time denoted by the author, his work, and those who may encounter it.

The cultural position of film, as a contemporary art, was initially fermented in the particular post-war environment of Paris, in cine-clubs and publications, first *Revue du Cinéma* and then *Cahiers du Cinéma*.⁵⁸ The latter was initiated by André Bazin in 1951, edited by Rohmer and then Rivette, and included writing from Godard, Chabrol and Truffaut amongst others. It came to define

⁵¹ Rosenstone, R. A. (1995) *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to our Idea of History*, Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, England: Harvard University Press, p.237

⁵² Bellour, R. (1975) 'The Unattainable Text', *Screen*, 16, p.19

⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁴ Ibid, p.12

⁵⁵ Robert Hullot-Kentor writes that for Adorno 'the essay is a critical microcosm of society just as the title as name is a microcosm of the essay.' Hullot-Kentor, R. (2006) 'Title Essay: Baroque Allegory and 'The Essay as Form' in: Hullot-Kentor, R. (ed.) *Things Beyond Resemblance*, New York: Columbia University Press, p.134

⁵⁶ Adorno, T. W. (1984) 'The Essay as Form', Hullot-Kentor, B. and Will, F. (trans.), in: *New German Critique*, No. 32, Spring – Summer, p.160

⁵⁷ Benjamin, W. (2009) 'One-way Street', in: *One-way Street and Other Writings*, Underwood, J. A. (trans.), London: Penguin Books, p.65

⁵⁸ Uroskie, A. V. (2011) 'Beyond the black box: the Lettrist cinema of disjunction', *October*, 135, Winter, p.26

modern criticism and enriched la nouvelle vague, modern films made by many of its writers with reference to cinema. It proposed, in one way or another, Bazin's now eternal question, 'what is cinema?' and its contributors, cinephiles all, offered aesthetic and formal answers. Serge Daney described cinephilia as 'a sickness that brought immense pleasure', which Wollen believes changes your life forever.⁵⁹ Keathley contends that there is a need to reconnect with this cinephiliac spirit. That through it the pleasure of viewing and the passion that film, which was lost when it crossed the 'threshold into scholarly legitimacy',⁶⁰ could be recovered. This sensibility does not forgo theory, and distinctly formulates, collate films and histories, but suggests that as Mullarkey observes that there is not a 'secret of film', that 'everybody knows something, but nobody knows everything',⁶¹ and that 'the crisis for cinema, then, is also one for our culture and philosophy, for our ability, fundamentally, to think anew'.⁶² This activity would re-cast films, bringing them together in new configurations that can suggest new thoughts and insights. In considering the rudiments of film analysis Rodowick contends that, 'the form and vocabulary in which these questions are posed has changed continuously in the history of film theory as a series of conflictual debates [however] the basic set of concepts has remained remarkably consistent'.⁶³ When considering 'film aesthetics' the enquiry has concerned itself primarily with the analysis of space⁶⁴, and this is intrinsically bound up with duration, a space that resides in time.

The technical proficiency of cinema suggested for Bazin the possibility of 'objectivity in time'.⁶⁵ In 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image' Bazin proposed that photography and cinema are 'discoveries that satisfy, once and for all and in its very essence, our obsession with realism'.⁶⁶ His cinematic appreciation championed aesthetic and social resemblance, a formulation that would see cinema as a revelatory medium. Bazin's intrinsic and influential understanding linked photographic representation to reality. As Tom Gunning writes, Bazin believed 'that a photograph puts us in presence of something, that it possesses an ontology rather than a

⁵⁹ Wollen, P. (2002) 'An Alphabet of Cinema' in: *Paris Hollywood: Writings on film*, London and New York: Verso, p.5

⁶⁰ Ibid, p.5

⁶¹ Mullarkey, J. (2009) *Philosophy and the Moving image: Refractions of Reality*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p.14

⁶² Christian Keathley (2006) *Cinephilia and history, or The Wind in the Trees*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, p.92

⁶³ Rodowick, D. N. (2007) *The Virtual Life of Film*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, p.188

⁶⁴ Ibid, p.73

⁶⁵ Bazin, A. (1967) 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image' in: *What is Cinema?* vol.1, (Gary, H. trans), Berkeley/ Los Angeles: University of California Press, p.14

⁶⁶ Ibid, p.12

semiotics.⁶⁷ Subsequent critics, particularly the post '68 generation⁶⁸, were to take Bazin's perceived idealism to task, however as Wollen, in *Signs and Meanings*, asserts, 'A great deal of influence which Bazin has exerted has been due to his ability to see the indexical aspect of cinema as its essence.'⁶⁹ Doane, writing about the inception of cinema, comments that 'knowledge of the indexicality of the cinematic image sustains a belief that something of time, something of the movement or its imprint, or, at the very least, its adequate representation, is there.'⁷⁰ This understanding is emphasised by Mulvey who contends that when still images are placed in a multiple and movable context the 'indexical "this was now" fuses with time passing, with the "now" of cinematic sequence that continually turns back into "then" within a single shot.'⁷¹ A position that is further iterated by Wollen, the 'index has a privileged relation to time, to the moment and duration of its inscription.'⁷² This posits the image as a transcription of time that is as rooted in the now of the viewer, as well as the then of the image, an occurrence that could be described as being both historical and present, and when we see a progression of images and simultaneously remember what we have just seen, the past, present and anticipated future fuse and separate in turns.

Bergson's enquiries initiated film's philosophical exchange, he describes its effect rather than its content and affect, but, as Münsterberg realised, for most viewers what was seen is defined, at least in part, by the work's content and form. After viewing a film audiences habitually discuss their experience, for what is a film without an audience? Films are remembered because they create an impression, and become part of the personal, and critical, consciousness. Stewart asserts that the 'philosophic mind may teach us how to think cinema, but cinema reminds us how we think.' Cinema, for him, is a means to divine thought and this is made apparent by the 'staging' of consciousness through the 'historic' flicker of images that allows an audience 'to retain the film as a mobile image (a *textual* model) of its own deepest cognitive negotiations with

⁶⁷ Gunning, T. (2004) 'What's the Point of an Index? Or, Faking Photographs', *NORDICOM Review*, vol. 5 (1/2), September, p.46

⁶⁸ 'The challenge of film theory after the events of 1968 and the writings of Althusser, was to figure out how cinema worked ideologically to constitute the subject within a system of 'imagined relations', that depended upon the individual's illusion of agency to fuel its reproduction.'

Aaron, M. (2007) *Spectatorship: The Power of Looking*, London and New York: Wallflower, p.9

⁶⁹ Wollen, P. (1972) *Signs and Meanings in the Cinema*, London: Martin Secker & Warburg Limited, p.140-1

⁷⁰ Doane, M A. (2002) *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, The Archive*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, p.174

⁷¹ Mulvey, L. (2006) 'The Possessive Spectator' in: *Death 24x a Second*, London: Reaktion Books, p.189

⁷² Wollen, P. (1972) *Signs and Meanings in the Cinema*, London: Martin Secker & Warburg Limited, p.9

the real.⁷³ However, Mullarkey cautions that film, ‘doesn’t reflect (illustrate, illuminate or represent) our philosophy – it refracts it, it distorts it with its own thinking [and] forces us to change our theory of what Philosophy and the Moving Image (thinking, philosophy) is.’⁷⁴ This reiterates that film, the form and event, is of primary concern, that it must provide the impetus and thinking should be understood through practice - film as an expression of thought (and memory).

The visualization of perception, for Bergson, was similar to viewing a stream of images, as they ‘can never be anything but things, and thought is movement’.⁷⁵ However, he perceived that the cinematic viewer’s experience was largely passive, as the rapidity of images negates proper reflection. Deleuze, in *Cinema 1*, inverts this understanding, relating movement to the viewer rather than the apparatus. He sought to address Bergson’s ‘over hasty critique of the cinema’⁷⁶, and to use this methodology to comprehend the cinematographic image. He writes that Bergson ‘makes possible another way of looking at cinema, a way in which it would no longer be just the perfected apparatus of the oldest illusion, but, on the contrary, the organ for perfecting a new reality’.⁷⁷ Mullarkey suggests that Deleuze’s ‘sleight of hand [...] shifts the reader’s attention from actual celluloid, projection rates and their effects on perception, to directorial cuts, viewed images and their effects on the brain’.⁷⁸ For Deleuze’s cinema is not to be understood as a series of still frames but as continuous movement, ‘cinema does not give us an image to which movement is added, it immediately gives us movement-image’.⁷⁹ He suggests that Bergson understood this connection but he ‘forgot’ his own discovery.⁸⁰ Stewart, in *Between Film and Screen*, found fault with this reasoning and suggested that ‘Deleuze wants only a new kind of thinking built upon a base of normative seeing’, believing that the ‘intervallic constitution’ of the image is all important, and this makes ‘possible an imaged temporality within screen motion’.⁸¹ His reckoning may be

⁷³ Stewart, G. (1999) *Between Film and Screen: Modernism’s Photosynthesis*, Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, p.327

⁷⁴ Mullarkey, J. (2009) *Philosophy and the Moving Image: Refractions of Reality*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p.11-2

⁷⁵ Bergson, H. (2004) *Matter and Memory*, Paul, N. M. and Scott Palmer, W. (trans.), New York: Dover Publications, p.125

⁷⁶ Deleuze, D. (1986) *Cinema 1*, Tomlinson, H. (trans.), London: Continuum, p.xix

⁷⁷ Ibid, p.8

⁷⁸ Mullarkey, J. (2009) *Philosophy and the Moving Image: Refractions of Reality*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p.99

⁷⁹ Ibid, p.2

⁸⁰ Ibid, p.3

⁸¹ Stewart, G. (1999) *Between Film and Screen: Modernism’s Photosynthesis*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, p.89

technically correct,⁸² however, Deleuze's assertion regards how film's images are encountered, and remembered, which is invariably as an extended sequence, a perceptual composite, in which film is seen to be comprehensibly continuous.

Deleuze desired to reassert the image and experience over signs and their meanings. Conley writes that, '[for Deleuze] Cinema is a surface on which viewers reflect their thinking, and in itself it is a medium or a machine that thinks with autonomy with respect to its viewers and creators.'⁸³ This conception, cinema as articulated thought, is reiterated by William Brown, who suggests through Deleuze's insight it is possible to perceive cinema as a 'virtual machine [...] that allows us viewers to become, and does so because it helps us to think the previously unthought, to experience the new.'⁸⁴ In this the viewer is presented with new knowledge, and depending on the nature of the film, has to work, one way or another, to extract that which was previously unknown; and this is part of what cinema does, it shows us other worlds, and allows us to reflect on cinema's time-image (its thinking, as it were).

Deleuze's hypothesis divines a shift in filmic preoccupation, moving from 'movement-image' to 'time-image', a development that he traces largely through post-World War II canonical European cinema. He suggests that there are two possible 'time-images', 'one grounded in the past, the other in the present. Each is complex and is vital for time as a whole.'⁸⁵ As an adaptation of Bergsonian temporality, these images denote a shift in, and an evoking of, another time; 'a camera-consciousness which would no longer be defined by the movements it is able to make, but by the mental connections it is able to enter into.'⁸⁶ For Deleuze this potentiality finds manifestation in the films of Resnais, amongst others, and he uses these examples to realise the primacy of thought and temporal continuity, observing, in this respect, that 'there is *a present of the future, a present of the present and a present of the past*'.⁸⁷ If this understanding of time is accepted it is clear that films like *Memento* and *Traffic* (Soderbergh, 2000) which differentiate time into separate

⁸² The frame is the singular filmic unit and film's motion, which is designed to have equivalence to, and create the illusion of, actual movement when passing through a projector at the appropriate speed, 24 frames per second is film's mechanised convention; around 14fps is the 'Critical Flicker Threshold' where stills cohere as movement; 25fps constitutes 50 fields per second for video (in the UK). Flicker fusion, the persistence of vision and beta movement each contribute to the subsequent illusion of apparent movement, achieved through optical and neuro-psychological means.

⁸³ Conley, T. (2005) 'Movement-Image', Parr, A. (ed.), *The Deleuze Dictionary*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, p.174

⁸⁴ Brown, W. (2012) Deleuze and The Lizard' in: *Deleuze and Film*, Martin-Jones, D. and Brown, W. (ed.), Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, p.100

⁸⁵ Deleuze, G. (1989) *Cinema 2*, Tomlinson, H. and Galeta, R. (trans.), London: Continuum, p.95

⁸⁶ Ibid, p.22

⁸⁷ Ibid, p.97

colour-coded realms, does not represent time as Bergson and Deleuze understand it, because for them it is a continuous cycle and, for Deleuze, this reckoning is expressed in the elliptical form of *Last Year at Marienbad* (Resnais, 1961).



An exercise in ‘mental realism.’ Alain Robbe Grillet⁸⁸

Fig. 15 *Last Year at Marienbad* (1961)

Deleuze’s conjectures, which emerged from a semiotic, structural, political stance, were countered by the self-proclaimed Cognitive and Analytic theorists, who sought to return to the text and eschew more contextual considerations; David Bordwell clearly marks the parameters of his enquiry, ‘we can, in short, study [film] narrative as *process*, the activity of selecting, arranging and rendering story material in order to achieve specific time-bound effects of the perceiver.’⁸⁹ Bordwell and Noel Carroll claim that their stance is not a theory but a position in which film is interrogated in ‘accord to with the norms of human perception.’⁹⁰ They would reduce the field of enquiry and find a type of scientific explanation and avoid the ideological and sociological questions which so preoccupied Deleuze. This would disavow difference, subject and location positioning – the intricacies of subjective interiority, cultural differentiation, social distinction and response – an acceptance that reception (and memory) is determined by contradictions, a myriad of factors and histories and not rational formulation.

⁸⁸ Robbe Grillet’s description of the film he wrote for Resnais. Cited in: Monaco, J. (1978) *Alain Resnais: The Role of Imagination*, London: Secker & Warburg, p.56

⁸⁹ Bordwell, D. (1985) *Narration in the Fiction Film*, Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, p.xi

⁹⁰ Stam, R. (2000) *Film Theory: An Introduction*, Oxford: Blackwell publishing, p.236

Other media and its relation to cinema

In *Toute la mémoire du monde* (*All the memory of the world*, 1956) Resnais and Marker depict the Bibliothèque Nationale de France⁹¹ as a supreme ‘giant memory.’ The film concludes in the expansive reading room, readers, ‘pseudo-insects’, pour over the proffered manuscripts, ‘Here we glimpse a future in which all mysteries are solved when this and other universes offer up their keys to us. And this will come about because these readers, each working on his slice of universal memory, will have laid the fragments of a single secret end to end, perhaps a secret bearing the beautiful name of “happiness”’.

The film’s narration implies that within this national institution that which can, and should, be known, can be found and will be remembered. Resnais and Marker conceived the library as an expansive and accessible repository of knowledge, a singular vision that describes a benign totality of information - this is an echo of the medieval library, such as the Biblioteca Malatestiana (Cesena, Italy) - where all extant knowledge could be acquired by reading a sequence of books - a qualification that is now no longer imaginable.



Fig. 16 *All the Memory of the World* (1956)

The universal memory that Resnais and Marker perceived was a unifying and positive entity that might facilitate ‘happiness’. The narrator in Borges’ short story, *The Library of Babel* (1941), is a

⁹¹ Established in the fourteenth century by Charles V, the library’s collections vastly increased after the 1789 revolution when the libraries of many members of the aristocracy and clergy were seized and added. It moved to the premises depicted in the film in 1886 and by the end of the nineteenth century it had become the world’s largest repository of books.

librarian, his domain is the ‘universe (which others call the Library)’⁹² Here all discernible knowledge can be found, most of the books are ‘formless and chaotic’, but there are some ‘books of apology and prophecy which vindicated for all time the acts of every man’⁹³ however this self-discovery is followed by disillusionment, because the ‘certitude that everything has been written negates us.’⁹⁴ The story alludes to the mystery of divinity, and the Librarian writes of the superstition that ‘there must exist a book which is the formula and perfect compendium of all the rest.’⁹⁵ And its sentiment iterates the earthly illusion of omnipotence.

In another Borges’ short story *Funes the Memorious* the narrator relates the tale, as he knows it, of Ireneo Funes, a man who cannot forget anything he encounters. He comments, ‘I suspect, however, that he was not capable of thought. To think is to forget differences, generalize, make abstractions.’⁹⁶ Libraries and other repositories of data, physical and virtual, act as cultural filters, as do books, which denote an author’s preferences. Libraries and other storage sites provide a predetermined framework for archiving and accessing recorded knowledge. Borges’s library is a world of seemingly limitless textual permutation, but this vastness meant that little was ever discovered. Much of Borges’ library would now seem to be a physical imagining of all that the Internet would promise; the librarian asserts that ‘man’ will always find an order and this will become *the order*, which suggests that this is actually the library’s purpose, to be systematically arranged, and the pursuit of knowledge is but an accompanying requirement.

Godard contends, that ‘there are no more simple images... The whole world is too much for an image. You need several of them, a chain of images...’⁹⁷ The contemporary proliferation of images may make them harder to account for, possibly altering context, but does this fundamentally change their individual complexity, and surely any image proffered as the world only illuminates the author’s directorial synthesis. Godard explained that *Histoire(s) du cinéma*’s technique was a way to visualise the ‘vague and complicated system that the whole world is continually entering and watching.’⁹⁸ A speculative sentiment, that is in contrast to earlier self-conscious political dictates, which refers to a now familiar and abundant visual universe, and suggests that this overwhelming imagistic multiplicity can invoke a reactive time of remembrance, one that is unique to film - Witt describes Godard’s project as ‘a time capsule filled with traces of

⁹² Borges, J. L. (1964) ‘The Library of Babel’, in: *Labyrinths*, Irby, J. E. (trans.), London: Penguin Books, p.78

⁹³ Ibid, p.82

⁹⁴ Ibid, p.85

⁹⁵ Ibid, p.83

⁹⁶ ‘Funes the Memorious’, in: Ibid, p.94

⁹⁷ Godard, J. L. (1992) *Son + Image*, Bellour, R. (ed.), New York: MoMA, p.171, quoted in: Manovich, L. (2001) *The Language of New Media*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, p.152

⁹⁸ Ibid

films', which is designed for the future.⁹⁹ Increasingly images, or sequences, are categorised and organised on our behalf, for instance on Youtube, Tumblr and other websites, where opening an image simultaneously pulls up a whole list of related images or sequences. Thus the relationship between images is emphasised at the expense of the individual image, which no longer stands alone, and viewing one image becomes a mere pretext for pursuing an endless chain of more such images.

Digital technology and the online environment have irrevocably changed the processing and presentation of the audio/visual vista, with the how and where of media engagement becoming a variable encounter, with films, which were once considered difficult to see now regularly appear (and disappear) in all forms and conditions online. Mulvey has suggested that the development of new media means 'that old films can be seen with new eyes and digital technology, rather than killing the cinema, brings it new life and new dimensions.'¹⁰⁰ She contends that this promotes a dialogue between histories and the present, in which viewers, through utilising new technology, can interrogate cinema's hidden detail, that new technologies 'reveal the beauty of the cinema but through a displacement that breaks the bond of specificity so important to my generation of filmmakers and theorists.'¹⁰¹ Is there a contradiction in these two positions or does the former one just express present reality and that this bond is now fundamentally broken, and this new realm moves considerations beyond the often fractious invocation of specificity?

In the last few decades there has been a change in film exhibition and reception, with works now being encountered on all manner of platforms and in non-cinema spaces, such as museums and galleries, which places it in a different cultural and spatial regime; for instance *Sans Soleil* (Marker, 1982) was shot on film and originally a cinematic release, before being made available on portable media, initially in the form of a VHS cassette, and later was installed in the gallery, and can now be seen in various unofficial forms online. Once, specialist playback facilities were required to access moving images, but, as Manovich writes, the arrival of the computer screen, and the potential to access a seemingly infinite flow of images, has challenged the stability of the cinema screen.¹⁰² Vinzenz Hediger suggests that new media have facilitated 'the industrialisation of film

⁹⁹ Witt, M. (2013) *Jean-Luc Godard, Cinema Historian*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p.211

¹⁰⁰ Mulvey, L. 'Stillness in the Moving Image: Ways of Visualising Time and Its Passing', in: Leighton, T. and Buchler, P. (ed.), (2003) *Saving The Image: Art After Film*, Glasgow: Centre For Contemporary, p.81

¹⁰¹ Ibid

¹⁰² Manovich, L. (2001) *The Language of New Media*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, p.96-7

cultural memory’;¹⁰³ he perceives that film’s platform migration has diminished its portent as it becomes untethered and domesticated.

Screens are now to be found, in various scales, in all private and public locations, with familiar effect. Francesco Casetti contends that cinema ‘no longer has its own place, because it is everywhere, or at least everywhere that we are dealing with aesthetics and communication.’¹⁰⁴ Do all screens, one way or another, reference cinema or are these screens more akin to television’s, and now the computer’s, infomercial flow and therefore suggestive of an enlarged and exposed domestic sphere? Fredric Jameson, in an echo of Guy Debord’s critique of the commodification of society where ‘All that once was directly lived has become mere representation’,¹⁰⁵ perceives that post-modernity is suffused with all manner of invasive images. He writes that ‘the very sphere of culture itself has expanded’, and is ‘no longer limited to its earlier, traditional or experimental forms, but is consumed throughout daily life itself.’¹⁰⁶ The proliferation of viewing platforms, coupled with a growing platform agnosticism, would seemingly differentiate viewing experiences, but as Manovich, suggests, ‘A hundred years after cinema’s birth, cinematic ways of seeing the world, structuring time, of narrating a story, of linking one experience to the next, have become the basic means by which computer users access and interact with all cultural data.’¹⁰⁷ Film’s cultural primacy may be challenged by new media’s omnipotence, but the material offered still largely respects cinematic models, its forms, protocols, techniques; content and configurations always indicate some form of previous incarnation, for nothing is without lineage (and linkage), a written (and yet to be written) history.

Agamben contends that cinema is now to be made from its own remnants, a conception that is founded in the practices of Godard and Debord and their liberal ‘re-use’ of film.¹⁰⁸ In this process cinema’s own history is being accessed and asserted and in doing so its heterogeneity is confirmed, a disparate, sometimes seemingly chaotic, assemblage. Colin MacCabe, in his biography of Godard, writes that ‘in a world where we are entertained from cradle to grave

¹⁰³ Cited it: de Valck, M. (2010) ‘Reflections on Recent Cinephilia Debates’, *Cinema Journal*, vol.49, no.2, Winter, p.137

¹⁰⁴ Casetti, F. (1999) ‘Theories of Cinema, 1945-1995’, Austin: University of Texas Press, p.315 quoted in: Burgin, V. (2004) *The Remembered Film*, London: Reaktion Books, p.9

¹⁰⁵ Debord, G. (1987) *Society of the Spectacle*, London: Rebel Press, thesis 1

¹⁰⁶ Jameson, F. (2009) *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern 1983-1998*, London/New York: Verso, p.111

¹⁰⁷ Manovich, L. (2001) *In the Language of New Media*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, p.78-9

¹⁰⁸ Agamben, G. (2002) ‘Difference and Repetition: On Guy Debord’s Films’, in: *Guy Debord and the Situationist International*, McDonough, T. (ed.), Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, p.315

whether we like it or not, the ability to rework image and dialogue, light and sound, may be the key to both psychic and political health.¹⁰⁹ His observations were written in support of Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, which was cleared for screening on Channel 4 'under the protection of the "fair dealing" provision of the British copyright act, which allows a limited amount of quotation for the purposes of criticism.'¹¹⁰ A memory of cinema was Godard's resource, and his project, whose eight 'chapters' took ten years to create, indicated a working method that is now regularly encountered under less exacting and more familiar circumstances, as the partial remembering of other films now routinely occurs online, where the copyright restrictions that are placed on public broadcasters are not adhered to, with the same rigor.

Film may have undergone a digital evolution with multi-platform possibility, but this development re-emphasises its distinct and singular form, as Manovich reflects, 'So far a computer, despite its persistent association with a human mind, has served as an even worse artistic mirror for our mind than cinema.'¹¹¹ His observation connects the lack of nuanced complexity in 'multimedia' software and the need to represent 'uniquely human, embodied thinking' of the type personified by the 'mind modeling' of Proust, Nabokov, Joyce and *Histoire(s) du cinéma*.¹¹² An age, in computing terms, has passed since Manovich recorded his frustration and the advent of new technology has afforded audio/visual work transformative powers and increased malleability, even the potential to be unconstrained by the frame, but, it would seem that alternative thinking, imaging, has yet to truly emerge.

Both film and digital video share a capacity to carry the same, or very similar, audio/visual information and practitioners who once only used film, like Marker or David Lynch, migrated to video and their practice engaged with the change in production, but largely the same preoccupations remained. For some digital means have provided a new way of imagining, such as in Alexander Sokurov's continuous history lesson from the Hermitage, in *Russian Ark* (2002), or Nolan's curved Paris dream streets, in *Inception* (2010). These innovations are a matter of technical realisation, with attendant aesthetic considerations, rather than fundamental changes in visualisation or reception. Sean Cubitt observes, that the material, emotional and intellectual effects that cinema produce, 'all share a quizzical and oblique relation to reality'.¹¹³ Film's component elements sometimes combine to make strange, even unintended affect, but they are still recognisable within its form. Until a new visual aesthetic, which eschews cinematically

¹⁰⁹ MacCabe, C. (2003) *Godard: A Portrait of the Artist at 70*, London: Bloomsbury, p. 301-2

¹¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹¹ Manovich, L. (2000) *Jump Over Proust: Toward Multimedia Writing*, [online] available at: <http://www.manovich.net/TEXT/proust.html> [accessed 15 March 2014]

¹¹² Ibid

¹¹³ Cubitt, S. (2004) *The Cinema Effect*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT press, p.1

derived viewing emerges, all developments, in this regard, are of technical rather than evolutionary interest; in visual culture, anything that requires images to be moving, always references, in some way, the film form (and our memory of it).

Even in the platform-agnostic realm cinema's affect and heterogeneity has discernible affect, its lexicon and protocol still has audio/visual dominance, which justifies continuing need to examine its instructive purchase. The tropes that have come to represent memory are utilised in all manner of films to indicate that more than one temporal plain is being invoked. This suggests the past can readily be conjured and a form of time travel can occur, and through discerning the manner in which this temporal switch is made manifest a film's conceptual position becomes known, for instance the contrast in the methodologies deployed by Resnais and Nolan is telling. There may be something in every film that strives for autonomy, and for the differentiated moment that is outside of the given order of things, when images, and sounds transcend their screen-bound presence, but some filmmakers strive to register difference and their images, sounds and ideas puncture indifference and posit a form of resistance to unthinking consumption. These films adhere to and associate with other salient works and memories, which, in turn, prompt further consideration. Film's theorization may produce multiple interpretations, but its evocative potency is evident, its practice illustrating thought in progress, and its study can offer an understanding of memory, its constitution and representation. This conceptualising of memory, the endeavour to give it form, finds a unique and instructive mode of expression through film and in Part 2. 'In Time: Films, Associations and Other Memories', the four case studies will be analyzed in conceptual and contextual detail and the ideas outlined in Part 1 will be cross-examined through practice.

PART 2.

IN TIME: FILMS AND OTHER MEMORIES

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.
'Burnt Norton', *Four Quartets*, T.S. Eliot, 1943

IV. MURIEL, OR THE TIME OF A RETURN: THE IMPORTANCE OF TIME (AND IMAGINATION)



Fig. 17 *Muriel, or the Time of a Return* (1963)

Muriel, or The Time of Return (1963), directed by Alain Resnais' (1922-2014), deftly suggests shifts in time, and its understanding and offers a partisan vision of post war and colonial France, a state struggling to find contemporary constitution. This brought the political into the private realm, the relationship between individual and nation, self-determination and communal responsibility, a reckoning that saw cultural equivalence, with these concerns finding film form. Through focusing on a familial drama in provincial Boulogne *Muriel* considers the scars of conflict and whether their marks can ever be excised; in this regard it questions the surety of memory - how it is internalised, expressed, changes - and how it can be made manifest. *Muriel* brings into focus a number of still timely concerns and through its analysis, and contextual augmentation, these questions and positions will be considered.

Resnais was part of a generation of filmmakers who were 'brought up in the shadow of the Cinémathèque Française, the first generation for whom film history has meaning and has been important in the development of their own work.'¹ These filmmakers would reflect on the meaning of cinema and its place within the cultural vista; asking what could, should cinema be: a story-telling machine derived from theatre or something closer to modernist literary prose, poetry, or even music, a means to think and let thoughts be known.

¹ Richard Roud quoted in: (1969) 'Retrospective Trace Career of Alain Resnais', *The Museum of Modern Art*, New York, March 31, [online] Available at: http://www.moma.org/docs/press_archives/4231/releases/MOMA_1969_Jan-June_0064_44.pdf [2010] [accessed 16 September 2013]

In considered how both the *Cahiers du Cinéma* and Left Bank groups responded to the 50s ‘information explosion’,² Ray Durgnat saw a coming together, and confounding, of ideas, and desired to interrogate film practice; he observed that the Left Bank Group’s mood of ‘interdisciplinary’ investigation and experimentation ‘marked a qualitative change in movie language and agenda.’³ Durgnat suggested that this ‘project’ could still reward analysis, and lists the elements that he identifies as being exemplary: a “critical poetry” mainstream; a solid materialism (non-naïve realism); a Wittgensteinian emphasis on the limits of discourse; virtuoso movie craftsmanship; and a non-academic avant-garde drive;⁴ qualities that can be applied to both Resnais’ documentaries and dramas.

For Resnais narrative was to be the means for him to explore his interests, he states, ‘I can’t imagine a film in which the contact with the audience is not achieved by some form of dramatic construction.’⁵ The film critic Jonathan Rosenbaum contends that Resnais is the ‘unacknowledged inspiration for most of the significant narrative experiments in movies since the 60s.’⁶ Resnais first three feature films, *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959), *L’année dernière à Marienbad* (*Last Year at Marienbad*, 1961) and *Muriel ou le Temps d’un retour* (*Muriel, or the Time of a Return*, 1963), indicated that the invocation of the past, was a timely and instructive preoccupation; Monaco, in his study of Resnais, writes that, ‘Without memory we should have no past, only a series of presents which changed before we were even aware of them.’⁷ These films, the framed memory of Hiroshima’s destruction, a baroque dreamlike puzzle, the affect of history and the trace of personal memory, make manifest a distinct and pluralistic temporality and topography that supersedes usual expository movement, a narrative complexity that subsequent visions have struggled to truly encompass.

The form of Resnais’ first two feature films emanated from the subjectivity of their lead characters, but *Muriel*’s narrative is shared, with no one character responsible for its intonation. Monaco comments, ‘For the first time in *Muriel* Resnais makes the oppression of imagined pasts human.’⁸ The film’s aesthetics and techniques aid the personification of encounter, the expression of memory and history and it offers some contextual understanding for the personal

² Durgnat, R. (1987) ‘Resnais & Co: Back to the Avant-garde’, *Monthly Film Bulletin* (London), 54/640, p.132

³ Ibid, p.132-3

⁴ Ibid, p.132

⁵ Roud, R. (1969) ‘Memories of Resnais’, *Sight and Sound*, 38 / 3, Summer, p.128

⁶ Rosenbaum, J. (2004) ‘A Stylist Hits His Stride (*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*)’, *Chicago Reader*, March 19, [online] Available at: <http://www.jonathanrosenbaum.com/?p=6070> [accessed 20 May 2014]

⁷ Monaco, J. (1978) *Alain Resnais: The Role of Imagination*, London: Secker & Warburg, p.10

⁸ Ibid, p. 95

(even national) state of disillusion; does Resnais' method achieve a representation of time (everyday personal experience and the machinations that constitute a nation's history) in its elaboration or just render it as effect, and does his elevation of the personified narrative objectify, or diminish, any attendant political commentary? His film is not overtly political, like the work of Godard and Debord, but does *Muriel* actually show, communicate something as equally radical, and perhaps with even more lasting affect?

Appearances and Disappearances in a pre and post war provincial town

- Open on: *A partially open internal door. A woman's brown leather glove grips the door handle. The cuff of her brown fur coat is visible.*
- Woman: What I really need is a chest of draws.
- Cut to: *A stove. On it a kettle is boiling, beside it is a glass and part of a coffee maker.*
- Cut to: *The brown fur coat. The right gloved hand is holding a square shaped brown leather handbag.*
- Cut to: *Another woman's hand is holding a low burning cigarette. She is wearing a beige cardigan. She lifts the cigarette to her mouth – the camera follows - she is attractive and middle-aged with grey streaked hair. She is Hélène.*
- Woman: Four feet, no more.
The hand holding the cigarette returns to its original position – the camera follows.
- Cut to: *The brown leather glove gripping the door handle.*
- Woman: It's to go between the windows.
- Cut to: *Water from the kettle is poured into the coffee maker.*
- Cut to: *An ornate brass chandelier.*
- Woman: But if you can't find one...
- Cut to: *The back of a carved dark chair. A polished dresser stands behind it.*
- Cut to: *The brown leather glove gripping the door handle.*
- Cut to: *A dull metal dish full of glass objects on a tabletop.*
- Cut to: *An ornate black clock, with a gold face and details, a small 'price' tag is visible.*
- Cut to: *The brown leather glove gripping the door handle.*
- Woman: I'll buy a Swedish teak table.
- Cut to: *A dull wall hanging that depicts a ruined classical temple.*
- Cut to: *A small glass chandelier.*
- Cut to: *The brown leather glove gripping the door handle.*
- Cut to: *A man's hand removes the coffee maker from the stove. The blue cuff of his sweater is visible.*
- Cut to: *The back of the Woman's head. The coat has a matching hat. Beyond her Hélène, is standing, arms crossed, smiling politely.*
- Cut to: *The Woman's face. She is younger than Hélène.*
- Woman: I don't want my apartment to look old.
- Cut to: *The Woman's profile.*
- Cut to: *The Woman's head turned.*
- Cut to: *Detail of the Woman's fur coat.*
- Cut to: *Hélène has a metal tape measure in her hands, which she retracts.*

Cut to: *The edge of Hélène's checked wool skirt, stocking covered legs and black slip on shoes with a low heel. She twists a foot on the parquet floor.*

Cut to: *Woman's head and shoulder.*

Woman: You'll need to satisfy both my taste and my husband's.
(Pause)
 You know what I want. I'm counting on you.
She turns to leave.

Cut to: *The apartment's exterior. The Woman opens a green door. Hélène follows her to the door.*

Woman: I need the frame to be in good condition. Good night.
 Hélène: Good night.
The Woman leaves and Hélène shuts the door.

Resnais' film begins with no establishing shots, little by the way of introduction, just a rapid and intricate montage, a form of temporal and spatial ordering, as all manner of different relations and histories are shown and alluded to - Jacques Rivette commented that 'From the moment of the opening shots what you are given is clues, every shot is a clue – in other words, it's both the imprint left by an action and what the action entails, its mystery.'⁹ Time is recorded across the apartment's artefacts and furnishings. Each carefully framed object embodies a displaced history and its provenance confers aspirational (and mercantile) value. This sequence is indicative of the film's flowing and complex montages, overlapping memories and historical vistas. In *Poetics of Space* Bachelard presented the house as the place to find the trace of time, where 'a great many of our memories are housed'.¹⁰ This scene, in which Hélène Augain appears to be selling the contents of her home, implies reduced circumstances and a present that indicates past upheaval (for her, others, the nation), as the furnishings seem to belong somewhere else; and they, in turn are imbued with the passage of existence.

After Hélène's customer, has departed, she and her stepson, Bernard, the apartment's other inhabitant, are left alone; she became part of Bernard's life when his father remarried, after Bernard's mother had died in World War II. He is another European orphan, lost and symbolic. Their familial situation locates the film's relational drama; Hélène is going to meet Alphonse, an old lover who she has invited to stay at Boulogne's railway station; Bernard acts disinterested, he is going to meet his girlfriend.

⁹ From a 1963 *Cahiers du Cinéma* roundtable discussion of *Muriel* quoted in: Kite, B. (2009) 'Everything is just like you', *Muriel* DVD booklet, Eureka! The Masters of Cinema Series, p.14

¹⁰ Bachelard, G. (2014) *The Poetics of Space*, Jolas, M. (trans.), London: Penguin Books, p.30



Bernard Aughain (Jean-Baptiste Thierrée) and Hélène Aughain (Delphine Seyrig)
Fig. 18 *Muriel, or the Time of a Return* (1963)

The film's drama occurs between Saturday, 29 September, and Sunday, 14 October, 1962, the dates of Alphonse's arrival and departure. He arrives with a woman he claims to be his niece, Françoise, an aspiring actress, in tow; it is quickly established that she is in fact his lover, however their relationship is evidently waning and Hélène seems unconcerned by her appearance.



Françoise (Nita Klein) and Alphonse Noyard (Jean-Pierre Kérien)
Fig. 19 *Muriel, or the Time of a Return* (1963)

Alphonse's return indicates something of Hélène's present unhappiness and her wish to re-visit the past. Their previous relationship was troubled, and ended with him abandoning her, but

despite all that she knows she still entertains the possibility of a shared life. Like *Hiroshima mon Amour*'s woman from Nevers, Hélène is trapped in time. Her affair may not carry the same traumatic weight, but she is still paralyzed by its effect.

Muriel is located in the coastal town of Boulogne - the only visual divergence is through Bernard's 8 mm film of Algeria, which he shot whilst doing his military service; Resnais reported that it,

'Began with an idea: one day on the stairs, [Jean] Cayrol [who was to write the film] said, "I've got an idea you might like, a film about provincial life. Wouldn't you like the idea of a movie about a kind of double city – pre-war and post-war with people who can't find their way anymore because the new streets don't follow the lines of the old ones?" Of course, I was interested.'¹¹

The film's sensibility relates to the *nouveau roman*, and is to be understood as such, a formulation founded in structural interplay with often seemingly opaque psychological motivations. Deleuze writes that 'Resnais has often declared that it is not characters that interest him but the feelings that he could extract from them like their shadows, depending on which regions of past they are placed in.'¹² Resnais considered that 'modern life is fragmented'¹³ - *Muriel*'s temporal progression is never clearly demarcated, suggesting the mental time of consciousness and the compulsion to remember (and forget). Its narrative is a matter of association, which conjures multiple temporal streams and its drive resides in the interplay between place, time and its inhabitants; the film forgoes physical flashbacks, but introduces all manner of emotional and cerebral ones, moments, realizations, that transport the characters to other places and times. It is the depiction of space (in time) that orientates the film and it is the observable accumulation of evidence that offers some explanation in a way that the film's protagonists cannot.

Resnais does not make direct reference to Henri Bergson, but his desire to encapsulate heterogenous movement within his films places him within the philosopher's cast; in *Alain Resnais, or the Theme of Time* Ward observes that 'The framework within which the act of synthesis [Resnais's filmmaking] is made possible is the philosophy of Henri Bergson, augmented by an almost Proustian obsession with associationism.'¹⁴ Resnais said, 'I've always refused the word "memory" a propos my work, I'd use the word "imagination"',¹⁵ which would seem to emphasise a Bergsonian understanding of film, in that the present, and the promise of the future, are founded in imagination, whilst everything that follows the moment of registration quickly passes into memory. The film's narrative is always present; the past is inferred through recollection, the

¹¹ Roud, R. (1969) 'Memories of Resnais', *Sight and Sound*, 38/3, Summer, p.125

¹² Deleuze, D. (1989) *Cinema 2*, Tomlinson, H. and Galeta, R. (trans.), London: Continuum, p.129

¹³ Armes, R. (1968) *The Cinema of Alain Resnais*, London: A. Zwemmer, p. 120

¹⁴ Ward, J. (1968) *Alain Resnais, or the Theme of Time*, London: Secker & Warburg, p.7

¹⁵ Cited in: Monaco, J. (1978) *Alain Resnais: The Role of Imagination*, London: Secker & Warburg, p.11

mark of time, as Bergson thought, ‘we pluck out of duration those moments that interest us, and that we have gathered along its course.’¹⁶ Kilbourn writes that for Resnais,

‘Memory is always an effect of the combination of the “objective” and “subjective”, voluntary and involuntary, conscious and unconscious, etc. Memory in this sense is a kind of representation system or mode of narrating or mediating experience: a structure over which individual agency only ever has partial control.’¹⁷

How can memory and imagination be differentiated? Sartre suggested that ‘what distinguishes memory from imagination is not some particular feature of the image but the fact that memory is, while imagination is not, concerned with the *real*.’¹⁸ Furthermore he stated that ‘if I recall an event of my past life, I do not imagine it, I *remember* it’,¹⁹ asserting that this is a real action. This matter is further complicated if considered within the context of a work of art. Even within the imaginative realm we are constrained by that which we know. This suggests that memory is within both past and future (‘the living future and the imagined future’),²⁰ that the past is ‘one mode of real existence among others’²¹ and that it is embedded within reality. If a memory is altered, for whatever reason, it becomes, by degrees, a work of imagination, because memory is built upon that which is known.



Fig. 21 *Muriel, or the Time of a Return* (1963)

¹⁶ Bergson, H. (1911) *Creative Evolution*, Mitchell, A. (trans.) London: Macmillan, p.288

¹⁷ Kilbourn, R. J. A. (2012) *Cinema, Memory, Modernity: The Representation of Memory from Art Film to Transnational Cinema*, London: Routledge, p.57

¹⁸ Warnock, M. (1987) *Memory*, London: Faber & Faber, p.34

¹⁹ Sartre, J. P. (2004) *The Imaginary: A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination*, Webber, J. (trans.), London/New York: Routledge, p.181

²⁰ Warnock, M. (1987) *Memory*, London: Faber & Faber, p.34

²¹ Sartre, J. P. (2004) *The Imaginary: A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination*, Webber, J. (trans.), London/ New York: Routledge, p.181

France's colonial complications, seeming intransience, informs the film's context. Bernard served in Algeria, for twenty-two months, and even though he is now demobbed he is still beholden to his memory of that time - he is particularly haunted by his part in the killing of a local woman, who may be called Muriel. Alphonse states he was also there for fifteen years – he ran a self-styled 'influential' café. He returned to France, two years ago, but he has struggled to settle down. However, Ernest, Alphonse's brother-in-law, tells another story. Ernest has followed Alphonse to Boulogne. He traces him to Hélène's apartment where he reveals that Alphonse was never in Algiers, his war record is an invention, that he is in fact fleeing a bankrupt restaurant and his wife, Simone, and his memories of his relationship with Hélène are in fact another fabrication; Ernest claims that some of Alphonse's memories are actually appropriated from his own time with Hélène – she does not comment on this situation, it's as if her memory of what may have happened, and what she wanted to happen, are at odds. After Ernest's denunciation, Alphonse, in palpable desperation, grabs him by the collar. Bernard, delighted, starts filming; he tells Françoise to get his tape recorder. But, rather than documenting the fight, she turns it on, and it emits laughter. This jarring emission causes Bernard to tearfully breakdown. He then rushes from the apartment. It is only after this shock that Hélène becomes presently aware - Alphonse's duplicity, her compulsive gambling and faltering business have been pressing distractions – and she follows Bernard out onto the street.



Marie-Dominique (Martine Vatel)
Fig. 20 *Muriel, or the Time of a Return* (1963)

Earlier, one Sunday morning, Bernard rides a white horse along Boulogne's cliffs, a symbolic image of freedom that is at odds with his repressed and conflicted characterization, and in this regard his relationships with women are particularly revealing. He may claim his girlfriend is called Muriel, however, in the time of the film, she is a young French woman, Marie-Do; their

relationship appears largely sexual, he does not show commitment - when she tells him that she is going to Montevideo, for three years, he reacts with a lack of concern. Françoise is also interested in Bernard, but he is unresponsive, being preoccupied with Muriel. When Françoise reacts against the oppression of the Aughain's collective past, she tells Bernard 'I'm sick of this dump that's fuelled by memories', and decides to return to Paris. Of all the primary characters, only Marie-do and Françoise appear to be unfettered by stifling memories and are able to pull free of the past.

In the film's finale Bernard shoots, dead a former military comrade, Robert, whom he blames for Muriel's death. Also, Alphonse departs - Ernest intends to escort him back to Simone - but he manages to give him the slip and jumps onto the first bus that he sees. Hélène, unaware of Alphonse's escape, goes to the railway station to see him off, but on arrival a porter tells her that the Paris train no longer stops at this station, for 'It's all changed'; this is endemic of her relationship with time's progression and her idealized memory of her affair with Alphonse. For him the present will always be too real, troubling, so he rejects his life's presumed course once again and flees from it. After the fatal shooting Bernard tells Hélène, who is blissfully unaware of his action, that he is leaving, perhaps now he can move on.

In the very final scene Simone locates Hélène's apartment. The front door is open, so she lets herself in. The remnants of lunch are still on the table. She looks through the rooms – the apartment is deserted. Her movements are tracked by the camera, which is in motion for the first time, and accompanied by the score's rising lament - Hans Werner Henze's score for voice and orchestra plays with, and against, the narrative, a non-digetic overview of all that occurs, emphasizing, through its modernist accents, all that is, or is not, being said. She leaves but the camera remains, fixed, once more, in its gaze, waiting, as it were, for someone to return to the frame, for something to happen.

Wartime, trauma, recall

This period of production was a time of profound uncertainty, in which history's lessons and questions seemed particularly troubling and unresolved, but also a time of change, France's waning power had been brutally exposed in Indo-China and Algeria, the aftermath of its Independence had produced an undeclared civil war, also the scars of World War II were yet to heal with many still struggling to admit complicity, lulling in fatalistic complacency. *Muriel* resonates with this prevailing mood and its narrative continually struggles with the consequences

of the past and the challenge, and possibility, of change, domestic and public visions, the wear and evidence of time.

Muriel's writer, Cayrol, had previously worked with Resnais on *Night and Fog* (1955). He had been a member of the French resistance; in 1943 he was betrayed and sent to the Gusen concentration camp. Following his imprisonment he suffered from bouts of amnesia - he says, 'I write and make films to "return": it's always the problem of memory regained'²² - an experience that affected his understanding of memory, perceiving it to be an 'alternate reality, equal in value to present experience.'²³ He was to be Resnais' third feature film literary collaborator, after Marguerite Duras and Alain Robbe-Grillet - Resnais observed, 'I think it's because I was not choosing these screenwriters because they were writers but because they had a hidden desire to make films'²⁴ – and his text shows traces of Duras' direct eye and ear and Robbe-Grillet's conceptual structure. That which is encountered in *Muriel* is invariably in some form of repetition or reflection; Cayrol commented that 'the film's characters are always between two memories, between two times, between two passions, unstable, badly put, not knowing the limits of their existence.'²⁵ Cayrol's scrip suggests that behaviour follows certain unavoidable patterns and that the pull of the past is hard to resist.

This sense of fatalism is perhaps understandable in a post-war and cold war context, but Existentialism, the philosophy that seemed to have a relevance, and subsequent notoriety after 1945, would promote individualism, 'an attitude of self-consciousness'²⁶ against this sense of determinism. Within existential understanding, human essence, or what it was to be alive, is seen as being contingent and absurd;²⁷ knowledge can only be found outside the general meaninglessness of communal existence and within oneself. Albert Camus's first novel, *L'Étranger* (*The Outsider*, 1942), portrayed 'man's "absurd" lot'²⁸, and he came to be seen a 'spokesperson' for the philosophy (and the French Resistance, due to his articles for the clandestine newspaper *Combat*).²⁹ However, in time he disavowed this political association, not wanting to be creatively and intellectually constricted by prescriptive definitions.³⁰

²² Cited in: Armes, R. (1968) *The Cinema of Alain Resnais*, London: A. Zwemmer, p. 120

²³ Monaco, J. (1978) *Alain Resnais: The Role of Imagination*, London: Secker & Warburg, p.75

²⁴ Ibid, p.29

²⁵ Cited in: Bounoure, G. (1962) *Alain Resnais*, Paris: Editions Seghers, p.56, cited in: Ibid, p.87

²⁶ Solomon, R. C. (2005) *Existentialism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.xiii

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Zaretsky, R. (2010) *Albert Camus – Elements of a Life*, New York: Cornell University Press, p.52

²⁹ Ibid, p.7

³⁰ Ibid, p. 97

In the *The Outsider*'s afterword Camus wrote that his protagonist, Meursault, a man who has killed an Arab, is 'driven by a tenacious and therefore profound passion, the passion for an absolute and for truth.'³¹ Camus was a pied-noir, a Frenchman born in North Africa. He supported French Algeria but objected to the repressive colonial form that it took. In his novel he invoked the impartiality of those who sat in judgment of Meursault, but this description of social equality ran counter to the racist reality of the time; it was a fiction that he desired to be fact. A majority of the pied-noir strongly rejected the prospect of an independent Algeria; it had been considered an integral part of France since 1830. Camus refused to accept that violence was justified in the pursuit, or defense, of freedom and foresaw that violent revolution would only beget more tragedy, a belief that had been formed in the recriminations that followed France's World War II liberation as he came 'to doubt the logic of uncompromising justice.'³²

De Gaulle had become president again in May 1958, and it was generally thought, due to his military background and political record, that he would maintain the status quo, therefore when he granted Algeria its independence in 1962 the pied-noir felt bitterly betrayed. This political decision, the displacement of the Algerian-born French nationals, raised the question of what did it mean to be French, and did it include Europeans and Arabs alike? This vexed issue afflicts all nation states that have a colonial past. When Alphonse imagined his café its customers were to be pied-noir. Alphonse's stories, believable in their mundane detail, are constructed to suggest the life he desired, but they also illustrated a conservative mistrust of France's changing composition.

Bernard enlisted before his call-up, but his sense of patriotic duty was defused by the actuality of conflict. On his return to Boulogne he inadvertently encounters Robert, a man who may have killed Muriel. Robert advises Bernard to forget Muriel, and remember the plans they made when they were demobilized, reminding him of De Gaulle's betrayal. The President's diplomatic pragmatism may have left France nominally at peace for the first time since the beginning of World War II, but it resulted in the very real possibility of civil war. Robert's plans are never made explicit, but it is implied that they relate to the OAS (Organisation armée secrète), a terrorist conspiracy that consisted primarily of disaffected soldiers who sought to avenge France's defeat by destabilising the French state and assassinating De Gaulle. The OAS campaign, which was part of a violent anti-Semitic and nationalist tradition that had embraced the Vichy regime, invoked uncomfortable memories of earlier conflicts and internal divisions. France's post-war attempt to project strength and maintain colonial claims, in North Africa and

³¹ Camus, A. (1981) *The Outsider*, London: Laredo, J. (trans.), Penguin Modern Classics, p.119

³² Zaretsky, R. (2010) *Albert Camus – Elements of a Life*, New York: Cornell University Press, p.70

Indochina, had proved to be forlorn delusions and consequently exacerbated societal fears, as Robert observes, ‘The main thing is that French people feel alone. They’re scared stiff.’

Godard was to be the first filmmaker to directly reference the Algerian conflict. *Le Petit Soldat* (*The Little Soldier*, 1960) was initially banned, and was not shown for three years, because it explicitly referenced France’s use of torture as a counter-terrorist tool against the FLN (National Liberation Front); Colin MacCabe writes, ‘Any film about France’s quasi civil war, whatever the opacity of its politics, or perhaps particularly because of the opacity of its politics, was political dynamite.’³³ In considering the representation of the Algerian struggle Gillo Pontecorvo’s *The Battle of Algiers* (1966), through its documentary like dramatization of the strategies of insurgency and counter insurgency, created a detailed and celebrated analysis of a violent conflict in which both sides utilised targeted terror; it was not screened in France till 1971 due to official censorship and pro-OAS threats.³⁴ The film focuses on 1954-57, the years when the Algerian guerillas formulated new terrorist strategies, urban rather than rural, choosing to operate from within the Casbah. The French forces, through state sanctioned repression, torture and assassination, neutralized the FLN leadership, but in winning the battle, by any means necessary, the populace were radicalized and ultimately the war was lost.

Night and Fog also ran afoul of the French authorities. It begins with images of prisoners being corralled by uniformed figures, accompanied by a voice-over that informs that this scene occurred right across Nazi occupied Europe. One of the featured photographs was taken at the French concentration camp, Pithiviers, and in the corner of the frame a gendarme, his insignia indicates his nationality, can be seen watching the scene. Resnais managed to reach a compromise with the censors and superimposed a beam over this offending French guard.³⁵ *The Sorrow and the Pity* (Ophuls, 1969) was also considered problematic in its exposure of France’s often inglorious Second World War, and the convenient Gaullist myth that every man and woman had in some way supported and worked towards France’s liberation, it had been originally commissioned for television broadcast but was rejected for being unpatriotic; it had a cinematic release in 1971 but it was not shown in its intended form until 1981. French narrative film also reflected this cultural turn, moving from the resourceful heroics of *Un condamné à mort s'est échappé ou Le vent souffle où il veut* (*A Man Escaped or: The Wind Bloweth Where It Listeth*, Bresson, 1956), to the valiant but bleak *L'armée des ombres* (*Army of Shadows*, Melville, 1969), to the explicit collaboration and capitulation of *Lacombe Lucien* (Malle, 1974).

³³ MacCabe, C. (2003) *Godard: a Portrait of the Artist at 70*, London: Bloomsbury, p.132-3

³⁴ Cowie, P. (2004) *Revolution! The Explosion of World Cinema in the 60s*, London: Faber & Faber, p.172-3

³⁵ Wilson, E. (2005) ‘Material Remains: Night and Fog’, *October*, no. 112, p.97

Night and Fog was produced a decade after the Allied victory in Europe, and even though the spectre of the concentration camps was still present, their actuality was beginning to fade, in Louis Marcorelles's telling phrase 'the inexorable forgetfulness of the present'.³⁶ The film sought to show that which is beyond representation, yet requires remembrance, for 'as Resnais never tires of affirming, memory does more than preserve, it also creates'.³⁷ Emphasising this conjecture, Carr contends that 'The past is intelligible to us only in the light of the present; and we can fully understand the present only in the light of the past'.³⁸ Emma Wilson outlines Resnais's conceptual dilemma:

'As in his experimentation with still and moving images, so more broadly Resnais is concerned to unsettle his viewer (to irritate our senses in Bersani's terms) and, in particular, to bring us close to the matter, substance, and affect of the images he manipulates. He seeks indeed to make the image distressingly manipulable, tangible, sentient, graspable.'³⁹



Fig. 22 *Night and Fog* (1955)

Night and Fog, with its affirmation of death and survival, its deadened, informed voice, slow and detailed inspection of the vacated architectural mausoleum, a scarred and tell-tale relic, directly locates what has been, McQuire writes that, its 'images of atrocity [are redeemed] not only from

³⁶ Marcorelles, L. (1959-60) 'Alain Rensnais and Hirishima Mon Amour', *Sight and Sound*, winter, p.13

³⁷ Ward, J. (1968) *Alain Resnais, or the Theme of Time*, London: Secker & Warburg, p.14

³⁸ Carr, E. H. (1961) *What is History*, 2nd ed., London: Penguin Books, p.55

³⁹ Wilson, E. (2005) 'Material Remains: Night and Fog', *October*, no. 112, p.104

the forgetfulness of historical absence, but also from the forgetfulness of banality.⁴⁰ However, Claude Lanzmann criticized Resnais and Cayrol's failure to directly name what they depict as a predominately Jewish experience, and their decision to show the bodies of the dead.⁴¹ But, their film considers concentration camps, not the Holocaust, the emaciated detainees are referred to as 'prisoners' (their racial or religious identity is not offered) and images of their fate, footage that had previously been seen in the newsreels shot after the camps' liberation, marked the consciousness of all that came into their presence; Wilson writes the Resnais' conception bids 'to unsettle how and what we see, to make the visceral shudder of the indeterminacy of living and dead matter.'⁴²

Lanzmann's epic documentary *Shoah* (1985) may not feature archival footage, relying as it does on contemporary interviews, but every piece of testimony suggests all that Lanzmann excludes, therefore to watch *Shoah* is also to remember *Night and Fog*, and all the other films which make use of archival material. Griselda Pollock and Max Silverman suggest that Resnais's film is 'not about absence and absenting', which is the subject of *Shoah*, but is about the 'terror and systematic operations' of concentration camps.⁴³ They indicate that it would be wrong to see these two films in opposition; Lanzmann envisaged his film as a 'resistance to representation', in which historical events are located in the present, but his film, as with Resnais', should be seen in the context of its production; by the 1980s the representation of the Holocaust had passed into knowing and commodified horror, however, when *Night and Fog* was produced this archival material had yet to be desensitised.⁴⁴ They classify *Night and Fog* as being part of 'concentrationary cinema', a form that utilises 'radical techniques of montage and disorientation', and 'connects the living to the dead, past to present, here to there in order to shock us out of comforting dichotomies that keep the past 'over there', and as a form it also embraces *Hiroshima mon amour*, Muriel and Marker's *La Jetée* (1962).⁴⁵ Through Resnais's method, the manifestation of memory becomes a testament, not a definitive statement for nothing can take on that mantle, but it contains seemingly off-hand and elemental disjuncture that still unsettles and provokes.

After *Night and Fog* Resnais was commissioned to make a documentary about the atomic bomb, but he felt unable to do so; he did not wish to revisit his previous film and document

⁴⁰ McQuire, S. (1998) *Visions of Modernity: Representation, Memory, Time and Space in the Age of Camera*, London: Sage Publications, p.154

⁴¹ Ibid, p.91

⁴² Ibid, p.102

⁴³ Pollock, G. and Silverman, M. (ed.) (2011) *Concentrationary Cinema: Aesthetics as Political Resistance in Alain Resnais's Night and Fog*, Oxford/New York: Berghahn Books, p.38

⁴⁴ Ibid, p.39-42

⁴⁵ Ibid, p.1-2

monumental suffering and perceptual incomprehension again.⁴⁶ So he turned to Duras and the result, *Hiroshima mon amour*, combined documentary observation, a metaphorical love story and reflective history, she commented, ‘All one can do is talk about the impossibility of talking about Hiroshima. The knowledge of Hiroshima being stated *a priori* by an exemplary delusion of the mind.’⁴⁷ Her staged dialogue and scenarios, never naturalistic ventriloquism, deploy a rhetorical form to question the validity of what is known and how it can be communicated. Duras termed this approach as being one of ‘false documentary’,⁴⁸ a position that implies through dramatic contrivance true fiction can occur, as fiction can also allow a truth, as it were, to be realised. *Muriel’s* dramatic relating of the effect and trauma of conflict evolved from *Night and Fog*’s self-awareness, from its intention to show, without illustration, and invoke what has been, without settled contemplation, as it explored the creative freedom of ‘false documentary’ to portray an understanding of France’s post-war situation.

All that home movies show



Fig. 23 *Muriel, or the Time of a Return* (1963)

After Alphonse’s arrival Bernard chose to sleep at his studio. One day Hélène decides to visit him, but he is absent. She looks around and then turns on his 8mm projector. The image of a busy souq is illuminated before it catches fire and burns in the projector’s gate. When we see

⁴⁶ Monaco, J. (1978) *Alain Resnais: The Role of Imagination*, London: Secker & Warburg, p.34

⁴⁷ Ibid, p.37

⁴⁸ Ibid, p.35

the heat radiate across the frame more than just an image is being destroyed, time itself is being effaced, but our ability to view what has been reiterates time's continuing affect.

It is rare, particularly in feature films, to see the mechanised nature of film, its material inscription and fragility, so exposed. The insertion of the 8mm film provides another textual and temporal surface, as do Bernard's photographs and hand-written notebook. The contrast between the resplendent lustre of the feature film's 35 mm and the worn and grainy texture of Bernard's 8 mm is marked, but this lowly gauge, with its amateur, home-movie connotations, offers an incidental authenticity.

Throughout *Muriel* Bernard films Boulogne and its inhabitants, his appearance with a camera is never thought to be particularly noteworthy and the footage is never seen; he is 'collecting evidence' documenting the conditions that allowed torture to happen; he wishes to see and indict a sensibility, a people, a country. In Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* (1960) we see another young man, Mark Lewis (Karlheinz Böhm), who also has an interest in filming all that he encounters with a 16 mm camera. However, the films he shoots invariably culminate in the death of a woman; he has attached a mirror to his camera, so his victims are forced to view their own deaths. Lewis's films may be black and white, but they do not show the requisite characteristics of 16 mm: the on screen resolution is no different from the parent 35 mm film, whereas Bernard's is clearly what it purports to be. *Peeping Tom* concludes with Lewis killing himself. He dies in the same fashion as his victims, by stabbing himself with a sharpened tripod leg, and in doing so finishes, as it were, his film. Powell's film emphasises the predatory aspect of the camera, and at times we are offered Lewis's point-of-view as he tracks his victims, as Susan Sontag writes, the film 'assumes connections between impotence and aggression, professionalized looking and cruelty, which point to the central fantasy connected with the camera.'⁴⁹ Lewis's scopophilia, a sexualised pleasure in watching those engaged in some form of sexual activity, is mirrored by the film audience's own voyeurism, the pleasure they derive from being 'safely' thrilled and horrified. Bernard's film does not contain such dramatic evidence, but his Algerian memories add meaning to his footage and change its connotations, a retroactive composite of the conditions of action.

In one of *Muriel's* key scenes, Bernard, projects a 'tin of rushes' in his studio, which he views with the local odd job man. We see, a scratchy 8 mm color film, Bernard provides a commentary as it plays:

'No one knew this woman before.' Images of a barren landscape, a young soldier comes into view. 'The warehouse was at the back of the courtyard.' Target practice.

⁴⁹ Sontag, S. (1977) *On Photography*, London: Penguin Books, p.13

'I didn't see her at first... I bumped into her as I approached the table.' Soldiers in country. 'She seemed to be asleep but she was trembling all over.' Eating rations. 'They told me she was called Muriel... I don't know how but I knew it wasn't her real name.' Dishes of food – an Arab eats. 'There must have been five of us standing chatting around her.' A field-gun in action. 'We had to get rid of her before nightfall.' A howitzer fires. 'Robert bent down and turned her over...' Two relaxed soldiers walk down a slope. 'She covered her eyes with her arm... He dropped her... She fell like a bundle.' The soldiers acknowledge the cameraman. 'Robert kicked her in the hips.' A city. 'He took a torch and shone it on her... She was foaming at the mouth... They tore off her clothes... They tried to sit her in a chair.' The soldiers play fight. 'One of her arms was all twisted... They had to finish what they started... She couldn't have talked if she'd wanted to... I joined in.' Digging a hole. 'Muriel groaned as I slapped her... My palms were burning... Muriel's hair was all wet...' An army truck on a country road. 'She stared straight at me...' The city again. 'She shut her eyes... Then she started vomiting.' Children and soldiers fraternize. Plucking dead birds. 'I left them all there.' Washing socks. 'That night I went back to see her.' Children by an army tent. 'I lifted the cover.' A soldier shakes the hand of a child. 'It was as if she'd been in the water for a long time.' Soldiers in a café. Soldiers swim. 'She was like a sack of potatoes that had been ripped open.' Arabs. 'Her body was covered in blood. So was her hair. She had burns on her chest.' A soldier strolls by. 'Muriel's eyes were open... I hardly felt anything.' Soldiers try and enter a house. 'I went to bed.' They throw rocks at the door. 'I slept well...'

The film cuts back to Bernard, his head is resting upon his hands, he continues, '...Robert had got rid of her.' The odd job man speaks for the first time, 'And where is that guy now?' Bernard replies, 'Traipsing round Boulogne like everyone else.' The man considers and then offers, 'Once you start digging you can never get out of the hole.' White leader spins out.



Fig. 24 *Muriel, or the Time of a Return* (1963)

Bernard films as any sightseer might and his images appear unedited, as the picturesque mingles with the mundane. Bernard and his comrades are at war, but the fighting is not directly evident, a howitzer recoils after firing but it is just another image of army life. However, the juxtaposition of film and commentary produces a different reading. He never directly implicates those who we see but the documented troop must contain Bernard's fellow torturers. The nostalgia of the film still remains but what it depicts alters and the location becomes a crime scene. Bernard tells Hélène that 'the story of Muriel cannot be told'; to tell her story would be to admit personal involvement in her death and the torturous nature of France's suppression of a racially divided Algeria. The images that represent her show another time and place, which Hélène can never know, but for Bernard these images have become a means to locate her, and they indicate the image's power to pass through temporal and spatial realms. Her memory oppresses Bernard, and he desires this now unknowable woman, her death was painful and unjust but she is symbolically victorious, for it is the French who are forced to leave Algeria.

Bernard's film is made of diary-like observational recordings; its true significance only becomes apparent through his narration. Other personal films feel the direct call of history. Abraham Zapruder, an amateur 8 mm enthusiast, shot 22 seconds of film, in Dallas, Texas, on 22 November 1963. On that fateful day he was the only cameraman to be positioned on the now infamous grassy knoll, and his silent, real-time, somewhat jerky recording of Kennedy's assassination is still the most complete visual record of this much-contested event.⁵⁰ Every other detail of that day appeared to be captured, everything but that which Zapruder saw. The Warren commission stated, 'of all the witnesses to the tragedy, the only unimpeachable one is the camera of Abraham Zapruder'.⁵¹ The Warren Commission's belief in the camera's natural observational powers is a widespread, but flawed, belief; a fallacy that *Report* (Conner, 1967) ably illustrates. Brue Conner's film 'utilises the emotional matrix of the Kennedy assassination',⁵² the now familiar documentation, but through deconstruction, repetition and de-synchronisation these known images become estranged from their original intention and meanings, their exposition now a series of enacted gestures.

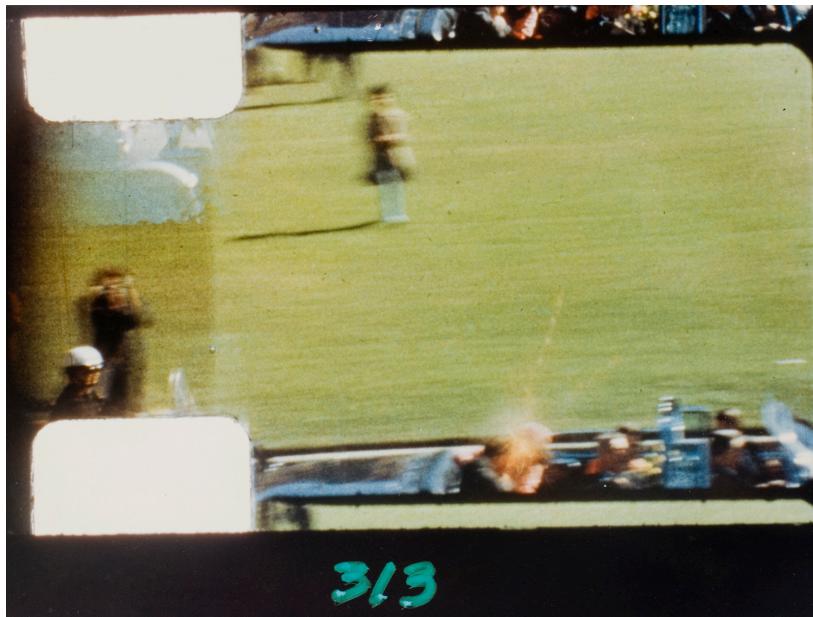
The Zapruder film is now part of the repository of images that represent Kennedy's assassination, but despite being unique it does not show who shot the president. Film reveals a

⁵⁰ However, in the day's aftermath Zapruder' film was not available to view, Life magazine secured the rights on the night of the assassination, and it was not broadcast until 1975. Bruzzi, S. (2000) *New Documentary: A Critical Introduction*, London and New York: Routledge, p15

⁵¹ Cited in: *Ibid*

⁵² Sitney, P. A. *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde 1943-1978* (2nd edition), Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.313

framed, partial vision - Bernard's 8 mm footage shows Algeria and its inhabitants, but it fails to show why he is actually stationed there and what he experienced.



Frame 313: the head shot
Fig. 25 Zapruder's film (1963)

Bernard's accomplice reassured him that once he had left the army he could return to normal life, but differentiating experience is problematic, and Bernard's film and commentary expresses his inability to reconcile this divide. Resnais' next film *La Guerre est Finie* (*The War is Over*, 1966), written by Jorge Semprún, an expatriate Spanish socialist, considers how an individual attempts to stay true to their beliefs, in this case Spanish Republicanism; what happens when the struggle becomes illusionary (Franco will not be overthrown) and an activist breaks with this, false, but necessary, ideal: what remains; self-deception, disillusionment, comradeship, duty? *The War is Over* suggests that humanity, real communal experience, rather than theory, is what ultimately matters, as Ward observes, 'this "plunge into ourselves", our memories and our pasts, will teach us that we are free and enable us to rediscover our capacity for action and the community between ourselves and others.⁵³ After his Algerian experience Bernard is disconnected, he does not have the benefit of genuine companionship, the ideological sympathy of his comrades-in-arms, and is unable to relate with people or place.

Films, which are concerned with military veterans reconnecting with society invariably focus on the relationship between military and civil life, public and private domains, the peacetime struggle

⁵³ Ward, J. (1968) *Alain Resnais, or the Theme of Time*, London: Secker & Warburg, p.117

to assimilate - the disparity between duty and personal feelings. This is augmented by conflictual context and this affects popular understanding and its representation, for instance *The Best Years of Our Lives* (Wyler, 1946), which focuses on three servicemen returning to America after World War II, imbues their re-integration with dignity and determination, a sense that they, and America, will prevail. World War II is still considered to be just and unavoidable, unlike the cold-war conflicts that followed. Samuel Hynes writes that, 'Americans had to wait until Vietnam for our national disillusionment'.⁵⁴ The returning servicemen, from this earlier 'Good War',⁵⁵ may have found that the world they left had changed, but their sacrifice was commonly respected; John David Slocum observes, 'Hollywood cinema functioned as a source of mutual identification and shared standards of social behaviour and values for a variety of viewers'.⁵⁶ *Coming Home* (Ashby, 1978) regards the emotional cost of the Vietnam War and shows that its veterans existed in a conflicted environment, where their presence abroad was viewed, in some quarters, to be fundamentally flawed. Despite being from a different culture these films, like *Muriel*, suggest that the discarding of a uniform is but the start of any reintegration, however society struggles to comprehend this and expects servicemen to forget what they have seen and done once they return home.

Resnais' sympathy is with the victims of war; this understanding also includes young men who become involved with violence. Bernard holds Robert responsible for Muriel's death and he was shot to appease her memory; Bernard acts without vitriol or flourish, only a small hole in the pocket of his vinyl overcoat shows where the gun was concealed. After the fatal shooting there is an explosion at Bernard's studio. Responsibility is not attributed but the most likely explanation would seem to be retaliation for Robert's death. The 8 mm film that Bernard shot whilst they served together does not reveal anything directly incriminating, but its importance is in what it invokes and for Bernard it confirms Robert's guilt. Bernard's violent act lessened his sense of complicity; he no longer feels the need to gather evidence and throws his camera into the sea. His archive, the images that he scrutinised, was destroyed in the explosion, but rather than mourn their passing he seems relieved. Bergson considered memory to be heightened when being of an action, because the memory is experienced within the body,⁵⁷ and when the past comes back to us, it is to enable us to comprehend the present, and move with understanding towards the future.⁵⁸ It is as if Bernard's action has freed him from the past, its image, he is no longer looking at the world around him through film's mechanism, for memories do fade, time

⁵⁴ Hynes, S. (1992) *Myths of World War II* , 'The Sewanee Review', vol. 100, no. 1, Winter, p. 99

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ Slocum, J. D. (2005) 'Cinema and the Civilizing Process: Rethinking Violence in the World War II Combat Film', *Cinema Journal*, vol. 44, no. 3, Spring, p.38

⁵⁷ Bergson, H. (1911) *Creative Evolution*, Mitchell, A. (trans.) London: Macmillan, p.51

⁵⁸ Ibid, p.391

effaces. He is now able, ready, to reengage with the world, an understanding that commences with his mother. He now remembers when they first met, ‘the broken roof? The linen turned to ashes... the melted silverware. The snow fell on my bed.’ She corrects him, ‘No, it was rain.’ They share a memory, tenderness, and then he readies to go.

Urban traces and other sedimented refrains

Cayrol proposed a reflective and knowing relationship between word and memory. His writing has a marked ambivalence towards resolution and the characters’ motivations are largely to be inferred by the viewer, for they only speak of experience, and their sensibilities are expressed through external trappings, their attire, actions, habitation. Sontag, in her review of *Muriel*, contended, ‘when Resnais decided to take as his subject, not “a memory”, but “remembering”, and to situate memories in characters within the film, a muted collusion between the aims of formalism and the ethic of engagement occurred.’⁵⁹ She characterised Resnais’s films as lacking ‘vigour’ and being ‘overburdened and synthetic’ and posited Bresson’s *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* (*The ladies of the Bois de Boulogne*, 1964) and Godard’s *Vivre Sa Vie* (*My Life to Live* (1962) as examples of the formalist tradition that are successful and ‘emotionally exalting’.⁶⁰ She wished to find a formalism that acknowledged the narrative film tradition and was not ‘cluttered’, contending that ‘Godard is the first director fully to grasp the fact that, in order to deal seriously with ideas, one must create a new film language for expressing them.’⁶¹ An appraisal that forgets Vertov’s revolutionary cinema, Brecht’s experimentation and the work of Godard’s contemporary, Debord, three figures who had a distinct influence on Godard’s practice.

Debord, in ‘Cinema After Alain Resnais’ (1959), praises *Hiroshima mon amour* as ‘the most original, most innovative film since the invention of talkies.’⁶² Debord’s appreciation is but a prelude to his real critique, ‘the appearance in “commercial” cinema of the self-destruction that dominates all modern art.’⁶³ The modern directors that Resnais epitomised brought a self-awareness and critical understanding to their craft. They were part of cinema’s new project, as outlined by Durgnat in ‘Resnais & Co’, which sought to promote its societal importance and artistic worth;⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Sontag, S. (2009) ‘Resnais’ Muriel’, in: *Against Interpretation and other Essays*, London: Penguin Books, p.238

⁶⁰ Ibid

⁶¹ Ibid

⁶² Debord, G. (1959) ‘Cinema After Alain Resnais’, *Internationale Situationniste*, 3 (Dec), [online] <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/resnais.html> [accessed 16 May 2014]

⁶³ Ibid

⁶⁴ Durgnat, R. (1987) ‘Resnais & Co: Back to the Avant-garde’, *Monthly Film Bulletin* (London), 54/640, p.132

a position that Debord acknowledged in his earlier essay, ‘With and Against Cinema’,⁶⁵ which begins, ‘The cinema is the central art of our society.’⁶⁶ Monaco, in his study of the French ‘New Wave’, observes that the Cinémathèque Française generation ‘were imbued with the history of art’ unlike those who had come before them.⁶⁷ They saw film as more than a form to be consumed and emphasised its creative potential and process. However, Debord argues that the form of cinema, as experienced through *Hiroshima mon amour*, could no longer claim cultural autonomy, and that for all its promise it was to be just another art turn and only through fracturing the critical and commercial binary could cinema stave off its institutional commodification. In Debord’s last film for cinema, *In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni* (*We Turn in the Night, and are Consumed by Fire*, 1978), he differentiates cinema’s technological development from its societal application, suggesting that cinema did not have to become the preserve of the ‘spectacle’, but it is now a sullied form, as he narrates, ‘I do not wish to preserve any of the language of this outdated art.’ Debord conceived of a cultural rebuttal that would use culture against itself, that a true analysis of society could only occur through dissecting popular culture’s traces.

Resnais’s films of this period considered contemporary history, but they are not overtly politicised in their ideological analysis. He suggests in an interview with Richard Roud that he believes that ‘dramatic construction has to evolve, but you can’t dispense with it altogether. It’s just a question of finding a new form for it’, and he is sure that there is a structural logic to Godard’s first essayistic film *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d’elle* (*Two or Three Things I Know About Her*, 1967), ‘despite what others may say.’⁶⁸ Resnais suggests ‘a really careful analysis of certain new techniques might not reveal that they are in essence still the same old rules which have applied for six thousand years.’⁶⁹ Godard considered his film to be ‘a continuation of the movement begun by Resnais in *Muriel*: an attempt at a description of a phenomenon known in mathematics and sociology as a “complex” [the analysis of society through its social networks]’,⁷⁰ that is was to

⁶⁵ It is worth noting that ‘With and Against Cinema’, published in the first issue of *Internationale Situationniste*, June 1958, contained the first mention the ‘spectacle’: ‘...we are without freedom at the centre of the miserable spectacle.’ This concept was expanded in ‘Cinema After Alain Resnais’: ‘The fundamental trait of the spectacle is the *Mise-en-scène* of its own ruin.’

⁶⁶ Debord, G (1958) ‘With and Against Cinema’, *Internationale Situationniste*, 1, Smith, J. E. (trans.), in: *Grey Room*, no. 52, Summer 2013, p.19

⁶⁷ Monaco, J. (1977) *The New Wave: Truffaut, Godard, Chabrol, Rohmer, Rivette*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.5

⁶⁸ Roud, R. (1969) ‘Memories of Resnais’, *Sight and Sound*, no. 38/3, Summer, p.128

⁶⁹ Ibid

⁷⁰ Quoted in: Roud, R. (1970) *Jean-Luc Godard*, London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, p.118, in: Monaco, J. (1977) *The New Wave: Truffaut, Godard, Chabrol, Rohmer, Rivette*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.178

be his ‘first film which was not totally dominated by the previous history of the cinema.’⁷¹ Monaco comments that Godard adopted a mix of documentary and ‘simple drama’, because ‘fiction doesn’t leave enough room for the persona of the artist.’⁷² Godard’s presence is seen through his visual montage of documented drama, but also heard, for the first time, in his hushed, whispering narration. If Resnais’ film, in part, inspired Godard, how does it relate to *Two or Three Things I Know About Her*? Resnais is intent on representing that which is not known and the search for some understanding, whereas Godard’s title is a statement of subjective knowledge and suggests a sense of confidence, that at least two or three things are definitely known.



Fig. 26 *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* (1967)

Godard’s film was inspired by an ‘article about prostitution in the new suburbs of Paris by Catherine Vimenet’,⁷³ and reflects on consumerist society, the war in Vietnam, and Paris’s redevelopment. The ‘her’ of the film’s title refers to Juliette (and Marina Vlady who plays her), who lives with her family in a new housing development, which is portrayed as a microcosm of capitalist alienation, and Paris the city; the gender specific affirmation could also regard their city. The film considers whether it is possible to be contented in a materialist society. Kilbourn writes that ‘the cinematic city is a repository of memory’,⁷⁴ and Stephen Barber suggests that the ‘cities at the origins of European cinema are strange Edens, already contaminated in the first illumination of their urban matter.’⁷⁵ In the post-war environment France’s cities are depicted as

⁷¹ MacCabe, C. (2003) *Godard: a Portrait of the Artist at 70*, London: Bloomsbury, p.175

⁷² Monaco, J. (1977) *The New Wave: Truffaut, Godard, Chabrol, Rohmer, Rivette*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.179

⁷³ Ibid, p.178

⁷⁴ Kilbourn, R. J. A. (2012) *Cinema, Memory, Modernity: The Representation of Memory from Art Film to Transnational Cinema*, London: Routledge, p.101

⁷⁵ Barber, S. (2002) *Projected Cities: Cinema and Urban Space*, London: Reaktion Books, p.15

a site of change, opportunity, but also excess and duplicity, populated by compromised individuals, places where the old and new worlds meet. The places depicted by Resnais, Godard and Debord are located and given authorial presence through film. Their modernist practices are situated in the urban theatre, and they sought to represent its complexity, in different and distinct ways, and their approaches contextualise France's post-war regime and confirmed film's political and conceptual potentiality.

The tropes that Godard adopts were first explicitly outlined in Debord's earlier film *Critique de la séparation* (*Critique of Separation*, 1961). T. Y. Levin emphasises Godard's indebtedness to Debord; '[he] takes up the philosophical voice-over, the use of black sequences, paratactic, non-narrative constructions, refusal of sound image synchrony, extended use of text frames, the exposure of the "means of production", intensive intertextuality, and so on.'⁷⁶ The Situationists repeatedly derided Godard for being out of touch with revolutionary cinema,⁷⁷ and his films for presenting society with 'a false image in which they recognize themselves falsely'.⁷⁸ Debord's films, from *Hurlements en faveur de Sade* (*Howls for Sade*, 1952) onward, were to be an antagonistic critique of form and society.

There may be no cinematic autonomy, but *Critique of Separation* engenders parody, societal/personal/political reflection, quotation, self-deprecation, irony, and contradiction to suggest and enact its challenge to cultural homogeneity, as Debord's voice-over states, 'The relation between the images, the spoken commentary and the subtitles is neither complementary nor indifferent, but is intended to itself be critical.'⁷⁹ The film regards, as its title indicates, the separation between audience and film, history and the present, politics and life, images and words, representation and reality, but also as Tom McDonough has pointed out, separation is also a vital part of Debord's revelatory strategy, which 'requires an analysis that insisted on separation – of viewer from film, of film from pro-filmic reality'.⁸⁰ This was a conscious exposure of film's, and by extension society's, apparatus, that film should forego its mastering inclinations

⁷⁶ Levin, T. Y. (2002) 'Dismantling the Spectacle: The Cinema of Guy Debord', in: *Guy Debord and the Situationist International*, McDonough, T. (ed.), Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, p.426

⁷⁷ Debord, G. (2004) 'The practice of Theory: Cinema and Revolution', McDonough, T. (trans.), in: *Guy Debord and the Situationist International*, McDonough, T. (ed.), Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, p.187-8

⁷⁸ Debord, G. (1961) 'For a Revolutionary Judgment of Art', Knabb, K. (trans.), [online] available at: *Bureau of Public Secrets*, <http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/debord.films/separation.htm> [accessed 12 May 2014]

⁷⁹ Debord, G (2005) 'Technical Notes on the first three Films', in Knabb, K. (ed. and trans.) *Guy Debord: Complete Cinematic Works*, Oakland, California: A K Press, p.213

⁸⁰ McDonough, T. (2007) 'Calling from the Inside: Filmic Topologies of the Everyday', *Grey Room*, 26, winter, p.21

and imbue the viewer with active necessity; over images of Plateau Saint-Merri the opening lines of Dante's *Inferno* appear, 'Midway upon the journey of our life, I found myself within a forest dark, For the straightforward pathway had been lost', McDonough posits that the quotation is, 'a confession of authorial impotence and a refusal of any position of mastery and knowledge; and second, in the absence of any Virgilian guide, the subsequent film can lead its viewer only deeper into the obscurities of that dark forest.'⁸¹ The spatial presence in Resnais, Godard and Debord's films emphasise different relational perspectives; Debord reconfigures Paris through his own politicised geography, Godard's interest is within the contemporary socio-political realm and Resnais' Boulogne is like a palimpsest.



Fig. 27 *Critique of Separation* (1961)

Debord's film, like Godard's, has a female protagonist, whom the author follows and in this action Paris is revealed, a personal environment with sedimented historic traces. Her derive, which traces a familiar neighbourhood, is described by Debord thus: 'playful-constructive behavior and awareness of psychogeographical effects',⁸² that 'calls for a radical transformation of society's comportment, its habits, behaviors, passions, and desires';⁸³ McDonough writes that

⁸¹ Ibid, p19-20

⁸² Debord, G. (1958) 'Theory of the Dérive', Knabb, K. (trans.) [online] available at: <http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/2.derive.htm> [accessed 12 May 2014]

⁸³ Yoon, S. (2007) 'Cinema against the Permanent Curfew of Geometry: Guy Debord's Sur le passage de quelques personnes à travers une assez courte unité de temps (1959)', *Grey Room*, 26, winter, p.39

this action was ‘meant to contest the retreat of the directly lived into the realm of representation, and thereby to contest the organisation of the society of the spectacle itself.’⁸⁴ Debord’s conception would re-engage life and its expression, and this informs a sociological critique and avant-garde autobiography; he intones that the film relates to ‘some particular memories’, the visualized dérive is formed of locations that invoke, for Debord, all that has been, as the images recall the Situationists’ ‘experimental inhabitation’,⁸⁵ and potentially could be.

Critique of Separation, and its predecessor *Sur le passage de quelques personnes à travers une assez courte unité de temps* (*On the Passage of a Few Persons Through a Rather Brief Unity of Time*, 1959), are records of Debord’s Paris, his life, other Situationists, the places they frequent, their discourses, the critical methods they would deploy (‘it is necessary to destroy memory in art. To undermine its communication.’) The films are a reflexive summation of time lived, images and reflections on all that has been, and an analysis of how a better (Marxist) future can be achieved. His monologue is always aware – at turns self-deprecating, serious, curious, irreverent, impassioned, personal, derisory - formed from an assemblage of memories, political entreaties, observations, all that he would offer to foment social and cultural change.

In *Muriel* the physical impact of World War II is still visible in scarred buildings, punctured road signs, displaced inhabitants and almost twenty years after the town was liberated it is still being rebuilt, as Cayrol recalled, ‘I situated the story in Boulogne, despite Resnais’s doubts, because Boulogne is also a town after a drama. There are two towns, the old one spared by the war and the reconstructed town, the topography of which the old inhabitants cannot recognise.’⁸⁶ Hélène regularly visits the town’s Casino. Her gambling companion is Roland De Smoke, who was in charge of the town’s demolition in 1945; he believes that the attic of his old house is exactly where Hélène’s apartment now stands. The modern architectural impositions do not have the confidence to orchestrate a real revival and awkward juxtapositions remain, revealing history; for Ward, *Muriel* shows ‘Time, as the great destroyer, the great reducer and the great repeater.’⁸⁷ De Smoke recounts the story of an apartment block, which nearing completion slid, he concludes, ‘we’re waiting for it to fall down... It won’t be a pretty ruin.’

The present is obsolete before it has had a chance to age, and unlike that which originally occupied the space its ornamentation will not be re-claimed, re-constituted, as it has not accrued the value that time bestows. *Muriel*’s characters all seem to be dissembling their past and are

⁸⁴ McDonough, T. (2002) ‘Situationists Space’, in: *Guy Debord and the Situationist International*, McDonough, T. (ed.), Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, p.254

⁸⁵ Ibid

⁸⁶ Armes, R. (1970) ‘Resnais and Reality’, *Films and Filming*, 16:8, May, p.128 cited in: Ibid, p.90

⁸⁷ Ward, J. (1968) *Alain Resnais, or the Theme of Time*, London: Secker & Warburg, p. 86

therefore evasive about their present. This is echoed in the town, which is falling down in the process of trying to improve its own past by unconvincingly reinventing its present. Ernest's denunciation, that Alphonse is a fantasist, is inter-cut with close-ups of a new apartment block's concrete and mass-produced planes, as if it is dislodging all that came before it with brutal disinterest.



Fig. 28 *Muriel, or the Time of a Return* (1963)

A building may disappear, but its footprint still offers a specific resonance - Hélène indicates to Alphonse the location of the now demolished Folkestone hotel, which they once visited for a three-day holiday, its absence reinforces its emblematic power for it allows the past to be remembered. Unseen at the station a young couple loiters. They cryptically discuss their future. The couple suggests a form of repetition; a cyclical variant on Hélène and Alphonse's past relationship. Hélène may seem to be in an uncertain place, the memory she desired to rekindle is now, once again, in retreat, but things have happened and time is past. Before Ernst's revelations he entertains Hélène, and her assembled friends, with a rendition of the popular song *Déjà*:

'Not only autos go a hundred
How annoying
Time too rushes on
How insane
Take it easy, Mr Time
Slow down on the curve
Yesterday a kid, today white hair...'

An aspect of Boulogne's, and France's, redevelopment was to be a conspicuously disaffected youth. In *Muriel* bikers congregate outside a sea front café, their youthful menace displayed through their mobility and style. In another scene Alphonse and Ernest meet, and in a different café, which coincidentally is also the location of Bernard and Robert's initial encounter; this

double meeting indicates that the orbits of these individuals have come together and their futures are interlinked until their trajectories pull apart, once more, a contrivance that can only occur in the urban environment.

The café, a social space that facilitates the passing of recreational and discursive time, was, from the 1950s onwards, witness to new emerging economic power, cultural rites and social configurations. Godard, after surveying a café that Juliette is seated in, frames a cup of coffee, he suggests, ‘perhaps an object like this will make it possible to link up, to move from one subject to another, from living in society, to being together;’ in a later scene, in another café, two men, Bouvard and Pécuchet, characters from Flaubert’s unfinished novel of the same name, who wished to know all, are surrounded by piles of books, from which they randomly choose phrases and connect them, linking one subject to another, whilst contemporary characters discuss the meaning of communism. Godard’s agitprop would position politics as an intrinsic component of life.

Debord’s cinematic time is always one of historical materialism, an ideological progression in which different temporal allusions reinforce his polemic - History, through images, commentary, quotations, reiterates the context in which society exists - believing that action must follow analysis. For Debord film should not just represent existence as it is, but it should produce change, as Debord wrote that ‘Revolution is not “showing” life to people, but bringing them to life’;⁸⁸ his film’s impossible, but necessary, task was to qualify his aphorism. Godard’s commentary oscillates between philosophical and theoretical lyricism and flights of revolutionary invocation - towards the end of the film he offers,

‘I listen to the ads on my transistor... thanks to Esso I’m happily on my way, on the route of dreams, and I’m forgetting the rest. I’m forgetting Hiroshima... I’m forgetting Auschwitz... I’m forgetting Budapest... I’m forgetting Vietnam... I’m forgetting the housing crisis.’

Critique of Separation, a marginal film apart from general discourse, ends with Debord declaring that he is unwilling to ‘play the game.’ Godard’s expansive cinematic palette, in contrast to Debord’s position, ‘didactic’ and ‘rigorously negative’,⁸⁹ indicates that he is unwilling, at this time at least, to forego the game and his cultural position. Debord and Godard reflect on a society that they perceive to be corrupted, one in need of change, and their critical persuasiveness is assessed through the acceptance, or not, of their respective positions. In ‘Cinema After Alain

⁸⁸ Debord, G. (1961) ‘For a Revolutionary Judgment of Art’, Knabb, K. (trans.), [online] available at: *Bureau of Public Secrets*, <http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/debord.films/separation.htm> [accessed 12 May 2014]

⁸⁹ Levin, T. Y. (2002) ‘Dismantling the Spectacle: The Cinema of Guy Debord’, in: *Guy Debord and the Situationist International*, McDonough, T. (ed.), Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, p.370

Resnais' Debord's critique drew on his memory of another, more innocent, time, one before Resnais, as it were. However, it could be countered that Resnais' method actually enriched cinema and developed its form, that his ideas could only find fruition in film and these works were still very much subject to the public's discriminatory gaze, they were not ensconced in the art world or archive, and were actively accounted for.

Resnais does not seek to divine the ideological imperative of progress and his treatment of history is understood through narrativised encounters, the relationship between the general and the specific, the progress of temporal detectives; Algeria marks the film and is made primarily known through Bernard's direct and Alphonse's fantastical relationship to this conflict. In this favouring of the individual, Resnais would personify some issues of war. He does not attempt to investigate the state's motivations, policies are understood through their effect on personal relations, but focuses on the temporal differentials and anomalies of experience. Resnais desires to use the language found in cinema to divine meaning from the fabric of time: like Bergson before him, this may be a high-minded aspiration, but no more so than to make film politically.

Divergent temporalities and their narrative orientation

Resnais' form and approach, a coming together of complex ideas in a narrative form, as Rosenbaum suggested,⁹⁰ has been extremely influential.⁹¹ The form of *Memento*⁹², which Rosenbaum derided as being a 'gimmicky and un-poetic counterfeit' of Resnais,⁹³ and other films such as *Run Lola Run* (Tykwer, 1998), *21 Grams* (Iñárritu, 2003), *Irreversible* (Noé, 2003), have come to be seen by some critics as evidence of a new form of cinema, which Allan Cameron defines as modular and database narratives 'terms [that are] applicable to narratives that foreground the relationship between the temporality of the story and the order of its telling'.⁹⁴ His assertion is predicated on the understanding that these various works encompass the lessons

⁹⁰ Rosenbaum, J. (2004) 'A Stylist Hits His Stride (Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind)', *Chicago Reader*, March 19, [online] available at: <http://www.jonathanrosenbaum.com/?p=6070> [accessed 20 May 2014]

⁹¹ His method can be seen in filmmakers such as Edward Yang (*The Terrorizers*, 1986), Wong Kar Wai (*Chung King Express*, 1994), Tran Anh Hung (*Cyclo*, 1994), Charlie Kaufman (*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, 2004) and others, including many database filmmakers.

⁹² 'Memento: Fettered and Systematic Recollection' features further analysis of database filmmaking and *Memento*'s relationship to this conception.

⁹³ Rosenbaum, J. (2004) 'A Stylist Hits His Stride (Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind)', *Chicago Reader*, March 19, [online] available at: <http://www.jonathanrosenbaum.com/?p=6070> [accessed 20 May 2014]

⁹⁴ Cameron, A. (2008) *Modular Narratives in Contemporary Cinema*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, p.1

of Modernist narrative radicalism within an accessible form, arguing that database films, ‘signal the point at which these aesthetics have been accepted by popular culture at large’,⁹⁵ that the temporal and aesthetic experimentation of Resnais, Antonioni and other canonical directors has become part of cinema’s lexicon. This contemporary co-option would suggest that all such methods could potentially be transposed, de-coupled from their original form, but intent and context is integral to their deployment.

Database films may seem to reflect many of Resnais’s concerns, by implication reference memory, and through their structures suggest that it is an uncertain and variable tool, but the protagonists of these dramas never seem to enact inconsequential thoughts as their actions always have momentous effect that can be traced through clear narrative drives, which is essentially different from Resnais’s idea of fragmented life and its representation.⁹⁶ Resnais’s choice of subject matter indicated a desire to inspect the contemporary world and question its occurrence and potential consequences, rendering these concerns through a complex form of thinking through practice, which resists being reduced to a formula and needs to be truly comprehended in totality, not as segmented effects. *Muriel*’s intricate montage offers a network of meanings and memories.

On Alphonse’s first night in Boulogne Hélène leaves him alone to go and play roulette. Whilst awaiting her return, Alphonse decides to search the apartment. In Bernard’s room he finds a gun and a Journal stuffed with loose papers and photographs. He opens the book and reads, and we, the viewer, are also offered the text, ‘I lifted the cover and I don’t know why Muriel’s eyes weren’t closed... Petit Rouge finally says to me, when you’re a civilian you’ll be able to think whatever you want...’ Alphonse notes a black and white photograph of a young dark haired woman with a man standing beside her - his face blackened out - Alphonse reads on, ‘We were “engaged” – we went to Paris now and then (I still have that stupid photo of us)... but it’s with Muriel that everything really began.’ It is telling that Alphonse, the film’s acknowledged fantasist, discovers these personal, revealing artifacts. The text, with its accompanying defaced photograph, even the gun, offer clues as to who Muriel might be and the nature of her relationship with Bernard. They all suggest his experience in Algeria lingers. The journal and photograph inform the narrative, the gun is a warning from history and a suggestion of things to come.

⁹⁵ Ibid, p.16

⁹⁶ Armes, R. (1968) *The Cinema of Alain Resnais*, London: A. Zwemmer, p.120



Fig. 29 *Muriel, or the Time of a Return* (1963)

To consider *Muriel's* totality is to see the depiction of time, and through its realization a reflexive vision is communicated, one that can only be known through film - its divergent temporalities are suggested in frame, all is seen on the same involved plane, a Bergsonian invocation, which Deleuze emphasises, ‘there is *a present of the future, a present of the present and a present of the past.*’⁹⁷ Out of the need to represent memory, to recall that which cannot be forgotten, Resnais offers personified moments, imagined scenes that create ‘false documentaries’⁹⁸, Dumas’ telling phrase suggests that this form can potentially offer a real fiction, work that transcends dramatic contrivance and produces an authenticated, exploratory, narrative experience. This may be antithetical to invocations of memory, which act as a means to discern all that is present, but this method offers reclaimed moments, fragments of life that require remembrance and the means to apprise and assemble them. To move through time, invoke space and show the trace of individual memory - all that resides in a particular place and is buffeted by temporal passage – and its relation to history and others is *Muriel's* lasting effect.

Frampton’s (*nostalgia*) is the subject of the next chapter. His film was made at the beginning of the next decade, on another continent and was formulated from a different, but related, rendering of memory. His passage through time was to be distinctly personal, national affairs exist beyond its frame. In (*nostalgia*) he recounts memories of his artistic life in New York and the method of his recollection endeavoured to make his film directly part of this memorious experience.

⁹⁷ Deleuze, D. (1989) *Cinema 2*, Tomlinson, H. and Galeta, R. (trans.), London: Continuum, p.97

⁹⁸ Cited in: Monaco, J. (1978) *Alain Resnais: The Role of Imagination*, London: Secker & Warburg, p.35

V. (NOSTALGIA):
THESE MEMORIES ARE PERSONAL



Fig. 30 *Self-portrait* (1959) from: *(nostalgia)* (1971)

Hollis Frampton's (1936-84) film *(nostalgia)* (1971) proposes an investigation of time through a form of film memoir that asks how can that which is past, but not gone, be given new presence? In *(nostalgia)* a series of chronological photographs are burnt on a hot plate, in real time, whilst a voice-over relates a number of displaced autobiographical tales related to the photographs. Frampton's succession of pyres simultaneously immortalises and replays their destruction. The film structure obliges the viewer to consistently adjust their temporal perspective as the film moves between tenses, invoking time and calling on memory. In considering *(nostalgia)* film's capacity for activating memory is tested, as it simultaneously requires the deployment of memory - recall - (for its comprehension) and invokes memory (through its form).

P. Adams Sitney placed Frampton's films in the structural canon; 'a cinema... in which the shape of the whole film is predetermined and simplified, and it is that shape which is the primal impression of the film.'¹ He goes on to define what he perceived to be its characteristics, fixed camera position, flicker effect, loop printing and re-photography (off the screen), though he

¹ Sitney, P. A. (1979) *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde*, 2nd ed., Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, p.369

cautions that these elements are not usually to be found in a single film and they can be modified. He observed, in a key phrase that echoes Frampton's own sentiments, that 'it is cinema of the mind rather than the eye'.² It is worth noting that this definition was not universally favoured; Frampton commented in a letter to Peter Gidal, 'I said to Sitney at dinner in July: I have found your structuralists, P. Adams, and they are in England. Complete to the diacritical mark, influence of Warhol, the whole number'.³ Sitney positioned Warhol as structural film's major precursor, and that 'it is an attempt to answer Warhol's attack [challenging 'the viewer's ability to endure emptiness or sameness'] by converting his tactics into tropes of the response'.⁴ His seeming indifference to industrial production values and aesthetics exemplified a stripped and essential way of seeing and engaging with film. These structural films were, in many ways, the antitheses of the earlier American avant-garde, and Sitney's formulation directly challenges the order of commercial cinema, and in doing so, seeks to expose and examine film's materiality and its reception.

(*nostalgia*) was Frampton's first film. Previously he had been a photographer, and in turning to film he sought what he felt was absent in his original discipline, namely a dialogue about method and purpose.⁵ His New York was a place of artistic flowering and diverse influences, and (*nostalgia*)'s photographic roll-call bears witness to the fact that he was not without notable friends: Michael Snow, Carl Andre, Frank Stella, James Rosenquist and Larry Poons. Their involvement underlined Frampton's artistic associations and also helped to establish his credentials, but as A. L. Rees observed, 'Frampton seemed to know all the painters and sculptors, but wasn't in any of the "prescribed categories"'.⁶ (*nostalgia*)'s sentiment attests to Frampton's creative development and a certain artistic confederacy, but it also indicates that over time this cohort became less of a regular presence. Frampton states that being 'a committed illusionist' in a community of 'dogmatic anti-illusionists', like Andre and Stella, had its problems; 'I mean they could marshal not only their own arguments, which were excellent, but those of the venerable Clement Greenberg and so forth. It left one very little room for being the devil's

² Ibid, P370

³ Rees, A. L. (1999) *A History of Experimental Film and Film*, London: BFI, p.75

⁴ Sitney, P. A. (1979) *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde*, 2nd ed., Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, p.374

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Frampton, H. (2009) 'Interview at the Video Data Bank', in: *On the Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters: The Writings of Hollis Frampton*, Jenkins, B. (ed.), Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, p.187

⁷ Rees, A. L. 'Working Both Sides of the Street: Film and Art in Michael Snow', in: (2001) *Michael Snow Almost Cover to Cover*, Roberts, R. and Steeds, L. (ed.), London: Black Dog Publishing, p.80

advocate.⁸ To be the iconoclast in this circle indicates, despite Frampton's suggestions to the contrary, his sense of purpose and intellectual confidence.

Frampton notes that 'In my film, there is a remastering of a certain number of lumps I took during those years.'⁹ This suggests that his film, its form and content, is a means to revisit and take some control of this past life; at this point his disciplinary composure and intentionality, as (*nostalgia*)'s execution and ambition bares out, is exact. Frampton's method requires an audience to be constantly, after the first episode, recollecting and recalibrating all they have seen into matching pairs, so Frampton's narration can accompany the relevant autobiographical image. In imposing this method is Frampton placing the emphasis on form, rendering the content less important; is the validity of Frampton's autobiographical tales vital; does the substance of the film override these concerns? Could the experimental form of the work, which is explicitly memorable, be too convoluted and actually obscure memory's willingness and procedure?

Images of a life lived

Open on: Black screen.
Voice Over: Is it all right?
Off mike: It's all right.
Cut to: Title card – (*nostalgia*)
VO: These are recollections of a dozen still photographs I made several years ago.
Cut to: Black.
VO: Does it sound all right?
Off mike: Yes, yes, perfectly. It's fine.
Cut to: *4 x 6 photograph of a dark room. It rests on a scorched surface. The top and bottom of a circle is visible.*
VO: This is the first photograph I ever made with direct intention of making art. I had brought myself a camera for Christmas in 1958. One day early in January of 1959. I photographed several drawings by Carl Andre, with whom I shared a cheap apartment on Mulberry Street.
The central area of the photograph starts to slowly ripple and discolour.
VO: One frame of film was left over, and I suggested to Carl that he sit, or rather, squat, for a portrait.
The top of the photograph starts to smoke.
The smoke intensifies, now affecting the bottom as well.

⁸ Frampton, H. (2009) 'Interview at the Video Data Bank', in: *On the Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters: The Writings of Hollis Frampton*, Jenkins, B. (ed.), Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, p.185

⁹ Dubois, P. 'Photography Mise-en-Film', (Kirby, L. trans), in: Petro, P. (ed.), (1995) *Fugitive Images From Photography to Video*, Indiana: Indiana University Press, p.169

- VO: He insisted that the photograph must incorporate a handsome small picture frame that had been given to him a year or so before by a girl named North.
The photograph is now alight. A distinct ring beneath it starts to appear.
- VO: How the metronome entered the scheme I don't recall, but it must have been deliberate.
The photograph is buckling. The bottom starts to curl and a flame becomes visible.
- VO: The picture frame reappears in a photograph dated March 1963, but there isn't time to show you that one now. I discarded the metronome eventually, after tolerating its syncopation for quite a while.
The top of the photograph is now alight.
The bottom is ablaze and a concentric pattern is forming on the photograph. Smoke curls round the sides. The flames, at the top and bottom, are moving closer together. The center is turning black. It is becoming cinder. Only a clock and some containers on the left hand side of the image remain visible. The darkness is now spreading rapidly from the center out. All is ablaze.
- VO: Carl Andre is twelve years older and more active than he was then.
I see less of him nowadays than I would like; but then there are other people of whom I see more than I care.
The photograph is now a rumpled misshapen rectangle.
- VO: I despised the photograph for several years. But I could never bring himself to destroy a negative so incriminating.
The flames dissipate. It becomes apparent that the photograph was resting on the ring of an electric hot plate. The black turns to ash. The ash appears to 'bubble' and flake.
The photograph is now grey and flaked.
- Cut to: Black.

Frampton's film is imparted in first person, past tense, which locates the spoken words and their related photographs in a time that is now being recalled. Frampton writes that 'One way or another, everything in a filmmaker's life forces its way into his work, finally... everything, even, in that part of his life he spends in making films.'¹⁰ Through the sharing of memories the film encapsulates part of a life that refers to Frampton's time before the film, his first creative flowering as a photographer in New York. As (*nostalgia*) proceeds, it becomes apparent that image and sound are desynchronised, with the films' narrative episodes preceding the corresponding photographs, that there is disconnectedness between what is seen and heard, and a remaking of linear sense and what it may mean.

¹⁰ Frampton, H. (2009) 'Mental Notes', in: *On the Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters: The Writings of Hollis Frampton*, Jenkins, B. (ed.), Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, p.256

Bergson perceived of a ‘past gnawing into the future’,¹¹ a notion which finds elucidation in Frampton’s film. In each sequence, movement occurs through the photograph’s contact with the ignited electric ring. This encounter animates the photograph and exposes its material fragility. The images change from being recognisable representations to carbonised remains, and in this oscillation, between being and decrepitude, they transcend their original form and become an eternal memorial. The recording of the process ensures that these images will be known for as long as Frampton’s work is preserved. It is worth noting that he retained the photographic negatives, ‘against unpredictable future needs.’¹² This releasing of inert items, and their temporal awakening, is the recorded testimony of what has been but also new beginnings.

The film’s voice-over foretells what we are about to see, and what we see reminds us of what we have just heard. The discontinuity challenges and destabilises the images, because they can only be known through the voice-over, a technique that weakens the usual audio/visual hierarchy. Sitney perceived that this technique ‘very obviously undermines the indexical unity of picture and sound’, and ‘unpacks the temporal category of the present in the film.’¹³ Once Frampton’s methodology is comprehended, the viewer instinctively attempts to re-sync image and text, endeavouring to remember these separate elements, in order to make more sense of what is being presented. The desynchronised relationship between image and audio is mirrored in the image’s spatial representation. The electric ring, on which the photographs burn, is seen vertically, a change in orientation that defies the natural perspective, but due to film’s horizontal viewing plane this positioning does not appear unduly disconcerting.

Frampton proposed an experiment in descriptive drama, a narrative in which the meaning may be displaced, but the grammar is intact. In his essay on Eisenstein, ‘Film in the House of the Word’, Frampton considered the late modernist position that ‘language was suspect as the defender of illusion.’¹⁴ He decried this stance, writing that ‘Every artistic dialogue that concludes in a decision to ostracise the word is disingenuous to the degree that it succeeds in concealing from itself its fear of the word.’¹⁵ Frampton’s formal method, his willingness to use autobiographical material, the film’s chronological arrangement and structural process, indicate

¹¹ Bergson, H. (2004) *Matter and Memory*, Paul, N. M. and Scott Palmer, W. (trans.), New York: Dover Publications, p.194

¹² Frampton, H. (2009) ‘Notes on (nostalgia)’, in: *On the Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters: The Writings of Hollis Frampton*, Jenkins, B. (ed.), Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, p.224

¹³ Sitney, P. A. (1979) *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde*, 2nd ed., Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, p.408

¹⁴ Frampton, H. (2009) ‘Film in the House of the Word’, in: *On the Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters: The Writings of Hollis Frampton*, Jenkins, B. (ed.), Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, p.167

¹⁵ Ibid

his desire to address the power of words (and images). Whilst at Western Reserve University, Cleveland (1954-6), he primarily studied Latin and Greek, but also German, French, Russian, Sanskrit, Chinese and Mathematics.¹⁶ His interests lead him to correspond with Ezra Pound, which led to the conclusion that he was not to be a poet.

These concerns are found in (*nostalgia*), a structurally organised film, with a deliberately misdirected text, that challenges narrative meaning and conclusive resolution. His practice would range beyond defined parameters, and to identify (*nostalgia*) as a structural film is to limit its ambition and reach. The works of experimental filmmakers are to be understood in context, all that it would challenge, as Tzvetan Todorov writes ‘a new genre is always the transformation of an earlier one, or of several: by inversion, by displacement, by combination’;¹⁷ he may have been considering literature but his thoughts can be applied to other mediums. The attempt to qualify work may be problematic, but all work does come from history and is formed within its cast and finds a place within established and ever emerging histories. Frampton wanted Film historians to account for all that cinema encompasses,¹⁸ and for work that could be defined as experimental to achieve inclusive equivalence.

In ‘A Pentagram for Conjuring the Narrative’ Frampton expresses the need for narratives and storytelling.¹⁹ Frampton’s form of narrative is elusive, complex and ambiguous like the literature of the Modernist masters that he so admired. In this context film is just another artistic language, a means to communicate ideas, and the form that Frampton proposed seeks to find ‘a dramatically evolving organic code directly responsive and responsible, like every other code, to the supreme mediator: consciousness.’²⁰ Sitney, in considering the ‘theoretical power’ of Frampton’s book, *Circles of Confusion: Film, Photography, Video, Texts 1968-1980*, writes, ‘The

¹⁶ [Online] available at: <http://hollisframpton.org.uk/bio.htm> [accessed 20 June 2015]

¹⁷ Todorov, T. ‘The Origin of Genres’, in: Duff, D. (1999) *Modern Genre Theory*, London; Routledge, p.197

¹⁸ Frampton, H. (2009) ‘For a Metahistory of Film: Commonplace Notes and Hypotheses’, in: Jenkins, B. (ed.), *On The Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters*: Wollen, P. (2002) *Writings on Film of Hollis Frampton*, Cambridge, Massachusetts/London: The MIT Press, p.136

¹⁹ Frampton’s essay lists the three ‘conditions of film art’, ‘The frame – which has taken on, through the accumulation of illusions that have transpired within its rectangular boundary, the force of a metaphor for consciousness’, ‘the plausibility of the photographic illusion [...] a kind of automatic reflex, invariably triangulates a precise distance between the image it sees projected and a norm held in the imagination’, and the Brakhage-proposed ‘third axiom, or inevitable condition: narrative.’ Frampton, H. (2006) ‘Notes on Composing in Film’, in: *On the Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters: The Writings of Hollis Frampton*, Jenkins, B. (ed.), Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, p.143

²⁰ Frampton, H. (2006) ‘The Invention Without a Future’, in: *On the Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters: The Writings of Hollis Frampton*, Jenkins, B. (ed.), Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, p.143

initiator of this branch of theory was Maya Deren';²¹ Frampton dates the emergence of a new form of film from *Mesches of the Afternoon* (1943).²² Deren writes that if cinema is to become an art, 'it must create a total experience so much out of the very nature of the instrument as to be inseparable from its means.'²³ *Mesches of the Afternoon*, made with her then husband Alexander Hammid, depicts the interiority of its protagonist. As Deren writes, 'it reproduces the way in which the sub-conscious of an individual will develop, interpret and elaborate an apparently simply and casual incident into a critical emotional experience.'²⁴ She conceptualised the encounter with a photographic image as 'reality filtered by the selectivity of individual interests and modified by prejudicial perception to become experience'.²⁵ This understanding of the photograph reinforces the image's indexical reading and its importance as a unit of time, something with history and presence.

Through (*nostalgia*) Frampton tells of his desire to speak of, and emphasise, aspects of his past, and in telling what has been he is also imagining the future; Boym writes that 'At first glance, nostalgia is a longing for a place, but actually it is yearning for a different time', and that this is a desire 'to obliterate history and turn it into private or collective mythology, to revisit time like space'.²⁶ (*nostalgia*) was to be the first instalment of Frampton's seven part film cycle *Hapax Legomena* (1971-2),²⁷ and it is the work of a young artist. Frampton writes, 'The narrative art of most young men is autobiographical. Since I have had little narrative experience, it seemed reasonable to accept biography as a convention'.²⁸ This is announced through the film's content, as Frampton observes, 'I understand the word autobiography to mean: writing one's own life.

²¹ Sitney, P. A. (2008) *Eyes Upside Down: Visionary Filmmakers and the Heritage of Emerson*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.102

²² Frampton, H. (2006) 'For a Metahistory of Film: Commonplace Notes and Hypotheses', in: *On the Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters: The Writings of Hollis Frampton*, Jenkins, B. (ed.), Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, p.136

²³ Deren, M. (1985) 'Cinematography: The Creative Use of Reality', in: *Film and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, 3rd ed., Mast, G. Cohen, M. (ed.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.65

²⁴ Deren, M. (1965) 'Notes, Essays, Letters, Film Culture', 39, Winter, p.1, quoted in: Sitney, P. A. *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde 1943-1978* (2nd edition), Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.9

²⁵ Deren, M. (1985) 'Cinematography: The Creative Use of Reality', in: *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, 3rd ed., Mast, G. Cohen, M. (ed.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.54

²⁶ Boym, S. (2001) *The Future of Nostalgia*, New York: Basic Books, p.xv

²⁷ 'The title, a term from classical philology, refers to those words whose sense is ambiguous because they only occur once in surviving texts; their meaning can only be determined from context', and it comprised of (*nostalgia*) (1971), *Poetic Justice* (1972), *Critical Mass* (1971), *Travelling Matte* (1971), *Ordinary Matter* (1972), *Remote Control* (1972), *Special Effects* (1972). Sitney, P. A. (1979) *Visionary Film: The American Avant-garde*, Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, p.411

²⁸ Frampton, H. (2006) 'Notes on (*nostalgia*)', in: *On the Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters: The Writings of Hollis Frampton*, Jenkins, B. (ed.), Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, p.224

But perhaps, as with so much Greek, our text is corrupt. I would rather understand it to mean: life, writing itself.²⁹ Todorov suggests that autobiography can be identified in two ways, ‘the author’s identification with the narrator, and the narrator’s identification with the chief-protagonist.’³⁰ These elements distinguish autobiography from other forms, because ‘the reality of the referent is clearly indicated.’³¹ It may be surmised that Frampton’s tales are formulated to suit his purposes but they emanate from the life he lived.

Frampton, in conversation with Peter Gidal, describes his intentions for (*nostalgia*), ‘I corrupt – well, I say “corrupt” – a series of, not descriptions, but reminiscences that turn old photographs of my own into a kind of a-temporality, a history of aesthetics and sculpture.’³² (*nostalgia*)’s lower case and parentheses suggest the film’s non-referential relationship to what has been, that for Frampton remembrance was a wistful, playful undertaking, corrupted by time and intention, and that memories are a useful means to examine other matters.

In composing (*nostalgia*) he fixes various recollections, framing them according to his purpose, and as Warnock observes, ‘memory and imagination overlap and cannot be wholly distinguished.’³³ Frampton’s wry observations, the trials and tribulations of this photographer in New York, allow for a degree of identification and empathy, as he guides us towards the end of his photographic journey. In this way it is a farewell, and departures are redolent with sentiment. The narrator, referring to Frampton’s self-portrait, comments, ‘I take some comfort in realizing that my entire physical body has been replaced more than once since it made this portrait of its face. However, I understand that my central nervous system is an exception’; he is no longer the person that arrived in New York and he is ready to move on.

The film’s monologue is written as if it is occurring now, which of course when viewing the film it is, but as a recording it necessarily happened sometime previously. At the beginning of the film, two voices can be heard, briefly discussing the microphone level. These voices belong to Frampton and Michael Snow. Frampton originally recorded the text, but rejected the results and in his place he decided to use Snow, commenting, ‘The reason I finally settled on Mike – except for the possibility of generating a couple of internal jokes – was that Mike has that flat Ontario

²⁹ ‘Mental Notes’, in: Ibid, p.255

³⁰ Todorov, T. ‘The Origin of Genres’, in: Duff, D. (1999) *Modern Genre Theory*, London; Routledge, p206

³¹ Ibid, p.207

³² Gidal, P. (1985) ‘Interview with Hollis Frampton’, *October*, 32, p.108

³³ Warnock, M. (1987) *Memory*, London: Faber & Faber, p.12

Scottish delivery', whereas my 'tendency is to imitate Richard Burton in a bathtub.'³⁴ It is now known that it is Snow's voice that is heard, but this knowledge is external to the film as he is not introduced and the film is without credits. Identifying Snow as (*nostalgia*)'s voice has the effect of removing any personal intonation and distances Frampton from the experiences being described. Snow's involvement also adds associative complexity, a self-reflexive play between reader and subject, author and object; towards the end of the segment Snow intones Frampton's apology to him, for his creative failure in designing a poster, concluding, that the 'whole business still troubles me. I wish I could apologise to him.'

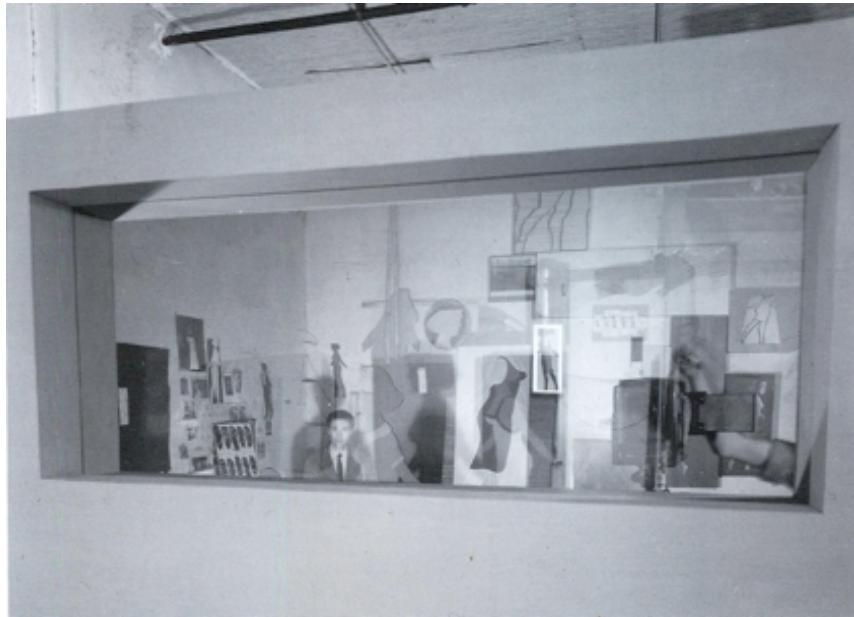


Fig. 31 Untitled (*Michael Snow's Studio*) (1965) from: (*nostalgia*) (1971)

(*nostalgia*) is an elegy to the man Frampton had been, 'In the end, when I saw the film myself, I felt that I had made an effigy, at least, of his opaque young-man's life, even if I had not wholly entrained its sadness.'³⁵ The film is a fond farewell to all Frampton knew in New York, but its material and enquiring form is an indication as to where his practice would venture next.

(*nostalgia*) was to be not just a departure from photography it was also a farewell to the city; Rachel Moore writes that 'he was shifting his residence to New York's countryside, where he had purchased thirty acres of land and spent the summer in 1970', and by 1974 this had become his permanent residence.³⁶

³⁴ Cited in: MacDonald, S. (1998) 'A Critical Cinema', Berkeley: University of California Press, p.61-2, in: Moore. R, (2006) *Hollis Frampton: (nostalgia)*, London: Afterall Books, p.38

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Moore. R, (2006) *Hollis Frampton: (nostalgia)*, London: Afterall Books, p.17

The photograph's historical pact

Photographs speak intimately to us of ourselves, so contends Philippe Dubois, he writes, 'autobiography sets in motion an essential reflection on the notion of mental image [and not *real* images].'³⁷ This 'cinema of the self', which Dubois suggests (*nostalgia*) is an example of, has, in Philippe Lejeune's phrase, an 'autobiographical pact',³⁸ of understanding with those that encounter it, in which the identity of the author, maker, is to the fore. The use of the photographic begs two questions: 'How can the photograph speak, or be made to speak, in and through film? And why is the photograph the privileged vehicle of autobiographic inscription in cinema?'³⁹ Dubois perceives that the answer to these questions lie in an awareness of form, 'The apparatus itself is as significant as the photographs it conveys and is thus in a way always theoretical – a concept as much as a form, machination as much as a machine.'⁴⁰ Also, autobiography is a suitable means to traverse more conceptual matters, a personal form of communication within an often-unknown world.

The filmstrip and photographs, connection to what has been, the process, its history, seems to place it in a distinct and recognisable temporal relationship. To view Frampton's black and white prints smoulder is to imagine his photographic procedure - the shooting and processing of the film, with its shutter speeds and exposures, and the dark room, full of technical apparatus and chemicals, the developing of the negative and printing of the image - this involved procedure, which was once relatively common, is inscribed with temporality.

Frampton, in 'The Withering Away of the State of the Art' (1974), acknowledged video's artistic and democratic potential, envisioning an image machine, now recognisable as the ubiquitous video-enabled home computer, suggesting it would become increasingly important.⁴¹ Its assimilation has seen an acceptance that technology works its magic remotely and that which makes it work is largely hidden. The filmmaker Guy Sherwin states, 'whatever advantages digital technology might have over film, its ontological link to the objective image-source is weaker.'⁴² This is not a question of image definition but an assertion of film's (and photograph's) material relationship to light and time, that an image is only formed when film makes contact with these

³⁷ Dubois, P. (1995) 'Photography Mise-en-Film', (Kirby, L. trans), in: Petro, P. (ed.), (1995) *Fugitive Images From Photography to Video*, Indiana: Indiana University Press, p.154

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ 'Interview at the Video Data Bank', in: Jenkins, B. (ed.), *On The Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters: The Writings of Hollis Frampton*, Cambridge, Massachusetts/London: The MIT Press, p.189

⁴² Sherwin, G. (1998) 'Chronology and Some Reasoning', programme notes, *Lux*, London, January 30th cited in: Hamlyn, N. (2000) 'Film Video TV', *Coil*, 9/10, n.pg.

elements, as opposed to video, which electronically produces images from a flow of voltages. This manifest connection is what makes Frampton's burning so redolent with Mulvey's indexical locating of material decay, human consciousness and the irrepressible nature of time.⁴³



Fig. 32 *Untitled (photographic darkroom)* (n.d.) from: *(nostalgia)* (1971)

'All history is the history of thought',⁴⁴ so proposed Carr. Frampton, in considering the photograph, wrote: 'It often seems to us, as we think about thinking, that we think in words, it seems as often, when we are not thinking about thinking, that we think not merely in "pictures" but in photographs.'⁴⁵ An idea that Sontag iterates, 'each memory from one's childhood, or from any period that's not in the immediate past, is like a still photograph rather than a strip of film. And photography has objectified this way of seeing and remembering.'⁴⁶ Photographs' may now be mainly in digital form, but the notion of memory being composed of a series of images still follows, an idea that resonates with Bergson's notion that 'pure memory' is formed from only the

⁴³ Mulvey, L. (2006) *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image*, London: Reaktion Books, p.31

⁴⁴ Carr, E. H. (1961) *What is History?* 2nd ed., London: Penguin Books, p.22

⁴⁵ Frampton, H. (2009) 'A Talk on Photography and History: Time, Space and Causality', in: Jenkins, B. (ed.), *On The Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters: The Writings of Hollis Frampton*, Cambridge, Massachusetts/London: The MIT Press, p.53

⁴⁶ Movius, G. (1975) 'An Interview With Susan Sontag', *Boston Review*, June, [online] available at: <http://www.bostonreview.net/BR01.1/sontag.html> [accessed 22 May 2013]

most pressing ‘snapshots’.⁴⁷ The idea that this media, which has become an omnipresent part of contemporary existence, influences our way of thinking, indicates that when individuals inhabit this environment and think through it (consciously and unconsciously), it becomes part of their personal sensibility, a way in which the world is encountered, but an image is never just an image as it is always framed by technological application, historical bearing and personal interaction.

In Freud’s ‘A Note upon the “Mystic Writing Pad”’, he writes that,

‘Devices to aid our memory seem particularly imperfect, since our mental apparatus accomplishes precisely what they cannot: it has an unlimited receptive capacity for new perceptions and nevertheless lays down permanent – even though not unalterable – memory traces of them.’⁴⁸

He goes on to posit the Mystic Writing Pad as an analogy for the workings of memory. He begins his reflections, ‘If I distrust my memory [...] I am able to supplement and guarantee its workings by making a note in writing.’⁴⁹ The problem with mechanical devices is their fixity, the lack of mutability. In this Freud is concerned with what is erased, potentially forgotten, when a memory ceases to be relevant and/or valued. When Frampton destroyed his photographs he iterated the inflexibility of the medium making them a memory. Frampton’s images that burn also have the effect of a palimpsest, which is reinforced by their repetition. The images may literally disappear, decomposing, time after time, on the electric hotplate, but all that has been seen lingers in memory, and these memories are needed, recollected, reordered, because of Frampton’s intrinsic mismatched composition and film faculty to suggest memory.

In the photographic we find this ‘permanent memory-trace’ is revered for its indexical resonance. Barbara Meter’s *Appearances* (2000) begins with the introductory text:

‘Independently of each other my father and mother fled from Germany in 1934. They met the same year in Amsterdam. This film is made from photographs they left me, all of which were taken before I was born.’

Meter was born in 1939. The film’s photographs were taken at the time of the Weimar Republic, they were revealed to Meter only after her mother’s death, and show a large bourgeois family; these images are contrasted with contemporary footage of German landscapes. The photographs form an authentic, if incomplete, record, which facilitated a project of reclamation. Barthes contends that photography has ‘something to do with resurrection’⁵⁰ Meter writes, ‘I wanted to recreate my own family [...] I wanted to recreate them from the depths of death. Out of the

⁴⁷ Bergson, H. (1911) *Creative Evolution*, (Mitchell, A. trans) London: Macmillan, p.333

⁴⁸ Freud, S (1925) ‘A Note upon the “Mystic Writing Pad”’, *General Psychological Theory*, London: Simon & Schuster, p.208

⁴⁹ Ibid, p.207

⁵⁰ Barthes, R. (1982) *Camera Lucida*, (Howard, R. trans), London: Vintage Books, p.82

darkness into the filmic light and then back into the darkness again.⁵¹ To see *Appearances'* images, framed as they are, is to imagine a familial history, one that intersected with national, international narratives, a time of disappearances and displacement, as Bachelard writes, 'Great images have both a history and a pre-history; they are always a blend of memory and legend, with the result that we never experience an image directly.'⁵² The history that these archival images indicate struggles to find reason and representation, but Meter's never completely still camera, which hovers over photographs of lost faces, the enlarged grain oscillating, as if breathing, before the camera's inspection, desires to personalise, to see and know what is lost and make it reappear once again.



Fig. 33 *Appearances* (2000)

The film's opening card offers a description of when and how Meter's parents left Germany, but this simple text is suggestive enough; they departed a year after Hitler became Chancellor. The film does not offer any more external context, but the powerful implication means the images have a distinct poignancy - they are a possible record of mortality, a national tragedy in microcosm – which is arguably all the more telling because of what is not said. All that is gone is focused by Meter's travelogue – it would seem she is visiting the places the family once inhabited;

⁵¹ 'Appearances Extra', (2008), Barbara Meter, Zuiver Film (Pure Film), [DVD], The Netherlands: Filmmuseum

⁵² Bachelard, G. (2014) *The Poetics of Space*, Jolas, M. (trans.), London: Penguin Books, p.53

Rosenstone comments that ‘experimental films help to re-vision what we mean by history.’⁵³ The very existence of the archive is trace evidence of unknowable family members, who now take on symbolic significance. The past, a place that can never be realised, becomes more present, real, through the memorial experience of it, and photographs can facilitate some access to this other realm.

Frampton, in considering the affect of the photograph, writes: ‘[the] camera deals, in some way or other, with every particle of information present within its field of view; it is wholly indiscriminate. Photographs, to the joy or misery of all who make them, invariably tell us more than we want to know.’⁵⁴ In (*nostalgia*) Frampton utilised his personal experience to examine the medium he would now inhabit. The individuals in many of his photographs are friends, acquaintances, colleagues, a number of which are now well known beyond these personal circles. The material transformation that we view in (*nostalgia*) refers us back to ourselves as witnesses of our own timeliness; Frampton remarked, ‘In Greek the word [nostalgia] means the “the wounds of returning.” Nostalgia is not an emotion that is entertained; it is sustained.’⁵⁵ Boym identifies two forms of nostalgia, restorative and reflective; the former ‘is not a duration but a perfect snapshot’, a preserved moment without decay, the latter is not concerned with the ‘recovery of what is perceived to be an absolute truth but on the meditation on history and passage of time.’⁵⁶ She contends that reflective nostalgia ‘reveals that longing and critical thinking are not opposed to one another, as affective memories do not absolve one from compassion, judgement or critical reflection.’⁵⁷ This nostalgia is not identified with the longing for home but is bound up with the search for identity, and this notion has found particular expression in the twentieth century, a time when the potency and nature of home became less certain.

Benjamin believed that relations between past and present could be indicated in a dialectical image: ‘an image that emerges suddenly, in a flash.’⁵⁸ It is a synthesis of opposed elements, blinding and illuminating in equal measure, articulating the past in a manner that splinters classical historiography, with its belief in a reasoned progression of events, a juxtaposition that

⁵³ Rosenstone, R. A. (1995) *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to our Idea of History*, Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, England: Harvard University Press, p.64

⁵⁴ Frampton, H. (2009) ‘For a Metahistory of Film: Commonplace Notes and Hypotheses’, in: Jenkins, B. (ed.), *On The Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters: The Writings of Hollis Frampton*, Cambridge, Massachusetts/London: The MIT Press, p.136

⁵⁵ Dubois, P. ‘Photography Mise-en-Film’, Kirby, L. (trans.), in: Petro, P. (ed.), (1995) *Fugitive Images From Photography to Video*, Indiana: Indiana University Press, p.169

⁵⁶ Boym, S. (2001) *The Future of Nostalgia*, New York: Basic Books, p.49

⁵⁷ Ibid, p.49-50

⁵⁸ Benjamin, W. (1999) *The Arcades Project*, Eiland, H. and McLaughlin, K. (trans.), Cambridge, Massachusetts/London: Harvard University press, p.473

produces progressive insight.⁵⁹ He describes the dialectical image's conditions, purpose and its almost divine countenance, but at no point does he exemplify this phenomenon or offer an empirical instance, for it is a matter of Marxist good faith. Moore suggests that Benjamin's 'definition [of the dialectical image] articulates an apt description of Frampton's burning, then quivering, images', and that the relationship between burning image and text, is "balanced in a constellation of new meaning".⁶⁰ Benjamin's formulation appeals to film and Moore suggests Frampton has produced a form of celluloid alchemy, through which he 'restores cinema's magical power to curse and cure'.⁶¹ Frampton's practice may be 'political' in its avant-gardism, but it forsakes direct political intent.

There can be no conclusive definition of what is a progressive and politically informed film but it would seem that Benjamin's historical materialism is essentially closer to Brecht's activism or Vertov's dynamism, and that he might find the dialectical image in the work of Sergei Eisenstein. Eisenstein's dialectical theory of montage denoted a 'collision rather than linkage'.⁶² Monaco writes, 'For Eisenstein, montage has as its aim the creation of ideas, of a new reality, rather than the support of narrative, the old reality of experience'.⁶³

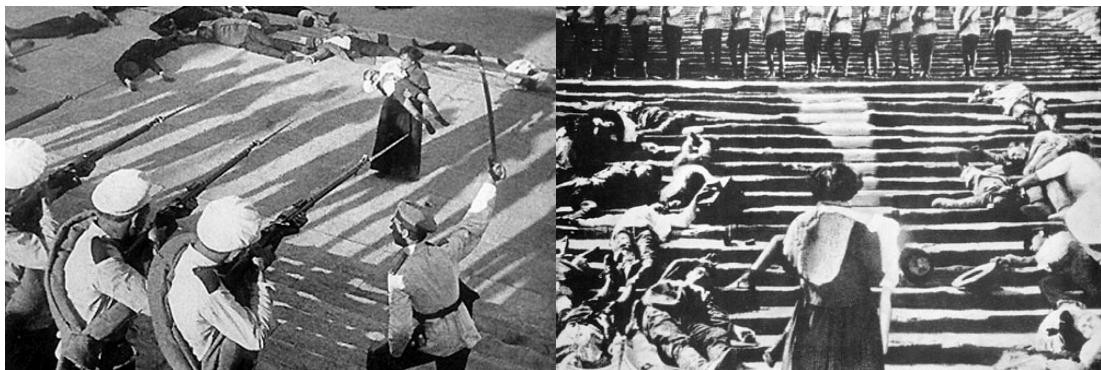


Fig. 34 *Battleship Potemkin* (1925)

⁵⁹ Benjamin defined historical materialism via three concepts, *catastrophe* – missed opportunity, *critical moment* – preservation of the status quo, *progress* – the revolutionary moment, and within this formulation that which currently prevails is catastrophic and therefore demands change. Ibid, p.474-5

⁶⁰ Moore has a particular fondness for (*nostalgia*). It features prominently in *Savage Theory: Cinema as Modern Theory*, and its chapter 'Pyrotechnical Reproduction' was later expanded into *Hollis Frampton: (nostalgia)*. Moore's readings are striking and persuasive, but other interpretations are also possible. Moore. R, (2006) *Hollis Frampton: (nostalgia)*, London: Afterall Books, p.57

⁶¹ Ibid, p.61

⁶² Monaco, J. (1981) *How to Read a Film: The Art, Technology, History, and Theory of Film and Media*, revised ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.325

⁶³ Ibid

Eisenstein's configuration was part of his formulation of a total film language that eschewed emotional identification and naturalism and sought to exemplify dialectical process. He developed his understanding of the dialectic to also apply to the shot:

'Every aggressive moment... every element... that brings to light in the spectator those senses or that psychology that influenced his experience – every element that can be verified and mathematically calculated to produce certain emotional shocks in a proper order within the totality [of film].'⁶⁴

Adorno was also to acknowledge the importance of montage but unlike Eisenstein he envisaged it arranging shots in a 'constellation akin to that of writing'.⁶⁵ Miriam Hansen comments that he believed, 'Only through montage which negates the affirmative appeal of the image and interrupts the chains of associative automatism can film become a medium of cognition'.⁶⁶ He desires to move the idea of montage beyond the principle of shock and make it readable and 'aspire to the level of a self-conscious construct', because 'only then would film cease to be script' and move into the realm of critical reflection.⁶⁷ Films such as (*nostalgia*) and *Man With a Movie Camera* (Vertov, 1929) have something of this quality. For Frampton 'film builds upon the straight cut, and the direct collision of images, of "shots", extending a perceptual domain whose most noticeable trait we might call *successiveness*',⁶⁸ and this conception of form is utilised for critical reflection, a formulation that is directly discernible.

Janet Harbord also invokes's dialectical movement for *La Jetée* (Marker, 1962), she writes, 'In the film, as in Marxist reading, we ignore the past at our peril; in Marker's version how we "know" the past is in itself a question'.⁶⁹ This film is perceived by Dubois to be another example of the 'cinema of the self', describing it as a 'work of memory and distance, it allows us to see thought in images: It allows time travel'.⁷⁰ The film is 'The Story of a man marked by a childhood image.' This man is propelled into time in search of his memories, an action that is necessitated by the violent destruction of the present and the war's victors hope that the man's 'obsession with an image from the past' would help re-orientate, save, the present. Traveling in time, in search of a memory of a man's death watched by a woman at Orly airport, he encounters the future; and its

⁶⁴ Eisenstein, S. 'Film Sense', p.231, cited in: Ibid, p.326

⁶⁵ Adorno, T. W. 'Transparencies on Film', Levin, Y. T. (trans.), (1982) *New German Critique*, 24/25, Autumn/Winter, p.203

⁶⁶ Hansen, B. M. (1982) 'Introduction to Adorno', *New German Critique*, 24/25, Autumn/Winter, p.195

⁶⁷ Ibid, p.197

⁶⁸ Frampton, H. (2009) 'The Withering Away of the State of the Art', in: Jenkins, B. (ed.), *On The Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters: The Writings of Hollis Frampton*, Cambridge, Massachusetts/London: The MIT Press, p.265

⁶⁹ Harbord, J. (2009) *Chris Marker: La Jetée*, London: Afterall, p.8

⁷⁰ Dubois, P. 'Photography Mise-en-Film', Kirby, L. (trans.), in: Petro, P. (ed.), (1995) *Fugitive Images From Photography to Video*, Indiana: Indiana University Press, p.168

emissaries offer the man a chance to rebuild the present. But time spirals, and rather than choosing to join 'the people of the world to come' he requests to return to the site of that memory, his initial point of departure, but the death that he had witnessed as a child was in fact his own. The film concludes where it began, time has returned the man to this fateful, inescapable, memory; Bergsonian duration incarnate as past, present and future on the same temporal plane.



Fig. 35 *La Jetée* (1962)

Marker's use of a dramatic genre, as a means to examine history and memory, places the attendant narrative in an enclosed universe, which operates through its own dynamic drives. He creates an alternative reality, which is recognisable in many respects and is occupied by characters from the near past, for instance the victor's lead experimenter can be heard to speak German – invoking the fears of the Nazi camps and their adherent experimentation, all that still haunted Marker's generation. In rendering his film in stills, taken by the American photographer William Klein, Marker fashioned an imagined world that emphasised the tone of reflective circumspection. His post-apocalyptic vision may be oriented towards the future, but like all science fiction it tells us more about present preoccupations, and their context, which in this case was the aftermath of World War II and mutually assured nuclear destruction, rather than things to come. The prosperity offered by the future beings does not appeal to Marker, for he is drawn to corporeal memory, and the real image of a man's death and a woman's face overpower unknown possibilities and a 'pacified' future.

In *La Jetée* the narrator likens the protagonist's memory to that of a museum, and this is one of the places that he and the object of his memories meet. The inference being that memory is the museum of self, something Marker was to return to in other films, and later realise with the virtual *Le Musée de Marker* (2003). Frampton's film may not have the historic gravity of Marker's twentieth century fable, but Frampton's consideration of his past does have actual material temporality; Marker's narrated images illustrate an idea of time and the substance of memory, whereas Frampton's assembly is imbued with real time (and memory). These films both assess what it is to remember, on and off screen, they both are redolent, in different ways, with the question of memory, why certain memories are powerful anchors; Freud may have mistrusted his memory, but its unconscious depths allowed time to be transcended. In 'Notes on (nostalgia)' Frampton writes (about himself), 'I was forced into examining his leavings and middens, like an archaeologist shifting for ostracized pot shards.'⁷¹ Frampton's use of analogy reminds one of a passage from Benjamin's notebooks,

Language has unmistakeably made plain that memory is not an instrument for exploring the past, but rather a medium. It is the medium of that which is experienced, just as the earth is the medium in which ancient cities lie buried. He who seeks his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging. Above all, he must not be afraid to return again and again to the same matter; to scatter it as one scatters earth, to turn it over as one turns over soil.⁷²

Both men (as does Marker) envisaged excavation, a process of sifting and documenting, as the way to better understand origins; this analogy also indicates the partialness of any discovery. The archaeologist attempts to reconstruct, through discovery, research and intuition, a plausible (academic and aesthetic) version of what has been found and what it may mean. The unearthing of fragmented pieces, also suggests the attempt to recreate, through collected evidence, the past. Mental exertion allows for retracing and recreating, in which the various fragments are given form through the act of informed imagination.

Thinking through practice

Frampton equated frame bound images with thought, 'the visible limit of the projected image itself – the frame – which has taken on, through the accumulation of illusions that have transpired within its rectangular boundary, the force of a metaphor for consciousness.'⁷³ This

⁷¹ 'Notes on (nostalgia)', in: *Ibid*, p.224

⁷² Benjamin, W. 'Selected Writing 2:2 1935-38', p.576, in: (2007) *Walter Benjamin's Archive*, Marx, U. Schwarz, G. Schwarz, M. Wizisla, E. (ed.), London: Verso, introduction

⁷³ Frampton, H. (2006) 'A Pentagram for Conjuring the Narrative', in: *On the Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters: The Writings of Hollis Frampton*, Jenkins, B. (ed.), Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, p.143

ambition found favour with fellow artists Snow, who deemed *Wavelength* (1967) to be a summation of his ‘nervous system, religious inklings, and aesthetic ideas’⁷⁴, and Brakhage who contended that ‘In film, the closest metaphor is the thought process.’⁷⁵ For these individuals film was an extension of art practice, a form that stretches back millennia, and expresses the thoughts and desires of humanity. Frampton writes,

‘We propose another, radically different morphology... one that views film not from the outside, as a product to be consumed, but from the inside, as a dynamically evolving organic code directly *responsive* and *responsible*, like every other code, to the supreme mediator: consciousness.’⁷⁶

This notion is taken up by Moore, who writes that viewing (*nostalgia*) ‘is a direct engagement with consciousness itself as the viewer gets caught in the grip of past, present and future time.’⁷⁷ The alignment of film and consciousness recalls Bergson’s interest, and these filmmakers’ shared his mistrust of film’s illusionism and sought to make manifest an alternative perception. This inclination was promoted by Annette Michelson who lauding *Wavelength* achievement in ‘Towards Snow.’⁷⁸ Snow conceived his film thus: ‘The space starts at the camera’s (spectator’s) eye, is in air, then is on the screen, then is within the screen (the mind).’⁷⁹ His film begins with the framed expanse of his studio and zooms slowly, in a continuous sequence of shots, towards an unknown point on the far wall.⁸⁰ The zoom is a unique filmic mannerism that moves from

⁷⁴ Michael Snow cited in: Sitney, P. A. (1979) *Visionary Film: The American Avant-garde*, 2nd ed, Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, p.375

⁷⁵ Frampton, H. (1973) ‘Stan And Jane Brakhage, Talking’, *Artforum*, January, p.74

⁷⁶ ‘Notes on Composing in Film’, in: *Ibid*, p.154-5

⁷⁷ Moore, R. (2006) *Hollis Frampton: (nostalgia)*, London: Afterall Books, p.1

⁷⁸ Michelson, A. ‘Towards Snow’, in: (1978) *The Avant-Garde Film: A Reader of Theory and Criticism*, Sitney, P. A. (ed.), New York: Anthology Film Archives

⁷⁹ Sitney, P. A. (1979) *Visionary Film: The American Avant-garde*, 2nd ed., Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, p.375

⁸⁰ In a note for the fourth International Experimental Film Festival, where it won first prize, Snow described the film: ‘*Wavelength* was shot in one week Dec. ’66 preceded by a year of notes, thoughts, mutterings. It was edited and the first print seen in May ’67. I wanted to make a summation of my nervous system, religious inklings, and aesthetic ideas. I was thinking of planning for a time monument in which the beauty and sadness of equivalence would be celebrated, thinking of trying to make a definitive statement of pure Film space and time, a balancing of ‘illusion’ and ‘fact’, all about seeing. The space starts at the camera’s (spectator’s) eye, is in the air, then is on the screen, then is within the screen (the mind).

The film is a continuous zoom which takes 45 minutes to go from its widest field to its smallest and final field. It was shot with a fixed camera from one end of an 80 foot loft, shooting the other end, a row of windows and the street. This, the setting, and the action which takes place there, are cosmically equivalent. The room (and the zoom) are interrupted by four human events including a death. The sound on these occasions is sync sound, a sine wave, which goes from its lowest (50 cycles per second) note to its highest (12000 c.p.s.) in 40 minutes. It is a total glissando while the film is a crescendo and a dispersed spectrum which attempts to utilize the gifts of both

totality to exactitude, as Michelson describes ‘from uncertainty to certainty.’⁸¹ As the zoom progresses across the studio it is punctuated four times by narrative elements, which culminate in an death; Frampton plays the dying man. The film’s drama is a counterpoint to its optical intensity, however, the film’s progression does not pause to acknowledge the staged death, but instead the zoom moves on, indifferent to the weight this cinematic occurrence conventionally carries. Stephen Heath states that there is no ‘production of any simple memory: the film plays with and on the past or a future to the present moment of the zoom.’⁸² It is the frame that holds all that is memorable but its complexity defies exact recollection. It is not a fixed monument; it is resolutely present, and yet also something emerging out of the past.

Snow, originally a painter, was born in Canada in 1931,⁸³ and like Frampton sought the community of New York for the 1960s, but despite its apparent vibrancy, Rees writes that,

‘Snow lamented the lack of interest in contemporary arts among the devotees of Underground film, much of which was still, as it were, culturally in the beat era; there was at that time and still is a separation of communities between those involved in the painting and sculpture world in whatever capacity – artist, dealer, critic, collector – and those involved in experimental film.’⁸⁴

In *Wavelength*, and other works, Snow endeavours to break down the distinction between object and action. He forsakes formalism, intruding into the disputed realm of narrativity. The film’s moments of theatrical exposition emphasise the material interplay between contrived actions and found occurrence. *Wavelength* is a filmic experience that cannot be replicated by any other means. The film has a playfulness that ‘challenge[s] and deflate[s] its own purist modernism, and to open its range of associative meaning.’⁸⁵ Its form engenders an immersive filmic environment that resides in immediate and after thought, one that resists classification and resides at the limit of perceptual recollection, due to relentless movement across space and questing structure. In the final sequence the zoom’s destination is evident, a point of stillness, a photograph of grey waves on the far wall between the studio’s windows.

prophecy and memory which only film and music have to offer’. *Film Culture*, 46 (Autumn 1967), p.1 cited in: Sitney, P. A. (1979) *Visionary Film: The American Avant-garde*, Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, p.375

⁸¹ Michelson, A. ‘Towards Snow’, in: (1978) *The Avant-Garde Film: A Reader of Theory and Criticism*, Sitney, P. A. (ed.), New York: Anthology Film Archives, p.174

⁸² Heath, S. (1977) ‘Film Performance’, *Cine-Tracts: A Journal of Film, Communications, Culture, and Politics*, 2, Summer, p.16

⁸³ Michelson, A. (1979) ‘About Snow’, *October*, vol. 8, Spring, p. 111

⁸⁴ ‘The collected writing of Michael Snow’, Dompierre, L. (ed.), Toronto: Wilfred Laurier University Press cited in: Rees, A. L. ‘Working Both Sides of the Street: Film and Art in Michael Snow’, in: (2001) *Michael Snow Almost Cover to Cover*, Roberts, C. and Steeds, L. (ed.) London: Black Dog Publishing, p.80

⁸⁵ Rees, A. L. ‘Working Both Sides of the Street: Film and Art in Michael Snow’, in: (2001) *Michael Snow Almost Cover to Cover*, London: Black Dog Publishing, p.82

At *Wavelength*'s conclusion, the viewer is no longer located in the room, but in stilled waters, Snow contends the 'the waves are visible registries of invisible forces.'⁸⁶ The image is held before it loses focus and ends in a glare of white light. Snow commented that the 'photograph of the waves is an implication of total continuity for everything, not just that simple incident.'⁸⁷ The film's passage, which mapped the internal space, ends in a place that is outside the studio, a dramatic change of scale from the definite to the infinite, and in this moment and all those that came before it, we reflect on what we are viewing, have viewed, and what it means to be a viewer. Also, the evocative, seemingly melancholy, image takes us somewhere else, to a place we recognise, feel we may even have visited, and somewhere that now resides in memor



Fig. 36 *Wavelength* (1967)

Brakhage, an altogether more lyrical filmmaker, also conceptualised his practice in this manner; Sitney wrote that he 'invented a form in which the film-maker could compress his thoughts and feelings while recording his direct confrontation with intense experiences.'⁸⁸ He used film to record and discover his own universe, and the audience is offered a manifestation of his familial and poetic memories and formulations. By way of contrast, Warhol commented that his film

⁸⁶ Hartog, S. (1976) 'Ten Questions to Michael Snow', *Cinim*, no. 3, Spring, in: *Structural Film Anthology*, Gidal, P. (ed.), London: British Film Institute, p.37

⁸⁷ Mekas, J. and Sitney, P. A. (1968) 'A Conversation with Michael Snow', *Film Culture*, 46, October 1968, [online] available at: <http://sprocketssociety.org/wp-content/uploads/Wavelength-program-notes-NWFF-Feb-2011.pdf> [accessed 03 January 2013]

⁸⁸ Sitney, P. A. (1979) *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde*, 2nd ed, Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, p.150

making process consisted of just switching on the camera and walking away.⁸⁹ This challenge to production procedure evidently cut against an artisanal approach and indicated the assent of more overtly conceptual concerns, focused on systems and process.

Frampton commented that ‘Much of what I have learned – both what I value and what I have not yet learned to value - I have learned from film, which is to say, from its makers.’⁹⁰ In 1972 Brakhage produced *The Riddle of Lumen*⁹¹ in response to the challenge of Frampton’s practice, particularly *Zorns Lemma* (1970). Sitney writes that his ‘systemic mode of filmmaking encouraged Brakhage, in that instance, to override his obsession with “the three sisters of Fate”’.⁹² *Zorns Lemma* is composed primarily of shots of words, found on the streets of New York, which are arranged in alphabetical order. The words are repeated and then replaced by images of objects and actions, which appear in the reverse order of their occurrence as the first letters of English words.



Fig. 38 *Zorns Lemma* (1970)

⁸⁹ Ibid, p.69

⁹⁰ ‘Mental Notes’, in: Ibid, p.255

⁹¹ The title of Brakhage’s film was an ‘allusion to the Latin text of Robert Grosseteste, ‘On the Ingression of light’, which Frampton had translated for the end of *Zorns Lemma* (1970). Ibid, p.327

⁹² Sitney, P. A. (2008) *Eyes Upside Down: Visionary Filmmakers and the Heritage of Emerson*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.326-8

The film takes its title from ‘set theory, where it seems that “every partially ordered set contains a maximal fully ordered subset”’.⁹³ The film’s ‘units’, the letters and the images that replace them, are one second in duration, and this progressive sequencing suggest the film’s systematic construction. The viewer is prompted to solve its code; to remember what has been, and predict its further development. Frampton’s substitution, an image for a letter, suggests more than mere representation but seeks to refine what an image can actually mean and/or be. It indicates that narrative is but one of many potential structuring formulations.

The Riddle of Lumen positioned the act of remembrance, unlike Brakhage’s earlier more lyrical films, with the viewer. It is a visual record of what has been, fragments of a personal archive, which is ordered according to colour, composition, movement and avoids thematic characterisation.



Fig. 37 *The Riddle of Lumen* (1972)

Brakhage’s ordering attends to each shot’s composition, which is given form by light’s fall - his study of its conditions and phenomena is the usual critical focus, a position that Sitney’s appreciation exemplifies.⁹⁴ The shots all have the sense of being part of an autobiography, which is being conducted through association and aesthetic disposition. The images show the artist’s environment and the development of his familial world. Brakhage’s film is arranged in bursts of

⁹³ Sitney, P. A. (1979) *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde*, 2nd ed, Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, p.397

⁹⁴ Ibid, p.388-9

rhythmic montage, which vary in speed and duration, reside beyond predictive facility, as any following shot cannot be predicted on the basis of the one currently on-screen. Brakhage, concluded his essay *Lost Films*, by suggesting that sometimes a ‘ghost film’ may ‘break through the thought-bounds of language’, and embody ‘the kind of passing image which prompts dreams that cannot be verbalised.’⁹⁵ This entity may exist only in the realm of the imaginary, but Brakhage’s empirical reflection is evidently correct; something must make an impression for it to be remembered. The images’ procession, in *The Riddle of Lumen*, may be largely unpredictable but a life in non-chronological filmed segments would seem to be revealed, like fragments of memory. The relationship between memory and predictability echoes Snow’s invocation of ‘memory and prophecy.’⁹⁶ In discussing *Wavelength* he states that its end is ‘fated’,⁹⁷ it’s there at the beginning but it’s not actually visible and is only revealed through the film’s durational progression and the audience’s procedural acquisition of it as space becomes known.

Frampton visited London in May 1972, to show the finished parts of *Hapax Legomena*. It was at this time that he met Peter Gidal and on May 24 they recorded an interview. Gidal was to challenge Frampton’s apparent lapse into narrative in parts of *Hapax Legomena*.⁹⁸ They discussed, amongst other matters, the omnipresent spectre of narrative. In this respect Gidal suggests ‘It’s the whole idea of using the viewer as a voyeur, as a passive respondent to your very abstract ideas and feelings. Or do you demand of the viewer a total break with the past cultural system?’⁹⁹ They agreed that narrative tends to be ‘authoritarian’, but as absolute as Gidal’s position was, forsaking all identifiable and abstract imagery, Frampton’s relationship with narrative remained a nuanced one, a critical reflection underpinned by clear articulated thoughts and structured images that emanate from an individualistically defined, rather than a purely theoretical, domain.

Gidal’s emphasis on materiality negates an encompassing memory, for without narrative and figurative representation it is harder to locate. He believed that the ‘visionary’ filmmaker’s method, as characterised by Sitney, was problematic, stating that ‘a film is not a window to life’, and furthermore it ‘cannot adequately represent consciousness any more than it adequately represents meaning.’¹⁰⁰ However, even within his reductionist approach there are moments of recognisable integration that locate the work and are memorable. He would forego film’s identification process and propose a pro-filmic event, a real coming into the presence of film (as

⁹⁵ Ibid, p.68

⁹⁶ *Film Culture*, 46 (Autumn 1967), p.1 cited in: Ibid, p.375

⁹⁷ Hartog, S. (1976) ‘Ten Questions to Michael Snow’, *Cinim*, no. 3, Spring, in: *Structural Film Anthology*, Gidal, P. (ed.), London: British Film Institute, p.37

⁹⁸ Sitney, P. A. (2008) *Eyes Upside Down: Visionary Filmmakers and the Heritage of Emerson*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.105

⁹⁹ Gidal, P. (1985) ‘Interview with Hollis Frampton’, *October*, 32, p.104

¹⁰⁰ Gidal, P. (1978) ‘Theory and Definition of Structural/Materialist Film’, in: *Structural Film Anthology*, Gidal, P. (ed.), London: BFI Publishing, p.10

it were); this asks can art relinquish what has been, abdicate all connections with disciplinary conjecture; can some works, through aesthetic and technological direction, define the terms of engagement so completely that memory only exists on its own terms?

Gidal's film *Clouds* (1969) is preoccupied with atmospheric emptiness. The film has a total duration of 10 minutes, and after 1 minute 40 seconds a plane flies into view, it is gone 5 seconds later. The mechanised dissection of natural phenomena, the clouds' movement across the frame, situates the work, and provides a memory that focuses all that precedes and follows this movement; anything that might refer to something knowable, and have some meaning, is latched on to and becomes a point of reference, because we instinctively make it so.



Fig. 39 *Clouds* (1969)

Gidal may be against remembrance (no time but the present) but is it possible to compose a work that somehow only suggests what has just been (and might come) and not be another point of entry into experience and all that precedes it. Film's linear progress, despite Gidal's best intentions, still initiates a narrative, of sorts, one that resides in memory, for all that we encounter make impressions and these are ordered according to cultural awareness and habit; his antithetical position, paradoxically, invokes memories, for they are irrepressible.

This image is memory

In (*nostalgia*)'s final sequence, the narrator tells of enlarging a photographic detail of, 'something, standing in the cross street and invisible to me, was reflected in a factory window, and then reflected once more in the rear-view mirror attached to the truck door. It was only a tiny detail.' The blowing-up of the photograph renders it 'hopelessly ambiguous', but it still retains its hold because, 'What I believe I see recorded, in that speck of film, fills me with such fear, such utter dread and loathing, that I think I shall never dare to make another photograph again.' The narrator, directly addressing the imagined audience, asks, 'Look at it. Do you see what I see?' The screen is black. In the end, there is no image.

The last narration is different from the other tales that have preceded it, as it is less based in anecdotal recall, and the attendant personal relationships, and more concerned with affect and consequently seems more contrived. Alex Garcia Duttman describes the end as a 'disappointment', contending that 'Frampton's comment presents itself so much as the last comment on photography and art that it proves as incriminatory as the photographs he dismisses confounding art with the will to art.'¹⁰¹ Frampton's method is not symmetrical; he leaves the circle incomplete. To repeat his method, or return to the start, would be too rational, a knowable memorial scheme, whereas his horrified shaggy-dog story takes the film somewhere else, somewhere unexpected. The narrator states he has seen 'something, standing', which suggests some kind of creature, human or otherwise. What horror could this urban spectre suggest? It is a struggle to bid farewell, especially to that which has just been fondly recalled. This last tale emphasises the hollowness of a photographic conceit, that there is always some unseen secret to be revealed, à la *Blow Up* (1966). For Frampton, enlargement rendered the image completely unknowable, unlike Antonioni's revealed secret. Is this inability to produce hidden meaning unsettling, that magnified inspection offers nothing but indistinguishable grain?

When viewing (*nostalgia*) there is a point at which its structure is understood, and at this moment there is a need to recap and realign all that has been seen. In reappraising the juxtaposition of voice and image, there is an implicit examination of perception, in which Frampton's subjects are placed in the realm of finality, ready for eternal examination. Siegfried Kracauer, in his essay 'Photography', drawing upon Freudian ideas, suggests that the 'last image' of an individual preserves their 'actual history'.¹⁰² This image encapsulates memory, and is like a 'monogram' in that the image is reduced to the clarity of a symbol. If this method were applied to film, a number

¹⁰¹ Duttman, G. A. (2013) 'Why Burn a Photograph', *Criticism, Theory, and Thinking Sense*, Royal College of Art, 12 June

¹⁰² Kracauer, S. (1993) 'Photography', *Critical enquiry*, Spring, p.426

of them, such as Truffaut's *400 Blows* (1959) with its defiant freeze frame ending, could be surmised in this manner.



Fig. 40 *400 Blows* (1959)

Kracauer also perceives that in 'a photograph a person's history is buried as if under a layer of snow',¹⁰³ an image of organic archaeology that echoes Benjamin's metaphor, and suggests that photographs are contextual clues in the happenstance of existence. It is not apparent which is (*nostalgia*)'s last image. The last photograph is the only image in the film that is not Frampton's. It is an appropriated newspaper photograph of a 'middle-aged man wearing a baseball cap'. He is 'a Texas fruit-grower', and Frampton's interest is in his interpretation of this 'slightly indistinct' image. This is followed by a black space, of short duration, which concludes the film; Frampton later commented, 'it might work better to have it simply trail off into darkness.'¹⁰⁴ The film's last image is Frampton's graphic monogram, as if he needed to release himself, and the viewer, from this seemingly blank frame, and through using his maker's mark re-establish his authorial stamp. His last photograph is his image of rotting Franco-American Spaghetti (1964), if his last portrait were sought it would be Larry Poons (1965) or does his final passage refer back to the initial photograph of the darkroom - the end (literally and figuratively) of his photographic narrative? This avoidance of a definitive final, and possibly totalising image, emphasises the film's displaced

¹⁰³ Ibid

¹⁰⁴ Cited in: MacDonald, S. (1998) 'A Critical Cinema', Berkeley: University of California Press, p.60 cited in: Moore, R, (2006) *Hollis Frampton: (nostalgia)*, London: Afterall Books, p.48

and elliptical quality, and something of the complexity, suggestibility and subjectivity of memory. In choosing to end with mock-horrified observation Frampton tried to avoid the awkwardness of declaring this is the end (of so many things).



Fig. 41 *Untitled (appropriated newspaper photograph)* (n.d.)
from: *(nostalgia)* (1971)

In the formulation of *(nostalgia)* Frampton sought through personal recollection, coupled with conceptual intent and narrative slight-of-hand, to make manifest ideas, thoughts, and harness film's potential to suggest a 'metaphor for consciousness'.¹⁰⁵ Frampton defined autobiography as 'life, writing itself',¹⁰⁶ an existence located in the relationships that accrue with time, seemingly incidental incidents that have personal resonance, whose interest lays in narrative affectation and the now famous company that Frampton kept. His sequences have cultural interest and disciplinary invention, an experimental disposition, but reside outside of History's direct shadow, the machinations of nations ferment beyond the remit of Frampton's frame. The work's

¹⁰⁵ Frampton, H. (2006) 'A Pentagram for Conjuring the Narrative', in: *On the Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters: The Writings of Hollis Frampton*, Jenkins, B. (ed.), Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, p.143

¹⁰⁶ 'Mental Notes', in: *Ibid*, p.255

criticality necessitates that the viewer re-synch the images and sound, find narrative reason and meaning, a task that Frampton ultimately refuses to do. In his recounting of anecdotes Frampton is also forgetting, omitting that which is deemed unimportant for his narrative, these absent memories may still dwell in his unconscious but, they have been relegated to the unlamented past. His bathos allowed a transition from nostalgia and sentiment to a new (unknown) place. If a memory is reiterated, altered, it becomes a work of imagination, and as Sartre proposes that the past is ‘one mode of real existence among others.’¹⁰⁷ This notion, where the past, present and future all seem to rest on the same plane, which echoes Bergson,¹⁰⁸ is given profound expression by Frampton.

In the next chapter Marker’s *Level Five* reflects on how individual memory is represented and processed by technological means. His interest in forms of memory and history’s flow, their relationship and representation, is to be repeatedly found in his work and in *Level Five* he engaged with his subjects through a computerized filter. His appraisal of this new informational realm asks how can history be re-contextualized - given meaning beyond the repetition of received data - and can this facilitate a new commentary that allows divergent voices to be recognized.

¹⁰⁷ Sartre, J. P. (2004) *The Imaginary: A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination*, Webber, J. (trans.), London/ New York: Routledge, p.181

¹⁰⁸ Bergson, H. (2004) *Matter and Memory*, Paul, N. M. and Scott Palmer, W. (trans.), New York: Dover Publications, p.194

**VI. LEVEL FIVE:
HISTORY, TECHNOLOGY AND THE MELANCHOLIC TURN**



Fig. 42 *Level Five* (1996)

Level Five (1996) was to be Chris Marker's (1921-2012) last work in the twentieth century's predominant art form, a work that Bellour declared to be 'a new kind of film, the first cinema release to examine the links between cultural memory and the production of images and sounds by computer.'¹ These areas of interest were recurring concerns for Marker, but his film engaged with them with a new conceptual hybridity. The allure of hypertext, not being constrained by durational concerns and time's momentum, were to lead him elsewhere and through computing conventions he sought to show his memory's trace. Through the analysis of *Level Five* the technological possibilities of the reframing of information, computerized databases, search engines, which were just becoming well-known with the launch of the first Internet browsers, is considered. I also ask whether this manner of archival engagement could develop new forms, encounters that bring personal narratives into historical focus, in some way recalibrate History's normative cast and actually be a site of resistance?

¹ Bellour, R. 'Multiple Cinemas – The Cinema Only', lecture delivered at Tate Modern, 23 May 2002, quoted in: Lupton, C. (2005) *Chris Marker: Memories of the Future*, London: Reaktion Books, p.201

Chris Marker was born Christian François Bouche-Villeneuve, in Neuilly-sur-Seine, France, and is thought to have taken his work name shortly after the Second World War. He was instrumental in developing the essayistic documentary form over the last four decades, and his oeuvre can broadly be characterised in three parts, which at times overlap: reflective travelogues, political documentaries, and works of biographical remembrance. Bill Horrigan, in Marker's photographic compendium *Staring Back*, writes that, 'It's by no means reductive to say that Marker's artistic odyssey and vocation, his calling, consists of making and looking at photographic images and of using words to puzzle what they mean, and of showing how their meaning can be made to change.'² Marker's work expanded the documentary's bounds through disciplinary innovation, a bringing together of ideological expression, lyrical individualism and formal enquiry, and this was coupled with a creative engagement with moving image technologies, as Jonathan Kear writes, 'self-reflexivity and experiments with intermediality have been the defining characteristics of Marker's cinema since the 1950s.'³ Rosenstone contends that filmmakers, like Marker and Godard, are a form of historian, providing counterpoints to traditional definitions⁴ and suggesting the possibility of different histories being written. Marker, after Benjamin's Historian, challenged the march of victors.⁵

Historical hybridity

- Open on: *A hand controlling a mouse accompanied by synthesized sounds.*
Camera move towards a computer screen.
Dark images of a car on an urban highway.
- Cut to: *Images of skyscrapers illuminated at night* (shot from a car's moving point-of-view) projected over a mannequin's face.
- Laura (VO): What can these be but the playthings of a mad god who made us build them for him? Imagine Neanderthal man glimpsing a flash of city at night, all motion and light. He cannot tell what it means, he has had a poetic vision...
- Cut to: *The mannequin – camera moves closer – abstract patterns formed by the car's lights tracing patterns in the night.*
... all motion and light.

² Horrigan, B, 'Some Other Time', in: Marker, C. (2007) *Staring Back*, Columbus, Ohio: Wexner Center for the Arts, p.140s

³ Kear, J. (2005) 'The Clothing of Clio: Chris Marker's Poetics and the Politics of Representing History', Film Studies, no. 6, p.58

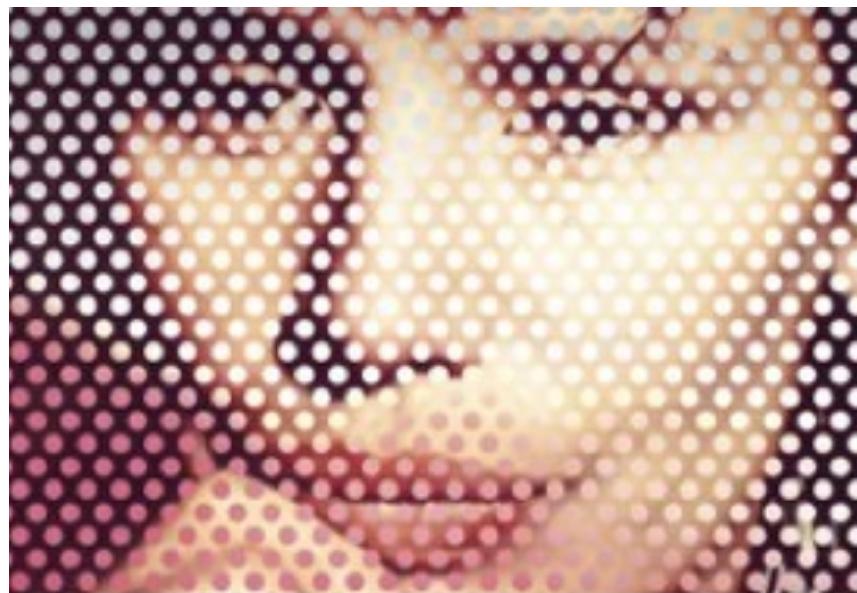
⁴ Rosenstone, R. A. (1995) *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to our Idea of History*, Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, England: Harvard University Press, p.7

⁵ Benjamin, W. (2003) 'On the Concept of History' in: *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 4, 1938-40*, Eiland, H. and Jennings, M. W. (ed.), Jephcott, E. and others (trans.), Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, p.403

- Cut to: The mannequin – *camera moves closer* – car’s POV, driving through the urban night.
- Cut to: *The POV raises – a sea of night-lights.*
He cannot unravel the images that land in his mind...
- Cut to: *The mannequin – camera moves closer – car’s POV, driving through the urban night*
Like birds, swift, unreachable birds.
- Cut to: *The mannequin – camera moves closer – scanning the illuminated city from a high POV.*
Thoughts, memories, visions are the same to him, a scary hallucination.
- Cut to: *CU of a waving flag (degraded image).*
Such was William Gibson’s vision...
- Dissolve to: *The image of a bespectacled black and white image of William Gibson.*
When he wrote Neuromancer.
- Dissolve to: *A black screen with horizontal interference.*
And invented Cyberspace.
- Dissolve to: *The city in daylight* (from a offshore POV).
He saw a Sargasso Sea.
- Dissolve to: *The black screen with horizontal interference.*
Full of binary algae.
- Dissolve to: *The mannequin is covered in a lattice of lines – interference covers the image.*
On that image we Neanderthals grafted our own visions, our thoughts and memories...
Interference fades out, an intermittent red dot flashes.
... our pitiful scraps of information.
- Cut to: *An image of criss-cross lines on a blue background is framed within the screen.*
The red dot continues to flash. Other dots highlight the image.
But none of us knows what a city is.
- Dissolve to: *Laura, a striking young dark-haired woman (dressed in a brown kimono, almost Jedi like), talks directly to the camera - She now has a synthesising filter applied. Behind her books, photographs (a cat looks over her shoulder), a cut-out of King Kong carrying Fay Wray (a speech bubble attached to the ape says CHANGER LA VIE!) crowd in.*

Laura (Catherine Belkodja), *Level Five*’s on screen narrator, mourns her lover, a computer game designer, who died ‘mysteriously’ after visiting the island of Okinawa. She is attempting to complete ‘The Battle of Okinawa’, the computer game he was working on before his death, and her investigation gives the film its structure. The film’s title refers to the levels that Laura and her lover assigned to individuals; Level 1: ‘Catholic, Communist or Anarchist or some other bigotry’, Level 2: ‘When they were funnier or wittier’, she says the levels ‘never went higher.’ The game became their standard, and in time everything in life required a level of assessment, but nothing ever reached level 5. Laura poses the question - does someone need to die in order to reach level 5, forever equating this highest level with her esteemed lover.

Level Five was the only time that Marker used an on-screen actor. Laura directs and observes the narrative's progress – she is Marker's avatar, her character may be genderised and framed by her investigation, but her pursuit is Marker's, she also bears witness and in doing so takes the part of the audience. The film sets up a triangulation between actor, the recorded interviews and the off-screen voice of 'Chris'. The relationship between these elements, which all offer different tones and forms of engagement - Laura directly addresses the audience in a familiar conversational style of a video diary, Chris offers the perspective of a seasoned and well-traveled man commenting on the images before him, and the interviewees respond to an unseen interviewer, recounting and commenting on Japan's involvement in World War II - introduce a range of perspectives and registers that suggest historical transience and a reflexive inclination; Rosenstone suggests that 'History as experiment [...] opens a window onto a different way of thinking about the past.'⁶ Marker's practice foregrounds the subjective, reflexive nature of his enquiry - his is a discursive mode with notebook-like elements - Rascaroli writes that 'the enunciator addresses the spectator directly, and attempts to establish a dialogue'⁷ - it is a positional work of fact and fiction, the exploration of ideas, thought in motion.



Laura (Catherine Belkodja)

Fig. 43 *Level Five* (1996)

⁶ Rosenstone, R. A. (1995) *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to our Idea of History*, Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, England: Harvard University Press, p.63

⁷ Rascaroli, L. (2009) *The Personal Camera: Subjective Cinema and the Essay Film*, London: Wallflower, p.35

When Chris is first heard he states: 'I was readier, now, for other people's images than my own.' This conceit, for the images are his, differentiates Marker the film's director from Chris the narrator. Laura Rascaroli emphasizes that 'one of Marker's key topics is the reflection on images, the media and their relationship with memory and with human subjectivity.'⁸ In the film Laura calls on him, an 'editing wunderkind', to make sense of the 'stuff' that she is encountering, and he, once again, submits to the resounding enquiry of his practice', what distinguishes remembrance from oblivion? Marker's faith in the image, his reframing of History, implies his Proustian (and Freudian) disposition, that he is appraising a series of invocations, fragments of the (near) past. In his earlier film *La Jetée* (1962) he connected memory and the museum, as sites of association and suggestion, repositories of the past, which, like images, allowed for travel in time and space. This conception was to become a reoccurring theme and it was directly explored in *Level Five*.

Laura, like Marker, is an assumed name; she reveals that the name was given to her by her lover after Otto Preminger's 1944 film - a work in which memory and dream unlocks a murderous past - she says 'I was amazed you could fall for an image and then have a real lady appear in its stead.' She then poses the question, 'Can one be as lovely as an image?' She also evokes *Hiroshima mon amour*'s Elle, quoting her, 'this is the first time I've spoken about you to another', with reference to her deceased lover. Laura, like Elle, desires to know (more), but she is also destined to be outside the History she seeks.

'The Battle of Okinawa', a game of strategy that Laura thought 'would rectify malignant fate', is in fact dictated by history's logic and no matter what strategy is deployed it can only be repeated, for the battle's outcome is a foregone conclusion, a matter of History. She says, 'strategy games are made to win lost wars... I tried the Marienbad game.' Laura's allusion, to Resnais's film indicates her fictional affiliation, her desire to divine the game as a perfectible puzzle, a system enclosed within time and memory, a proposition that is divorced from the actuality of military action and the computer's programmatic logic. Nagisa Oshima, film director and one of the film's interviewees, comments that the Japanese high command envisaged Okinawa's sacrifice as being 'Sute-ishi like', a term from the game 'Go' that means to give-up a piece in order to save the game. Laura personalises the computer's presence, implying it has the facility for human, emotional, arbitration - a common cinematic trope that is most evidently expressed in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Kubrick, 1968) with its malevolent space station computer, Hal – however, word plays, entreaties, do not have the power to unsettle artificial intelligence. She attempts to overturn its inherent composition, through trying to 'turn its neurons inside out' by logging in with 'a noun for a verb', but this move fails to undo its systematic surety, as her word play literally does

⁸ Ibid, p.64

not compute.

Level Five emphasises the limits of the single screen, but also its inescapable influence. The information that Laura accesses is largely presented through computerised superimposition and reframing, screens within screens within a static frame; the constructed nature of representation is constantly being re-emphasised. Cavell writes, ‘The screen is a frame; the frame is the whole field of the screen – as a frame of film is the whole field of a photograph.’⁹ Film is also informed by what cannot be seen, as Burch writes that off-screen space is defined by the four edges of the frame, the space ‘behind the camera’ and the space beyond the film’s set or some object in it.¹⁰ Laura’s position, alone in the room with her camera and computer communicating with what lies beyond, emphasises the importance of all that is seen, and not seen. She once shared her space with her deceased lover, but now only her reminiscences suggest that he was ever present, and she resides in pictorial isolation, connected to the external world by computer interface.

The game that Laura plays is a means to personalize (and re-state) History’s indefatigable passage. Chris states that, ‘the Game offered a new way’ into World War II, this comment is particularly telling as he then confesses, ‘I become so Japanese I shared their collective amnesia. As if the War had never happened.’ His first cinematic visit to Okinawa was to be in *Sans Soleil* (1982), a film Lupton posits as ‘a masterpiece of the personal essay film genre’.¹¹ Japan is at the film’s center, Stephen Barber writes that ‘from his European perspective, Marker views Tokyo as a collective but flawed space of dreaming, always edged with calamity’.¹² Tokitsu, martial art expert, and *Level Five* interviewee, says, ‘I’m not nostalgic about that era [WW II]. But those that lived through it find something missing today.’ The effects of World War II permeate Marker’s practice, since his initial collaborations with Resnais the framing of history has been analysed, which Rosenstone writes is ‘part of a search for new ways to express a relationship to the past’.¹³ Marker’s approach challenges the narrative of works such as *Pacific* (2010), an HBO mini-series that was based on the recollections of US marines who had served in the Pacific campaign; its form is reminiscent of *Saving Private Ryan* (Spielberg, 1998) and *Band of Brothers* (2001), another HBO series, produced by Spielberg and Tom Hanks, in its verisimilitude and use of interviews, which feature veterans, to suggest the reality of the drama. The connection, that these works make, between historical participants and the dramatization of events, is proposed as an

⁹ Cavell, S. (1979) *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*, enlarged edition, Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, U.K.: Harvard University Press, p.25

¹⁰ Burch, N. (1973) *Theory of Film Practice*, London: Martin Secker & Warburg Limited, p.17

¹¹ Lupton, C. (2005) *Chris Marker: Memories of the Future*, London: Reaktion Books, p.7

¹² Barber, S. (2002) *Projected Cities: Cinema and Urban Space*, London: Reaktion Books, p.117

¹³ Rosenstone, R. A. (1995) *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to our Idea of History*, Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, England: Harvard University Press, p.15

inspirational affirmation of the depicted History, but as Nichols points out, ‘identification and narrative characterization may be attached to historical people, giving them dimensions greater or less than their “real-life” measure.’¹⁴ Marker comments over images of Okinawa-related exhibits in the The Mabuni Museum that ‘Till we get smellies, like talkies, war films don’t exist.’



‘The battle was lost in Advance. The Japanese army could not win.’

Fig. 44 *Level Five* (1996)

The indigenous people of Okinawa were renowned for being a gentle race, but Laura informs us that ‘A peaceful isle, out of the world, out of History, would stage the bloodiest battle of all time;’ in *Sans Soleil*, the narrator elucidates that, ‘Americans themselves believed that they were conquering Japanese soil, and that they knew nothing about the Ryukyu civilization.’ In returning to their story Marker reemphasized his identification with those whose memory is often overlooked. The Islanders were not Japanese, but their fate was also to die; Chris states: ‘Mass suicide accompanied the advance of US troops. Together with Japanese executions and casualties of war, some 150,000 civilians died, a third of the population. No other group suffered so, except in the Nazi camps.’ It is estimated that 900,000 Japanese civilians died in WW II, excluding those who were killed by the atomic bombs. Marker’s European comparison, invocation of the camps, reinforces the Island’s distance, and the islanders’ disproportionate loss of life becomes another statistic in a hierarchy of barbarity; numerical insistence, and comparison, ultimately desensitises and abstracts suffering.

¹⁴ Nichols, B. (1991) *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*, Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, p.249

Such events produce unsettling images, which still generate a morbid fascination, that singular horror of being caught between curiosity and abhorrence. Laura accesses grainy, black and white, footage of a woman running down a slope, she pauses and looks at the camera, before continuing and throws herself off a cliff. Laura comments: ‘in slow-motion, you can see that woman turn back and spot the camera... Do we know she would have jumped if she hadn’t known she was watched?’ She likens the cameraman to a hunter. This is a neat metaphor but under the pressure of Imperial ideology the woman did not need the camera to urge her on. Laura extends the point further; ‘No book can explain how a teenage boy kills his mother because an invisible camera is there and he cannot disobey.’ This camera is a form of cultural indoctrination, boys wanting to be fathers, to inherit their position, and the privilege of service; however, it may document them but it does not determine their actions. A bespectacled Japanese man, Kinjo, calmly conveys how he and his brother, like the other Japanese men on the island, murdered their families; Tokitsu explains, ‘Seppuku is not, in the European sense suicide, but the act of giving oneself death.’ The Imperial system of self-sacrifice could not contemplate the shame of defeat. Kinjo survived the war and became a Christian minister; Chris says, ‘He wants memory to be faced, and forgiveness asked.’ In conclusion he suggests: ‘without Okinawa’s resistance, Hiroshima would not have been. The century would’ve been different. Which means in all respects our lives were fashioned by events between Kinjo killing his family and Ushijima’s [Japanese General] self-death.’ His wishful thinking conceives of a moment that would undo the atomic age. However, history is never so simply diverted, individualized, for it is a matter of sequential consequence, a position that Marker reinforces through the game’s intransience.

Film as essay

Nichols, in *Representing Reality*, writes ‘Documentary offers access to a shared, historical construct. Instead of *a* world, we are offered access to *the* world.’¹⁵ Whilst Marker was developing his own film practice, his first film was *Olympia 52* (1952), he was also working with Resnais on a number of distinctive documentaries, such as *Les Statues Meurent Aussi* (*Statues Also Die*, 1953), *Nuit et Brouillard* (*Night and Fog*, 1955) and *Toute la mémoire du monde* (*All the memory of the world*, 1956). Their constructive union: invariably Marker’s words found expression in Resnais’ direction, developed a pursuit of remembrance, its historical and cultural connotations, and through a series of influential works they contributed to a form of accessible modernism; they desired to work with form and narrative, rather than against them, to communicate with their audience on a range of timely concerns.

¹⁵ Nichols, B. (1991) *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*, Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, p.109

Statues Also Die, which Marker co-directed, explores the colonial commodification of African culture and how the appropriation of art, its removal from the everyday, symbolises a form of repression. The film is dominated by a series of striking masks, which are divorced from their original significance, as Nora M. Alter observes: ‘Marker’s camera treats all subjects in front of its lens without differentiating between humans, statues, animals, landscapes, architecture, or signs. The magic of cinema both imbues inanimate objects with life and carries out the mortification of living subjects.’¹⁶ The narration challenges the privileging of European art history and how these artefacts, from sub-Saharan Africa, which now reside in European museums, are deadened: ‘When men die, they become history. Once statues die, they become art. This botany of death is what we call culture.’ Colonial imposition has disregarded meaning and negated memory. The film concludes that European and African art should not be regarded separately but as part of a cultural whole. The film’s radicalism meant that it suffered censorship and was not screened until 1968.¹⁷



Fig. 45 *Statues Also Die* (1953)

Marker’s *Lettre de Sibérie* (*Letter from Siberia*, 1958) begins ‘I am writing to you from a faraway country...’ and is a film that endeavors to reveal something of this ‘frozen devil’s island’, but where it diverges from most other documentaries of its time is through its personal and critical

¹⁶ Alter M. N. (2006) *Chris Marker*, University of Illinois: Illinois University Press, p.49

¹⁷ Lupton, C. (2005) *Chris Marker: Memories of the Future*, London: Reaktion Books, p.39

reflections. Marker's filmed travelogues also had a literary parallel, his series *Petite Planète* (1954-64), travel books with graphic texts and accompanying photographs, are redolent with a form of enquiry that corresponds to his films. When Bazin considered *Letter from Siberia* he wrote that it 'is an essay in the form of a film report on Siberian reality, past and present.'¹⁸ His defining of Marker's film as an essay is indicative, in many ways, of Adorno's formulation; it is a commentary, a means to associate ideas, make new connections and defines its own form.¹⁹

Bazin links Marker's innovation to Vigo's *À propos de Nice* (1930). Vigo's silent film, 'an essay on the historical and political time, though written by a poet',²⁰ has distinct authorial directive, one that is critical of Nice's societal inequality, its feckless materiality and escapist preoccupation. Other films that could also be seen as Marker's precursors are Vertov's progressive manifesto *Man With a Movie Camera* (1929), and Buñuel's social indictment *Las Hurdes: Tierra Sin Pan (Land Without Bread*, 1933); Vertov's exploration of an idealised Soviet city (the film was shot in Moscow, Kiev and Odessa) was conceived as a Marxist (and technological) declaration, the critical unification of content and form was a celebration of Soviet modernisation and methodology; Buñuel's film is introduced by the text - 'This cinematographic essay of human geography...' - and what follows is presented in the form of an anthropological journey into the under-developed region of Las Hurdes, Spain. The film's mode is indicative of a serious ethnographic fieldwork - it was inspired by Maurice Legendre's ethnographic study *Las Jurdes: étude de géographie humaine (Las Jurdes: study of human geography*, 1927) - but it is redolent with dark surrealist humour and social critique, the voice-over and images juxtaposed for absurd purposes, a strategy that uses parody, provocation and ironic solemnity, to subvert and mock documentary conventions. Bazin believed that Marker's editing style differentiated him from his predecessors:

'Marker brings to his films a completely new assembly I would call horizontal, as opposed to traditional assembly that takes place throughout the film, focusing on the relationship between the planes. For Marker the image refers to what precedes or follows it, but somehow totally relates to what is said.'²¹

Bazin may have inverted Eisenstein's original definition of vertical and horizontal montages, but in doing so he suggested that Marker had found a way of working laterally with image and text, that formulated meaning through a relationship with both elements. This method, with its

¹⁸ Bazin, A. (1983) 'Lettre de Sibérie', *Le Cinéma français de la Libération à la nouvelle vague*, Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, [on line] available at: <http://cinefilobar.wordpress.com/2012/07/30/chris-marker-1-lettre-de-siberie-par-andre-bazin/> [accessed 14 March 2014]

¹⁹ Adorno, T. W. (1984) 'The Essay as Form', Hullot-Kentor, B. and Will, F. (trans.), in: *New German Critique*, No. 32, Spring – Summer, p.160

²⁰ Bazin, A. (1983) 'Lettre de Sibérie', *Le Cinéma français de la Libération à la nouvelle vague*, Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, [online] available at: <http://cinefilobar.wordpress.com/2012/07/30/chris-marker-1-lettre-de-siberie-par-andre-bazin/> [accessed 14 March 2014]

²¹ Ibid

implicit commentary on the documentary form, is perfectly expressed in a sequence, which shows a Yakutsk Street, a bus, a Zim luxury car, a gang of road workers, and a pedestrian. This sequence of images is repeated four times, without narration, a pro-Soviet interpretation, anti-Soviet diatribe, and then Marker's own observations. These four approaches qualify Marker's journey, and indicate the malleability of footage and sentiment, that all raw footage is susceptible to a variety of conflicting interpretations. Marker's commentary stresses that even the 'objective observation is also a distortion', and a 'walk through the streets of Yakutsk isn't going to make you understand Siberia', but 'what counts is drive and the variety' of approaches. Bazin describes this effect as an intellectual 'echo'.²²

Letter from Siberia's voice-over focuses the film, as Durnat writes, in a 'pseudo-personal'²³ manner; this phrase suggests that it would be wrong to comprehend such a work as a direct communication, but as one that is filtered through cinema. Marker's relating of image and text challenges filmic hierarchy, for the image is not enough on its own and needs his commentary to be fully comprehensible. Steven Ungar writes that, 'Bazin reads Marker's intent in this exercise as showing the capacity of words to destabilize the seemingly fixed meaning of images and so to promote a more dynamic process of signification in which the role of words is no longer secondary'.²⁴ This reversal of normative practice is exemplary of what Nichols defines as 'reflexive documentary', films which prompt 'the viewer to a heightened consciousness of his or her relation to the text and to the text's problematic relationship to that which it represents'.²⁵ He connects this formulation to 'counter-narrative' films, "texts" that embody palpable contradictions that engage us diversely [by] dislodging the notion of an origin or center',²⁶ a contextualisation that originated with Wollen's essay *Godard and Counter Cinema: Vent d'Est* (1972) in which he outlined a set of 'seven deadly sins of cinema against the seven cardinal virtues':

- (1) Narrative transitivity/Narrative intransitivity, (2) Identification/Estrangement,
- (3) Transparency/Foregrounding, (4) Single diegesis/Multiple diegesis,
- (5) Closure/Aperture, (6) Pleasure/Unpleasure, (7) Fiction/Reality.²⁷

These declarative pairs propose a radical break with narrative cinema and the codification of an oppositional practice. Nichols characterizes each binary, offering examples that exhibit the

²² Ibid

²³ Durnat, R. (1987) 'Resnais & Co: Back to the Avant-garde', *Monthly Film Bulletin* (London), 54/640, p.135

²⁴ Unger, S. (2011) 'Radical Ambitions in Postwar French Documentary', in: *Opening Bazin: Postwar Film Theory and Its Afterlife*, Andrew, D. (ed.), New York: Oxford University Press, P.256

²⁵ Nichols, B. (1991) *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*, Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, p.60

²⁶ Ibid, p.256

²⁷ Wollen, P. (1985) 'Godard and Counter Cinema: Vent d'est', in: *Movies and Methods: An Anthology*, vol.2, Nichols, B. (ed.), Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, p.501

required qualities, for instance he lists *Sans Soleil* as one of the films that use ‘narrative intransitivity - episodic construction, digressions, and interruptions’,²⁸ qualities that can also be applied to *Level Five*. But, unlike Wollen, he does not locate the ‘seven virtues’ in one film, but finds them within various ‘counter-narrative’ documentaries.²⁹ Nichols concludes his summary by noting that in counter cinema fiction is contrasted with reality, but ‘in documentary the reverse contrast occurs: a reintroduction of subjective and narrative elements into a domain once governed by a canon objectivity.’³⁰ This reversal indicates the specificity of formal relationships, and that for documentaries, as with fiction films, the representation of the world is a contested and debatable matter and the subjective nature of this realisation allows for enhanced critical awareness on the part of the viewer.

In time the cinematic essay was to take on a more populist application, in which the director, writer, narrator, in the mode of a personable investigator, such as Michael Moore (*iRodger and Me*, 1989), Nick Broomfield (*The Leader, His Driver, and the Driver's Wife*, 1991) and Morgan Spurlock (*Super Size Me*, 2004), challenged a conspiratorial and corporate world. Marker’s style has proved to be influential (and imitable) and by following his method, at once artful and reflective, a cinematic essay can be produced. He was directly part of revolutionary activity and its disconcerting aftermath, like a number of his contemporaries, but very few contemporary filmmakers offer a similar perspective. Nina Power writes, with particular reference to the Otolith Group’s *Otolith I* (2003) and the work of Hito Steyerl, that the ‘melancholic tone’ of ‘art political cinema’ is a ‘feeling that politics can only be gestural in a post-revolutionary era’, and the ‘relation of political art to this question of time is to reflect the specific capacity of film to move at a different speed than other modes of political life’.³¹ For instance *Otolith I* is haunted by the spectre of inherited failure; its narrator Anjalika Sagar, utilising *Sans Soleil*’s letter writing self-reflexivity, states, ‘It is my great misfortune to belong to a generation with no political vision to betray or to fulfill’, the words are spoken over slowed-down footage of the march against the war with Iraq, London, 2003. In this context activism, and its tilt at power, is but an empty, if observable, gesture. The known revolutionary moment, such as Paris 1968, which despite its disappointing outcome for the left is still more appealing than contemporary protest, for its slogans, barricades, seeming focus have doomed romantic allure.

The filmmaker Lis Rhodes was part of a generation that conceived of an artistic (and political)

²⁸ Nichols, B. (1991) *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*, Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, p.256

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Ibid, p.258

³¹ Power, N. (2012) ‘The Melancholic Turn in Contemporary Political Cinema’, *Sequence: New Artists’ Film and Video*, 3, Winter, p.33

counterculture, first as part of The London Filmmakers' Co-op and later as a founder member of Circles, which was formed in 1979 to produce and distribute women's film and video. Her *In the Kettle* (2010) draws on experimental and agitprop strategies to interrogate narratives and histories of repression and resistance. The film is concerned with 'kettling' as a means of containing protesters, and the broader implications of how police tactics have developed, surveying London and the Palestinian West bank. The film is a reaction against authoritarian positions and contains long textual passages that explicitly critique the legality and justification of such actions, the film ends with a text that reveals that a rare Palestine granary has been put out of action by an illegal Israeli air strike. She develops a visual and textual collage, which suggests a now rare earnestness that is in marked contrast to contemporaneous art political cinema.

Rhodes' sincerity emphasises a difference in generational perception; she has a political vision, which rejects flights of personal fancy, and her film would consider direct issues and communal intent rather than selfhood, but her images and words also reinforce the seeming impossibility of progressive change. A localised practice, personal and critical, as seen in works such as *Light Reading* (1979), indicated a direct involvement with identifiable issue(s), but national and international altercations are a different matter; does the bearing witness through film, to such events, raise consciousness or just register personal indignation and ultimately helplessness? The Otolith Group would reflect on contemporary matters, but unlike Rhodes's expansive position their commentary offers artistic propositions, forms of theoretically sophisticated defeatism, rather than act as a political corrective.

The sentiment of sedition exacts a primary hold, which is not to decry political commitment, but to declare its attraction. Straub was interviewed in 2010 about his and Huillet's film *Trop Tot, Trop Tard* (*Too Early, Too Late*, 1981), which explores the connections between the French revolution and Egypt's contemporary social conditions; in discussing their working method, he said,

‘You need to behave as a filmmaker and not a paratrooper. Filmmakers nowadays are paratroopers; they fall from the sky, and show something that they did not have time to see, film before seeing anything, and never look at anything before seeing, or look again at something after having seen it.’³²

In ‘The Seeds of Time’ Jameson writes that ‘It seems to be easier for us today to imagine the thoroughgoing deterioration of the earth and of nature than the breakdown of late capitalism; perhaps that is due to some weakness in our imaginations.’³³ Written in 1996, Jameson’s words encompassed a new political sphere, one that had environmental implications. The planet’s safety

³² Condorelli, C. (2011) ‘Speaking of revolutions: Too Early, Too Late’, *Lux*, <http://lux.org.uk/blog/speaking-revolutions-too-early-too-late>

³³ Jameson, F. (1998) *Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern 1983-1998*, London/New York: Verso, p.50

is no longer beholden to the Cold War's oppositional binary, but to the effect of global industrialization - imagination was being exercised in the pursuit of capital and not communal equality. Contemporary protest is largely concerned with single-issue causes, a network of overlapping issues that happen on an ad hoc, and often opportunistic, basis, and distinctly formal positions, with its accompanying ideology, are distrusted. It is as if the lessons of the past, particularly the failed heroics portrayed in films like Marker's *Le fond de l'air est rouge* (*A Grin Without a Cat*, 1977), have cast a romantic but paralyzing shadow; the direct translation of the original title, *The Base of the Air is Red*, is an enigmatic reference to the Left's unsubstantiated ambitions. The English title is taken from Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* - 'I've often seen a cat without a grin, thought Alice; but a grin without a cat! That's the most curious thing I ever saw in my whole life'³⁴ - which is also enigmatic, but positively playful by contrast; perhaps this change of title emphasises a difference in cultural sensibility and relationship to the considered history.



Fig. 46 *A Grin Without a Cat* (1977)

The film was envisaged only a decade after the movement's radical arrival it revisited European, Asian, and South American theatres of conflict, Marker described it as 'scenes of the third World War 1967-77, finding its initial hope but a memory by the film's conclusion. Marker evokes not

³⁴ Carroll's book also provide the title for the BFI's 2011 Resnais retrospective, 'Curiouser and Curiouser.'

the history of events but subjective remembrance: how events become something different, abstracted, through recollection.

The prevalent radical critique from the late sixties onward sought to reveal underlying ideological structures, a position that, proposed that with enough awareness, a coming into knowledge could occur. However, within a short period of time this endeavour became mired in the impossibility of its task; the war in Vietnam continued, Nixon was re-elected in 1972, what had seemed like a glorious initial phase was in fact the ‘movement’s high water mark. Advances continued to be made, particularly regarding gender and racial issues, but the desire for fundamental political change dissipated as the power of capital was resolutely asserted; counter-forces retreated from ambitious intention to pragmatic rhetoric and nostalgic attachment. Part of film’s effect is that its realness never diminishes, and as it leaves behind its original context, it struggles to resist becoming a mere historical bystander. Marker’s films are part of the history that they represent, his work is infused with a desire to make his concerns known, but what was originally marked by freighted potentiality became a matter of regret.

Towards a better tomorrow, film’s political intent

Sans Soleil features a well-traveled cameraman, Sandor Krasan, and an unnamed woman that he writes to; he is known by his words and images, and she is known through her narration; she reads his letters, and reflects upon them. Marker’s films invariably feature narrators who are all slightly removed from Marker the filmmaker, but they all speak with one voice, as their interests are always his. Krasan, has a Japanese ‘pal’, Hayao Yamaneko, a video game designer who has developed an image synthesizer, the Zone. Its name pays homage to Tarkovsky’s *Stalker* (1979) – in its Zone there ‘is a certain room in which, we are told, everybody’s most secret wish will be granted.’³⁵ Yamaneko’s Zone processes and represents the past, and in doing it de-naturalises the documented world.

For Marker this Zone allowed a true image to be revealed by paradoxically stripping away all that would identify it as being real, as Krasan writes, ‘At least they proclaim themselves to be what they are: images, not the portable and compact form of an already inaccessible reality.’ With this technological intervention Marker emphasises how representing reality is a complicated matter, which is intrinsically exacerbated by film’s realistic facility, the Zone deconstructs the image’s direct identification and through its manipulation, meaning, function and authenticity is questioned. Catherine Lupton observes that Krasna,

³⁵ Tarkovsky, A. (1986) *Sculpting In Time*, Hunter-Blair, K. (trans.), Austin: University of Texas, p.198

'Fondly dubs Yamaneko a "fanatic", and there is a sense in which these characters represent two conflicting models of history: Yamaneko the truism that memory is always a selective reinvention of the past to answer the needs of the present, and Krasna a residual faith in Proust's Madeleine.'³⁶



Fig. 47 Hayao Yamaneko's Zone *Sans Soleil* (1982)

Sans Soleil concludes, 'Hayao showed me my images already affected by the moss of Time, freed of the lie that had prolonged the existence of those moments swallowed by the Spiral.' The 'spiral' is a reference to Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958) a film that is venerated within Marker's universe. In *Sans Soleil* he states that it is the only film 'capable of portraying impossible memory—insane memory', that 'In the spiral of the titles he saw time covering a field ever wider as it moved away, a cyclone whose present moment contains the motionless eye.' The faith that Marker places in Proust, and Hitchcock, was to be reiterated in *Immemory* (1997) and in the booklet that accompanied his CD-Rom he writes, 'I claim for the image the humility and powers of the Madeleine.'³⁷ This invocation reiterates Lupton observation and confirms Proust's place in Marker's firmament.

The promotion and suppression of images from war zones is an inevitable part of their depiction and framing. *Level Five* features a scene, taken from John Huston's *Let There be Light* (1944), of a psychiatrist attempting to cure a shell-shocked American soldier, who was traumatized by what he witnessed on Okinawa. Chris comments that army censors deemed it 'demoralizing,' John Wayne in *The Sands of Iwo Jima* (Dwan, 1949) was more acceptable, however, when it was

³⁶ Lupton, C. (2005) *Chris Marker: Memories of the Future*, London: Reaktion Books, p.156

³⁷ Marker, C. (1998) *Immemory: a CD Rom by Chris Marker*, English ed. 2002

screened at a naval hospital ‘the star turned up in cowboy garb [...] and got booed.’ In a later scene American marines raise a victorious stars and stripes, a patriotic tableau that was re-staged for the camera at Iwo Jima, 1945. Nichols suggests that ‘The historical domain, open-ended and contingent, lies at right angles to the closure of narrative.³⁸ Laura tells the story of Private Ira Hayes. He was one of the six marines who were ordered to partake in this second raising of the flag. The original participants had already rejoined the battle; the event’s supreme iconography surpassed individuals. Private Hayes struggled with his part in this performance and was later to die of alcoholism.

In *Pictures From a Revolution* (Meiselas, Guzzetti and Rogers, 1991), photojournalist Susan Meiselas returned to Nicaragua, to the sites of the images she took during its civil war. Ten years after the victory of the Sandinistas she tries to find the original subjects of her photographs and unpick the mythologising nature of her image making. Meiselas’s original impulse was to challenge the distorted news coverage of the popular insurrection against Somoza and his national guard. She acknowledges that her objectivity dissipated in the presence of this very real drama, ‘History was being made on the streets and no one knew where it would lead. People believed what they were doing mattered. I felt the necessity to witness and document what they did.’ At the film’s end, after she has re-visited the now peaceful, but outwardly just as poor, Somoza-less land, and seen a number of her photographic subjects, she ponders, Marker-like: ‘If there had been no war, no contra war, no cold war, what might the revolution have become. The sadness is that we’ll never know. For some of us who watched we lost the luxury of a dream, but for the Nicaraguans it was much more.’ In considering the reflexive documentary, Nichols suggests that ‘it rarely reflects on ethical issues as a primary concern, other than with the sigh of detached relativism readier to criticize the choices of others than to examine its own.³⁹ He observes that this form ‘shows’ and reflects on a situation but remains apart, reinforcing the attendant cultural and socio-political differentials.

The photographs that Meiselas took became infused with iconic significance, part of another war, ‘a war of images.’ She comments that her image, ‘Molotov Man’, ‘Like so many photographs that begin as documents of history it ended up as an illustration and then a symbol.’ Images await explanation, their ideological reckoning, and Meiselas’s photograph was to become a potent

³⁸ Nichols, B. (1991) *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*, Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, p.249

³⁹ Ibid, p.59

image of political action, both for the Sandinistas, it was the ‘official’⁴⁰ image of Somoza’s overthrow, and also for the Contras, who used it to illustrate communist lawlessness.



Fig. 48 *Molotov Man* (1979)



Fig. 49 *Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima* (1945)

⁴⁰ Molotov Man, ‘Susan Meiselas: Photographer’ [online] available at: <http://www.susanmeiselas.com/latin-america/nicaragua/#id=molotov-man> [accessed 15 March 2014]

In *Level Five* Marker indicates the partisan complexity of such graphic representations and that these invocations of valour become disconnected from their original contexts and subject to all manner of appropriation. As well as the deconstructing WWII myth, he shows footage of Gustav, the burning man of many newsreels, beyond its usual conclusion; these extra frames show the man walk away seemingly unharmed. Benjamin observed that ‘Articulating the past historically does not mean recognizing it “the way it really was”’,⁴¹ which he perceived that this could only be countermanded through the ‘flash’ of a dialectical image. Lupton, considering *Level Five*’s ‘quaint looking graphics’,⁴² and her reaction to them, suggests; ‘I also believe that the actual experience of the dialectical image, as I think Benjamin and Marker understand it, must involve this affective response which locates the viewing subject within a materialist history.’⁴³ Harbord, in *Chris Marker: La Jetée*, also makes favourable reference to Benjamin’s dialectical movement as a means of interpreting the film.⁴⁴ But, surely, if Benjamin’s conception is to be found in Marker’s work it is in *A Grin Without a Cat*. Marker’s film begins with footage from *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) in which Eisenstein’s heroic revolutionary sailor Vakulinchuk exults – ‘Brothers!’ These shots are accompanied by a voice-over, in which the narrator reminisces about his first memories of the film. This is followed by a more contemporary shot of hands held up in victory salutes.

Next, a montage, which is intercut with the film’s titles, of contemporary revolutionaries in various global locations being violently confronted by police and militaristic forces, and more footage from *Battleship Potemkin*, in which the Tsar’s guards rend asunder the demonstrators on the Odessa steps. The different shots share motifs of revolutionary action as comrades’ battle across time, a sense that is heightened by the accompanying stirring march (Luciano Berio, based on a theme by Boccherini). The reference to Eisenstein’s film, with its direct dialectical montage, also suggests a correlation of forms and the utilisation of revolutionary method to advance Marker’s critique. The film offers many other similar instances of critically aligned material, for example at one point the Russian tanks that liberated Prague in 1945 become its suppressors and occupiers in 1968. Marker is clearly iterating that the struggle continues and that in the first part of his film, ‘Fragile Hands’, (the second part is entitled ‘Severed Hands’) this trajectory will be traced and analyzed in an attempt to articulate the movement’s context and passage, and countermand perceived cultural bias where, ‘one event is swept away by another, living ideals are replaced by cold facts, and it all descends into collective oblivion.’ The images, interviews and

⁴¹ Benjamin, W. (1999) *The Arcades Project*, Eiland, H. and McLaughlin, K. (trans.), Cambridge, Massachusetts/ London: Harvard University press, p.391

⁴² Lupton, C. ‘Chris Marker: In Memory of New Technology’, *Chris Marker: Notes from the Era of Imperfect Memory*, [online] available at: <http://www.chrismarker.org/catherine-lupton-in-memory-of-new-technology/> [accessed 15 March 2014]

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Harbord, J. (2009) *Chris Marker: La Jetée*, London: Afterall, p.8

commentary, culled from partisan and official sources, alike, are juxtaposed and tested in a montage that indicates the relationship of what has been to what will follow, which arguably produces a dialectical montage of historical, political and critical significance.



Fig. 50 *A Grin Without a Cat* (1977)

Marker's film identifies 1967 as the year that the international left came to prominence, but, for many, it was the events that happened a year later that defined this up surge. In Paris a series of independent newsreels, *Ciné-Tracts*, were produced in response to May's violent tumult. One roll of film at a time, they sought to challenge societal iconography, the ideological slant of official channels and authorial ownership. Each *Ciné-Tract* was made with 100 feet of silent black and white 16 mm film, which equates to a duration of approximately two minutes and fifty seconds, and the viability of this technology allowed each film to be a self-facilitated, single-day production.

This directness is akin to Alexandre Astruc's conception of a camera stylo, a means to capture images that is 'just as flexible and subtle as written language'.⁴⁵ He considered that cinema's fundamental problem was how it could 'express thought'⁴⁶ and the camera pen would address this. Technology has delivered a hitherto unimagined procedural immediacy, ease of production and ubiquity, but Astruc would harness the means of production to produce the appearance of thought and this is always a more complex matter. These films were screened across France, and abroad, in factories, universities, social clubs and other non-commercial and partisan locations. 41 *Ciné-Tracts* were released, all without credits; each reel was preceded by the simple title –

⁴⁵ Astruc, A. (1948) 'Du Stylo à la caméra et de la caméra au stylo', *L'Écran française*, 30.05.48, [online] Available at: https://soma.sbcc.edu/users/davega/filmst_113/filmst_113_0ld/general/theory/CameraStylo_Astruc_1928.pdf [accessed 14 June 2014]

⁴⁶ Ibid

Ciné-Tract plus a serial number. Godard, Marker, Resnais and others contributed work anonymously, but despite this intention stylistic mannerisms, for instance Godard's identifiable handwriting, have led to the attribution of authorship in some cases.

The *Ciné-Tracts* are still physically visible, but what kind of trace will modern alternative channels leave? They are traces formulated to be an antithetical to History's march, to be counterweight then and now – Benjamin observes, 'what has been strives to turn – by dint of a secret heliotropism – towards the sun which is rising in the sky of history.⁴⁷ Digital technologies have changed the fluency of personal communications, in many parts of the world, with the Internet operating as an efficient means for connectivity and dissemination. However, virtually present material has a tendency to appear, and disappear without explanation, there is only a semblance of permanence, which leaves a whispered legacy.

Re-imagining time in the zapping zone

'I remember that month of January in Tokyo – or rather I remember the images I filmed in that month of January in Tokyo. They have substituted themselves for my memory – they are my memory. I wonder how people remember things who don't film, don't photograph, don't tape?'

Sandor Krasan's rhetorical question, which discounted non-technological forms of observation, illustrated his purpose. The twentieth century was documented as never before, and technology mediated occurrence. The opportunity to peruse audio/visual evidence aided remembrance, but these recordings were not complete memories in themselves, they were a prompt, a means to suggest and share the past, and the advent of film afforded the most direct way to facilitate this exchange.

By the advent of the 1980s all that had once seemed possible had dissipated. In considering *Sans Soleil* Terrence Rafferty writes that 'What Marker means to communicate to us is the solitude of the film editor at his machinery.'⁴⁸ This is an isolated fate, a position of contemplation, rather than action. Once this recourse would not have been deemed sufficient, for to indicate the problem was not enough in itself, for as Situationist graffiti stated in May 68: 'Action must not

⁴⁷ Benjamin, W. (2003) 'On the Concept of History', in: *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 4, 1938-40*, Eiland, H. and Jennings, M. W. (ed.), Jephcott, E. and others (trans.), Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. P.390

⁴⁸ Rafferty, T. 'Chris Marker and Sans Soleil', *Sight and Sound*, Autumn, 1984, in: (1996) *Imagining Reality: The Faber Book of Documentary*, Macdonald, K. and Cousins, M. (ed.), London: Faber & Faber, p.243

be a reaction, but a creation'. The heroics of failure threw into relief the elevation of individuals, who invariably would move on, one way or another, from direct activism. History rather than politics became the cause for Marker,⁴⁹ and in time he was to find solace in new media, and its ability to map and seemingly interrogate the past, a technology that allowed a semblance of the world to be at one's fingertips.

Laura researches the history of Okinawa through OWL (Optional World Link); this network is depicted as a proto World Wide Web, which had only started to gain general usage since the introduction of the Mosaic web browser in 1993. OWL's users all have pseudonyms, and Laura reminisces that her lover was 'part Robin Hood, part Avengers', that he would leave his 'Sherwood' to raid for information. Laura's adulation is decidedly romantic, with its transference of audacious purloining. Despite Laura complaining that OWL 'is not what it was', due to its increasing popularity, it is still preferable to the Net, because 'The knowledge available on the Net was questionable', and in Marker's online binary it stands for technology's vacuity and potency, and the negation of ethical discourse. His desire to imagine the future, realise it through inventive means, was also the subject of his only drama, *La Jetée* (1962). Working with science fiction, he created a near future to survey the present, a place, in his conception, which is always past, because this is where his interest really lay. At one point in *Level Five* Laura dons glasses, a virtual mask, which echoes those worn by the time-travelling protagonist of the earlier film.

Level Five deploys new media effects, in the manner of old media. Its invention was rooted in the emerging prosumer market - Marker favoured the Apple II GS and Hyperstudio software - Lupton suggests that his approach 'offers new technology itself as a historical object of recollection.'⁵⁰ The film's style, which invokes *Sans Soleil*'s Zone, may now appear to be dated, but so is the Wachowski's 'bullet time' of *The Matrix* (1999). The latest visions of the future are always intrinsically linked to the time of their inception through their use of dateable technology innovation, aesthetic and stylistic clues, which is primarily concerned with devising more convincing affect. The meaning attached to *Level Five*'s technological representation has also changed with time as its computerised inflection inscribes it with epochal aesthetics and significance, however Marker's depiction is all the more memorable because of its 'quaint,

⁴⁹ Douaire, D. and Rivoire, A. (2003) 'Marker Direct', *Libération*, March 5, 2003, [online] available at: <http://www.filmcomment.com/article/marker-direct-an-interview-with-chris-marker> [accessed 15 March 2014]

⁵⁰ Lupton, C. 'Chris Marker: In Memory of New Technology', *Chris Marker: Notes from the Era of Imperfect Memory*, [online] available at: <http://www.chrismarker.org/catherine-lupton-in-memory-of-new-technology/> [accessed 15 March 2014]

anachronistic⁵¹ and lo-fi intimacy, because we understand it to be directly authored and imagined outside of the industrial regime.

In *Level Five*, computing is placed at the apex of contemporary remembrance; Laura says ‘It was customary for such tribes [of the late 20th century] to address a familiar and protective spirit known as the computer. They’d consult on everything. It kept their memory. In fact, it was their memory.’ Her computer is the keeper and defender of time. Steedman writes that since ‘at least the end of the nineteenth century - the Archive [has been thought of] as metaphor or analogy, when memory is discussed’, but this notion is problematic because it ‘is not potentially made up of *everything*, as is human memory.’⁵² The Archive is not active, it preserves, but time has changed the means of storage, and Rascaroli proposes that the digital database has the facility for ‘the “creation” of memory, and offers new metaphors to describe the human mind.’⁵³ These terms may afford new linguistic and poetic means; however as Manovich observes the computer has so far failed to mirror the mind and cinema is still the more capable medium for revealing its workings.⁵⁴ Undoubtedly digital delivery will become more intuitive, imaginative, venturing beyond the confines of the frame, but perhaps, certainly for the time being, it is actually the frame that gives the form, even in its broadest sense, its purpose.

To regard the work of Marker, Godard and others, is to trace the dislocation of cinematic constancy, and the development of other positional means. In many ways it was a generational turn, from direct to interior cinema, and their productions came to be found across a number of different platforms, with the author at the centre of the work. The museum, archive, gallery, collection, creates history, a vision of the past, that is in itself a product of history, and as Huyssen writes, ‘modernity is unthinkable without its museal project.’⁵⁵ Museums are a constant presence for Marker - Rascaroli suggests his films are actually akin to museums.⁵⁶ But if a film depicts a form, which has an archival aspect to it, does it follow that it is in itself imbued with and contributing to this experience? Museums offer an answer to History’s questions, whereas, Rosenstone states, ‘Historians are people who spend their lives answering questions that nobody

⁵¹ Rascaroli, L. (2009) *The Personal Camera: Subjective Cinema and the Essay Film*, London: Wallflower, p.78

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ Ibid, p.72

⁵⁴ Manovich, L. (2000) *Jump Over Proust: Toward Multimedia Writing*, [online] available at: <http://www.manovich.net/TEXT/proust.html> [accessed 15 March 2014]

⁵⁵ Huyssen, A. (1995) *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*, London and New York: Routledge, p.15

⁵⁶ Rascaroli, L. (2009) *The Personal Camera: Subjective Cinema and the Essay Film*, London: Wallflower, p.64

has asked.⁵⁷ Marker and Godard, if they are considered to be historians, perform this latter task, challenging history's affirmation, re-imagining the archive's composition, through distilled thought, captured memory and intervention.



'Other images appear, merge, in that museum, which is perhaps that of his memory.'
Fig. 51 *La Jetée* (1962)

Technological innovations, which were once beyond the museum's bounds, are now imbedded within its post-modern rationale; these means have a different materiality and temporality, and their historical resonance has introduced a different kind of viewing regime. Marker's museums populated his films and, latterly migrated to sites, initially with his installation *Zapping Zone: Proposals for an Imaginary Television* ('Passages de l'image', Centre Georges Pompidou, 1990), then more conclusively with the interactive *Immemory* (CD-ROM, 1998) and his *Second Life* compound, which features a virtual museum, Le Musée de Marker (2003).

Marker's multi-media presentation *Zapping Zone* was an assemblage of televisions and computer monitors, augmented by photographs and computer generated collages, which suggested a tour of various imaginary cultural zones; Bellour, one of the exhibition's co-curators, writes in its catalogue, '*Zapping Zone* is a supermarket, a mini BHV carefully disorganized, where everyone can find everything else as needed.'⁵⁸ Marker's assemblage can be seen as a physical manifestation of

⁵⁷ Rosenstone, R. A. (1995) *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to our Idea of History*, Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, England: Harvard University Press, p.267

⁵⁸ Bellour, R. (1990) 'Zapping Zone', in: *Passages de l'image*, Paris: Editions du Centre Pompidou, p.169-170, [online] available at: <http://www.newmedia-art.org/cgi-bin/show-oeu.asp?ID=150000000023119&lg=FRA> [accessed 12 March 2014]

the coming age; an abundance of visual information competing for attention, also an attempt to prepare a trove of recollections for external perusal; a desire which would really come to fruition with the release of *Immemory*.



Fig. 52 Installation view: 'Passages de l'image' (1990)

La Jetée begins 'This is the story of a man, marked by an image from his childhood', and this consideration, in relation to Marker's own life, was to be made known through *Immemory*. He chose to make this work in the form of a CD-Rom, which he also produced using commonly accessible software, commenting that 'With the CD-Rom, it's not so much the technology that's important as the architecture, the tree-like branching, the play.'⁵⁹ It was one of the first artistic attempts to offer a multi-layered mapping of personal experience, and his utilisation hinted at future forms of presentation.

The object of the disc was to navigate an inventory of one man's offered memory; Marker writes in the introductory text, 'every memory with some reach is more structured than it seems', that 'photos taken apparently by chance, postcards chosen on the whim of the moment, begin once they mount up to sketch an itinerary, to map the imaginary country which spreads out inside of us.'⁶⁰ This notion resonates with instinctive and organic memory metaphors. He references Robert Hooke (1635-1702), 'who intuitively grasped the laws of gravitation before Newton', as

⁵⁹ Douaire, D. and Rivoire, A. (2003) 'Marker Direct', *Libération*, March 5, 2003, [online] available at: <http://www.filmcomment.com/article/marker-direct-an-interview-with-chris-marker> [accessed 15 March 2014]

⁶⁰ Marker, C. (1997) *Immemory: A CD-Rom* by Chris Marker, Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou

another thinker who also developed a conceptual interest in mapping memory geographically, rather than historically, many centuries before.⁶¹ Manovich contended that ‘Computer media is understood as something that will let cinema tell its stories in a new way’;⁶² *Immemory*’s navigation may now seem dated, but its series of screens, images, references and reflections were conceived as a non-linear and investigative work to be read rather than watched, considered rather than consumed, as Marker suggested, ‘don’t zap take your time.’ The relating of information, through a compliant form, places it within a particular context, on the cusp of the current digital age; his artistic memories are sealed by technology and the form of their mediation foreshadows a now familiar solitary engagement.

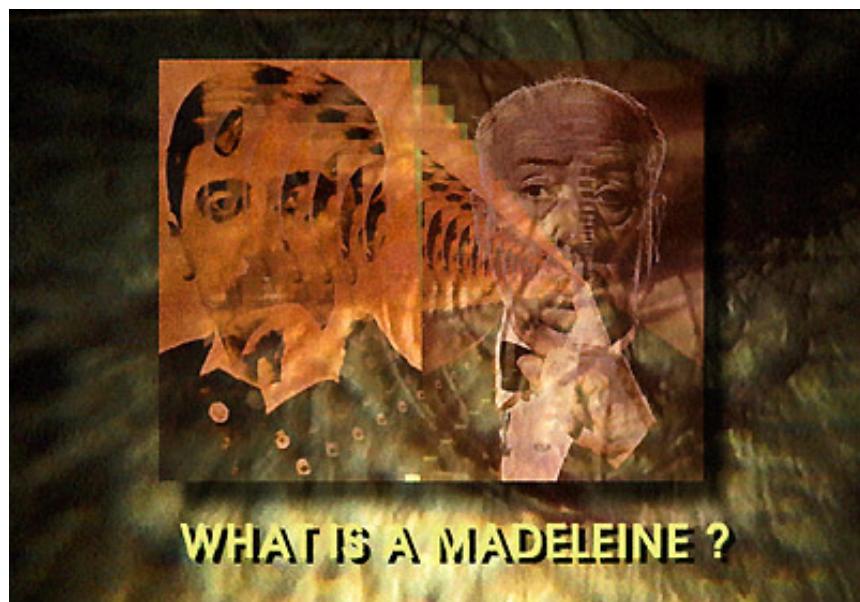


Fig. 53 *Immemory* (1998)

In 2005 Marker installed *Owls at Noon, Prelude: The Hollow Men*, a two-screen loop, at MoMA, New York. The museum’s publicity stated, ‘He has been making films for over fifty years, sifting through images that play with the concept of memory and exploring the paradoxes of time.⁶³ His installation takes as its starting point T. S. Eliot’s poem *The Hollow Men* from 1925, which surveyed a Europe decimated by world war; ‘Marker combs a vast beach of images to create an echo chamber in which the viewer can either remember or witness for the first time the reality of

⁶¹ Ibid

⁶² Manovich, L. (2001) *The Language of New Media*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, p.293

⁶³ Chris Marker, (2005) ‘Owls at Noon Prelude: The Hollow Men’, New York: MoMA, April 27 – June 13, 9, [online] available at: <http://www.moma.org/visit/calendar/exhibitions/115> [accessed 15 March 2014]

a civilization's self-slaughter.⁶⁴ But as Eliot wrote, 'Between the idea, And the reality, Between the motion, And the act, Falls the shadow.'⁶⁵ A self-referential shadow that desires space to illuminate the portent of what has been.

A work's perceived relevance fluctuates according to critical attention, and accessibility; *Level Five* was not included in Marker's first UK retrospective 'Chris Marker: Grin Without a Cat' (Whitechapel, 2014),⁶⁶ perhaps its perceived 'awkwardness' was at odds with Marker's visionary status - Ian Christie calls him a 'techno-shaman'.⁶⁷ It is telling that his retrospective occurred in a gallery, not in a cinema. The exhibition was positioned as an 'unprecedented survey of the full range of his creativity'⁶⁸, his archive was to be curated and enfolded into the museum, and it was divided into four sections, that covered 'key themes that recur throughout Marker's work – The Museum, Travelogues, Film and Memory, and War and Revolution'.⁶⁹ The exhibition's thematic approach, which cut across historical periodization and from one form of media to another, endeavoured to create a receptive environment that emphasized Marker's technological and conceptual curiosity and continuing relevance - its method could be seen as being like a series of memories of Marker.

The exhibition featured a number of Marker's films⁷⁰, which were shown in various installed forms. This re-positioning of work revised intentionality; Marks, considering the staging of single screen projections in the gallery, writes that 'numerous critics of cinematic spectacle', argue that 'the time is experienced in isolation, while space is social'.⁷¹ Gallery installation would ideally seek to free the viewer from their rapt cinematic reverence, and destabilise what Leighton

⁶⁴ Ibid

⁶⁵ Elliot, T. S. (1988) *Selected Poems*, London: Faber & Faber, p.77-80

⁶⁶ Marker is still largely unknown outside specialist audiences - Terry Gilliam's *Twelve Monkeys* (1995), which was based on *La Jetée*, garnered some wider interest, however, this soon passed - so it was enjoyable to see posters bearing his name appear on the public underground. They could be seen next to all manner of other advertisements, including the latest instalment of the X-Men franchise, a film that had the Marker-esque title *Days of Future Past* (Singer, 2014), (also the title of a Moody Blues album from 1967) which arguably would have been a more fitting title for his retrospective.

⁶⁷ Lupton, C. (2005) *Chris Marker: Memories of the Future*, London: Reaktion Books, p.12

⁶⁸ 'Chris Marker: Grin Without a Cat', Whitechapel Gallery, 16 April - 22 June, 2014, [online] available at: <http://www.whitechapelgallery.org/exhibitions/chris-marker-a-grin-without-a-cat> [accessed 24 July 2014]

⁶⁹ Ibid

⁷⁰ *Les Statues meurent aussi* (*Statues Also Die*, 1953), *La Jetée* (1962), *Le Joli Mai* (1963), *Le fond de l'air est rouge* (*A Grin Without a Cat*, 1977), *Sans soleil* (*Sunless*, 1983), *The Case of the Grinning Cat* (2004).

⁷¹ Marks, L. (2012) 'In the Single Channel: Experimental Media from Theater to Gallery', *Millennium Film Journal*, no.55, Spring, [online] available at <http://www.readperiodicals.com/201204/2759925591.html> [accessed 24 July 2014]

characterises as the ‘false absolution of time to which cinema is prone.’⁷² This form of installation would emphasise that which is encountered, on and off screen, is an active occurrence, socialising the experience,⁷³ a position that may be consistent with work, which has been made specifically for this context, such as *Zapping Zone*, but can it also accommodate work that originated elsewhere; Nash states, with reference to installation practice, ‘we are always already in cinema, one way or another.’⁷⁴ What is film’s place in this realm, which already has a distinct history and pre-occupations, how is the material encountered and if it is to be re-positioned how does this revise its memory?



Fig. 54 Installation view: ‘Chris Marker: Grin Without a Cat’ (2014)

With standard gallery moving image installation a clash of temporalities occurs in which the viewer’s time, and their ability to move freely, is set against a film’s durational progress.⁷⁵ This

⁷² Leighton, T. (2008) ‘Introduction’, in: Leighton, T. (ed.) *Art And The Moving Image: A Critical reader*, London: Tate Publishing, p.29

⁷³ Fisher, J. (1996) *James Coleman*, Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, cited in: Van Assche, C. ‘The state of Things’, in: (2003) *Saving the Image: Art After Film*, Leighton, T. and Büchler, P. (ed.), Glasgow: Centre for Contemporary Arts and Manchester: Manchester Metropolitan University, p.94-5

⁷⁴ Nash, M. (2002) ‘Art And Cinema: Some Critical Reflections’, in: Leighton, T. (ed.) (2008) *Art And The Moving Image: A Critical reader*, London: Tate Publishing, p.444

⁷⁵ Considering the cinema/gallery axis Erica Balsom writes, “The gallery occupies a paradoxical position: it is the “security compound” that might best “save” cinema by memorializing the products of its history and/or by sponsoring its new, high culture variants. And yet, it is but another site to which the shattered cinema has travelled, participating in the dissolution of its specificity and trafficking in the same kind of profanation that it experiences so often in culture

situation suggests that for galleries that choose to show films in this manner, a film's totality is not of primary importance, but its affect is, with the gallery spectator experiencing rather than watching it. Marker's films were intended to be seen in cinema (like) conditions and this impacts on their screening, for instance *A Grin Without a Cat* has a duration of 240 minutes - should its gallery installation be seen as an introduction to the film, an indicator of its importance, a fragmentary memory, or is it being reduced to a filmic reference, in the same way that a museum might present a manuscript as a venerable relic to be observed rather than as a complete and readable text?⁷⁶

Towards the end of Benjamin's 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' he cautions, 'The public is an examiner, but an absent-minded one.'⁷⁷ An audience works with the form that is offered and this becomes part of their abiding memory, in this way a film like *A Grin Without a Cat* becomes a gallery installation when once it would have been only imaginable in the cinema. Methods of exhibition are representative of the times that inspire them and to revisit any cultural manifestation is to understand something of its historical conjunction. Film's embrace by the art world had been foreseen, and cautioned against, decades earlier by Debord:

'As soon as cinema enriched itself with the powers of modern art, it found itself encompassed by the total crisis of modern art. At the same time that this step brought cinema closer to its freedom, it also brought it closer to its death, to the proof of its inadequacy.'⁷⁸

In becoming an elevated form, that which had differentiated cinema and given it autonomy, was forsaken. His critique suggests that in seeking cultural equivalence with art practice, cinema's propensity to aesthetic fetishism, and its commodification, was exacerbated and it became distanced from life itself and the possibility of social change. Jameson has observed, 'life has now become part of the institutional realm and the image's intrusive purchase has expanded so that social space is now completely saturated with the culture of the image.'⁷⁹ This situation, an

at large.' Balsom, E. (2013) *Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, p.40

⁷⁶ The Whitechapel exhibition sought to address this issue through running a concurrent screening programme in the gallery's cinema space. Is this double screening strategy a tacit admission that the gallery installation is largely symbolic and, if so desired, the films can be properly seen in the cinema, as it has successfully developed the conditions for experiential completion.

⁷⁷ Benjamin, W. (2007) 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in: *Illuminations*, Arendt, H. (ed.), Zohn. H (trans.), New York: Schocken, p.241

⁷⁸ Debord, G. (1959) 'Cinema After Alain Resnais', *Internationale Situationniste*, 3 (Dec), [online] <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/resnais.html> [accessed 16 May 2014]

⁷⁹ Jameson, F. (2009) *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern 1983-1998*, London/New York: Verso, p.111

adulterated universe of images, compacts difference and would actualise substance as a cultural (and economic) asset.

The technological understanding, which foresees the meeting of creative needs and although it is never merely a tool, it is an implicit part of any work's methodology and process. Technology, and the play of personas, had always interested Marker and his engagement with new media led to him to creating a virtual presence in *Second Life*, and on the island of Ouvroir he constructed a museum to his own memory, Le Musée de Marker. 'Ouvroir the Movie' is an introduction to his island, in which Guillaume-en-Egypt, avatar and mythic cat, was to be Marker's chosen guide. It begins, 'Building a virtual museum is more tricky than a real one, Marble wood and linoleum, are lighter stuff than mind alone.'⁸⁰ 'Digitextuality'⁸¹ is the coming together of different technologies within the digital realm and in this process old material becomes embedded within new media. This form of presentation offers a (seemingly) seamless transition and in this manner information is ordered and nested, and, in an echo of once progressive practice, suggests that all images are potentially usable. New media images are often thought to represent real time operations, the present is their primary tense, they are symbolised by a desire to communicate rather than contemplate – something that Marker's more open, ambiguous invitation to explore the work's spaces tries to undo - it's now ubiquitous framing often flattens time and difference, reducing audio/visual discrepancies that pre-date its advent and favouring work that has been produced for this form. For Marker medium was always a means to convey ideas, and the potential architectural complexity of this form allowed him to revisit his past and reconsider, curate, remember all that he would make known, as a interactive proposition, beyond *Level Five*'s imaginings; and considering his practice it seems probable his interests would have migrated to the truly virtual environment.

This is a new era, one beyond, but still referencing, its analogue past, and, despite the image's direct meaning being recanted, its effect still denotes some form of temporal passage and invariably a form of identifiable representation; there is comfort in image recognition, a sense of nostalgic continuity that reassures and familiarises. Anna Everett suggests that the digital medium may 'turn traditional notions of mimesis and diegesis on their heads',⁸² an idea which is taken up by Mulvey, who observes that the 'mechanical, even banal, presence of the photographic image as index takes on a new kind of resonance, touched perhaps by nostalgia, but no longer tied to

⁸⁰ Marker, C. *Ouvroir the Movie*, [online] available at: <http://www.chrismarker.org/ouvroir-the-movie-by-chris-marker/> [accessed 16 March 2014]

⁸¹ Everett, A. (2003) 'Digitextuality and Click Theory: Theses on Convergence Media in the Digital Age' in: *New Media: Theories and Practices of Digitextuality*, Everett, A. and Caldwell, J. T. (ed.) New York/London: Routledge, p.5

⁸² Ibid, p.23

old debates about the truth of photographic evidence.⁸³ Marker's *Second Life* creation is an adjunct to his other works, in many ways it is an extension of *Immemory*, and like its predecessor *Le Musée de Marker* is a self-referential inventory and emphasises the subjectivism of his purpose; different forms may articulate issues in seemingly new ways, but they all continue to service the same preoccupations. His is a model of new media incarnate, with all its contradictions; its navigation could only be managed on a digital platform, however its content resides in the past, it is a repository of his artistic and cinematic influences, which are all pre-digital.

Digital media have come to assail the individual with images and messages as never before. In this all manner of still and moving images, competing for exposure, are unleashed onto an anonymous world, to be discovered, connected and then often discarded. *The Remembered Film* begins with Burgin's description of André Breton and Jacques Vaché's cinematic viewing strategy, he writes, that they would drop 'in at random on whatever film happened to be playing, staying until they had had enough of it, then leaving for the next aleatory extract'.⁸⁴ Their method was a means to introduce a random element into the controlled flow of film linearity; an avant-garde derive that is now readily re-enacted online. Burgin borrows Foucault's term 'heterotopia', 'a place without place that may touch many places' (like a ship on the ocean), to describe this process, he writes, 'What we may call the 'cinema heterotopia' is constituted across the variously virtual spaces in which we encounter displaced pieces of films'.⁸⁵ The digital erosion of cinema time indicates the disassembly of film's specificity, it becomes part of a universal lexicon of all collected and characterised imagistic moments and struggles to find a relevant place in this new age and maintain the memory of its progress.

The narrator in Borges' *The Library of Babel* concludes that despite the 'human species' imminent extinction 'the Library [and by implication the universe] will endure: illuminated, solitary, infinite, perfectly motionless, equipped with precious volumes, useless, incorruptible, secret'.⁸⁶ Borges' library suggests that the unfettered acquisition of knowledge leads to a form of intellectual and emotional saturation where learning ceases to have real value; the Librarian dismisses the search for 'meaning' as being a 'vain and superstitious custom'.⁸⁷ But, Marker would attribute meaning, because if the past had no discernible significance much of his work would be but a vain

⁸³ Mulvey, L. (2006) *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image*, London: Reaktion Books, p.31

⁸⁴ Burgin, V. (2004) *The Remembered Film*, London: Reaktion Books, p.110

⁸⁵ Ibid, p.10

⁸⁶ Borges, J. L. (1964) 'The Library of Babel', in: *Labyrinths*, Irby, J. E. (trans.), London: Penguin Books, p.85

⁸⁷ Ibid, p.80

conception; this conundrum relates to all those who produce work that would affect, and be a commentary on, politics – in the aftermath of World War II this search, for a better, fairer, more inclusive way, inspired many (as many of Marker's films indicate). In confronting his regret a shift occurred, however he was not willing to completely forsake the world he knew, because it was a place he had made his own.

Days of future past

Level Five may hint at a world to come, but how does it re-examine Okinawa, historical representation, and the intersection of technological and personal memory? Rascaroli writes that the 'film's most characteristic strategy is interpellation',⁸⁸ Marker proposes questions, offers reflections, which are part of an ongoing conversation between works, History and his audience. In Marker's film twentieth century memory has a propensity towards a personal (and communal) nostalgia, even the proto-Internet 'is not what it [once] was', whereas future memory appears to be largely filtered through technology and stored in an ever expandable reservoir, in which nothing that is recorded is ever forgotten, and consequently remembrance becomes a different proposition, in which human and machine co-habit.

Level Five is a work of future imagining, which would consider the past, and like all works that contemplate the future it is truly located in the present. The film's introduction mentions in passing William Gibson and his fictional projections - cyberspace, new data systems, personal interfaces and other technological innovations and their effect of human interaction and memory – all expressions of things to come, that, one way or another, came.⁸⁹ This reference suggests Marker's ambition for his film: that its hybridity may indicate a contextual plurality, a new history beyond the constraints of a conclusive narrative. Laura describes her search as a Marienbad game, which is part of Marker's associationism, for he is an avowed Proustian, and is returning to whence he came.

In the film Laura – a displaced film heroine – is alone with a computer, a screen, and the possibility of accessing the known universe. In the mid-nineties this conception seemed futuristic, however its depiction is now a normative operation - her actions, and reactions, are now ubiquitous, part of the contemporary vista. The interviews she accesses are part of old media, they comply with a recognizable documentary format, that becomes a critical questioning

⁸⁸ Rascaroli, L. (2009) *The Personal Camera: Subjective Cinema and the Essay Film*, London: Wallflower, p.81

⁸⁹ McCaffery, L. 'An Interview with William Gibson', [online] available at: http://project.cyberpunk.ru/idb/gibson_interview.html [accessed 14 July 2015]

of form through their framing, and Laura's gaze. Chris's voice brings all into alignment, his presence focuses, contextualizes the material, in the realm of history, technology and his life. He's position is one of omnipotent control, for his hand, vision, is made known in all that we encounter. This aspect of the film, its need to explain, share observations, connects this work to all that precedes it, roots it in the past and makes it a sad farewell.

The film's levels concern Laura, she laments that individuals 'never went higher' than level 2 - perhaps Level 5 is transcendental, a higher level of consciousness, reserved for Marker's pantheon - but the intermediate levels are obtainable, and her and Chris's interaction, the questions they pose, the resolution they seek, hint of these levels, that they require degrees of positional awareness, locatable criticality, the desire to ask difficult, direct questions, and pursue answers through all means. When she leaves the frame, for the first and last time, the camera zooms into her face until she dematerialises, it is as if Marker has also departed; Chris comments that after their inconclusive investigation he never encountered her again; 'Now Laura saw the Game couldn't change history. It would repeat it, in a loop, with respectably futile obstinacy. Storing the past so as not to revive it was sheer 20th century.'

In conclusion, one can say that the political narratives that shaped Marker's world were now in retreat, but the lessons, which might have been drawn from the last century, were ignored, as all manner of questionable actions, driven by an ideological disregard, were still being countenanced and repeated. The digital environment that Marker created and Laura, his and our avatar engaged with, hinted at the forms to come. Film's durational totality is dismantled by new media's malleability, however it does not approach the same direct address; the ability to construct an essay, which communicates a position, and is part of a discernible historical discourse. The digital realm may offer new metaphorical understanding, ways to describe memory's function, but it is film that still provides the means to establish a human purchase on these notions, as Cavell emotes, 'film and memory are entwined'⁹⁰ which change for future generations but it is still so, and they are also the means for generating new Historical perspectives.

Yamaneko's Zone offered a means to re-cast time but its effect only altered reality for those who had need of its metamorphosing properties. In the Zone's effect the future was founded, for technology, as the means to survey History, to become as important as real time documentation. Marker applied himself to remembering and activated technology to invoke all that had left a trace, but realising that he could only observe and not influence events, he became affected by the malady of his age and his cinematic farewell indicated all that had preoccupied his working

⁹⁰ Cavell, S. (1979) *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*, enlarged ed., Cambridge, Massachusett/London, U.K.: Harvard University Press, p.xviii

life and why it was no longer his driving concern. His work mapped a route across the globe, and that which was originally directed by intellectual curiosity became infused with political aspiration, but when this did not come to pass, he would turn his attention to History. Okinawa was reinvestigated, to re-contextualise its perceived importance, but Marker's past disappointments influenced his present concerns, and when he looked into the future it was to recover the past, for he was a twentieth century man.

The passing from one millennium to another is a distinct point of reflection and projection, and Nolan's *Memento* was made in the twentieth century and released in the new one. This is to be the last case study and *Memento* references a number of previously discussed memorious filmic propositions and reflections, and re-positions them within genre-based narrative cinema. This adoption of memory tropes, with their distinct filmic calibration, produces a film, which may ostensibly be about its protagonist's memory loss, but it is also an invocation of film and its memorious purpose.

VII. MEMENTO: FETTERED AND SYSTEMATIC RECOLLECTION



Fig. 55 *Memento* (2000)

Memento (2000) marked Christopher Nolan's arrival in America. It was to be only his second feature film and is the work of a young man declaring his artistic ambition. He chose the theme of memory, told with narrative invention and noirish sensibility, to announce his appearance, and such an undertaking endeavours to suggest a lineage that connects with other notable films, such as *Citizen Kane* (Welles, 1941), *Out of the Past* (Tourneur, 1947) or *Lost Highway* (Lynch, 1997), that explore what it is to remember and forget, temporality and perception – themes that he has returned to in subsequent films. Bordwell contends that *Memento* is both 'novel and conformist'¹ within the classic Hollywood tradition; does the fractured appearance of *Memento* and other films such as *Pulp Fiction* (Tarantino, 1994), *Run Lola Run* (Tykwer, 1998), *25 Grams* (Iñárritu, 2003), represent a new development of form, a post-classical modular cinema that Cameron² and Buckland³, amongst others, have suggested; even Bordwell, allows, that if a 'film does not correspond to the canonic story, the spectator must adjust his or her expectations

¹ Bordwell. D. (2006) *The Way Hollywood Tells it: Story and Style in Modern movies*, Berkeley, LA: University California Press, p.78

² Cameron, A. (2008) *Modular Narratives in Contemporary Cinema*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan

³ Buckland, W. (ed.) (2009) *Puzzle Films: Complex Storytelling in Contemporary Cinema*, Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell

and posit, however tentatively, new explanations for what is presented.⁴ These films offer a hybrid account of forms and content - once avant-garde technique situated in recognisable narratives - but is a new categorisation necessary or do they represent an adaptive period of production that reflects the turning millennium's tension and uncertainty?

Memento was based on a short story, *Memento Mori*, which was written by the director's brother, Jonathan. The film's drama is encountered through a fragmented vision, a realization that introduces the notion of a non-continuous temporality, it establishes the film's reverse linearity, and in doing so, the film's start reveals its conclusion, as Phil Hutchinson and Rupert Read write, 'starting from a position of confusion, one tries to puzzle out one's "condition", as the viewer of this film.'⁵ The film's complexity requires an attendant viewer with a willingness to engage with its in-built puzzle, but its form does suggest that a resolution (of some sort) can be found. The viewer also discerns that despite referring to classic tropes *Memento* clearly has a post-modern composition and its dramatic and temporal orientation suggests that this mystery will not be solved through straightforward detection.

The film's protagonist Leonard Shelby (Guy Pearce) has short-term amnesia. He is the viewer's guide, their means of investigation (and disorientation). To aid his recollection he uses Polaroids, amongst other techniques, as a prompt, and he documents the environment that he encounters, recording the individuals that he meets and the places he visits: he states the 'camera doesn't lie. Notes can be lost.' Shelby's notation constitutes his system of remembrance; but can these external notations constitute a reliable facsimile of internalized memory? And does *Memento* find a new balance between involved temporal and memory streams within an accessible form or is it a clever variation on classical narrative structure?

Memento mori

Open on: Close-up of a man's hand holding a Polaroid. He grips the white border, not wanting to touch the image.
The image is of a dark-haired man lying face down on a checked floor. Beneath his hidden face there is blood. Violent blood splashes can be seen on a wall just beyond him.
The Polaroid is undeveloping. The man waves the Polaroid; the image's colour and contrast fade.

⁴ Bordwell, D. (1985) *Narration in the Fiction Film*, Madison, Wisconsin: University Wisconsin Press, p.36

⁵ Hutchinson, P. and Read, R. (2005) 'Memento: A Philosophical Investigation', in: *Film as Philosophy: Essays in Cinema After Wittgenstein and Cavell*, Read, R. and Goodenough, J. (ed.), Hounds mills, Hampshire/New York: Palgrave Macmillian, p.80

- He waves the Polaroid again; the process of reversal seems to accelerate.
 After holding it still for a while, he once more waves it.
 The image has almost disappeared.
 He waves one last time and the image is gone.
- Cut to: The reverse of the Polaroid. The camera follows the hand as it puts the Polaroid back into a camera, and we see the face of a blonde handsome young man behind it. He has scratch marks on his left cheek and he is wearing a beige suit.
- Cut to: The man replaces the camera under his suit jacket.
- Cut to: Close-up of blood flowing on dark concrete.
- Cut to: Shell casing on the dark floor.
- Cut to: A pair of up turned aviator style glasses, surrounded by blood splatters.
- Cut to: The back of a dark haired man's head.
- Cut to: A gun jumps into the blonde man's outstretched hand. There is a bright doorway to his left. He kneels down and uncocks the gun.
- Cut to: The spent shell casing rolls out of frame.
- Cut to: The glasses moving upward.
- Cut to: The dark-haired man rises up. The gun is pointing at the back of his head.
- Cut to: The shell casing flies into the gun.
- Cut to: The blonde man. The gun sucks in a muzzle flash. The dark haired man spins round. His face momentarily visible, he is older, with a moustache, his glasses are in place.
- Cut to: Close-up of the blonde man, in a different interior, and in black and white.

In *Memento*'s opening scene there is evident attention to detail, the Polaroid which depicts a bloody corpse, the fetishised mechanics of death, the grubby post-industrial location, the blood on the executioner's handsome face, which contrasts with his peroxide hair and beige suit, brooding synthetic music, all the iconography of the modern thriller is present. Even in this short sequence there is something about the killer's demeanor, despite his actions, that makes him strangely sympathetic. Shelby is presented as a man of confused action and the 'viewer must be active—and part of that activity consists sooner or later in trying to answer questions',⁶ and these become Shelby's driving force.

Memento never diverges from Shelby's point-of-view, which is expressed through two colour-coded and inter-cut strands; the narrative rewinds in colour and the narrator's reflections play in black and white. *Memento* contrives to reverse occurrence, but it still deploys an episodic structure that moves the viewer logically towards some sort of narrative understanding. Initially an element of temporal doubt is introduced, but ultimately *Memento* is a self-revelatory puzzle. Its structure

⁶ Hutchinson, P. and Read, R. (2005) 'Memento: A Philosophical Investigation', in: *Film as Philosophy: Essays in Cinema After Wittgenstein and Cavell*, Read, R. and Goodenough, J. (ed.), Hounds-mills, Hampshire/New York: Palgrave Macmillian, p.80

also separates voice-over and flashback, neither overlapping the other, indicating that reflection and memory exist in different realms and are brought together only by the viewer.

Shelby may be a compromised narrator but his recollection is largely unfettered by uncertainty, and it is the audience's privilege to doubt its validity. Greta Olson writes, 'Cases of unreliable narration⁷ invite the reader to depart from a literal reading',⁸ her analysis concerns literature, however, this also applies to film; to discern *Memento*'s rationale requires a constant assessment of Shelby's position and his progress. Shelby may not be deliberately misleading but, despite his intentions, his condition, anterograde amnesia (with its short-term characteristics), consistently challenges his ability to act reliably (beyond adhering to the symptoms of his ailment).



Leonard Shelby (Guy Pearce)

Fig. 58 *Memento* (2000)

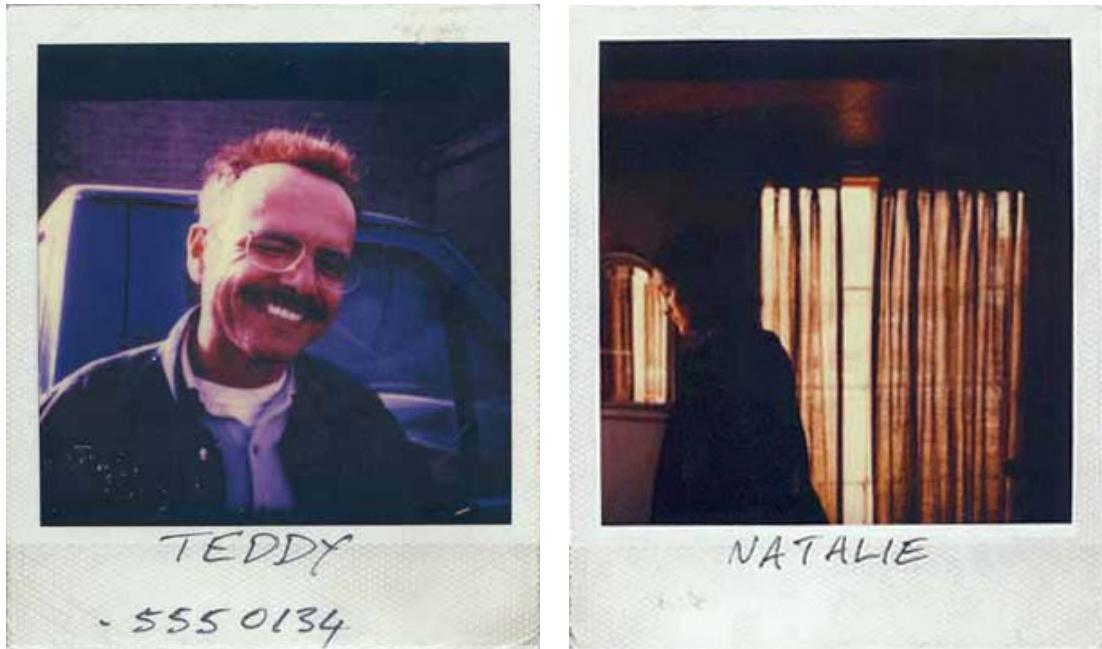
In the film's pivotal scene Shelby's wife is attacked. The scene is rendered as a traditional flashback in monotone; it is presented as a definitive memory, one that motivates the protagonist's trajectory. After the initial attack, Shelby fights back and kills the man who has apparently raped and murdered his wife, but is hit from behind by a second assailant, who then escapes. Shelby's narrative is dictated by his desire to solve the mystery of his wife's death (despite her dramatic importance she remains unnamed), to discover the knowledge that he lacks, and his memory and the subsequent investigation will come to direct his actions. The magnitude

⁷ With reference to Booth, who introduced the term unreliable narrator, Olson describes them as 'narrators who articulate values and perceptions that differ from those of the implied author.' Olson, G. (2003) 'Reconsidering Unreliability: Fallible and Untrustworthy Narrators', *Narrative*, vol.11, no.1, p.94

⁸ Ibid, p.105

of the attack, with its violent masked intruders, has formulaic credence; it is as if this episode needed to be clearly stated in order to excuse all that follows - Shelby's murderous pursuit of the second assailant. The police investigate his wife's death, and in the course of the investigation they actually dismiss this second attacker as a figment of Shelby's imagination.

Shelby communicates his disorder, to excuse any forgetfulness on his part, to everyone he meets and these characters direct, one way or another, his search. After his wife's death, his most significant relationships are with Teddy and Natalie, a waitress he meets in the course of his misadventures.



Teddy (Joe Pantoliano) and Natalie (Carrie-Anne Moss)

Fig. 56-7 *Memento* (2000)

Teddy's death introduces the film. He is a plain-clothes policeman who aids Shelby's pursuit of the second man. It seems that he was originally motivated by duty, even altruism, but he comes to manipulate his knowledge of Shelby for his own ends. Natalie embodies many of the attributes of a traditional femme fatal. She works in a bar and was the girlfriend of a small time drug-dealer. Her relationship with Shelby has romantic potential, but it is never consummated, and ultimately she uses him to alleviate her problems. All of Shelby's relationships leave him open to potential compromise, Hutchinson and Read associate this with 'others' awareness and exploitation of the

fallibility of his system of forming memories⁹, rather than being an inherent problem of his condition; so he must trust in the faithfulness of those he encounters, however, the nature of his search means the individuals he encounters regard the truth as a negotiable position.

In the black and white strand of the narrative Shelby is seen to be a married man, an insurance investigator and is working on the Sammy Jankis case. Jankis and Shelby have a number of striking similarities - they both have short-term amnesia and their wives are diabetics. In a key scene Jankis is seen to be dutifully injecting his spouse with insulin, she requests repeated shots in an effort to uncover whether her husband's memory loss is genuine or not, but the frequency of the injections kills her. Towards the end of the film Teddy claims that Jankis was not married, and Shelby's wife survived the attack but actually died of an insulin overdose. This doubling suggests that Jankis and his spouse are some form of transposition and/or fabrication, that this episode articulates another possible narrative for Shelby; a sub-conscious imagining that is presented as evidence of Shelby's condition and inherent self-delusion. Morrissey writes that 'there is no 'truth' in [the traumatically remembered] narrative, only endless multiplicity and interpretation.'¹⁰ Teddy claims that he located the second intruder and Shelby killed him, and all that followed was motivated by Shelby's need to find purpose after his wife's needless death. Teddy claims that the commonality of the dead man's name, John G, was contrived to ensure Shelby's search would continue ad-infinitum. Ironically, Shelby noted on Teddy's Polaroid - 'don't trust his lies' - but he then kills him for telling (some form) of the truth.

The clinical assertion of Shelby's underlying condition, and its crucial dramatic influence, is presented as convincing fact. But *Memento*'s dramatic centre, the murder of his wife, is inconsistent with what is known about amnesia, as sufferers are usually unable to recall the trauma that caused their memory loss. The dramatic truth of Shelby's undertaking, the certifiable anterograde memory impairment that he suffers from, is a syndrome understood only from within the story arc, and is offered as the reason for Shelby unwittingly becoming a murderer. Amnesia has been offered as an excuse, a plausible reason, for many things including murder, but never for multiple homicides. Shelby exhibits a degree of self-determination, for instance he knows that the only way to destroy a Polaroid is to set it alight, a procedure that erases any uncomfortable visual memories. This suggests that Shelby deliberately suppresses evidence that

⁹ Hutchinson, P. and Read, R. (2005) 'Memento: A Philosophical Investigation', in: *Film as Philosophy: Essays in Cinema After Wittgenstein and Cavell*, Read, R. and Goodenough, J. (ed.), Hounds-mills, Hampshire/New York: Palgrave Macmillian, p.83

¹⁰ Morrissey, B. (2011) 'Impossible Memory: Traumatic Narratives in *Memento* and *Mulholland Drive*', in:

Sinha, A. and McSweeney, T. (ed.) *Millennial Cinema: Memory in Global Film*, London and New York: Wallflower, p.99

may unsettle his certainty. It never seems to occur to Shelby to simply bring the man he seeks to justice. Shelby may protest, 'I'm not a killer I'm just someone who wanted to make things right', but unfortunately for those deemed guilty no restraint is shown.

Noir's shadow

A thriller, such as *Memento*, can be understood as emanating from the sensibility that was originally founded in noir. Noir's time has passed, but its stylistic invocation of America's underbelly still exerts a conceptual and stylistic appeal. It may now be dated from *The Maltese Falcon* (Huston, 1941) but its worth was not truly identified until the liberation of Europe. Durgnat writes that 'French critics having missed Hollywood films for five years saw suddenly, sharply, a darkening tone, darkest around the crime film',¹¹ and their championing drew new appreciation and appraisal. Paul Schrader observes, 'the *noir* period created a new artistic world which went beyond a simple sociological reflection, a nightmarish world of American mannerism which was far more a creation than a reflection'.¹² Noir would unmask atavistic duplicity through ambiguities of tone and characteristic intransigence, and according to Mike Davis developed into 'a kind of Marxist cinema manqué, a shrewdly oblique strategy for an otherwise subversive realism',¹³ that probed the lie of America's materialism and its relentless drive.¹⁴ Noir's dramatic Hollywood cycle, which ended with *Touch of Evil* (Welles, 1958), was curtailed by America's renewed economic and cultural certitude, its critical introspection no longer finding a ready audience, but, its influence still exerts a hold as *Memento*'s Neo-noir invention suggests.

Noir is not a clear set of genre conventions, concerning instead a tone - an invocation of personal fatalism, dark times and desperate measures, faints and plays of moral and amoral insistence, a restructuring of time (and its remembrance) and the expressionistic visualization of a familiar, but paradoxically, fearful place, with specific and identifiable cultural parameters, in

¹¹ Durgnat, R. 'Paint it Black: The Family Tree of the Film Noir', in: (1996) *Film Noir Reader*, Silver, A. and Ursini, J. (ed.), New York: Limelight Editions, p.37

¹² Schrader, P. (1996) 'Notes on Film Noir', in: Ibid, p.63

¹³ Davis, M. (1998) *City of Quartz*, London: Pimlico, p.41

¹⁴ This propensity did not go unnoticed, as Worpole writes, 'one of America's most distinguished cultural critics, Jacques Barzun', defended the classic detective story against the 'nihilistic vandalism' of 'Hammett and Chandler, noting, with not a little dash of red-baiting, that 'the tough story was born in the thirties and shows the Marxist colouring of its birth years.' Worpole goes on to observe that it was also denounced by 'Communist aestheticians', who saw it as a sign of bourgeois degeneracy. Being damned by both political extremes is perhaps one the best indications of its unsettling worth. Barzum, J. and Taylor, W. H. (1971) 'Catalogue of Crime', and Zhdanov, A. (1934) 'Soviet Writes' congress', quoted in: Worpole, K. (2008) *Dockers and Detectives*, Nottingham: Five leaves Publications, p.70

which a lone investigator sees beyond the surface appeal of America's relentless procession, and seeks truth, often at personal cost. Jacques Tourneur's *Out of the Past* (1947), a story of double-crossing and doomed individuals that largely unravels, as the title suggests, in flashback, clearly indicates the form's scope and formulation. The film's plot travels from the present to the past and back again, more than once: as Schrader writes, the film's 'complex chronological order is frequently used to reinforce the feelings of hopelessness and lost time.'¹⁵ *Out of the Past*, like other noirs, asks us what happens when we act on our primal drives, forces, which, more often than not, conspire against affable resolution and where to err is duly punished. The fate of film's protagonist, Jeff Bailey (Robert Mitchum), a former private eye, is bound up in the conspiring events of his existence, despite his best intentions, a scenario that Shelby reiterates, which is a quintessential Noir experience, as his future is determined by the past, and a sense that no matter what, a fateful, dark force will out.



'If I'm going to die, I want to die last.'

Fig. 59 *Out of the Past* (1947)

In Raymond Chandler's essay, 'The Simple Art of Murder', the private investigator is characterised as a 'man of honour' (for invariably this is a man's world), who is a loner by design and necessity, and is to be mainly found in urban centres, or new towns, places linked to America's economic growth (and corruption), for 'Down these mean streets a man must go who

¹⁵ Schrader, P. (1996) 'Notes on Film Noir', in: (1996) *Film Noir Reader*, Silver, A. and Ursini, J. (ed.), New York: Limelight Editions, p.58

is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid.¹⁶ James M. Cain and Dashiell Hammett may have originated literary noir, its venacular and routine, its anti-El Dorado critique of a bloated and poisoned state, but it was Chandler who self-consciously refined it.¹⁷ Humphrey Bogart's portrayal of Chandler's private eye Philip Marlowe, in the Howard Hawks' adaptation of *The Big Sleep* (1946), was to become the definitive exemplar of this hardboiled knight-errant, and the reflexive interplay of investigator and investigated became the laconic archetype. Bailey has many of the traits Chandler proclaimed, but he fails his ideal. He falls in love, with the wrong woman, in noir's terms, Kathie Moffat (Jane Greer), and in acting out this attraction he seals his fate. Realising Moffat's self-serving intentions he plots their death, knowing he must sacrifice himself. In this moment he asserts the ultimate control, and illustrates that he may have strayed, but, unlike her, he is still a moral creature; she, like all unrepentant femme fatales, must be punished in the final reel, for even this most iconoclastic of forms must belatedly show respect to societal mores. Natalie uses Shelby's inherent uncertainty to her own ends. She, like Moffat, convinces a hapless male to act and in doing so he also incriminates himself.

California was noir's original host. Los Angeles, a 'bright, guilty place', as Orson Welles once described it,¹⁸ only navigable by automobile, sprawls inland, forming a network of indistinguishable places linked by freeways. In California's hinterland the multitude of dwellings and commercial spaces that are repetitious and dull, and others, more fanciful, all manage to convey the same effect: like mausoleums, sets for demise. The edgelands of San Fernando Valley, where most of Hollywood's studios are to be found, a place that manages to be simultaneously modern and dilapidated, developing and forsaken, is where Shelby's pursuit is located. It is a world of non-distinct liminal places that are neither really past nor present.¹⁹ Nathaniel West's novel *The Day of the Locust* (1939) emphasised the disappointment that many people experienced in the idea of California, and how Hollywood's persuasive illusion became malignant and damaging; 'Their boredom becomes more and more terrible. They realise that they've been tricked and burn with resentment.'²⁰ This place is wrought with struggle and survival, be it economic or environmental, a narrative that is expressed in *Chinatown* (Polanski, 1974), with its dark vision of political and moral duplicity, which draws on Los Angeles's early twentieth century

¹⁶ Chandler, R. (1950) *The Simple Art of Murder*, New York: Ballantine Books, p.20

¹⁷ 'Chandler's own writing, based as it was originally on admiration for Hammett and Hemingway, whom he often cited, became increasingly sophisticated and moved away from the popular and demotic.' Worpole, K. (2008) *Dockers and Detectives*, Nottingham: Five leaves Publications, p.69

¹⁸ Davis, M. (1998) *City of Quartz*, London: Pimlico, p.18

¹⁹ These locations are much cherished by chroniclers of real America. Whether it is the foreign vision of Wim Wenders, from *Alice in the Cities* (1974) onwards, or the local documentation of Stephen Shore's *Uncommon Places*, their very non-descriptiveness solicits serious attention.

²⁰ West, N. (2000) *The Day of Locust*, London: Penguin Books, p.157-8

history, a time of boosterism, land grabs and nefarious deals, which came to characterize the seemingly inherent corruption of the city's expansion and its disregard for individual rights and, in many ways, still defines it.

In the late 1950s cinema audiences were falling from their pre-war high and television had started to make an impact into the entertainment market. *Dragnet* was to be the first television police procedural; it started as a radio drama in 1949 and transferred in 1957. Every episode started with a declaration of authenticity, 'Ladies and gentlemen: the story you are about to hear is true. Only the names have been changed to protect the innocent.' It offered a simpler message, with its refrain of 'just the facts', a statement of intent that would have sorely troubled earlier investigators, as its protagonists upheld the law without operational or existential concern.

Robert Altman's *The Long Goodbye* (1973), adapted from Chandler's last completed book by Leigh Brackett, who also wrote Hawk's *The Big Sleep*, relocated Marlowe to a contemporary Los Angeles, where he is portrayed as being distinctly out of place and time; Chandler's world had become an anachronism. Altman commented, 'I think it's a goodbye to that genre – a genre that I don't think is going to be acceptable anymore.'²¹ His film would deconstruct the form's conceits, its formalized classicism, and liberate it in the process. He worked with well-rehearsed variants, developing a discourse on his age, however *The Long Goodbye* exists within the confines of scenarios that Brackett and Altman found problematic. The referent, in an identifiable manner, must remain, precedent can be critiqued but never negated. Patronising genre reinforces it, revision serves to indicate its compelling nature, and exemplifies the essence and limitation of form, its resistance and versatility is illustrated by films such as *Total Recall* (Verhoeven, 1990), and *Blade Runner* (Scott, 1982)²², which imagine dystopian futures through an identifiable form (from the past).

Defeated sleuths

Shelby's affliction, anterograde amnesia, is relatively unique in film, but all amnesiac characters allow plots to unfold out of time, a discontinuity that affords greater structural freedom, medical bolster for psychological upheaval, the legitimization of misrepresentation, in which the spectator has a privileged awareness. For Freud, a 'screen memory', 'owes its value as a memory not to its own content but to the relation existing between that content and some other,

²¹ McGilligan, P. (1989) *Robert Altman: Jumping off the Cliff*, St Martins Press: New York, p.365

²² Both films were adapted from Philip K. Dick short stories, *We Can Remember It For You Wholesale* (1966) and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968).

that has been represented.²³ These memories, which mask more painful ones, are ones that often afflict the protagonists and the uncovering of the repressed memories delivers pivotal revelation. Films like *Spellbound* (Hitchcock, 1945) and *The Crooked Way* (Florey, 1949)²⁴ make use of their respective amnesiac protagonist's inability to remember at key plot points, which allows these films' revelatory narratives to be directed by the recovered memory, as the protagonists search to realise their true identity, and the films to find narrative resolution.

For Shelby, Hutchinson and Read suggest, 'Everything is externalised, everything verified'²⁵ that his memory aids actually become his memory, but, they write, 'why does our interiorising such things make them [seem] less surreal and less mechanical [...] because of the psychological or cultural roots of philosophical delusion.'²⁶ This approach is exemplified by Andy Clark and David J. Chalmers research; in 'The Extended Mind' they examine the differences between interior and external forms of memory. In their hypothetical hypothesis, Otto uses a notebook and Inga relies on her memory, and they suggest, perhaps counter-intuitively, that 'the information in the notebook functions just like the information constituting an ordinary non-occurrent belief; it just happens that this information lies beyond the skin.'²⁷ Both examples provide a means of navigation, of knowing, a belief in memory. They perceive the differences between 'Otto's and Inga's cases are striking, but they are superficial'²⁸ and consider where an individual's interior and exterior begins and ends:

'What, finally, of the self? Does the extended mind imply an extended self? It seems so. Most of us already accept that the self outstrips the boundaries of consciousness; my dispositional beliefs, for example, constitute in some deep sense part of who I am [...] The information in Otto's notebook, for example, is a central part of his identity as a cognitive agent. What this comes to is that Otto *himself* is best regarded as an extended system, a coupling of biological organism and external resources.'²⁹

Otto could be Shelby's stand in, for 'his notebook constitute a single cognitive system'³⁰ and in a follow up essay, 'Memento's Revenge: The Extended Mind, Extended', Shelby's plight is directly

²³ Freud, S. (1914) 'Screen Memories', in: *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, Brill, A. A. (trans.), London: T. Fisher Unwin, p.320

²⁴ *Spellbound* utilised psychoanalysis as a narrative device to uncover hidden truths and suggested that it is a way of unlocking the mind and film; *The Crooked Way* indicated something of the perceived psychological maladjustment and fear that accompanied servicemen on their return to civil life after World War II.

²⁵ Hutchinson, P. and Read, R. (2005) 'Memento: A Philosophical Investigation', in: *Film as Philosophy: Essays in Cinema After Wittgenstein and Cavell*, Read, R. and Goodenough, J. (ed.), Hounds mills, Hampshire/New York: Palgrave Macmillian, p.80

²⁶ Ibid, p.82

²⁷ Clark, A. and Chalmers, D. J. (2010) 'The Extended Mind', in: *The Extend Mind*, Menary, R. (ed.), Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, p.34

²⁸ Ibid, p.35

²⁹ Ibid, p.39

referenced, as Clark writes, ‘Mental states, including states of believing, could be grounded in physical traces that remained firmly outside the head.’³¹ Clark suggests that the ‘study of mind might, likewise, need to embrace a variety of different explanatory paradigms whose point of convergence lies in the production of intelligent behaviour.’³² Furthermore, he questions the very production and ownership of memory, speculating ‘If, in the future, science devises a way for you to occasionally tap into my stored memories, would that make them any less mine, or part of my cognitive apparatus?’³³ Shelby’s memory system resides in transcription and these records become his memories and as far as he is concerned they are no less reliable than an internal resource. For Clark Shelby’s notebook is a meaningful memory system, but in Shelby’s case this is complicated by disposition, his writing is the stuff of his memories and they offer instruction, but they seem different from internalised recollection because they lack detail, incidental ephemera, all that is seemingly forgotten, till it is remembered, that re-visiting occurrence invariably suggests.



Fig. 60 *Memento* (2000)

Shelby’s environment may be recognisable, but, in many ways, he exists outside the realm of the traditional masculine investigator, an individual, like Marlowe, who exhibits a degree of control and is entitled to seek closure through investigative prosecution. As noir’s protagonists’ become enmeshed in mysteries they communicated, often with surety *and* uncertainty, all that they encountered, because, as Olson writes, they ‘cannot provide their readers with vital pieces of the

³⁰ Ibid, p37

³¹ Clark, A. (2010) ‘Memento’s Revenge: The Extended Mind, Extended’, in: *The Extend Mind*, Menary, R. (ed.), Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, p.43

³² Ibid, p.51

³³ Ibid, p.57

puzzle until they themselves have found them out.³⁴ In the original *The Big Sleep* Marlowe says, 'if I seem to talk in circles, it just seems that way; he shares all that happens and, like the reader, he would make sense of it, his knowledge may be incomplete but his narration is reliable.

Shelby is also faithful to all he knows, but he is a defeated sleuth; that which he seeks is fundamentally unobtainable, and as such he can, in some ways, be seen as a 'metaphysical detective'. Patricia Merivale defines 'a real metaphysical detective story' as one 'where the detective hero himself becomes the murderer he has been seeking.'³⁵ Susan Elizabeth Sweeny and Merivale write that, 'The metaphysical detective story is distinguished, moreover, by the profound questions that it raises about narrative, interpretation, subjectivity, the nature of reality, and the limits of knowledge.'³⁶ They trace a literary tradition that first found expression with Edgar Allan Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841). Poe's locked room mystery is generally considered to be the first example of detective fiction; Poe's narrator writes, 'As the strongman exults in his physical ability, delighting in such exercises as call his muscles into action, so glories the analyst in that moral activity which *disentangles*.'³⁷ This story is a reflexive composition that regards the purpose and process of investigation.

The detective story's normative *raison d'être*, or that of any procedural enquiry, is to uncover who-done-it, whereas the metaphysical detective story suggests the solving of a mystery owes more to mental agility, and the accompanying human narrative, than a desire for justice per se. Shelby's investigation would solve the mystery of his wife's death, but his analysis is flawed and the logic of his actions becomes increasingly confused until the moral difference between 'John G' and Shelby becomes indistinguishable.

In one of *Memento*'s black and white sequences Shelby says to his wife, who is rereading a book, 'I thought the pleasure of a book was finding out what happens next.' The returning to a text always carries a different cast and context, and facilitates a reading that is unencumbered by the uncertainty of not knowing, it allows another awareness to emerge, one of reflection. Noir's amnesiacs sought to unravel mysteries in order to know the truth. The loss of memory and its incremental re-discovery was invariably consistent with the original turn of events. This device was not deployed as a means to undermine or question onscreen occurrence but to elucidate personal and societal experience, like the confusion of returning from war. But Shelby is involved

³⁴ Olson, G. (2003) 'Reconsidering Unreliability: Fallible and Untrustworthy Narrators', *Narrative*, vol.11, no.1, p.101

³⁵ Merivale, P. and Sweeney, S. E. (1999) 'The Games afoot: on the Trial of the Metaphysical Detective Story' in *Detecting Texts: the Metaphysical Detective Story From Poe and Postmodernism*, Merivale, P. and Sweeney, S. E. (ed.), Philadelphia: University Pennsylvania Press, p.2

³⁶ Ibid, p.1

³⁷ Poe, E. A. (1986) 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' in *The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Writings*, London: Penguin Classics, p.41

in an unresolvable mystery, in which all is questionable; Morrissey writes that ‘while memory is the bedrock of cinematic representation, allowing us to “see” that which we could never and have never seen; it remains a most unsatisfactory foundation for any sort of understanding.’³⁸ This suggests that the discovery of a clue only unearths another one, and so on, that ‘memory cannot be trusted’,³⁹ a perspective that is made conspicuous by *Mulholland Drive* (Lynch, 2001), which challenges ‘memory as a way to make sense of the world’.⁴⁰ Lynch’s film defeats any conventional attempt to decipher its mystery and meaning, and challenges memory, its cryptic plot links dream-like sequences, and that which may be real or fantasy is undifferentiated.



Fig. 61 *Mulholland Drive* (2001)

Lynch’s protagonists, two young women, Diane Selwyn and Betty Elms/Rita (Naomi Watts and Laura Harring), the former an amnesiac, investigate a series of mysteries; Morrissey observes that ‘Rita’s desire for meaning can then be allied with that of Leonard Shelby in *Memento*: as a retrograde amnesiac she is a *tabula rasa* in a way that Leonard, as an anterograde amnesiac, is not.’⁴¹ Betty and Rita’s identities are at times interchangeable and alter with the film’s progression and according to its own logic, as Betty says, ‘It’ll be just like in the movies. Pretending to be somebody else.’ The film articulates the allure of Hollywood, its construction of personas, and repression of identity.

³⁸ Morrissey, B. (2011) ‘Impossible Memory: Traumatic Narratives in *Memento* and *Mulholland Drive*’

Sinha, A. and McSweeney, T. (ed.) *Millennial Cinema: Memory in Global Film*, London and New York: Wallflower, p.97

³⁹ Ibid, p98

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Ibid, p.111

Nolan and Lynch's films require the viewer to actively remember all that has happened, and the main characters are constantly pushed to remember and question what may have happened, but the structures are such that recall, and its subsequent narrativisation, fails to find resolution.

Morrissey problematizes the depiction of memory in *Memento* and *Mulholland Drive* thus:

'Narrative memory is made absurd, while traumatic memory, with its impossible remembrances, is conceived as the only "truth" any of us are ever likely to know. Reality is up to memory, but memory can never be reality, because it cannot include that which cannot be spoken.'⁴² Lynch is willing to liberate the plot and risk real narrative discontinuity, uncanny irrationality, as J. Hoberman writes, 'Characters dissolve. Settings deteriorate. Situations break down and reconstitute themselves, sometimes as fantasy, sometimes as a movie.'⁴³ The film's narrative, and the conventions that it suggests, indicate that there is a mystery to be comprehended, but ultimately the offered evidence means that the film, and its mystery, remains incomplete. The viewer is in the position of being aware of all the knowable information, unlike any of the characters, but this is still insufficient.

Nolan's narrative inclination is derived from working within a particular dramatic form; this sensibility was also evident in his first film *Following* (1998). In this context, narrative boundaries can be stretched, but the method that Nolan elects vouches for its need to be within the realm of identifiable filmic sense, which is always contained within the diegesis. The camera preys on Shelby. His back-story, the history the narrative needs to justify his quest, is occasionally ambiguous but always whole; it satisfies the audience's need to share this knowledge. He operates in a narrative, which has a clear structure, and despite appearances this drama inherently demands, and expects, understanding - unlike Lynch's unreliable narrators', who despite solving part of the film's mystery their unsettled confusion always returns.

Photographs make sense of the world

The Polaroid the viewer sees first as it un-develops is in-fact *Memento*'s last act. Polaroids are placed at the centre of *Memento*'s memorious process. They are a means for Shelby to orientate himself and as Scruton observes, about the 'ideal photograph', it gives him an 'idea of

⁴² Morrissey, B. (2011) 'Impossible Memory: Traumatic Narratives in *Memento* and *Mulholland Drive'*

Sinha, A. and McSweeney, T. (ed.) *Millennial Cinema: Memory in Global Film*, London and New York: Wallflower, p.113

⁴³ Hoberman, J. (2001) 'Points of No Return', *The Village Voice*, October 2, [online] available at: <http://www.villagevoice.com/2001-10-02/film/points-of-no-return/> [accessed 13 June 2014]

how something looked,⁴⁴ because, by definition, it ‘is incapable of representing anything unreal’.⁴⁵ Shelby does view them as indisputable evidential records and prompts, and as his images of people and places accrue, over the course of his investigation, they give it a procedural rhythm. Shelby’s faith in images is simple, that they hold a direct likeness, as Roger Scruton writes, ‘The ideal photograph also yields an appearance not interesting as the realization of an intention but rather as a record of how an actual object looked.’⁴⁶ The Polaroid’s development cannot be circumvented, the image is revealed only when it is ready, and the images are presented as indicators of real time; they have a physical robustness, deconstruction is a deliberate act.



Fig. 63 *Memento* (2000)

Shelby’s collection of images connects him with all he has lived, for instance after he has spent the night with Natalie he needs to refer to his collection of Polaroids in order to jog his memory, to know who she is, and then ‘*his senses send an image of her to his mind, the image is then matched with a mental representation of her*.’⁴⁷ The pictures that he takes, the notes that he accrues, are augmented and compounded by his bodily inscriptions. His decision to affix, through professional and homemade tattoos, his suspicions and investigations onto his body, believing this to be a reasonable and dependable manner in which to record his deductions, literally illustrate his Investigation and fraying mental deviation. Morrissey suggests that Shelby’s depicted memory

⁴⁴ Scruton, R. (1981) ‘Photography and Representation’, *Critical Inquiry*, vol.7, no.3, p.587

⁴⁵ Ibid, p.588

⁴⁶ Ibid, p.579

⁴⁷ Morrissey, B. (2011) ‘Impossible Memory: Traumatic Narratives in *Memento* and *Mulholland Drive*’, in:

Sinha, A. and McSweeney, T. (ed.) *Millennial Cinema: Memory in Global Film*, London and New York: Wallflower, p.83

'becomes impossible: we cannot trust it, but we cannot deny it either.'⁴⁸ His body becomes a physical post-it, a testimony to his investigation - 'If it's not written, it didn't happen'. However, with time its purpose becomes untenable, as it is a questionable record, one that reflects his lived experience.

The physical manifestation of a Polaroid is not instant, it requires a degree of patience and depending on the stock the image's materialisation can take between fifteen seconds and two minutes. The Polaroid image appears with a degree of wonder (and now attendant nostalgia) as its mechanistic action literally produces tangible results. When *Memento*'s first Polaroid regresses we see that time is literally returning to whence it came, a phenomenon only possible with time-based images. We also behold a technological mediation, an illustration of the past appearing. The first occurrence may be of a dead man, but the manner of its presentation places this scene within a recognisable sphere, as the overture to a mystery. The Polaroid's mechanical documentation neatly frames the bloody mess and in doing so sanitises it. Its clinical presentation suggests that whatever mystery the scene holds will be solved through careful analysis. Generic convention indicates that the study of an image will offer evidence that is not immediately apparent, however, even with close inspection, these images fail to deliver anything more; they have no extra forensic value.

Marker, in *Sans Soleil*, asked the question: 'I wonder how people remember things who don't film, don't photograph, don't tape?' This is variation on a reoccurring concern, how does technology mediate memory? A photograph has the quality of seeking out a memory, this sensation can be felt even when the image is initially unknown, because being familiar with the medium, and its various genres, we identify with, and feel that we know, its value. For Bellour the use of the photograph in film indicates awareness and perception, the evocation of things past, as he writes, 'the photograph enjoys a privilege over all other effects that make the spectator of cinema, this hurried spectator; a pensive one as well.'⁴⁹ This position is a contradiction of Barthes, who believed the fundamental difference between the photograph and film, was one of movement (and immersion): 'Do I add to the images in movies? I don't think so; I don't have time: in front of the screen, I am not free to shut my eyes: otherwise, opening them again, I would not discover the same image; I am constrained to a continuous voracity; a host of other qualities, but not pensiveness.'⁵⁰ Bellour countered that when 'you stop the film [to view a photograph], you begin to find the time to add to the image',⁵¹ and in this pause he thinks Barthes might find pensiveness. This suggests that a different viewing regime is being enacted, in which a still that is in motion

⁴⁸ Ibid, p.100

⁴⁹ Bellour, R. (1987) 'The Pensive Spectator', *Wide Angle*, 9 (1), p.10

⁵⁰ Barthes, R. (1982) *Camera Lucida*, Howard, R. (trans.), London: Vintage Books, p.55

⁵¹ Ibid

appears to suspend a film's movement and this allows repose and reflection. When a photograph is seen in this context, as in *Memento* or *Blow-up* (Antonioni, 1966), it indicates a change in the flow of a film's linearity: as Bellour writes, filmed photographs 'freeze for one instant the time of the film, and uprooting us from the film's unfolding, situates us in relation to it.'⁵² This facility to open time allows filmic temporality to have a counter flow, to have a dual movement. Mulvey suggested in her paper 'The Ghost in the Machine' that if Barthes had lived to see the advent of VHS and DVD culture that he may well have revised his opinion regarding film. She contended that with the adoption of this technology a version of the punctum can be found in moving images.⁵³ Barthes' termed the part of the photograph that engenders poignancy and 'pricks' the viewer the 'punctum' - 'Occasionally (but alas all too rarely) a 'detail' attracts me. I feel that its mere presence changes my reading.'⁵⁴ This sensation suggests something unexpected that moves and alters perception.



Fig. 62 *Memento* (2000)

The punctum is an enticing proposition, in that it suggests hidden connections with largely unknown forces, but is it to always be tinged with sentiment; James Elkins characterises Barthes' arrested moment as 'a tourism of the over looked'⁵⁵ he likens these moments to 'detective stories' as 'they put us in mind, just a little, of the fact that people we love will die – but then they make it seem that if we are clever, enough, those deaths can somehow be solved.'⁵⁶ He maintains that Barthes' perception ignores the real pain and anguish that a photograph may be imbued with

⁵² Ibid, p.6

⁵³ Mulvey offered a series of gestures and looks from Marilyn Monroe, in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (Hawks, 1953), as evidence. Mulvey, L. (2013) 'The Ghost in the Machine', *From Montage to Mash-ups*, London: Institute of English Studies, University of London, 26 October

⁵⁴ Barthes, R. (1982) *Camera Lucida*, (Howard, R. trans), London: Vintage Books, p.42

⁵⁵ Elkins, J. (2011) *What Photography Is*, New York/ London: Routledge, p.38

⁵⁶ Ibid, p.40

by regarding it as an unconscious, but safe, adventure of discovery. Elkins allows that Barthes' formulation has romantic allure but it is encumbered with our own familiar memories. What provokes our attention is always within a sphere of known reference, but that which is gone can never really be known, so can our viewing of it be more than nostalgic intrigue? Images exist in a discursive context, which presses upon any meaning and interpretation. Photography shows what has been, not as a reproduction of reality, but as a representation of a recorded past. Barthes writes, "The Photograph does not call up the past (nothing Proustian in a photograph). The effect it produces upon me is not to restore what has been abolished (by time, by distance) but to attest that what I see has indeed existed."⁵⁷ In this contention Barthes' relation with the photograph is restated, not his connection with what is past; it also refers to language's struggle to produce an understanding of a photograph's position in time. He contends that to imagine and seek '*what has been*' rather than '*what is no longer*',⁵⁸ requires the ability to behold and move within time frozen for an instance, accepting that this is the only unequivocal aspect of an image's actuality. It is this inscribed moment that offers an image of time past, as Bazin, considering the advent of photography, writes, 'for the first time, the image of things is likewise the image of their duration, change mummified as it were'.⁵⁹ Frampton's (*nostalgia*), through its moving stills, emphasises this, but this is framed as photography's somewhat mournful allure; photographs influence, even change, our perception of what has been, for its very essence preserves a representation of life, as it will never be again.

In taking a photograph the photographer is looking into the future and those who are being addressed by the camera look towards the past; Sontag contended, 'photographs give people an imaginary possession of a past that is unreal',⁶⁰ that photography is a 'way of certifying experience' by 'converting experience into an image'.⁶¹ This notion is predicated on our subject related interest, as Scruton writes, "Typically, therefore, our attitude towards photography will be one of curiosity, not curiosity about the photograph but rather about its subject. The photograph addresses itself to our desire for knowledge of the world, knowledge of how things look or seem".⁶² The development of the photograph was to be a profound expression of the desire to represent and behold an image of reality. Photography has always been a way to better know, or at least show, the world, through its seemingly unerring resemblance to that which was and could be encountered, that 'the emotional or "aesthetic" qualities of a photograph tend to derive

⁵⁷ Barthes, R. (1982) *Camera Lucida*, (Howard, R. trans), London: Vintage Books, p.82

⁵⁸ Ibid, p.85

⁵⁹ Bazin, A. (1967) 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image' in: *What is Cinema?* vol.1, Gary, H. (trans.), Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, p.15

⁶⁰ Sontag, S. (1977) *On Photography*, London: Penguin Books, p.9

⁶¹ Ibid

⁶² Scruton, R. (1981) 'Photography and Representation', *Critical Inquiry*, vol.7, no.3, p.590

directly from the qualities of what it “represents”.⁶³ Vilém Flusser, writing before digital convergence, observed that,

‘Images are needed to make [the world] comprehensible [but] since [people] are no longer able to decode them, their lives become a function of their own images. [These images] are supposed to be maps but they turn into screens: Instead of representing the world, they obscure it until human beings’ lives finally become a function of the images that they create.’⁶⁴

The situation that Flusser identified has only been exacerbated with time and the post-photographic world, a place of imagistic self-orientation, in which individuals can become structured by and through the photographs they take (of life), would seem to support his contention. In *Memento* the physicality of the Polaroid procedure expresses a search for knowledge, the exposure externalises memory, which becomes an archival trace to be collated.

Technology affords a degree of permanence and a means of discernible navigation, but when time reverses in *Memento*, and the Polaroid’s image de-materialises, it returns to its pristine state. The reverse procedure is a resonant metaphor for Shelby’s condition. Gunning writes, ‘a photograph can only tell the truth if it is also capable of telling a lie’,⁶⁵ but the Polaroid emphasises Scruton’s observation that the camera ‘is being used not to represent something but to point to it’,⁶⁶ that its direct relationship with depicted subject gives it evidential authenticity. Shelby hoards the images he makes believing that they provide certainty, but once they become disconnected from context their meaning becomes even more contestable.

Modular time, film and the zeitgeist

Memento’s referential indications, co-opting, is part of the post-modern passage. It is difficult to disentangle the film from all that precedes it, because the looking back, being part of film’s history, is so self-conscious. Nolan, like his contemporaries Quentin Tarantino and Douglas Gordon, is irreversibly marked by his exposure to the domestic VCR. The videotape allowed, for the first time, viewers to repeatedly review material. Gordon stated, ‘Cinema is young, only a hundred years old, but for us it’s already dead. We’ve grown up with the video-recorder, perhaps it’s as simple as that.’⁶⁷ The VCR may have been replaced by other formats, but

⁶³ Ibid, p.591

⁶⁴ Flusser, V. (2000) *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, London: Reaktion Books, p.10

⁶⁵ Gunning, T. (2004) ‘What’s the Point of an Index? Or, Faking Photographs’, *NORDICOM Review*, vol.5, 1/2, September, p.42

⁶⁶ Scruton, R. (1981) ‘Photography and Representation’, *Critical Inquiry*, vol.7, no.3, p.589

⁶⁷ Douglas Gordon cited in: ‘L’Entre-Images 2’, p.268, in: Darke, C. (2000) *Light Readings*, London: Wallflower, p.159

it was the first domestic device to facilitate the viewing of pre-recorded material. Gordon's statement suggests this immediacy indicated a collapsing of disciplines, flattening of history and a change in temporalities. This new controllable appreciation opened-up film's dissemination and consumption and in this new accessibility film's presence was normalised, in that film's viewing procedure, discernment, was domesticated.

Memento avails itself of a mass of visual and cinematic material that suggests its lineage and desired categorization. It is a film about forgetfulness, in terms of plot, but it is also evidence of forgetting, whilst borrowing from, film (and cultural) past, its post-modern form being founded in myriad film traces; *Double Indemnity* (Wilder, 1944) looms, with its guileless insurance salesman, Walter Naff; neo-noir references are also evident, for instance James Ellroy's pitiless *L.A. Confidential* (1990); *Jackie Brown* (Tarantino, 1997) and the small time California of other films like *Straight Time* (Grosbard, 1978); the film's Polaroids seem to reference *Alice in the Cities* (Wenders, 1974); its clever plotting has some similarity to *The Usual Suspects* (Singer, 1995) and is replete with other contemporary thriller tropes; *Spellbound* and other amnesiacs, and a legion of noirish femmes fatales, ladies in lakes, bars and bedrooms; it tries to invoke something of the paranoia of *The Conversation* (Coppola, 1974); the oppression of *Don't Look Now* (Roeg, 1973); the menace of *Angel Heart* (Parker, 1987); the precision and cleverness of *Chinatown*; the temporal complexity of *Muriel, or the Time of a Return*; the reverential enquiry of *Blow-Up* (Antonioni, 1966); amongst others.



Fig. 64 *Blow-Up* (1966)

Memento moves down already established channels; it requires its audience to recognise its intent, in order to tap easily into the kind of collective unconscious of which film is the most heady of

exponents, whereas a film like *Pierrot le Fou* (Godard, 1965) would deploy inter-textual references to pursue a creative and social critique, suggesting a memory of what has been, the cultural ephemera of the modern world, and the film's characters endeavour to pull free of this burden. This indicates that referential knowledge cannot be undone, that which is known incrementally accumulates and has affect.

Does *Memento*, and other films by directors and writers such as Alejandro González Iñárritu, Charlie Kaufman and Tarantino, suggest a new development of form? Cameron writes, that 'modular narrative and database narrative are terms applicable to narratives that foreground the relationship between the temporality of the story and the order of its telling.'⁶⁸ This assertion is predicated on the understanding that these various works encompass the lessons of Modernist experimentation within an accessible form. Alluding to this conception Cameron argues that these films, 'signal the point at which these aesthetics have been accepted by popular culture at large.'⁶⁹ He argues that the temporal and aesthetic experimentation of Resnais, Antonioni and other canonical directors has become part of cinema's lexicon and that modular narratives are situated somewhere between them and the mainstream. *Memento*'s colour-coded strands clearly exist on different temporal planes; however, this differentiation actually divides and simplifies psychological motivation through its compartmentalisation. Deleuze perceived that films like Resnais's *Last Year at Marienbad* (1961), could move thoughtfully across time,⁷⁰ but an integrated scheme, which converged occurrence and consciousness, that allowed Shelby's trackable progress and invited identification, would risk real discontinuity. Regarding this modular formulation, David Denby asks: 'Are moviegoers bringing some new sensibility to these riddling movies? What are we getting out of the overloading, the dislocations and disruptions?'⁷¹

These contemporary films, at the level of content and form, offer something of the zeitgeist but does their replaying, relaying, delaying indicate a distinct innovation or just associate them to a particular time? Thomas Elsaesser suggests that these films require a high level of viewer sophistication, arguing that 'mind game films' may have become 'a mode of performative agency, as well as a form of thinking.'⁷² The themes that resonate through these films indicate millennial uncertainty, a world in which twentieth century social definitions and positions were being challenge, invariably through economic pressure rather than political agitation. This

⁶⁸ Cameron, A. (2008) *Modular Narratives in Contemporary Cinema*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, p.1

⁶⁹ Ibid, p.16

⁷⁰ Deleuze, G. (1989) *Cinema 2*, Tomlinson, H. and Galeta, R. (trans.), London: Continuum, p.97

⁷¹ Denby, D. (2007) 'The new disorder: Disordered narratives in film', in: *The New Yorker*, 5 March, [online] available at: <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/03/05/the-new-disorder> [accessed 21 October 2015]

⁷² Elsaesser, T. 'The Mind-Game Film', in Ibid, p.38

understanding is also linked to technological developments and Buckland believes that new media has influenced human development, making multi-strand depictions necessary, he writes: ‘These complex stories overturn folk-psychological ways of understanding and instead represent radically new experiences and identities.⁷³ The genesis of modular work is to be found in the multi-channel media environment but does aping its effect only reinforces cinema’s singularity; the idea that these database films constitute a new form is discounted by Bordwell, who writes, ‘most storytelling innovations since the 1990s have kept one foot in the classic tradition. Because of the redundancy built into the Hollywood narrative system, unusual devices could piggyback on a large number of familiar ones.’⁷⁴ Bordwell’s theoretical approach desires to make sense of films, and that resolution can be found for any narratological issues. This tendency places all narratives within an established scheme, one determined by a classic realist cinema. In writing, ‘Nolan’s real achievement, it seems to me, is to make his reverse-order plot conform to classical plot structure and film-noir twists’,⁷⁵ Bordwell is expressing the robustness of his definition but also limiting its possibility to a number of finite established variations. These narrative-driven explanations dwell within textual analysis and are seemingly untroubled by external factors. Challenging this tendency, Cubitt states that contemporary Hollywood promotes ‘identification with fictional worlds’, and that these self-referential entities negate history.⁷⁶ Analysis may begin with the actualised form of a work, but purely digetic examination with its exhaustive categorisation⁷⁷ seems to forget all beyond its near focus, and that sometimes cinema’s component elements are combined to make strange, even unintended effect, which exists beyond the confines of diegetic functionality.

Database films may be evidence of their technological epoch, a representation of a kind of audio/visual encoding, but their method would seem to reflect a received perception of the contemporary world, the popular idea of data excess and chaos, with its surface attraction, streams of competing information. The invoking of the database draws directly on analogous claims to the computer and its facility for storage. A database denotes an accumulation of information that can be systematically retrieved. This repository can be accessed from multiple points-of-view, potentially each encounter could be uniquely informed by need and habit, a method that is at odds with film’s linear flow. Manovich, in *The Language of New Media*, enlists

⁷³ Buckland, W. ‘Introduction: Puzzle Plots’, in (2009) *Puzzle Films: Complex Storytelling in Contemporary Cinema*, Buckland, W. (ed.), Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, p.1

⁷⁴ Bordwell, D. (2006) *The Way Hollywood Tells It: Story and Style in Modern movies*, Berkeley, LA: University California Press, p.73

⁷⁵ Ibid, p.79

⁷⁶ Cubitt, S. (2004) *The Cinema Effect*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, p.236

⁷⁷ For an example of this tendency see Ghislotti, S. (2009) ‘Narrative comprehension Made Difficult: Film Form and Mnemonic Devices in *Memento*’ in *Puzzle Films: Complex Storytelling in Contemporary Cinema*, Buckland, W. (ed.), Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, p.87-106

Man With a Movie Camera (Vertov, 1929) to serve as a guide to new media, as a prototypical example of database filmmaking, contending, ‘It proves that it is possible to turn ‘effects’ into meaningful artistic language.’⁷⁸ Manovich’s adopting of Vertov’s film suggests a different contextual position to Cameron et al, one that would look to the Soviet avant-garde to find filmic equivalence for new media in 2001.

Vertov’s film pertained to society, a Communist ideal, and the ideological necessity to make work that encapsulated this progressive ethos. The classic and post-classic critical models both invariably seek coherent explanations within the narrative realm; films that must, on some level, be comprehensible (within knowable formulations). Cameron, and others, may argue that database films represent a type of pragmatic experimentation, but their rationalization forsakes the originating impulse of filmmakers like Vertov.

Cameron et al have proposed that contemporary database films are innovative versions of narrative cinema, but as Denby proffered, ‘what are we getting out [of] these riddling movies?’⁷⁹ Considering their form now, suggests that they depicted a time in flux, the seeming fluidity and connectedness of society, but also its confused and evolving positions, these films articulated something of the spirit of that age. The form of filmmaking that Nolan and his contemporaries espouse has taken on spectacular connotations, as seen in *Inception* (2010), and now has the garlands of Best Picture and Best Director Oscars, for Iñárritu’s *Birdman* (2014), to its credit. From its title sequence, with its homage to Godard, onwards, this is a film about films, but as its plaudits indicate this is not just a work for cinephiles, and in this we see the extent of influence, but also the manner in which it has been co-opted and its politics neutered.

Memories can change

A predecessor of *Memento*’s reverse structure was Pinter’s *Betrayal* (1978); it tells the story of a tripartite extramarital affair over the period of seven years, told in receding order, and the accompanying fall-out. At the play’s beginning the characters reminisce and assess what has been, but even after the affair has ended inconsistencies and untruths prevail. Pinter’s structural method follows an event back to its founding moment, but the schema is not akin to a series of flashbacks, but is more like one memory invoking another, and so on. Time is ordered through

⁷⁸ Manovich, L. (2001) *The Language of New Media*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, p.xv-xxxvi

⁷⁹ Denby, D. (2007) ‘The new disorder: Disordered narratives in film’, in: *The New Yorker*, 5 March, [online] available at: <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/03/05/the-new-disorder> [accessed 21 October 2015]

the play's structural logic, and the microcosm of characterisation, in which all is betrayed, including memory and time, by subjective reason.⁸⁰ To facilitate their affair the adulterers rent a flat, a shared secret space that becomes their home, away from home, a haven and burden; Malcolm Bull writes, 'with its uncanny mingling of fear and play, the hidden seems to threaten a regression to childhood, a return to some forgotten world of unexplored possibility.'⁸¹ This is an expression of something being hidden, an obscuring of the truth, for if something is to be revealed it must be knowable and whilst it is hidden it is incomplete. Burgin observes, 'The telling of the memory, of course betrays it... in the sense that to tell it is to misrepresent, to transform, to diminish it';⁸² even with the best intentions that which is remembered alters with time and influence. The process of Shelby's investigation is conducted in a matter-of-fact manner, one clue invariably leading to another. He is forever turning over things, a Polaroid, note, document, to inspect its worth as if his memory is reinforced through touch and he never loses his belief that they can always reveal more. The search for truth is an interpretive experience that determines and expresses particular focus and framing.

In *Memento* all truth is measured against that which is provided by the film; this notion is perpetuated by belief that the world can be known by contemplating its image. Work that is conceived outside a quizzical, analytic and exploratory position fails to penetrate presumed knowledge and *Memento* is at its most compelling when uncertainty is shown through action; for instance, Shelby is involved in a shoot-out and chase, and at its height he forgets whether he is the pursuer or the pursued. However, the film is constrained by its structure, and once it becomes clear that its chronological reversal is the primary ordering device, all is subordinate to this procedure. What is actively known about the past informs the present, as Bergson observed, the present connects the past and future.⁸³ Shelby struggles to find new understanding due to his psychological condition: 'I don't have amnesia. I know who I am. I just can't form new memories.' Hutchinson and Read write that *Memento* 'depicts the soul of someone whose problem, perhaps, is actually that they cannot bear to remember, not that they cannot remember

⁸⁰ Five years after the play's premiere at the National Theatre Pinter adapted it for the screen. The film's staging follows the play's structure, nine scenes, each one shown in 'real' time, but they are disjointed by film's narrative demands. The play's filmisation suspended time, with its leads, Jeremy Irons, Patricia Hodge and Ben Kingsley, becoming the de facto personifications; this time was also etched into the London of the film, a time that is now recognisably a memory.

⁸¹ Bull, M. (1999) *Seeing Things Hidden: Apocalypse, Vision, and Totality*, London: Verso Books, p.1

⁸² Burgin, V. (2004) *The Remembered Film*, London: Reaktion Books, p.16

⁸³ Bergson, H. (2004) *Matter and Memory*, Paul, N. M. and Scott Palmer, W. (trans.), New York: Dover Publications, p. 194

to forget.⁸⁴ Shelby is driven by his need to behold all which is absent, something that he cannot achieve. He survives through systemised behaviour. He is continually awaking anew, always on the verge of being lost, but saved by his procedural, annotated, memory.

In the final scene, after Teddy's death, Shelby is driving, reflecting on all he can remember, and as he does so he imagines he is lying next to his wife, as he is now, and in these images his past life and present condition literally combine for the first time. A tattoo reads on his chest, 'I've done it', an affirmation of successful prosecution that would seem to be somewhat incongruous, considering all he knows, and we understand, but perhaps this inadvertently relates to his bringing these two streams of time together, and in this he has achieved the sense of unification, the validation that he has been searching for. The film concludes with him abruptly stopping outside a tattoo parlour, as if this vision requires further comment before its memory is gone. In considering *Memento* its structured progression is resolutely to the fore. The film's formulation guides the spectator through Shelby's tribulations, untroubled by the imperfection of memory, sure in the method of its production; there is no place in and beyond the confines of plot, the only reflective intrusion is that of the protagonist's narration, words conceived to keep the film on a delineated track. When Selby intones, pondering his position, it is always with the film's rapt attention, this self-edification never waivers. Once the film's method is revealed, the spectator backtracks, connecting what has been with the receding present. This re-synchronisation differs from Frampton's because its purpose is to find reason for the film's puzzle, some form of psychological explanation, as in the classic narrative tradition.



Fig. 65 *Memento* (2000)

⁸⁴ Hutchinson, P. and Read, R. (2005) 'Memento: A Philosophical Investigation', in: *Film as Philosophy: Essays in Cinema After Wittgenstein and Cavell*, Read, R. and Goodenough, J. (ed.), Hounds mills, Hampshire/New York: Palgrave Macmillian, p.89

To Shelby, memory is ‘an interpretation, not a record. Memories can be changed or distorted, and they’re irrelevant if you have the facts.’ But which facts, those that Shelby believes or the facts that the film offers by way of narrative exploration? Nolan may aspire to collate, reclaim and recast memory, however his structuring impulse disallows any really contradictory discourses. Even though Shelby cannot remember whence he came he still has a sense of self, which is derived from his pursuit. Nolan never demurs from Shelby’s subjective quest, the unquestioned identification of his plight. *Memento*’s hybridity, the ambitious combining of temporal forms and narrative content, is a testament to the many of the things film can offer, but also an indication of its formal limits, that methodology is relationally and contextually tethered and the loosening of ties weakens memorious purpose and dulls its more reflective connotations.

CONCLUSION



Fig. 66 (*nostalgia*) (1971)

Once Freud and Proust were the inspiration for scientific enquiry into memory and now it is film directors like Nolan and Verhoeven.¹ Imagination, to reiterate Resnais' assertion,² is just as important as it has always been, and where literature and philosophy once led, now, it would seem, it is cinema. *Memories Made in Seeing* has remembered, contextualized, analyzed films – their generic and formal composition, different modes of production, and periodization (from the fertile post-war realm to post-modern inter-textuality). These films, when considered individually, and together, indicate how memory's interpretation changes with time and interest, its complexity, being reformulated to suit present needs. Their configuration offers new relations between film forms and memory, offering interdisciplinary direction. They speak from history, are markers that can be returned to and navigate a course through time and practice and all offer responses to the original research questions - does this time-based medium offer a unique treatment, which makes manifest a distinct form of memory; how, and why, do these films' seek to be part of this compact; how do they make and become memories, part of history?

¹ Suggested by Steve Ramirez with reference to *Inception* and *Total Recall*. Cited in: Beck, T. (2013) 'Inception-Style Memory Experiment Performed On Mice Was Inspired By The Movie Total Recall', *Fast Company labs*, 07.08.2013, [online] available at: <http://www.fastcolabs.com/3015419/inception-style-memory-experiment-performed-on-mice-was-inspired-by-the-movie-total-recall> [accessed 15 July 2014]

² Cited in: Monaco, J. (1978) *Alain Resnais: The Role of Imagination*, London: Secker & Warburg, p.11

A visualisation of memory can be identified and formulated, for its identifying tropes are well known, however, the deployment of these aesthetics and techniques can fail to articulate its true reason, because to do so requires accepting a position that acknowledges an involved temporal understanding. This suggests that there are different levels of mediated memory. These forms have found particular development over the latter part of the twentieth century, an interest that concurs with a changing perception of history.

The different films are a commentary on memory's filmic hold and illusive allure. This critical assessment is a matter of aesthetics and technique, and the form that these works take should be seen within the contextual breadth of history and the intent of practice. The manner of this filmic occurrence is multifarious and accordingly produces a different gradated effect, which emphasises narrativization, of some form or other, stimulating the means to remember, the always wanting to know more. Memory is ceaseless and its representation is reactive to cultural and technological directions that expose its contours, in obvious and nuanced ways, leaving a record of occurrence to be revisited and socially processed; it expresses a need to recount, relive, reassess all that is thought worth saving from the oblivion of unrecounted time.

The studied films trace memory's influence, its determinants and contestations, and in following this trail all manner of connections occurred, which were sutured by memory. Deren wrote, 'as we watch a film, the continuous act of recognition in which we are involved is like a strip of memory unrolling beneath the images of the film itself, to form the invisible under layer of an implicit double exposure.'³ If the primary films, and the other referenced works are considered, some of the relationships adhere to canonical developments but others are more intuitive, a matter of personal association.

The memories that *Muriel* depicts, and invokes, are communicated without differentiation, in that time past and present co-exist in the same frame, as time is experienced as one fragmented and imagined stream. Resnais' formulation was conceived in relation to France's post-war situation and his drama sought to show a country in flux, oscillating between the tragedy of the near past and the uncertainty of the future. (*nostalgia*) emphasises film's ability to present a conceptual composition that indicated something of memory ('memory function?') and its audio/visual possibilities opened up by the thinking through of how to represent memorious processes. Frampton's film is suffused with personal history, a narrativized version of it in which each story creates a different kind of relationship with its accompanying image, thereby demonstrating how memory is selective and creative-created, in the process of writing it down, with which he agitates

³ Deren, M. (1985) 'Cinematography: The Creative Use of Reality', in: *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, 3rd ed., Mast, G. Cohen, M. (ed.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.56

memory, his own and the viewer's. The national issues, with which infuses Resnais' film, have been absented for structural concerns and individual consideration.

In *Level Five*, Marker, makes available archival material through database examination, but as navigable as it is, it still fails to offer anything other than a pre-ordered inventory, any answers - to the questions history poses - are suggested by human intervention, Marker's off-screen, knowing, voice. His work was preoccupied with historical memory, the computer's emerging omnipresence, and in *Level Five* he indicates that the database is no more likely to offer an objective history lesson than any other form, but it also emphasised his need to explore the potential of other types of media resistance.



Fig. 67 *Level Five* (1996)

Marker's film acknowledges technological change, but his perspective is indebted to twentieth century narratives, and associated positions, and he struggles, by his own admission, with the implications of the coming age. *Memento*, which would seem to offer a similar realm, but through its evident stylisation of time betrays its generic intent, that its portrayal of memory serves narrative necessity. Nolan would bring something of Resnais' invention, Frampton's method and Marker's enquiry into wider discussion, but in doing so he risks forsaking their originating intent. This sequence of films also offers referential composition, the contextual relief of the selected work, the process of accrual and the formulation of a new set of conditions and coordinates that signal a different and unfolding orientation, another history.

All films relate to memory, in its cultural form, but not all films seek to invoke it. The original formations, of Resnais, Marker, Frampton and Nolan, are a matter of reference. To view their films is to know memory's concurrent state, all that has been remembered and forgotten and how this can alter with time. If the films are traced, from *Muriel* onwards, a lineage becomes apparent that expresses historic pertinence and cultural affiliation, an understanding that aligns work and suggests evolving situations, one that is conscious of the draft of time. These developments are now known through a work's historical articulation; this can be seen in the forms of enquiry and how they still have a distinct purchase on creative consciousness; for instance, Resnais's narrative examination and temporal imagination, Frampton's structural and memory challenge, Marker's search to make film a form of reflective history and Nolan's hybrid use of genre and practice, indicate film's range, connectedness, reflective facility, formative positioning.



Fig. 68 *Memento* (2000)

All these films knowingly engage with the procedure of memory, endeavouring, through their own means, to articulate how we remember and the selective, seductive implications and results of this process. In this, what it is to remember, why this may be of interest and how this undertaking can be realised becomes known by example and this offers models that quantify other memorious expressions. The different films consciously provoke and produce thought through specific means and are suggestive of more than one tense. The development of an accessible Modernism, as practiced by Resnais, founded in an innovative spirit and a need to

comprehend (and forgive) the senselessness of contemporaneous human conflict, represented a fragmentation of space and time, as all had previously been assured was being deconstructed and examined to aid future configurations. This analysis was the foundation (explicitly and implicitly) for the work of the new age, a time of prosperity and personal discovery, the place that (*nostalgia*) indicated so deftly. Marker had become a veteran activist by the time of *Level Five*'s conception. It is a work that looked back, wanting somehow to reconfigure the injustice of his age through engaging with all that is to come. He knew this was fruitless, but he could not resist the thought - what if history could be undone? Nolan looked at film history and saw all that could gild his hybrid model and his manifest recollection was to be a memory of a memory, as to see his work is to remember all the films he knew. The persuasiveness of these various practices, in that they are still seen as referential models, suggests that we still have well-preserved memories of what was seen and the form and content of these renditions still has purpose and resonates beyond the originating moment, continuing to be instructive and lucid.

All aesthetic and technological methods have the potential to be adopted in unforeseen ways and this indicates contemporary preoccupations and emphasises how even (or especially?) the vanguard, with the passage of time, becomes a historic entity, and in this unforeseen alignments can occur, with works, such as Marker's, being presented in a new context, one that may differ from the maker's original intentions. There is nostalgia for discernible avant-garde affect; Hal Foster observed, 'Each epoch dreams the next, as Walter Benjamin once remarked, but in doing so it revises the one before it.'⁴ There is a symbolic and epochal reference, and reassurance, in older method, technology, as their appropriation and invocation attests to. Film is the 'art of time'⁵ and film and memory's generative affiliation is founded in this relation, with films' proposing multiple temporal, sensory, plains, within a set duration that then finds a place in the viewer's imagination (and memory). Bergson reasoned that unknown time, that which follows now, can only be disclosed within an understanding that connects it to all that has been, as he writes,

'It may be said that we have no grasp of the future without an equal and corresponding outlook over the past, that the onrush of our activity makes a void behind it into which memories flow, and that memory is thus the reverberation, in the sphere of consciousness, of the indetermination of our will.'

Film's expression, which we as viewers internalise, can be likened to Freud's 'screen memories', for film images can come to represent real memories and screen our recollection of personal

⁴ Foster, H. (1996) 'Whatever Happened to Postmodernism?', in: *The Return of the Real*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, p.207

⁵ Cubitt, S. (2004) *The Cinema Effect*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, p.365

⁶ Bergson, H. (2004) *Matter and Memory*, Paul, N. M. and Scott Palmer, W. (trans.), New York: Dover Publications, p.69-70

experience, for there is a transference, a sense of knowing, that occurs through film's verisimilitude, identification and sensory effect. Technology will undoubtedly change methods of production and display, but the intrinsic nature of images in motion is that they will, after registration, pass into memory and, by turns, seem somehow real, and mine and yours, for memory does more than perpetuate, it changes with time and re-creates and is recreated. The systematic relationships between materials and their application are like our evolving synaptic connections, in that perceived meanings are not static entities as they relate to and alter with time in ways that cannot be reckoned for, and in this they suggest different systems of thought and interpretation - it is not possible to completely isolate experience, for associations, references and influences, have their own instinctive order and persist, regardless of accuracy or rational understanding.



Fig. 69 *Muriel, or the Time of a Return* (1963)

Some films, like these ones, show, write and examine memory, they articulate its facility, history, all that might be remembered. In *Muriel* final scene Simone inspects Hélène's apartment. As she looks around the abandoned rooms traces of activity, occupation, become evident, however contextual awareness is *our* referential privilege. When the scene is done an end card announces the film's screen time is over, but its attendant and associated memories, which develop with, and through, time, continue to stream forth. A filmmaker's conceptual challenge may still have radical effect, but it is not exactly what it once was, as contexts change, History's resonance alters with time, forms evolve through procedure and precedence, and the material means of production changes. But, as time passes it becomes, in its own way, more memorable. Time bestows longevity and as its stretches it takes on a different perspective, as different associations and linkages emerge and recede. In this, certain works appear to take on importance and others

seemingly disappear, but are never completely forgotten, because film's memorious compact cannot be undone.

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